

ISTANBUL BILGI UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE PROGRAMS  
PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIAL THOUGHT MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM

SELF-REALIZATION: FROM AUTHENTICITY TO 'AESTHETICS OF EXISTENCE'

Merve CEYHAN

118679004

Assoc. Prof. Ferda KESKİN

İSTANBUL

2022

**Self-Realization: From Authenticity to ‘Aesthetics of Existence’**

**Kendini Gerçekleştirme: Otantiklikten ‘Varoluş Estetiği’ne**

Merve Ceyhan

116611048

**Tez Danışmanı:** Doç. Dr. Ferda Keskin

(İmza).....

İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi

**Jüri Üyesi:** Doç. Dr. Zeynep Talay Turner

(İmza).....

İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi

**Jüri Üyesi:** Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Yıldız Silier

(İmza).....

Boğaziçi Üniversitesi

Tezin Onaylandığı Tarih: 13.07.2022

Toplam Sayfa Sayısı: 140

**Anahtar Kelimeler**

- 1) Kendini Gerçekleştirme
- 2) Özgünlük
- 3) Varoluş Estetiği
- 4) İçselleşme
- 5) Etik

**Keywords**

- 1) Self-Realization
- 2) Authenticity
- 3) Aesthetics of Existence
- 4) Inwardness
- 5) Ethics

## FOREWORD

First of all, I would like to thank my family, Deniz, Eda and İbrahim Ceyhan, for their unconditional love, support and care.

I would like to thank my professors Ferda Keskin, Kaan Atalay and Zeyney Talay Turner at Bilgi University, I would be writing another thesis if I hadn't listened to the inspiring lectures given by each of them in their own fields.

As I started master's program, I was acting in a theatre play called Parrhesia with a group of my friends. Each of my play friends, Can Güvenç, Çağıl Kaya, Didem Kiriş, Gözde Yıldırım and Melike Kutluer, inspired me a lot in terms of their relationships with life and art. I would like to thank the director of Parrhesia, Salih Usta, for always trusting me in the sometimes contradictory and sometimes creative field where I stand between theater and philosophy, and for encouraging me to ask the theater audience the questions that fall within the scope of this thesis.

I would like to thank Boğaziçi University and my professors and my friends there for making me who I am, and I salute and pay my respects to all the components of the university who have bravely put their labour into the Bogazici University resistance, for a free and autonomous university, for more than a year now.

I would like to thank Melvyn Ingleby, who has always supported me during my master's degree, motivated me to write my thesis, and always inspired me with his existence.

I would like to thank my dear friends Deniz Çiftçi and Sesil Artuç, who have always been by my side and never spared their academic and moral support.

And I am grateful to my dear neighbor and friend İpek Seyalioğlu, who came into my life like a miracle, her comments and corrections on my thesis made me continue what I was doing.

I would like to thank Nisan Berkol, who always showed her support and curiosity about my thesis process, and Elizabeth Ritchie, who read my thesis and made corrections.

And I would like to thank my love, Yiğit Yıldım, who inspired me in many ways with his unique relationship with life and with his aesthetic existence.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AS	Aging and Self-Realization: Cultural Narratives About Later Life
BN	Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology
C	<i>The Confession, in The Collected Writings of Rousseau</i>
E	<i>Emile or On Education</i>
EA	<i>The Ethics of Authenticity</i>
ECS	“The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom”
EW1	<i>The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, vol. 1</i>
HS	“The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the College de France, 1982-83”
HS1	<i>History of Sexuality Vol One: The Will to Knowledge</i>
HS2	<i>History of Sexuality Vol Two: The Use of Pleasure</i>
M	<i>Meditations On First Philosophy</i>
MS	<i>Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age</i>
NE	<i>Notebooks For an Ethics</i>
NGH	“Nietzsche, Genealogy, History”
OBA	<i>On Being Authentic</i>
OG	<i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i>
OGE	“On Genealogy of Ethics”
ONGE	“On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress”
SP	<i>“The Subject and Power”</i>
SS	<i>Sources of the Self</i>

*TS*                    *“Technologies of Self”*

*WE*                    *“What is Enlightenment?”*

## ABSTRACT

The starting point of this study is how the concept of self-realization is approached in today's world. As it seems, the discourse of self-realization in the age that we can call the late modern period is predominantly produced by the culture of self-help. As found here, the concept of self-realization treats people as isolated, atomic individuals in connection with others. Therefore, today, this concept is not treated within ethical and political context. In addition, the concept of authenticity is in close contact with the culture of self-help that produces late modern interpretations of self-realization. The ideal of authenticity, developed around the motto of 'be yourself', includes processes such as 'discovering your true self' and adapting this truth to the rest of your self. In this study, the separation of the self into 'inner' and 'outer' realms is traced in the history of philosophy: since when has human been talking about herself? The next part of the study focuses on the concept of authenticity and examines what kind of self-realization approach this concept proposes through the understanding of authenticity of Jean Jacques Rousseau, Charles Taylor and Jean Paul Sartre. The last part of the work is devoted to the philosophy of Michel Foucault. Can a model that can be created as an alternative to the understanding of self-realization suggested by the self-development culture deduced from Foucault's writings? The relations that the Greeks established with themselves within the framework of the rule of 'taking care of oneself', and the 'ascetic' practices they carried out regarding the use of pleasures, which Foucault conveyed to us on the ancient Greek ethics he was working on in his last period, are of a quality that will appeal to today's 'self-occupied' people. These ethical studies, which Foucault called the 'aesthetics of existence', also promised freedom to the 'subject'. Therefore, the 'aesthetics of existence' can offer a kind of exit door to the idea and practice of self-realization, which has lost its ethical and political aspects today.

**Keywords:** Self-realization, Authenticity, Aesthetics of Existence, Ethics, Inwardness

## ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın çıkış noktası kendini gerçekleştirme kavramının günümüz dünyasında nasıl ele alındığıdır. Geç modern dönem olarak adlandırabileceğimiz çağda kendini gerçekleştirme söylemi ağırlıklı olarak kişisel gelişim kültürü tarafından üretilmektedir. Burada bulunduğu haliyle, kendini gerçekleştirme kavramı insanları ötekiler ile bağlantısında izole, atomik bireyler olarak ele alır. Dolayısıyla günümüzde bu kavram etik ve politik bağlamı ile ele alınmamaktadır. Bunun yanında özgünlük kavramı, kendini gerçekleştirmenin geç modern yorumlarını üreten kişisel gelişim kültürü ile yakın temas içindedir. ‘Kendin ol’ düsturu çevresinde gelişen otantiklik ideali, ‘hakiki benliğini keşfetme’, ve içeride bulunan bu hakikati benliğin geri kalanına adapte etme gibi süreçleri içerir. Bu çalışmada benliğin iç ve dış olarak ayrılmasının felsefe tarihinde izleri sürülür: insan ne zamandan beri kendi ‘içinden’ bahsetmektedir? Çalışmanın bir sonraki kısmı özgünlük kavramına odaklanır ve Jean Jacques Rousseau, Charles Taylor ve Jean Paul Sartre’in özgünlük anlayışları üzerinden bu kavramın nasıl bir kendini gerçekleştirme anlayışı önerdiğini irdeler. Çalışmanın son kısmı Michel Foucault’nun felsefesine ayrılmıştır. Kişisel gelişim kültürünün topluma ağırlıklı olarak özgünlük diskuru ile önerdiği kendini gerçekleştirme anlayışına alternatif oluşturulabilecek bir model Foucault’nun yazılarından çıkarılabilir midir? Foucault’nun son döneminde antik Yunan etiği üzerine yaptığı çalışmalarda bize aktardıkları, Yunanlıların ‘kendine özen göstermek’ kuralı çerçevesinde kendileri ile kurdukları ilişkiler, hazların kullanımına ilişkin gerçekleştirdikleri ‘asketik’ pratikler bugünün ‘kendiyile meşgul’ insanına hitap edecek niteliktedir. Foucault’nun ‘varoluş estetiği’ olarak da adlandırdığı bu etik çalışmalar aynı zamanda ‘özneye’ özgürlük vaadeder. Bu yüzden, bugün etik ve politik veçhelerini yitiren kendini gerçekleştirme düşüncesi ve pratiğine ‘varoluş estetiği’ bir tür çıkış kapısı sunabilir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kendini Gerçekleştirme, Özgünlük, Varoluş Estetiği, İçselleşme, Etik

## INTRODUCTION

“I want to realize myself, not to be who I am, to unleash my full potential, to be the best version of myself.” Hearing such a phrase from one perhaps does not sound unfamiliar to us as individuals living in today’s world. Or, if we encounter one striving to ‘be oneself’, we may think that she is not making a pointless effort. For in today’s world, the dominant emphasis of the organizations which purport to interfere in people’s relation to themselves with a certain type of knowledge, highly emphasize the idea of self-realization, that is, the ideas of ‘not remaining as one is’ or, paradoxically, ‘remaining what one is’. I will call self-realization the conscious work one does on oneself to make a change in oneself towards a favorable goal such as attaining the ‘good life’.<sup>1</sup> In the literature, this concept is often used synonymously with various terms such self-actualization, self-fulfillment, self-development, and so on.<sup>2</sup> Although those concepts are akin to self-realization in signifying a certain reflexive relation involving “a favorable development wherein persons achieve goods”.<sup>3</sup> I prefer to use the concept of self-realization as my focal point. The reason is that I believe that the expression ‘kendini gerçekleştirmek’, which is the direct Turkish translation of this concept, has a more meaningful place in the Turkish reader’s experience with this concept.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Good life’ is a concept that has been referred to since the beginning of philosophy and is explained with normative and descriptive content about how to live a ‘meaningful’ life: “Antisthenes, a pupil of Socrates, founded the Cynic school of philosophy, which advocated an ascetic lifestyle. Aristippus, another pupil of Socrates, founded the Cyrenaic school, which advocated a hedonistic lifestyle. Of between these extremes, we find, among many other schools, the Epicurean school, the Skeptic school, and, of most interest to us here, the Stoic school, founded by Zeno of Citium.” From W. B. Irvine, *A Guide to the Good Life: The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy* (New York: Oxford, 2009), 3. My definition of self-realization is inspired by Michel Foucault’s definition of “technologies of the self”. See Michel Foucault, “Technologies of Self”, in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. L. H. Martin, H. Gutman, P. H. Hutton (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 18 (hereafter cited in text as *TS*).

<sup>2</sup> See Marshall Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity: Radical Individualism and the Emergence of Modern Society* (New York: Atheneum, 1972), xv. “I have used the word ‘authenticity’ to designate a whole family of aspirations and ideals which are central to the cultural life of our age. But my choice of the word was rather arbitrary; so many other might have done as well. ‘Identity’, ‘autonomy’, ‘individuality’, ‘self-development’, ‘self-realization’, ‘your own thing’; See Alan Gewirth, *Self-Fulfillment* (Princeton, 1998), 6.

<sup>3</sup> Gewirth, *Self-Fulfillment*, 6.

The point of departure of this study is to reveal philosophical and political assumptions that today's self-realization discourses, especially through the self-help culture, incorporate. Accordingly, in the first chapter, I examine the forms that self-realization takes in 'late modernity'<sup>4</sup>, which is used to express the age we live in, and analyse the discourses of self-help literature. In viewing the concept of self-realization within the framework of philosophy, I am inspired by the genealogical method that Michel Foucault inherited from Friedrich Nietzsche.<sup>5</sup> This will be the subject of the second chapter. Foucault states that philosophy above all has a critical function, and one of the most important tools of critical perspective is genealogy.<sup>6</sup> A genealogical view of the concept of self-realization requires, first of all, the acceptance that this concept does not have a fixed essence or that it does not reveal any 'truth'. According to the genealogical understanding, even the truth itself been meticulously constructed as a result of certain processes in history.<sup>7</sup> Foucault states that one of the objectives of genealogy is making the "historical ontology of ourselves in relation to truth through which we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge".<sup>8</sup> Considering that the concept of self-realization makes assumptions about the truth of one's relationship with oneself, examining this concept from a genealogical perspective leads us to look critically at the relationship one establishes with oneself and truth. In this context, citing Charles Taylor's statement, who is one of the main figures of this work, we can ask: What is the reason behind

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<sup>4</sup> There are hesitations among sociologists in using the term 'postmodernity' since it suggests that modernity is over. Rather the terms such as 'late modernity', 'high modernity', 'second modernity', 'reflexive modernization' 'liquid modernity', introduced by authors, Antony Giddens, Ulrich Beck, Scott Lash, and Zygmunt Bauman respectively (Bauman adopts the term postmodernity as well, he is doubtful about it; see Zygmunt Bauman, Milena Yakimova, "A postmodern grid of the worldmap? An Interview with Zygmunt Bauman", *Eurozine*, November, 8, 2002, <https://www.eurozine.com/a-postmodern-grid-of-the-worldmap/>)

<sup>5</sup> See Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, vol. 2: Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1998), (hereafter cited in text as *NGH*).

<sup>6</sup> Michel Foucault "The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom", in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, vol. 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997), 300 (hereafter cited in text as *ECS*).

<sup>7</sup> See Ferda Keskin, "Özne ve İktidar" in *Özne ve İktidar: Michel Foucault/Seçme Yazılar 2*, trans. Işık Ergüden-Osman Akınhay, ed. Ferda Keskin (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları), 23.

<sup>8</sup> Michel Foucault "On Genealogy of Ethics" in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, vol. 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997), 262 (hereafter cited in text as *OGE*).

the call to people to realize themselves and “feel their lives would be somehow wasted or unfulfilled if they didn't do it”?<sup>9</sup> Moreover, relying on the discourse of self-realization, what kind of truth about themselves are people dedicated to discovering?

One of the main focuses of this study will be the concept of authenticity, which I consider a subheading of the discourses of self-realization, especially when taken as the necessary condition of its current forms.<sup>10</sup> Just before examining the concepts of authenticity, it is essential to examine the historical processes that help conceptualize the self in terms of ‘inside-outside’ distinction, whose development paved the way for concepts like self-realization and authenticity.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, in the third chapter, I will examine the concept of ‘inwardness’, which Charles Taylor in *Sources of the Self* (1989) considers to have a critical importance in the formation of the modern notion of self. Taylor’s analysis starts with the Homeric text pertaining to the positioning of the features expressing the self and continues with a Platonic understanding of the self pointing to a unified zone for the first time in history. In his analysis in which reflexivity of the self matured in Augustine and the self was detached from the outside world with Descartes, Taylor depicts how it is possible to consider the self as an entity with an ‘inner world’ as it is today. In my opinion, laying out such a background is essential in grasping the concepts of self-realization and authenticity relying on the idea of disclosure of the potentialities that are supposed to reside ‘inside’. While reviewing the concept of ‘inwardness’, I will look at different aspects of the relationship that people establish with the universe in the process leading to modernity and observe how the ‘inner’ and ‘outer’

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<sup>9</sup> Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1992), 17 (hereafter cited in text as *EA*).

<sup>10</sup> See Antony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 9 (hereafter cited in text as *MS*); Taylor, *EA*, 16.

<sup>11</sup> “Lionel Trilling argues in *Sincerity and Authenticity* that the notion of authenticity so understood was not really possible in Western culture until a particular set of ideas had attained currency, and that those ideas did not reach their mature form until the later half of the eighteenth century.” See Charles Guignon, *On Being Authentic* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 7 (hereafter cited in text as *OBA*).

distinctions are formed within a certain framework of a world understanding.<sup>12</sup> while examining Plato's understanding of 'inwardness', I will refer to the 'cosmocentric' universe perspective peculiar to the period called pre-modern, and while examining Descartes' disengaged subject, I will refer to the 'anthropocentric' world understanding that is deemed to be a result of scientific revolutions and Enlightenment.

The fourth chapter will examine the idea of authenticity. There is a very close link between the concepts of self-realization and authenticity. Taylor regards authenticity as the moral idea behind self-fulfillment (*EA*, 15).<sup>13</sup> For him, the modern understanding of self-realization relies on the ideas of "being true to oneself" (15). Similarly, Giddens, in his work *Modernity and Self-Identity* (1991), states that authenticity functions as a "pre-eminent value" and "a framework" in today's self-realization representations (*MS*, 9). Moreover, Charles Guignon indicates its relationship with self-help culture in which he states that the ideal of authenticity is central to discourses of self-help culture.<sup>14</sup> Hence, gaining an insight about the assumptions of authenticity enables us to have a clearer perspective of the concept of self-realization, to criticize certain of its underpinnings and to indicate an alternative approach free from problematic premises.

Although much has been said on the concept of authenticity, 'being oneself' or 'being true to one's own self' can be considered the two most common definitions.<sup>15</sup> Referring to Guignon, it can be said that authenticity involves two components. The first one pertains to the task of getting in touch with 'inner self' which is deemed

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<sup>12</sup> In *OBA*, Guignon refers to different forms of relationship of humans with universe in the historical line stretching from premodern periods to modernity: he explains them in terms of *cosmocentric, theocentric and anthropocentric* understandings.

<sup>13</sup> Taylor uses the terms self-realization and self-fulfillment interchangeably at times.

<sup>14</sup> Guignon mentions the TV shows creating content on self-improvement, such as "Oprah Winfrey Show" "Dr. Phil" which receives millions of viewer in America and underlines that they both made authenticity a central theme. See Guignon, preface to *OBA*.

<sup>15</sup> For the difference between the notion of sincerity and authenticity, see Somogy Varga, *Authenticity as an Ethical Ideal*, (New York: Routledge, 2012), 15. Sincerity is also conceived as being "true to one's own self"; however, "being true to the self is not an end in itself, but first and foremost an essential condition of virtue. Inward orientation is therefore not valuable in its own right. Instead, it is valuable because it serves the higher moral goal of being true to others." On the other hand, authenticity is generally deemed as a personal virtue, not a social one.

as ‘true self’. This requires a deliberate ‘look’ at the self and leads a person to get away from the distractions preventing her from access her ‘true self’. The second component involves disclosure of the ‘true self’, that is, expressing the ‘true self’ with actions (*OBA*, 75). I shall call these two components ‘self-discovery’ and ‘self-disclosure’.<sup>16</sup> Since there are various formulations of authenticity, I shall identify the mentioned description as the classical account of authenticity.

I will refer to three authenticity models: ‘Inner Sense’, ‘Virtue’, and ‘Productionist’.<sup>17</sup> In the ‘Inner Sense Model’, I shall examine Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s understanding of authenticity in which he identifies inner self as one’s true self. For him, to the extent one listens to the voice of nature and keeps one away from the deception of society, one can reach one’s ‘true self’ wherein “no original sin” can be found. In the ‘Virtue Model’, I shall refer to Charles Taylor’s account of authenticity in which he lays out the criticism against the modern interpretation of authenticity and considers authenticity as a moral ideal. For him authenticity has a potential for offering one the standards of what one ought to desire to have “a better or higher mode of life” (*EA*, 16). For ‘The Productionist Model’ I will refer to Jean Paul Sartre’s account on authenticity. Unlike Rousseau, Sartre does not ascribe an essence to human beings. For him ‘Being-for-itself’ and/or ‘consciousness’ are free from any given content. His interpretation of authenticity relies mostly on one’s acknowledgement of one’s existence with all the aspects and leading one’s life in company with the free and creative capacities. What is my intention in laying all these three accounts of authenticity is to show

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<sup>16</sup> Nina Maria Hagel, “Appeals to Authenticity: Discourses on the True Self and the Politics of Identity Construction.” PhD diss. (University of California, 2016), 102.

<sup>17</sup> For “Inner Sense” and “Productionist” Models: See Somogy Varga, *Authenticity as an Ethical Ideal*, (New York: Routledge, 2012), 61-84; for the “Virtue Model”: See Lauren Bialystok, “Authenticity and the Limits of Philosophy”, *Dialouge*, 53 (2014), 20-24. In the literature on authenticity, there is a tenet that champions authentic moral power through which it is deemed one can build ethical relationship with one’s self and society: See Charles Guignon, *On Being Authentic*, (New York: Routledge, 2004); Charles Taylor *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1992); Bernard Williams *Truth and Truthfulness*, (Princeton: Princeton, 2002); Alessandro Ferrara *Reflective Authenticity*, (New York:Routledge, 1998); Somogy Varga *Authenticity as an Ethical Ideal*, (New York: Routledge,2011); Charles Larmore, *Practices of the Self* (Chicago: Chicago, 2010).

they all somewhat fall under the description of classical authenticity. Rousseau's account indisputably overlaps with the formulations of 'self-discovery' and 'self-disclosure'. Sartre's perspective on authenticity is trickier; even though he radically rejects any understanding of self with a given essence, his phenomenological explanation of a human being and emphasis on 'being true to oneself' enables us to see that he attributes an essence to human existence. At the end of the fourth chapter, I shall present how Foucault challenges the idea of authenticity. My arguments will be based on Nina Marie Hagel's doctoral dissertation where she traces Foucault's undermining of authentic perceptions of sexuality in *History of Sexuality: Volume One* (1978). Foucault argues that sexuality is considered as the locus of 'natural' desires which enables one to have an insight about the truths about her self, body and identity. He criticizes this perspective by analyzing the content of the relations of power and its operations exerted upon sexuality which paves the way for certain attitudes inducing subjects to deem that their truths about themselves and their sexualities are intertwined.

The last chapter will be on Foucault's inspirational concept 'the aesthetics of existence' which contains a comprehensive ethical understanding of self-formation. First of all, Foucault rejects 'a priori theories of the subject', which start from a description of self and build the rest of the theory on this assumption (*ECS*, 290). He also thinks of the subject in relational terms as an entity constituting itself "through certain practices that were also games of truth, practices of power, and so on" (290). Hence, the subject of self-formation engaging in an ethical work on herself, unlike in Rousseau and Sartre's accounts of authenticity, does not 'discover' anything given in her inner self nor disclose what is 'in' her. Moreover, Foucault considers works individuals do on themselves, which also encompasses the idea of self-realization, as a 'technology', that is, he does not deem them separately from the power relations which lead them to treat themselves in a certain way (*TS*, 18). To me, Foucault's aesthetic consideration of self-formation which flourished from his criticism against truth, subject and power, and which regards one's life of one as a work of art can speak to today's people striving to realize themselves.

## 1. Terminology

Dealing with the concepts of self-realization and authenticity requires the use of a wide variety of terms to denote the one undergoing those processes. In the first chapter, pertaining to the late modern interpretations of self-realization, the term ‘individual’ will be used, it will at times be referred to with terms specific to late modernity such as ‘reflexive individualism’, ‘manipulated individual’. In the third chapter entitled *Inwardness*, while examining the analysis of Taylor on the modes of thought and world understandings that pave the way to the ‘inner world’ which enables one to refer to a unified locus containing motivations, inclinations, thoughts, and feelings in the saying ‘I’, the term I will use will be ‘self’. In the section on Rousseau, since human’s relationship with society is at stake, the term ‘individual’ will be used; on the other hand, as he has a certain emphasis on human nature, the subject of authenticity will be ‘human being’. In the part devoted to Sartre’s account of authenticity, since what is at stake is the terminology of ontology involving contrasts of ‘beings’ and ‘non-beings’, the self will be expressed in special terms such as ‘being-for-itself’ and ‘consciousness’. ‘Individual’ will also be mentioned in this section as he takes into account the ‘facticity’ aspect of the human in the context of her relationship with society. In the last chapter on Foucault’s understanding of self-creation, there will be terms such as ‘self’, ‘subject’, ‘subjectivity’, ‘subjectivation’, ‘object’, and ‘objectivation’ that indicate Foucault’s perspective on subjects not as a substance but as a constituted form (*ECS*, 290).

## 2. Self-Realization: Terms, Concepts, History

Alan Gewirth, in his work *Self-Fulfillment* (1998), taking his focal concept of self-fulfillment as synonymous with self-realization, defines it as “carrying to fruition one’s deepest desires or one’s worthiest capacities”.<sup>18</sup> For him, self-fulfillment contains two aspects: ‘aspiration-fulfillment’ and ‘capacity-fulfillment’. While the former encompasses the realization of “one’s deepest or supreme desire”, the latter

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<sup>18</sup> Gewirth, *Self-Fulfillment*, 3.

consists of one's actualization of capacities that are “primed for growth or development toward an inherent end” (8,13).<sup>19</sup> The roots of the ‘capacity-fulfillment’ model lie in Aristotle’s elucidation on the contrast between actuality (*entelecheia*) and potentiality (*dunamis*) in *Metaphysics*, Book Θ. There, Aristotle establishes substance’s tendency for actuality rather than potentiality by claiming the teleological perspective of substance, in which it has a ‘matter’ for the sake of attaining a ‘form’: “...the actuality is an end, and the potentiality is acquired for the sake of this. For it is not that animals see in order that they may have sight but they have sight so that they may see...” (*Metaphysics*, 8.8, 1050b10).<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, when the good life of a human, or *eudaimonia* is at stake, virtue of character (*ēthos*) is not inherent in humans but “is a result of habituation” (ethos). Virtues are given as capacities but actualization of those require a deliberate exercise which turn them into ‘habituation’ (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 2.1, 1103a12-26).<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, the ‘capacity-fulfillment’ model can also be found in the early writings of Karl Marx wherein he describes the true essence of a human and realization of it in a human’s participation in communal life: “the essence of man is the true community of man, men, by activating their own essence, produce, create this human community... man estranged from himself is identical with the statement that the society of this estranged man is the caricature of a *true community*, of his true species-existence.”<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Alan Gewirth considers that humanistic psychologists also adopted the same model in their accounts of self-actualization.<sup>23</sup> For Abraham H. Maslow, for instance, self-actualization is the fundamental characteristic of human nature, denoting the inevitable disclosure of innate potentialities as “fullest humanness, or as the ‘Being’ of the person”.<sup>24</sup> The same emphasis can be found in Carl Roger’s works: “It appears that the person who is

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 8, 13.

<sup>20</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics: Book Θ*, trans. S. Makin, ed. L. Judson, (Oxford: Oxford, 2006), 11.

<sup>21</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans., ed. R. Crisp, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 23.

<sup>22</sup> Karl Marx, “Excerpts from James Mill’s Elements of Political Economy”, in *Early Writings*, trans R. Livingstone and G. Benton, (New York: Penguin, 1992), 265,266.

<sup>23</sup> Gewirth, *Self-Fulfillment*, 9.

<sup>24</sup> Abraham H. Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, 2nd ed. (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1962), 138, 145.

psychologically free moves in the direction of becoming a more fully functioning person [...] It seems to mean that the individual moves toward being, knowingly and acceptingly, the process which he inwardly and actually is.”<sup>25</sup>

Also Hanne Laceulle, in *Aging and Self-Realization* (2018), while describing self-realization as the revelation of what is ‘best’ in the self, stresses the special status of self-realization discourses in the philosophy of ethics. For her, while one’s striving for a ‘realized’, or ‘fulfilled’ life corresponds to the “teleological conception of ethics”, namely the ‘good life’, an individual undertaking the endeavors of self-realization acquires the status of ‘moral agent’.<sup>26</sup> In this study, I locate the concept of self-realization to the framework of both ethics and political philosophy. Foucault’s last period, which is at times called ‘ethical turn’ points out the meeting point of ‘technologies of power’ and ‘technologies of self’. Through the historical analysis of the sets of self-practices stretching from ancient Greek and Roman culture to Christian confession practices, he underlines the fact that the self-forming activity of one cannot be deemed bereft of forms of ‘subjectivation’, and “technologies of dominations of others” at that (*TS*, 19). Charles Taylor is another figure who led me to think of self-realization in ethical and political terms. His analysis provides a very fruitful perspective to understand how politics and ethics are intertwined. Taylor’s explanations and criticisms, on the other hand, pertaining to the ethics of self-realization, and especially his analysis on the reflexive position of the self in modernity and late modernity again provide very comprehensive sources for this study.

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<sup>25</sup> Carl Rogers, *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist’s View of Psychotherapy*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961), 158 170.

<sup>26</sup> Hanne Laceulle, *Aging and Self-Realization: Cultural Narratives About Later Life*, (Transcript Verlag, 2018), 95 (hereafter cited in text as *AS*).

## 1. SELF-REALIZATION IN LATE MODERNITY

Before going through the philosophical underpinnings of self-realization, I would like to describe its reception in today's world. In the light of Hanne Laceulle's illuminating report in *Aging and Self-Realization: Cultural Narratives about Later Life* (2018) I shall first outline the characteristics of self-realization that gain peculiar emphasis in the contemporary world. Next, I will discuss the general characteristics of the present age, which paved the way for individuals to consider self-realization a significant objective of the good life. Laceulle draws on various authors' accounts to formulate her outline.<sup>27</sup> My aim in this section is to lay out a brief analysis of the status of self-realization in today's context; dwelling on the deeper sociological and philosophical investigations would not be useful for my aim. However, due to its relevance to the overall objective of the study, I will refer to Foucault's analysis of power which has a 'disciplinary' and 'individualizing' influence on people. In the final part, I will take a look at self-realization's relation to the self-help culture. I shall point out some examples of the best-seller self-help books published in Turkey and analyse their promises to today's reader.

Borrowing from Giddens, Laceulle uses the term of late modernity to describe contemporary times. She classifies the late modern interpretation of self-realization into five categories. The first category focuses on late modernity in which a life is considered 'good' to the extent that it is arranged with an authentic choice of one. A unique lifestyle or "a set of personally appropriated habits and practices" are considered the determinant factors for one's self-realization in late modernity (34). The second category points out the characteristic of the individual agent of self-realization as it appears in late modernity. Since it was considered that the good life is the individually chosen one, the subject of self-realization is regarded as "a highly self-determined, atomistic and independent creature, emancipated from the

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<sup>27</sup> "Social theorists like Giddens (1991, 1994), Bauman (2001, 2007), Beck (1992), Beck & Beck-Gernsheim (2002), and philosophers such as C. Taylor (1989, 1991, 2007) and MacIntyre (1984)" as well as Axel Honneth, and Anthony Elliott and Charles Lemert. See AS 34. Except for the accounts of Taylor, Giddens, and Honneth, for the other authors I will just stick to the interpretation of Laceulle.

restrictive traditional embedding of human lives characteristic of pre-modern times” (34). The third category emphasizes the exclusion of social bonds of the individual in her quest of self-realization. Since individuals are considered atomistic entities free from the restrictions of society and culture, the late modern prescriptions of self-realization have been designed without taking individuals’ inescapable bonds with society into account. This is what can be observed in the discourses of the self-help books, which can be identified as a typical method of self-realization in the late modern context: Turkish self-help book *Her Şey Seninle Başlar (Everything Starts With You)* (2019) presents formulas for success to readers. As it is clear from the title, it solely points out the personal factors in being successful, as if the external factors, such as one’s social class, do not have any role in the individual’s success. The last category of Lacey underlines the ‘self-mastery’ emphasis of the late modern interpretation of self-realization (35). In the late modern interpretations of this concept, not only the social factor is neglected but also the “uncontrollable dimensions of human life” such as desires is not taken into account, as if human is fully autonomous being who has full control over his parts.

After laying out the general characteristics of self-realization peculiar to late modernity, Lacey features the distinguishing features of late modern world. For her, these points enable one to understand why in late modernity individuals have been constantly called for self-realization and why this process only focuses on the self-determined aspect of an individual (35). The first characteristic feature of late modernity is individualization. Referring to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, Lacey explains the two interrelated tendencies that individualization brings together. The first one pertains to the disintegration of individuals with previously existing norms regulated by the standards of religion, culture or state. The elimination of regulations imposed on individuals in the course of modernity puts a special emphasis on individuals. In late modernity, or in Beck’s definition ‘second modernity’, however, individuals must supply those preexisting social norms and

regulations for themselves and “import them into their biographies through their own actions”.<sup>28</sup>

This also parallels Charles Taylor's interpretation pertaining to the transition from pre-modern periods to modernity. In *The Ethics of Authenticity* (1992), he mentions that people living in premodern times “used to see themselves as part of a larger order”, in other words “a cosmic order, or ‘a great chain of Being’” (EA, 3). The society was also designed in the same hierarchical order and what one simply had to do was to find her role and/or her position ascribed to her by the social and the cosmic world. For Taylor, “modern freedom came about through the discrediting of such orders.” (3). This is what is peculiar for the individualism of modern time for him: having the right to choose in accordance with one’s lifestyle and to decide what to believe in (2).

Referring to Elliott and Lemert (2006), Laccelle puts forth two interpretations of individualization: “manipulated individualism” and “reflexive individualization”. The first depicts the individual’s powerless position against “power structures and socio-economic arrangements” exercising a great force on her (AS, 43). Regarding self-realization, it can be said that an individual is able to realize her life ‘despite’ the “structural and systemic impediments”. This case is reminiscent of Karl Marx’s formulation of self-realization. According to Marx, the conditions of the capitalist system which leads one to spend all her time working in a job that she does not relate with, thus resulting in alienation, do not make room for self-realization. Hence people living under capitalism do not have the chance to freely decide which powers, and abilities to develop and thus actively cultivate the potentialities by their labours.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, unlike communism, in capitalism the socio-economic system stands as an obstacle to self-realization. The second perspective of individualization, that is, ‘reflexive individualization’ stresses the point where the dynamics of late modernity do not restrain but urge people “to become the architects

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<sup>28</sup> Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization*, (London: Sage Publication, 2002), 2.

<sup>29</sup> Jon Elster, “Self-Realization in Work and Politics: The Marxist Conception of the Good Life”, *Social Philosophy and Policy* 97, no.2 (1986).

of their own biography and realize their potential capacities as autonomously choosing agent” (AS, 37). Hence in this case one realizes one’s self ‘by the help of “structural and systemic impediments” rather than ‘despite’ those since self-realization is formed and organized by structural and systemic regulations. Axel Honneth, in his article *Organized Self-Realization: Some Paradoxes of Individualization* (2004), states that the discourse of self-realization is utilized by late modern consumer capitalism; while on the surface it seems that individuals work for the sake of their own intrinsic needs, what is at stake is those needs which serve the capitalist economy behind closed doors. In the dynamics of the late capitalistic economic system, being “flexible” and “willing to develop” are viewed as the keys for integration into professional life and society.<sup>30</sup> Exemplifying the late capitalist promotion of self-realization, Honneth first mentions the media’s role. Through mass media consumers are introduced to “the ideal of a style of life” and urged to create their lifestyles in the same manner, namely by being creative and original as much as possible.<sup>31</sup> He adds that while people sought their film idols on the television, now they “expect to see their own selves” because media serves the familiar images of them or the ‘best versions’ of themselves to promote the idea of self-realization.<sup>32</sup> Thus the following paradox is underlined by Honneth: on the one hand, the promotion of self-realization involves the promise of being authentic. On the other hand, consumers are feverishly encouraged to follow “standardized patterns”.<sup>33</sup> The same manipulative tactic is exerted on the promotion of goods; it involves the promise that by buying the product, the consumer will acquire a tool that will reinforce the originality of her lifestyle.<sup>34</sup> Another factor that enables the late capitalist economy to put the self-realization discourse into use is the 1980 reorganization of the industrial and service sectors. Compared to “Fordist processes of production”, the identity of a worker completely changed in the eighties: they were no longer addressed as employees “but rather as creative entrepreneurs or as

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<sup>30</sup> Axel Honneth, “Organized Self-Realization: Some Paradoxes of Individualization”, *European Journal of Social Theory* 7, no.4 (2004): 472.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

self-employed persons”. The new emphasis on “intellectual initiative of individual employees” renders self-realization a profitable tool for businesses, for they need workers who voluntarily enhance their unique and creative capacities.<sup>35</sup> To sum up, ‘the new individualism’ or the individuals of late capitalism seeking self-realization, is eminently compatible with the efficiency of the current economic system. People, in a constant attempt to keep up with what the time necessitates, shape themselves according to the molds of the standardized ‘self-realized’ individual promoted by media, or the demands of the companies who seek “involvement, flexibility, and individual initiative” from their employees.<sup>36</sup>

Michel Foucault’s analysis of power relations in the formation of the modern state<sup>37</sup> is worth mentioning here. Honneth’s claim that the ideal of self-realization functions as a means of profit in the capitalist economy can also be extracted from Foucault’s analysis of the relationship between the individual and the state. Foucault, who complains about understandings which equate power to a structure that only inflicts violence on individuals, emphasizes the need for “a new economy of power relations”, that is, the necessity of developing a more comprehensive thought on power relations. Within this framework, he underlines a new aspect in power relations that emerged with the formation of the modern state around the eighteenth century. Contrary to the view that identifies power as “developed above individuals, ignoring what they are and even their very existence”, there is a network of power relations in question that ‘cares about’ individuals, develops policies and provides services for them. However, according to Foucault, the state’s taking care of one’s life also brings about the ‘individualization’ of one, that is, there is a form of power “which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth...” (*SP*, 781). “It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects” (781). Foucault also

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 473.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 474.

<sup>37</sup> See M. Foucault “The Subject and Power” in *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (1982): 777–95 (hereafter cited in text as *SP*); “The Political Technology of Individuals” in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. L. H. Martin, H. Gutman, P. H. Hutton (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988),

indicates that World War II led to a significant change in the organization of the state in the twentieth century: “This moment, when the great welfare, public health, and medical assistance programs were instigated”.<sup>38</sup> The paradoxical timing of state programs for ‘the care of individual life’ which were implemented during one of the greatest massacres in the world presents more clear evidence on the function of power relations than the accounts identifying it as a source of violence.

From this perspective, a similar interpretation to the one we have reached through Honneth’s account comes to our mind: the modern state, or the other the locus of power relations having similar attitudes does not keep the idea of self-realization at a distance but promotes it as long as it attaches one to one’s identity or/and individuality more. At this juncture, it is necessary to introduce another term of Foucault’s which has vital importance in terms of power relations’ ‘individualization’ strategies, that is, ‘discipline’. Foucault defines discipline, which he considers in the category of ‘political technologies’ as “techniques of the individualization of power”<sup>39</sup>.

Discipline is basically the mechanism of power through which we come to control the social body in its finest elements, through which we arrive at the very atoms of society, which is to say individuals...How to oversee someone, how to control their conduct, their behaviour, their aptitudes, how to intensify their performance, multiply their capacities, how to put them in the place where they will be most useful: this is what discipline is, in my sense.<sup>40</sup>

In his work *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1995), he argues that the strategy of ‘individualization’ of discipline directly targets bodies; the goal is to produce ‘docile’ bodies. According to Foucault, the disciplinary techniques that lie

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<sup>38</sup> Michel Foucault, “The Political Technology of Individuals” in *Essential Works of Foucault: Power*, ed. J.D. Faubion, trans. R. Hurley and others, (New York: The New Press, 1997), 405.

<sup>39</sup> Michel Foucault, “The Meshes of Power” in *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography*, ed. J. Crampton and S. Elden, (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007), 59.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 159.

at the heart of the forms of domination of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries do not only target individuals, but also penetrate into their bodies and control them at an atomic level: “The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it.”<sup>41</sup> For him, the formation of docile bodies should not be confused with enslavement denoting the total appropriation of the body; what is at stake here is the development of forces and skills of bodies. However, bodies with enhanced capacities cannot discharge their power in the way desired by themselves, but in ways already determined by authority. Capabilities are allowed to develop as long as individuals obey; to the extent that a soldier serves in his battalion, he must be competent in using arms, or a student improves her learning skills to the extent that she attends the existing education system. Referring to Marx's notion of alienation, one aspect of which is the separation of labor power from the product of labor, Foucault mentions the reversal of the energy derived from the development of human aptitudes; instead of leading to emancipation, it leads to a “relation of strict subjection” under disciplinary coercion.<sup>42</sup>

To avoid an anachronistic interpretation, it should be emphasized that Foucault does not consider discipline as a late modern technology. Discipline is a product of the power relations that belong to the historical period between the seventeenth century and the twentieth century. Yet, the phenomenon of self-realization can be included in Foucault's framework on the individualizing strategy of power. What kind of picture appears when self-realization is considered as a tool of ‘discipline’? Can the big popularity of self-help culture and the widespread demands for self-realization in contemporary society be interpreted as a product of the power relations’ disciplinary strategy? Or do the prescriptions offered by contemporary self-realization accounts on human bodies aim to construct them as ‘docile bodies’?

‘Reflexivity’ is also another key concept pertaining to discussions on self-realization that is worth mentioning. Antony Giddens, in his work *MS* elaborates

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<sup>41</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. A. Sheridan, (New York: Vintage, 1995), 138.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

on mechanisms of modernity which structures “reflexivity of the self”. “The reflexive project of the self” of modernity entails individuals approaching their own lives as “biographical narratives” (*MS*, 5). Giddens underlines the difference between ‘having’ and ‘living’ a biography; what attracts modern individuals is the latter since through reflexive stance toward their lives, they organize their biographies through “social and psychological information” available for them in the culture (14). And building a biography is not an easy task for modern individuals. For, according to Giddens, they have to answer the question “How shall I live?” by themselves (14). Moreover, it is not a type of question one can answer in one go. Rather, it “has to be answered in day-to-day decisions about how to behave, what to wear and what to eat...” (14). All these require making a certain ‘choice’ in daily activity. It was mentioned above that in late modernity, self-realization was equated with having a lifestyle that is ‘specific’ to or produced for one. Giddens defines lifestyle as “a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfill utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity.” (81). Constructing a lifestyle<sup>43</sup> requires one to make countless choices in countless fields. “All such choices (as well as larger and more consequential ones) are decisions not only about how to act but who to be.” (81). The phenomenon of choice that Giddens emphasizes can be approached in two ways: first, it refers to Honneth's point where he criticizes the significance attributed to the act of making choices in late modernity: the individuals are convinced that buying a certain product leads to a vital change in their identities. It also pertains to Taylor’s interpretation of late

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<sup>43</sup> The term ‘lifestyle’ is used also by Foucault in the context of “*tekhne tou biou* (the art of life)” which is a concept that describes the general perspective of reaching an ethical life, and the related ascetic practices in Greco-Roman and Hellenistic culture. For Foucault “the question of style was central to experience in antiquity”, including “stylization of the relation to oneself, style of conduct, stylization of the relation to others”. Therefore, it can be said that it differs from the above-mentioned ‘lifestyle’ in two basic ways: First, the ethical pursuit of the Greeks is not based on any “civil law or religious obligation”; Foucault says it's more like a “choice about existence made by the individual”. Accordingly, it comes closer to being a creative, artistic act. Second, the objects of late modern lifestyle and *tekhne tou biou* correspond to different realms: for the former the object is self, for the latter the object is existence itself which embodies the care of ‘others’, city, responsibilities of being citizen, family life, as well as self. See “The Ethics of Sexuality” in *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, trans. A. Sheridan and others, ed. L. Kritzman (New York: Routledge, 1988); *OGE*.

modernity in which people no longer rely on objective standards and “break loose from older moral horizons” (*EA*, 3). This brings about, for Taylor, on the one hand, the necessity of self-determined choices that rely on individuals’ personal moral standards, and on the other hand, it leads to a “slide to subjectivism” where all the choices are equally affirmed and do not contradict each other since it is widely accepted that everyone shares different realities (55). Hence, in late modernity, striving for self-realization either in terms of adopting a lifestyle without taking ethical dimension into consideration or pursuing an authentic life free from standardized self-realization patterns, people tumble into a “cloud of possibilities” where they “are forced to continuously reflect, calculate, adjust, negotiate and plan their lives” (*AS*, 37).

Charles Taylor in *The Ethics of Authenticity* points out a moral ideal underlying late modern interpretations of self-realization. He claims that ‘being true to oneself’, namely authenticity appears as an ideal in the contemporary forms of self-fulfillment. Although it is discredited as a moral value among authors such as Daniel Bell, Christopher Lasch, and Gilles Lipovetsky who tend to relate authenticity with narcissism, hedonism, or self-indulgence, Taylor does not deem those attributions as essential characteristics of authenticity. By analyzing its origin and the ways it is criticized today, he attempts to restore the reputation of authenticity. Rather than focusing on Taylor’s perspective on the ‘genuine’ nature of authenticity, I want to examine his analysis of the contemporary critiques of the culture of authenticity. For, the emphasis often is put forward in contemporary self-realization culture that authenticity can only be understood in the light of these criticisms. I will refer to Taylor’s own understanding of authenticity later in the study. The first criticism laid out by Taylor pertains to the criticism that people in the culture of authenticity reinforce “liberalism of neutrality” (*EA*,17). Since authenticity involves the ideals of ‘being true to oneself’ or ‘becoming who one is’, it can very well fit in a liberal society whose basic tenet is “be[ing] neutral on questions of what constitutes a good life” (17). Therefore, in a liberal society, not only widespread calls for authenticity but also an attitude of taking one’s authenticity as a self-evident position can be expected since it is considered

unacceptable to criticize a person for revealing their true nature. Another criticism concerns the overlap of authenticity with “moral subjectivism”, which is the determining feature of late modernism. Taking values as the sole objective in attaining a good life just because they originated from the inner life of an individual, the prevalent approach of contemporary self-realization champions authenticity. Next, the attitude of ignoring “whatever transcends the self”, that is, omitting personal relationships, responsibilities towards natural environment and society, is another point Taylor discusses together with the rise of instrumental reason, which he considers one of the malaises of modernity (22). The realization of the self by actualizing the inner potentials leads, in today's later modern picture, one to see everything other than her self as a tool for her own personal development. Approaching self-realization as something that the individual can succeed at only by isolating herself from her surroundings, or only taking the inner world as the sole source as to attain authenticity indicate a facet of the forms of self-realization in today's world.

Self-help literature is one of the most common sources used for self-realization, considering the number of people who read self-help books and participate in seminars and workshops in the world and Turkey today. All the facts mentioned above about the world view late modernity contains, the characteristic of individuality it promotes, and the discourses it uses for self-realization are illuminating reasons why self-help literature is so appealing to people seeking a good life. Criticism against the late modern interpretation of self-realization is seen in Taylor, who points out its affinity with self-centered individualism and in Honneth, who notes that it is related to late capitalist tools, which can easily be applied to self-help literature. Analyzing the premises of two Turkish self-help books, I aim to present in what way these two texts are subject to those criticisms.

The development of a self-help culture is traced back to the Great Depression of 1929, which began in America and affected the world. The economic depression, which had a devastating effect in the United States, especially on the lower and lower-middle classes, forced people to seek a solution in their inner lives, for the

opposite was impossible in those times. Similarly, the massive change in the self-help culture in Turkey came along with the 1980 coup and the 2001 economic crisis.<sup>44</sup>

Self-help culture operates through books, courses, seminars, workshops, and conferences, as well as the media via television and radio programs or youtube channels.<sup>45</sup> James Forest, in his article *Effect of Attitudes and Interests on Personality Change Induced by Psychological Self-Help Books* (1991) defines a self-help book as: "any book which made at least one promise on preliminary pages (e.g., front or back cover) to help readers improve themselves on some personal (e.g., self-esteem) or social behaviour (e.g., communication)" (588). Marie Colette Prager, referring to David F. Scholz's account in her master's thesis, underlines the fact that self-help books are widely known as "commercial publications". Scholz defines those books as "commercial publications that are produced for the advertised purpose of changing some undesirable aspect of an individual's personal or social life."

Scott Cherry in his critical study<sup>46</sup> on self-help claims that self-helps books rest on a model of success (8). Mümin Sekman's book *Her Şey Seninle Başlar* (Everything Starts With You) (2019), which is claimed to have broken the Turkish record with the sales of 1,250,000 copies, fits Cherry's statement as he gives the readers the formulas of success in life. "Success is the best thing that can happen to you. Every success is a powerful revenge on people who treated you badly when you failed."<sup>47</sup> In the following pages, there are evaluations which overlap with the late modern interpretation of self-realization; the attitudes that reduce reaching a good life to a lifestyle and identifies individuals as self-determined entities who are free from

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<sup>44</sup> Sekan Şengül, Osman Acar, "Türkiye'de Kişisel Gelişim Alanının Tarihi" (The History of Self-Help Field in Turkey), *Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 23, no:1 (2012): 219-235.

<sup>45</sup> Marie Colette Prager, "Exploring self-help literature: promoter or preventer of authentic growth?" master thesis, (University of Calgary, 2021).

<sup>46</sup> Scott Cherry, *A Critical Study of Self-Help and Self-Improvement Practices : Textual, Discursive, and Ethnographic Perspectives*, (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2011).

<sup>47</sup> Turkish trans. of the texts: "Başarı başınıza gelebilecek en güzel şeydir. Her başarı, başarısızken size kötü davranan insanlardan alınmış güçlü bir intikamdır." in Mümin Sekman, *Herşey Seninle Başlar*, (İstanbul: Alfa, 2005), 72 (hereafter cited in text as *HSB*).

socio-economic ties. “Our choice of life is similar to our choice of hamburger. Some people want large size, some medium size, some small size life (*HSB 77*).”<sup>48</sup> “The class you were born in shows how lucky you are, and the class you die in shows how successful you are!” (77).<sup>49</sup> Cherry raises a similar criticism of self-help books. Since the self is regarded as an externally isolated nucleus, these books can be interpreted both as “a celebration of the self, or the self as success”<sup>50</sup> and scapegoating of the self. Since it is attributed a self-determined, independent, and atomistic characteristic, the discourse of self-help books claim that the self “has to carry a heavy burden”, that is, the disasters that befall people arise solely from their own faults and symptoms.<sup>51</sup> “We may speak, or drink, or live in a ghetto, or be unemployed, or be single, or whatever; they are all symptoms of personal deficiency.”<sup>52</sup> What Sekman wrote in the introduction also confirms Cherry’s claim: “This book is a self-sufficiency book... It is written for those who want to stand on their own feet and live without being dependent on others. Our motto: In life, you either kick up dust or you swallow the dust. The choice is yours! (*HS 10*)”<sup>53</sup>

In the other self-help book *Kendin ol! (İçimdeki Uyanış)* (Be yourself! (Awakening Inside Me) (2019) written by Erhan Özer, there are several assumptions which affirm the prevalent emphasis on authenticity in the late modern discourse of self-realization. The book opens with the claims as such: “You Are Love, You Are Valuable, You Are Safe”. He claims that the purpose of our life in this world is to “be yourself”, “find the truth”, “liberate” and “love”. There are statements in this book that the truth can only be attained by being oneself. The author makes a synthesis of an Augustinian interiority and Rousseau’s conceptualization of

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<sup>48</sup> “Hayat tercihimiz hamburger tercihimize benzer. Bazı insanlar büyük boy, bazıları orta boy, bazıları küçük boy hayat ister.”

<sup>49</sup> “Doğduğunuz sınıf ne kadar şanslı olduğunuzu, öldüğünüz sınıf ne kadar başarılı olduğunuzu gösterir!”

<sup>50</sup> Scott Cherry, “The Promise of the Hyphen: An Ethnography of Self-Help Practices”, PhD diss. (Loughborough University, 2009), 7.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>52</sup> Cherry, *A Critical Study of Self-Help and Self-Improvement Practices*, 9,13.

<sup>53</sup> “Bu kitap bir kendi kendine yetebilme kitabıdır. Kendi ayakları üzerinde durmak, başkalarına bağımlı olmadan yaşamak isteyenler için yazılmıştır... Sloganımız: Hayatta ya tozu dumana katarsın ya da tozu dumanı yutarsın. Seçim senin!”

authenticity. In the sentence “We are all different aspects of one soul and are fed with the same energy. Our common energy is LOVE!”<sup>54</sup> and “If we are one hundred percent ourselves, we will be able to become one with existence and realize the inner light, love, trust and serenity within us”<sup>55</sup> he mentions that with an Augustinian ‘inward-upward’ movement, authenticity can ultimately bring us to God, of which we are parts (KO,77). “Society in general causes us to live in a masquerade. We all take part in life with different personalities than our own and we continue our lives by playing certain roles at home and outside. However, not being yourself distracts you from the true maturation journey” (74).<sup>56</sup> He points to the dichotomy between the peripheral self, corrupted by society, and the inner self that will lead us to the right life, which is found in Rousseau’s account.

Finally, in the following sentence “As we all step into the world for spiritual experience, we come with a certain life plan. In order for us to reach our goal in the shortest way, we must first be ourselves and trust ourselves.”<sup>57</sup> he claims that individuals are born with an essence and they are determined. Although this expression does not exactly fit the definition of the modern self-determining individual, it still overlaps with today's self-realization interpretations; in advising to ‘be oneself’ as to achieve a goal, it underlines the authenticity discourse of late modern self-realization views.

Sekman's book, which does not mention the word capitalism once, but offers individuals the recipes for how they can be successful in this system, and Özer's book, which can be described as more mystical, ascribing an essence to the self and a moral value of ‘being oneself’ are two typical examples of self-help literature in

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<sup>54</sup>“Hepimiz tek bir ruhun farklı görünüşlerimiz ve aynı enerjiyle besleniyoruz. Ortak enerjimiz SEVGİ!” in Erhan Özer, *Kendin ol! (İçimdeki Uyanış)*, (İstanbul: Doğan Egmond Yayıncılık, 2019), 73 (hereafter cited in text as KO).

<sup>55</sup> “Yüzde yüz kendimiz olduğumuz takdirde varoluşla bir bütün haline gelerek içimizde doğuştan var olan ışığı, sevgiyi, güveni ve dinginliği fark edebileceğiz.”

<sup>56</sup> “Toplumun geneli bir maskeli balo sahnesinde yaşam sürdürmemize neden olur. Hepimiz olduğumuzdan farklı kişiliklerle hayatın içinde rol alır, evde ve dışarıda belli roller oynayarak yaşamımızı sürdürürüz. Oysa kendin olmamak bizi gerçek tekamül yolculuğundan uzaklaştırır.”

<sup>57</sup> “Hepimiz ruhsal deneyim için dünyaya adım atarken, belirli bir yaşam planıyla birlikte geliyoruz. Hedefimize en kısa yoldan varabilmemiz için yine öncelikle kendimiz olmalı ve kendimize güvenmeliyiz.”

contemporary Turkey. In this section, by following Laccelle's account and Giddens and Taylor's analyses and criticisms on the decisive role of self-realization in late modernity, and Honneth's criticism of self-realization in the capitalist economy next to Foucault's theory of power, I attempted to draw a map of how the concept of self-realization fits in today's context. Demonstrating Taylor's criticism of authenticity, which emerges as an ideal in the modern self-realization accounts, and the authenticity implications of Özer's self-help book, I wanted to depict that the moral ideal of 'being oneself' is central in contemporary self-realization discourses.

In the light of these criticisms and determinations, I would like to examine more comprehensively the concept of authenticity in the next chapters. Finally, I will explore the possibility of a practice of self-realization including necessary social and political bonds of the individual, excluding any mystical reference and indications associating individuals with self-encapsulated entities bearing an essence of their own. For I see that the self-help culture, which offers urgent prescriptions to individuals who are in search of self-realization, is in need of criticism, and alternative views to it must urgently be advanced.

## 2. GENEALOGICAL METHOD

Will it be a meaningful question if one asks what the concept of self-realization ‘actually’ means? If the question were posed in a street interview, it would likely not be a pointless question; some would perhaps refer to the situation of someone who has fulfilled her dreams, some to one who can ‘express’ herself fully, and some to one who has ‘created’ a new self by having a clean slate.

Expressions such as ‘well-integrated with herself’, ‘she is confident, very sure about her task and expresses herself fluently’, ‘at peace with herself, she has no doubt about her virtues and takes good care of her body too’, ‘living is not a troublesome occupation for her’ are usually verbalized to describe the ‘self-realized’ people in the surroundings. You may have heard it, and perhaps some of us want to be the subject of these expressions since they indicate very positive states! These statements may provide a general understanding of what the concept of self-realization means to today's people, but do they give us a satisfactory answer as to what it ‘really’ means? I suppose not. Then, how can we pursue the truth of this concept, moreover of any concept in general? What we could initially do to approach the question would be to follow the footsteps of Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault, saying that concepts do not have any truth in themselves(!) We can even call them posers with an uncanny nature which enables them to exhibit their different faces at every moment and that as adults they are totally different from the thing they were when they emerged. In this sense, in terms of Foucauldian terminology, to understand what kind of concept self-realization is and which forms of knowledge it has produced and has been used throughout history, it is necessary to look at the journey the concepts have undergone in becoming how they are currently received. Thus it will help us clarify what kind of ‘truth games’<sup>58</sup> it has

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<sup>58</sup> In the article he wrote under the pseudonym Maurice Florence, the way he defines this concept is the following: “The forms according to which discourses capable of being declared true or false are articulated concerning a domain of things.” Maurice Florence, “Foucault” in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, vol.2*, ed. J.D. Faubion, trans. R. Hurley and others (New York: The New Press), 460 (hereafter cited in text as EW2)

been involved in, and also in what way the discourse produced through this concept of self-realization shapes the subjects, or for that matter, which subjects are connected to it.

This will undoubtedly require the use of history. “Rending the veil” of concepts is possible for Nietzsche and Foucault with a specific historical method called genealogy (NGH, 79). In his 1971 article *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*, referring to Nietzsche’s terminology in his philosophical-historical method, Foucault draws attention to the distinction between the terms *Ursprung*, *Herkunft*, and/or *Entstehung*<sup>59</sup> which are two distinct historical approaches. The former is associated with a “pursuit of the origin” (78). For Foucault it is “an attempt to capture the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities, and their carefully protected identities” (78). This is an understanding of history that is the product of substance ontology, which both Nietzsche and Foucault radically reject and let their philosophies flourish in a locus that does not have anything in common with this understanding. In the introduction of *Beyond Good and Evil* (2002), titled “On the prejudices of philosophers”, Nietzsche criticizes metaphysicians who pursue the origin of truth, saying that what they hope to find is an origin consistent with the nature of what they determine as truth.<sup>60</sup> Referring to the ‘baby-adult’ analogy above, it can be said that the metaphysicians in search of origin are just like a nostalgic grandmother who takes out the childhood photo of her granddaughter every time she visits her and emphasizes the similarity between the two: “it was obvious that you would become a doctor even when you were even a baby”. For instance, if the mentioned understanding intends to search for the origin of the concept of liberty in history, it hopes to encounter an origin suitable for the current nature of liberty and chooses the research area with such lenses. However, in the same article, Foucault has shown us the concept of liberty can be an “invention of the ruling classes” independent of its current meaning (78). For him, the truth itself “do[es] not remain

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<sup>59</sup> According to Foucault, these three concepts are sometimes used as synonyms and sometimes as antonyms in Nietzsche's texts. The use of *Ursprung* in opposition to the other two terms is evident in the preface to *Genealogy*. See NGH, 77.

<sup>60</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 6.

truthful”, let alone the concept of liberty (79). Therefore, attributing truth to both concepts and to the truth itself, that is, to ascribe a self-evident truth to them, to claim that they are identical with themselves, or to claim that they derive their validity from a divine, everlasting and immobile other world, is opposed to both Nietzsche and Foucault's understanding of history, but more fundamentally to the ontology on which they base their philosophy. For, as I have just mentioned, these philosophers are tracing the history of things without “assuming a substratum at the origin”.<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, Foucault, borrowing from Nietzsche, introduces the historical concept of *Herkunft*, the opposite of *Ursprung*, and defines it as ‘descent’: “It is the ancient affiliation to a group, sustained by the bonds of blood, tradition, or social class” (80). However, this concept does not simply equal to exploring the historical line of a race. Or, as seen in the construction of nation-states, it is not writing history to ensure the integrity of a nation. What is at issue in *Herkunft*, unlike *Ursprung*, is to reveal that the parts that make a nation a nation and keep it whole, are internally separate, to examine each historical event in its singularity, not to attribute it to a sacred purpose, and even to say that some of them are “accidents, the minute deviations-or conversely, the complete reversals-the errors, the false appraisals” (81).

Another concept that Foucault evaluates in contrast with *Ursprung* is *Entstehung*. It means “emergence, the moment of arising”. According to Foucault, just as *Herkunft* should not be considered as “uninterrupted continuity”, any identity or continuity should not be sought in *Entstehung*. “The eye was not always intended for contemplation, and punishment has had other purposes than setting an example” (83). While explaining this concept, Foucault draws attention to the moments when two forces interact or struggle with each other. While the concepts reach the form in which they are currently used, they become objects of “play of dominations” that continue throughout history and accordingly acquire different meanings. Concepts ‘emerge’ at the point where the forces collide with each other, and as the collision

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<sup>61</sup> Michael Mahon, *Foucault's Nietzschean Genealogy: Truth, Power, and the Subject*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), 82.

continues, the meanings and contexts of the concepts and by whom they are used change.

Therefore, in both *Herkunft and Entstehung* there is not an “eternal essence” behind objects, and Foucault sees them as the “true objective of genealogy” (80). The genealogical view aims to reveal the hidden links between the narratives of truth, essence, unity, and identity. “It disturbs what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself” (82).

Referring to Nietzsche, the metaphysician claims that she was able to recognize the concept she seeks the origin of from its childhood photograph. However, for the genealogist, the fact that there cannot be a single developmental line of the history of a concept, that is, that there is not a single child, means that there are countless photographs that require us to direct our gaze to the myriad events of history. In emphasizing the synthetic feature of genealogical thought, Foucault states that “to be in a position to judge philosophical discourse, one must be able to diagnose the illnesses of the body, its conditions of weakness and strength” (80). In the following lines, Foucault quotes Nietzsche's work *Dawn of the Day* (1910) and states that people who feel tired, sick, or melancholic can express themselves in a limited way because they are not able to exert much physical effort, and since such conditions will naturally make them less dangerous, they will adopt social roles like thinkers or prophets.<sup>62</sup> That is to say, the genealogical point of view may find a bodily disease behind the ‘sacred’ appearance, and institutionalized power relations behind a disease.

Genealogy, therefore, is a critical method for both Nietzsche and Foucault. Nietzsche invites us to make a critique of moral values and to question the values of values in *On the Genealogy of Morals* (2007). In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he makes a very strong criticism of the Stoics whose main objective is organizing life in harmony with nature: he states “nature is always value-less” and downrightly

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<sup>62</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Dawn of the Day*, trans. J. Volz, (London: T. Fisher Uniwin, 1910), 9-10.

asks “how could you live according to this indifference?”<sup>63</sup> Nietzsche accuses the Stoics of dictating their own created values to nature. According to him, Stoics claiming to have established their order inspired by the order they saw in nature, attribute a value to it, which is called order, and this should be questioned and subject to criticism. Foucault also acknowledges genealogy as a tool for critique, in being an impetus for disturbing “secure foundations of knowledge” without replacing it with “more secure foundations”, but revealing the fragmented nature of those foundations.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, for both Nietzsche and Foucault, from this genealogical-critical perspective, what determines the value of concepts does not depend on the essence of the concept but on the way power relations are organized according to some will at some point in history.

My intention in this thesis is to approach the concept of self-realization via genealogical-critical distance inspired by Nietzsche and Foucault. I do not have, of course, the same philosophical agility or knowledge of Nietzsche and Foucault, who move effortlessly among such divergent repertoires of knowledge. Rather I intend to take a genealogically inspired look at this concept of self-realization. For today while it carries ethical and political implications in terms of giving meaning to one's life and establishing a deeper bond with society and the world, it can also be interpreted as a tool of the self-help industry that serves to create narcissistic individuals who are not interested in anything but their own self-development. Hence questioning the value of self-realization and examining the assumptions by which it claims to be valuable becomes a promising quest involving debates on ethics, ontology, political philosophy, and philosophy of self.

In this thesis, while examining the history of inwardness, the different authenticity concepts and their underpinnings, as well as the legacy of essentialist ontology behind the ideals of ‘self-discovery’ and ‘self-disclosure’ or the command of ‘be yourself’, I will take the critical-genealogical method of Nietzsche and Foucault as

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<sup>63</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 10.

<sup>64</sup> Derek Hook, “Genealogy, discourse, ‘effective history’: Foucault and the work of critique”, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 2, no:1 (2007): 7.

a starting point, for they are the ones who have shown me there are no values behind the values, and no truth behind the truth.

### 3. 'INWARDNESS' AS A PREREQUISITE CONCEPT

Charles Guignon's book *On Being Authentic* (2004), which I will use extensively throughout this chapter, states the following in reference to Lionel Trilling's classic work, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (1972) : “the notion of authenticity so understood was not really possible in Western culture until a particular set of ideas had attained currency”.<sup>65</sup> According to Trilling, for the concept of authenticity to emerge, there must first be a sharp conceptual distinction between the inner and outer of the self, which was possible only in the middle of the 18th century.

Considering the genealogical view, we have mentioned in the previous chapter, the concepts of today that have been internalized enough to be a part of human nature emerged at a certain moment in history and were foreign to the human species before. Was the self, for instance, which is allegedly located in the ‘inside’ of a human being, a concept that could be referred to about 1500 years ago? Or if we had the opportunity to talk to the person of that period and ask her “how do you feel inside?”, would it be a meaningful question for her? For the philosophers such as Foucault, who refers to the subject, as a formation of a certain discourse, or such as Nietzsche who thinks that even basic moral concepts such as good and evil, which are considered self-evident, are concepts that have been manufactured in history due to certain power relations, the answer to this question would be no. What is now called the ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ of the self are the conceptualizations that have been constructed throughout the subject's history.

Charles Taylor, a philosopher who in fact holds fundamentally different views from Foucault and Nietzsche, states in his prominent book *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (1989) that the understanding of the modern individual is constituted by the concept of ‘inwardness’.<sup>66</sup> If it is essential to discern this inner-outer distinction built around the self, as Trilling said, to understand authenticity,

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<sup>65</sup> Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity*, 7

<sup>66</sup> Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 111 (hereafter cited in text as *SS*).

which is my necessary stop on the way to the concept of self-realization, we should look specifically at the concept of ‘inwardness’.

In the second chapter of his book titled “Inwardness”, Taylor discusses the emergence of an inside/outside distinction in the world of thought and attempts to understand how this distinction becomes a constituent element for the modern notion of self by following its traces in a line of the history of philosophy stretching from the Homeric period, Plato, to Augustine and then to Descartes.

### **3.1. PRE-PLATONIC LOCALIZATION**

Taylor first examines the Homeric texts, wherein he states that there is no common definition indicating the location of emotions and thoughts. *Psyche*, which is currently identified with the soul, refers to “something like the life force in us, what flees from body at death”, rather than a container that includes different kinds of internal elements like thinking and feeling (SS, 118). In addition, he finds out that each of the various emotional states is associated with different locations, and some are even associated with organs such as the heart, lungs, and liver (118). Hence, according to Taylor, it cannot be claimed that in the Homeric period the non-physical human-related features are gathered ‘inside’ in a unified place.

### **3.2. Preface of Inwardness: Plato**

Secondly, Taylor mentions Plato’s installation of soul-related elements in the human being, which is the opposite of the decentralized attitude of the Homeric period. Instead of the fragmented style in which “some things happen in the ‘*thumos*’, others in the ‘*phrenes*’, others again in the ‘*kradie*’”, Plato comes up with a new notion of the soul which is deemed a single site containing all thought and feeling (118, 120). His organization of soul, that is the hegemony of the parts considered higher, namely reason, over those considered lower, that is, desires is what is defined as ‘self-mastery’ in Taylor’s account.<sup>67</sup> The reason, which

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<sup>67</sup> It is worth to mention that Taylor’s interpretation of Plato based on a mainstream commentary which is based on a sharp distinction between reason and desire. But according to other interpretations, this distinction between reason and desire is the legacy of modern philosophy.

monopolizes the soul and regulates the other parties according to its principles, leads to unification in the self. “The morality of rational hegemony” based on reason being the manager from a single locus forms the initial basis for the internalization of the self (120). Taylor, affirming this Platonic ‘moment’ as a starting point of internalization, claims that “without the unified self which we see articulated in Plato's theory, the modern notion of interiority could never have developed” (120).

Another important issue that Taylor points out is the relationship between Plato's understanding of reason and order: the soul commanded by reason, by its nature, tends to reach a state of order. When all its parts are eventually located where they need to be, the soul finds the state of “concord and harmony” (121). Besides the soul's harmonious state, the order has another connotation in Plato, which is the cosmic order from which the order of the soul derives and partakes, and it is the cause and inspiration of the individual soul. In this sense, being governed by reason comes to mean the capacity of the reason to comprehend that it is part of a cosmic order, which is also described as having a correct vision (121). Taylor describes the correct vision as a matter of “turning the soul's eye around to face in the right direction” (123). The soul that turns its eyes to the cosmic order will grasp itself as a part of the whole and will reproduce the same order within itself. Therefore, for Taylor, the realization of the Platonic soul or the state of it wherein it becomes fully rational cannot be “described as something that takes place in us, but rather as our connecting up to the larger order in which we are placed” (123).

In the narrative of inwardness in the history of philosophy, we can consider Plato as a preface in which the cores of interiorization are just beginning to be seen but not yet matured, for the soul still appeals to external sources, not the internal ones,

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Michael Frede, in the introduction of *Rationality in Greek Thought* claims that comments reducing reason to “a formal ability to reason, as an ability to process data with which reason is provided from the outside, and to which, perhaps, it is neutral, in such a way as to calculate what it is reasonable to assume given certain assumptions” and isolating it from desire is misleading. According to Frede “reason has its own needs and desires...At least some desires, like desire to know the truth or to obtain what is thought of as good, are desires of reason itself, rather than desires reason merely endorses.” In *Rationality in Greek Thought*, ed. M. Frede, trans. G. Striker, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 4-5.

for its self-realization. As Taylor puts forth “it is not a matter of internalizing a capacity but rather of a conversion”, that is, a conversion of the direction of the eye of the soul (123).

Another clue related to the theme of ‘inwardness’ in Plato’s texts can be found in his dialogue of *Alcibiades*. Foucault, in one of his interviews titled “On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress”, analyzes the theme of “contemplation of the self”. Socrates advises Alcibiades to “know himself”, in other words, to ‘look’ at himself in order for the act of ‘knowing’ to actualize, which corresponds to a kind of introspection. However, for Foucault, this is in no way a “psychological form of contemplation but ontological contemplation of the self”.<sup>68</sup> Socrates introduces the process of “see thyself” with the metaphor of the eye. For him, first of all, an eye should be able to “look at something through which one can see thyself”<sup>69</sup>, which in the first level of reasoning corresponds to the ‘pupil’ of the ‘other’ wherein one can see both herself and the other. The pupil is considered the best part of the eye. Therefore, for Socrates, if the soul wants to know itself, it should look at the best parts of it “in which what makes a soul good, wisdom, occurs”.<sup>70</sup> The final part of the reasoning concludes that to the extent that the soul looks at the part which resembles the divine, namely “vision and understanding”, one will also grasp herself; grasping the divine is the prerequisite of knowing oneself. Therefore, it can be said that in Plato’s understanding of self, the capacity of reflexivity got matured, that is, a person can distance to her self and approach it as an object of contemplation. However, Foucault underlines that it should not be understood in terms of a “psychological form of contemplation” since it is not a deed of “examination of conscience” involving the investigation of desires and thought. For, what is at stake in “know thyself” is the ontology of the soul, nothing else.

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<sup>68</sup> “On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress” in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, vol. 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997), 275 (hereafter cited in text as *ONGE*).

<sup>69</sup> Plato, “Alcibiades” in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. J. Cooper (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997) 591

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 592.

### 3.2.1 Cosmocentrism

Before mentioning in what sense Augustine was the heir to Plato and his share in the process of inwardness, I would like to take a closer look at the understanding of cosmic order, which is the determining factor in a human's relationship with oneself and with nature in the pre-modern period. In his book *On Being Authentic*, while examining the historical journey of the ideas that paved the way for the formation of the concept of authenticity, Guignon explains how the self and the universe are perceived in the pre-modern period. He refers to the 'cosmocentric' understanding as the distinguishing feature of this period. According to him, pre-modern philosophers like Plato have very different conceptualizations of self; they thought of humans not as "self-encapsulated individuals with their own inner, personal being" but as "placeholders in cosmic web of relations in which what anything is determined by its place and function within that wider whole" (*OBA*, 7). Hence, the inner life of a person including one's desires and feelings was not considered a medium that one can deem as an end to attain the 'truth' or to be a fully-actualized being. On the contrary, the person's subjective characteristics were seen as a hindrance to one in taking the appointed place in the whole.

Then how can we approach the Delphi maxim '*gnōthi seauton* (know thyself)', which influenced the way people lived at that time and was adopted by Plato, within the framework mentioned above? It would be a mistake if we took it as an authentic ideal such as 'be yourself' or 'discover your true self'. For, considering the gap between self-conceptions between the modern and pre-modern periods, it can safely be asserted that the Delphi maxim has little to do with polishing the subjectivity by finding and extracting the unique features of the person (7). When Socrates advises Alcibiades to know himself in the famous dialogue, his suggestion does not concern finding out the true self within oneself so as to reach one's authentic being as it is employed in the modern era. The main objective of Socrates put forth in the several texts of Foucault<sup>71</sup>: since Alcibiades did not realize that he was not equipped with

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<sup>71</sup> See Michel Foucault, "The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the College de France, 1982-83", ed. F. Gros, trans. G. Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), (hereafter cited in text as *HS*); *ONGE*; *TS*.

sufficient skills to govern the city and its people, Socrates advises him to look at himself, asks him to “reflect on himself a little”, and notice his inferiority like his lack of education compared to his rivals who stood as candidates for the same position (*HS*, 35). Examining the conflict between the “*gnōthi seauton* (know thyself)” and “*epimeleia heautou* (the care for self)”, Foucault refers to the *Alcibiades* dialogue to show what these precepts refer to. In his article, Foucault says that these rules have very concrete counterparts in Greek social and political life. “It is always a real activity and not just an attitude. It is used in reference to the activity of a farmer tending his fields, his cattle, and his house, or to the job of the king in taking care of his city...” (*TS*, 25). Hence, it is clear that people having cosmocentric understanding conceptualize the relation with oneself differently. The main objective of relation with oneself is “not the care of the soul-as-substance” but to take up a position that they believe they belong to and to find their proper function in the whole (25).

In this understanding of the universe, which Plato also bases his philosophy on, it is believed that the universe has an intrinsic meaning and living beings have roles in the story called life. Gabriel Roxana Carone in her book *Plato's Cosmology and its Ethical Dimensions* (2005) points out the relation between the cosmology of Plato and his ethical understanding and speaks of the trend of interpreting the universe as an “intelligent living being”.<sup>72</sup> This is also what leads to the teleological interpretation of the universe approached as a being containing a good purpose commanded by reason.<sup>73</sup> In the introduction, she examines human-universe and part-whole relations through Plato's two dialogues and explains what ethical implications these metaphysical relations lead to. Quoting from the *Gorgias* dialogue she points out Plato's analogy of order which is found in both cosmos and humans: “both heaven and earth, and gods and humans, are bound by communion, friendship, orderliness, temperance and justice; and that is why they call this whole

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<sup>72</sup> Gabriel Roxana Carone, *Plato's Cosmology and its Ethical Dimensions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 6.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

an order (cosmos)”.<sup>74</sup> Secondly, Carone touches on *The Republic* and underlines the social context that makes the part-whole relationship possible. Carone quotes Socrates’ counsel in *The Republic* as follows: “you should start by considering yourself part of that whole and discover that it is by promoting the latter’s well-being that you will find the rewards of personal well-being”.<sup>75</sup> ‘Self-realization’ of the time is possible to the extent that one finds an appropriate place in society and, on a larger scale, in the universe. In this context, there is no room for discoveries through ‘inward’ references; ‘what ought to be’ is already determined in the universe and it is enough to turn one’s eyes outward. On the other hand, cosmocentrism can also be found in the pre-Socratic texts, as well as post-platonic ones. Carone reports that the necessity of understanding one’s role in the whole as to know oneself can be traced back to Heraclitus, who claimed ‘all human laws are fed from a single divine Law’, and to Aristotle, who considers nature together with its normative feature, and Stoic philosophy, which is in total allegiance to nature.<sup>76</sup>

Before moving on to Augustine’s understanding of inwardness, I would like to refer to one more text regarding the implication of cosmocentrism within ancient philosophical texts. Foucault, in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, examines how the care of self manifested in the Stoics during the Hellenistic period. In this period, through a series of exercises, practices, and works within the scope of self-care, a person transforms herself and thus becomes an ethical subject of truth by making her capable of attaining the truth. The self-focused practices have a relation with the cosmocentric understanding in Ancient Greece mentioned above: Foucault emphasizes that the knowledge of self and nature are inseparable for the Stoics, giving examples from Seneca’s letter to Lucilius: a “virtuous soul is a soul ‘in contact with the whole universe and careful to explore all its secrets’” (*HS*, 280). According to Seneca, one’s bondage to oneself can be overcome through the study of nature. In the foreword of his *Natural Questions*, which comprehensively describes the formation of the earth, seas, and seasons, Seneca advises his student

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 4.

Lucilius about how he can take care of himself, rendering the connection between the knowledge of nature and the care of oneself meaningful: “reach the highest regions of the world without, as it were, ever losing ourselves from sight and without the world to which we belong ever being out of our sight” (276).

As a result, it can be claimed that the internal-external distinction, which must necessarily exist for the formation of the concept of authenticity, which in turn is essential for us in understanding self-realization, did not start with Plato, yet its foundations were laid through his conceptualization of the soul positioned under the management of reason, that is, self-mastery, as Taylor puts it. On the other hand, with the cosmocentric understanding dominant in Ancient Greece and whose traces will be seen in the Augustine period as well, people do not yet feel separate from the world. Realization of the self and authenticity do not occur in the form of one’s integration with the ‘unique’ features of the self or of ‘being oneself’ by adopting subjective traits. On the contrary, being “able to match the ideal that determines (a person’s) function” is equivalent to the ‘be yourself’ discourse at the time (*OBA*, 8).

### **3.3. AUGUSTINE’S SHARE IN INWARDNESS: ‘INWARD-UPWARD’**

Taylor starts his discussion of internalization with Plato but suggests that Augustine deserves more credit. According to Taylor, there is a remarkably close connection between the philosophy of Augustine and the doctrines of Plato: Plato’s Ideas are the ideas of God in Augustine’s philosophy. Since created things take their form through their participation in God’s thoughts, everything created can be deemed good and arranged for good (*SS*, 128). Like Plato, rationality has a substantive character in Augustine, thus the cosmic order and reason are intertwined with each other. However, the significant difference between the two philosophers is that the places they look to reach the truth are different. For Augustine, the way to truth, to God, is possible by looking at oneself internally, while in Plato, we must turn our gaze ‘outward’, to the world of Ideas (129). Guignon also characterizes Augustine’s view as ‘theocentric’, rather than cosmocentric (*OBA*, 9). What Augustine writes at

the beginning of his *Confessions*, in which he talks, begs, and cries to God throughout pages, is quite illuminating in this sense: “you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it comes to rest in you.”<sup>77</sup> As can be understood from these lines, the only way for a person’s self to be fully-realized is connecting with God. This attachment is only possible via introversion as God can only be encountered within oneself according to Augustine.

Augustine's call for an inward turn corresponds to a particularly important breaking point for Taylor in the tradition of Western philosophy. This is why he makes quite a detailed analysis of Augustine’s inward gaze. In Taylor's interpretation of Augustine in terms of introversion, there is the point that he distinguishes as a ‘radical reflexive stance’: God is not something we can see, but he is the vision itself. This interpretation of Taylor’s creates a gap between Plato's and Augustine's acts toward the truth. The eyes of the soul do not only turn inside with Augustine, that is, we do not only try to see the divine within us, but the deed of seeing becomes the truth itself. As Taylor puts it another way, “Augustine shifts the focus from the field of objects known to the activity itself of knowing” (SS, 130). There is a two-stage process where the knower and the known are folded on top of each other (135). Taylor interprets this as the gaze having a reflexive quality, as well as a “first-person standpoint” feature (130). In his opinion, not every reflexive action has this mode: caring for oneself, for example, is a reflexive action but cannot be associated with a first-person perspective. For, here the object of self-care is ‘self’, while when the object of self-care is self-care, in other words, if I “focus on myself as the agent of experience and making this my object”, then it gains the first-person perspective (130). For instance, being ‘aware of your awareness’ or ‘experiencing our experiences’ are acts that belong to the first-person mode (130). Besides the radical reflexive movement Augustine added to literature, before mentioning Descartes’ share in this story, we should remind that the characteristic of Augustine's movement is described as ‘inward and upward’ because we are still in a pre-modern period, and God exists somewhere out there and we reach the truth thanks to him.

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<sup>77</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. T. Williams (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2019), 1.

Inward can be considered a means which helps carry one upward, that is, to God. That is to say, there is still an exit from the hole that Augustine has dug in. Yet as we shall now see, Descartes will sew this hole from the inside while we are all within since he hardly takes God into account in his philosophy.

Following Taylor's narrative, before moving on to Descartes' philosophy, which is counted as the most crucial step toward internalization, I would like to go back to Guignon's book *On Being Authentic*. As mentioned above, referring to Trilling's point, Guignon traced the important transformations in history that paved the way for the emergence of the concept of authenticity. Guignon states that the ideal of authenticity cannot be understood without gaining an insight into the formation of the modern cultural outlook and mentions three events that played a crucial role in the formation of the modern worldview (*OBA*, 15). One of them is the emergence of modern science. Understanding the transformations the world underwent is important in contextualizing Descartes' ontology and theory of knowledge, which eventually led to the birth of the modern subject.

### **3.3.1. Towards the Disengaged Subject**

The scientific revolutions of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, associated with Galileo Galilei, changed many things for humanity on the way to modernity.<sup>78</sup> He made important contributions to the science of astronomy with the telescope he invented. His verification of the Copernican heliocentric model resulted in a substantial change in the understanding of the universe. In the history of philosophy, on the other hand, the 1600s have been referred to as a century when Aristotelian metaphysics no longer came to dominate the world of thought and was replaced with another

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<sup>78</sup> Foucault's characterization on general understandings of the epochs of premodernity and modernity: "I know that modernity is often spoken of as an epoch, or at least as a set of features characteristic of an epoch; situated on a calendar, it would be preceded by a more or less naive or archaic premodernity, and followed by an enigmatic and troubling 'postmodernity'. And then we find ourselves asking whether modernity constitutes the sequel to the Enlightenment and its development, or whether we are to see it as a rupture or a deviation with respect to the basic principles of the eighteenth century." in "What is Enlightenment?" in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, vol. 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 309.

systematic view called modern science. What is more, the explanation of natural phenomena with testable experimental methods led to the replacement of the cosmocentric view of the universe with the anthropocentric view (*OBA*, 17). In other words, human's intrinsic relationship with the universe, that is, human's quest of truth in her relationship with a cosmic order or system of Ideas gradually was overshadowed by different world understandings on the way to modernity. For, the world of Galilei, and modern science, was a "vast homogeneous aggregate of material object" (16). Before the universe was, in Weber's famous saying, 'disenchanted'; the purpose of humans was to find a proper place in the universe and to complete the assigned task. However, the anthropocentric world led human beings to position themselves at the center of the universe. The sole objective of modern science came to be to acquire knowledge of the world by exercising power and attaining 'mastery' over nature (17).

One of the consequences of the shift from a cosmic order in which the structures and boundaries are determined, to a 'new' world where scientists could enjoy their own discoveries and inventions, and comprehend the causality of things, and where a scientific perspective prevailed, was the emergence of instrumental reason. Through the progress of modernity and scientific revolutions, human beings, who had been gradually developing their capacity to use tools since the first ages, began to use their existence itself as an instrument. Max Horkheimer<sup>79</sup>, in his article "Means and Ends" compares the understandings of reason in Ancient Greece and modern periods: while the former regarded reason as a principle inherent in the objective world, the latter reduced it to a subjective faculty of mind and attributed to it an instrumental function that gathered up appropriate means for given end and functions such as "classification, inference, and deduction".<sup>80</sup> The reduction of reason to mental capacities and its redefinition not as the property of the cosmic

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<sup>79</sup> The Frankfurt School, including Horkheimer, opposes the 'progress' narrative of the Enlightenment, stating that the emphasis of rationality brought by the Age of Enlightenment gave birth to destruction rather than benefit to society. On the other hand, by positioning themselves against 'traditional theory' which can be best grasped through Descartes' theory of knowledge, they put forward Critical Theory indicating that the object of knowledge is embedded in a historical and social process rather than being universal and objective laws.

<sup>80</sup> Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason* (London: Continuum, 2004), 3.

order has enabled the autonomy of the humans, while on the other hand making them perceive the world just as an object of mind's capacities. When there is no longer an internally shared quality with the universe, a distance is created between humans and the external world surrounding them. Horkheimer's concept of instrumental reason is also used in Charles Taylor's critiques of modernity. He notes in *The Ethics of Authenticity* (1992) that "once the creatures that surround us lose the significance that accrued to their place in the chain of being, they are open to being treated as raw materials or instruments for our projects." (EA, 5).

### 3.4. DESCARTES' REFLEXIVE TURN

Having established a dualistic view of reality by defining mind and body as two different substances, Descartes was one of the architects of the philosophy of the disengaged subject. While dreaming in the autumn of 1619 of a marvelous science being revealed<sup>81</sup>, Descartes was 'looking at the same world' as Galileo. He rejected the theological and ontic logos theories associated with the pre-modern period and founded his philosophy on a mechanistic, explainable, cause-effect-subjected universe understandings (SS 114). One of the essential concepts that binds Descartes and Galilei together is 'representation': creating an accurate picture or having a representation, of outer reality in the mind (144). Taylor, in his article "Overcoming Epistemology" notes that the terms of "new, mechanistic science" led to the discrediting of previous understandings of knowledge and to the birth of modern epistemology.<sup>82</sup> The representational model, which Taylor defines as "knowledge as the inner depiction of an outer reality", is one of the key concepts explaining the transformation in the understandings of 'knowledge' in modernity and Descartes' intervention to philosophy.<sup>83</sup> The Cartesian model of 'inwardness', which Taylor refers to as the 'reflexive turn', helps to perpetuate the representational understanding, that is, the new form of perceiving external reality.

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<sup>81</sup> The Birth of Modern Science: Galileo and Descartes, a lecture by Ricardo Nirenberg. Fall 1996, the University at Albany, Project Renaissance.

<sup>82</sup> Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 3.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

The border drawn with an indelible pen between the mind and the outside world will constitute the most radical moment of ‘inwardness’. By referencing Wittgenstein’s phrase, the “picture held us captive”, Taylor states in *Retrieving Realism* (2015) that the intervention of Descartes holds humans captive in comprehending the realm outside of their minds because of the conviction that the picture itself (mind) is “so obvious, so commonsensical, so unchallengeable”.<sup>84</sup>

The truth which is obtained through having a correct vision by turning the direction of the gaze towards Ideas in Plato, and through deep introspection which ends up outwardly in Augustine, loses its feature of being ‘outside’ with Descartes. As Taylor outrightly puts it, the “order of ideas ceases to be something we *find* and becomes something we *build*” (SS, 144). To understand Descartes’ share in the distinction between inner and outer realities, we should now take a closer look at Descartes’ ontology and theory of knowledge.

Descartes begins his *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1911) by stating that as he got older he realized how wrong his beliefs were in his youth and that he would therefore doubt everything to have the right knowledge and to find a strong basis for the sciences.<sup>85</sup> Mentioning that senses have a deceptive nature, Descartes takes the senses as the first object for his doubt; seeing distant objects smaller, for example, is a demonstration of the illusory nature of the senses (*M*, 7). Afterward, Descartes asserts that no sign allows him to distinguish between the body represented in his dreams and the body he has while awake. As a result, he captures another piece of evidence for his doubt, that is, he may be asleep even if he thinks he is awake (7). In this sense, the empirical world also becomes an object of doubt. In his next argument, he deepens his methodological doubt by raising the hypothesis of an ‘evil demon’ who can use all his might to deceive him, even within the scope of the solid truths of mathematics (8).

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<sup>84</sup> Charles Taylor, Hubert Dreyfus, *Retrieving Realism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 2.

<sup>85</sup> René Descartes, *Meditations On First Philosophy* trans. E. S. Haldane (Cambridge University Press, 1911), 6 (hereafter cited in text as *M*).

By the end of the *First Meditation* he had convinced himself that there was nothing indubitable in the world: “I convinced myself that there was nothing at all in the world, no sky, no earth, no minds, no bodies.” (18). In the *Second Meditation*, he hopes to find an indubitable, a certain ‘Archimedean’ ground, and finally, by stating that “certainly I did exist”, he establishes a foundation that he cannot doubt (18).

It is necessary to take a closer look at the construction of the *cogito* argument<sup>86</sup> in the *Meditations* since this is where the origins of Descartes' contribution to the formation of the modern subject can be found. In the *Second Meditation*, Descartes in canceling the truth of everything that is caught in the net of methodological doubt, arrives at a point where he feels he is ‘lost’: “Did I therefore not also convince myself that I did not exist either?” (*M*, 18). His answer was no. It was such a puzzling answer, no, that even today philosophers are debating it and criticizing its premises and outcomes. Here is Descartes’s justification for his existence: “certainly I did exist, if I convinced myself of something.” (18). Even the evil demon, which undermines the certainty of mathematical arguments, could not taint Descartes’ existence, because for him his deceivability serves for nothing but underlining its existence (18). Hence, according to Descartes, nothing can be skillful enough to ignore or cancel his existence because of the magic words that open the door to existence: “I think I am something” (18). Through the *cogito* argument, which was formulated as “I am thinking, therefore, I exist” in the *Discourse*, he was finally able to rest on a solid foundation: “the first principle of the philosophy” that can be the basis for sciences as he once dreamed (28).

For Taylor, Descartes’ way of justifying his existence led to the internalization of an important source that Augustine still seeks ‘outside’ because of his devotion to God (*SS*, 143). While the movement in which Augustine opted for attaining the truth was ‘inward-upward’, by presenting his act of thinking as a valid justification for achieving certainty, Descartes in a way states that “I don't need anyone or anything but myself to reach the true knowledge”. Finding a ground which leads to true knowledge, that is, saying ‘I am’ or ‘I exist’, is diametrically opposed to the

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<sup>86</sup> Formulated as *cogito ergo sum* in the *Discourse on Method*.

Platonic period in terms of methods. For, one does not any more open oneself to “the order of antic Ideas” but cancels everything that resides outside and finds and constructs “an order of (intra-mental) ideas” by “turning inside” while doing nothing but trusting one’s ‘intuition’ about one’s existence (155). This is also what Descartes himself asserts in *Second Replies*; when a person comes up with a *cogito* argument “he is not deducing existence from thought by means of a syllogism, but recognizes it as known directly [*per se notam*]\* by a simple intuition of the mind.” (*M*, 92).

Bernard Williams, in his book *Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry* (1978) analyzes the distinctive features of the *cogito* argument. For Williams, the argument has both ‘incorrigible’, and ‘self-verifying’ characters.<sup>87</sup> An argument is incorrigible if it satisfies the following description: “if I believe that P, then P”. On the other hand, it is deemed to be self-verifying when it can fit in the following structure: “If I assert that P, then P”.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, the *cogito* argument implies that “if I believe or assert “I exist”, then I exist”. There is another feature Williams mentions which is ‘irresistibility’. It is a kind of property of a proposition which makes it impossible to think about something without believing it.<sup>89</sup> This is what Descartes explains in *Second Replies* with regard to the *cogito* argument: “there are some that are so clear and at the same time so simple that we can never think of them without believing them to be true.” (*M*, 95)

As can be seen, the effort made to attain true knowledge requires nothing but the mind and its related functions. While confirming his assumptions with again his own assumptions, Descartes creates the most effective moment of inwardness having a crucial role in the formation of the modern subject.

Once being certain that he is something that thinks and exists, Descartes sets out to search for other items that fit this quality within his knowledge. In that sense, he determines the standard of certainty that is necessary for truth: “that everything I

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<sup>87</sup> Bernard Williams, *Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry* (London: Routledge, 2005), 59.

<sup>88</sup> MIT Open Course 24.01: “Classics in Western Philosophy” by Prof. Rae Langton.

<sup>89</sup> Williams, 2005, 166.

very clearly and distinctly perceive is true” (25). The perceptions that do not comply with these standards should also be strictly avoided, because the main aim of the project and the purpose of the methodical doubt put forth in the beginning of the Meditations, was to avoid the errors caused by (un)clear and (non)distinct perceptions. However, as is emphasized in the previous paragraph, the criteria of certainty, relatedly clear(ness), and distinct(ness) as the basis of true judgment, necessarily are generated by the mind itself.<sup>90</sup> The ‘reflexive turn’ adopted by Descartes, involves reducing the objects of the external world to representations of the mind and measuring their truth with again the mind’s contents. Therefore, it can be said that while Descartes puts much of his labor on the ideas within his mind, he does not prefer to observe the external world or use this realm as a basis for his arguments on the external world. In one of his letters, the sentence “I am certain that I can have no knowledge of what is outside me except by means of the ideas I have within me”<sup>91</sup> explicitly describes the role Descartes attributes to ideas.

Descartes’ view on the relationship between perception of subject and outside reality is the exact target of Charles Taylor’s criticism of inwardness. According to him, Descartes’ representational approach of compensating the outer reality with having a correct representation of things leads subjects to deem themselves isolated nuclei necessarily detached from outer reality (SS, 144). Descartes’ attempt to determine standards for representations that are initially derived “from the thinking activity of the knower” does require nothing but the mind’s capacities (145). The self-sufficient subject of Descartes, in turn, will not direct her eye toward Ideas to be able to “attune to the order of things (found) in the cosmos” in a Platonic sense but will construct her own order “according to the canons of *evidence*” (155).

Foucault's criticisms of Cartesian philosophy bear similarities with Taylor's.<sup>92</sup> Foucault considers that Descartes caused a great break in the history of philosophy in terms of relationship among subject, knowledge, and truth. For him, in Western

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<sup>90</sup> Taylor, 1995, 4.

<sup>91</sup> *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Vol III: The Correspondence*, trans. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch, A. Kenny (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 474.

<sup>92</sup> See Michel Foucault, *HS, ONGE, and ECS*.

culture, up to the sixteenth century, access to truth and ascetic practices of self were “obscurely linked”. That is, especially in Greco Roman and Hellenistic cultures, it was unconceivable to have access to the truth without one “first operat(ing) upon himself a certain work”. The truth in a way demands one to be the subject of the truth, in other words, to undergo a certain kind of conversion in one’s existence. However, for Foucault, when Descartes said “To accede to truth, it suffices that I be any subject that can see what is evident.”, he positioned himself against the preceding tradition. Descartes somehow implies that one does not have to undergo an overall transformation and the capacity of rationality allowing one to discern what is ‘evident’ is the sufficient condition for attaining the truth. While being immoral and knowing the truth were mutually exclusive, Descartes’ intervention made it possible for one to be impure, immoral, and know the truth at the same time. This Cartesian shift, according to Foucault, paves the way for both “the institutionalization of modern science” and the focus of philosophy being directed to the development of knowing subject.

### **3.6. NIETZSCHE’S CRITICISM OF “INWARDNESS”**

In Friedrich Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* (2007), we encounter a concept very similar to inwardness, which Taylor says has a constitutive role in the formation of the modern self. “The internalization of man” is referred to at least twice in Nietzsche's text and a fundamental role is attributed to it in the formation of the human spirit and inner world. Moreover, it is presented as the origin of bad conscience, which Nietzsche regards as “a serious illness”.<sup>93</sup>

Nietzsche begins his narrative with a partial anthropological account in which the internalization of humans is described as the alteration resulting from the transition from wilderness to the civilization by wild humans, or “semi-animals” who were used to “wars, wandering life and adventure” (*OG*, 56). To survive, the human now

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<sup>93</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, ed. K. Ansell-Pearson, trans. C. Diethe (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 15 (hereafter cited in text as *OG*).

had to either “suspend” or “devalue” the instincts that belonged to the uncivilized social structure. However, these instincts do not disappear but change their direction targeting another location, where internalization begins for Nietzsche: “All instincts which are not discharged outwardly turn inwards – this is what I call the internalization of man.” (57). Being unable to meet with an external receiver, the obstructed instincts begin to fill the ‘inner’ and gradually begin to expand the limited inner world of humans, which was “originally stretched thinly as though between two layers of skin” to Nietzsche (57). This process causes the phenomenon called ‘spirit’, which is not found in animals but peculiar to humans (57).

In the next section Nietzsche moves on to the second part of the internalization hypothesis; this time he describes the savage ruling class as the subject of internalization. While the ruling class, which he defines as “some pack of blond beasts of prey, a conqueror and master race” and which he directly calls ‘state’, inflicts violence on others before there was civilization, or “unscrupulously lays its dreadful paws on a populace”. However, it had to suppress its instinct and direct these wild instincts inward, as in the previous account (58).

Internalization is the origin of bad conscience. Nietzsche deems bad conscience as a serious illness of humans and as the base of all Christian ascetic ideals such as guilt, sin, and debt, all hostile to life. Not all types of internalization of instincts are seen as the origin of bad conscience; it is only the aggressive and violent instincts gathered in the name of freedom that lead to it. The place where the obstructed cruel instincts target is the locus of other instincts that belong to the same “psychic economy.”<sup>94</sup> William M. Beals, in his article “Internalization and Its Consequences” (2013) gives a noticeably clear account of internalization leading to bad conscience:

When we feel inner pain about something we have done, or thought, or have been motivated to do, it is a result of our own aggressive and violent instincts discharging themselves upon other instincts that we

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<sup>94</sup> William M. Beals, “Internalization and Its Consequences,” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 44, no. 3 (2013): 434.

have. So, if we feel ashamed of our sexual urges, Nietzsche's explanation is that this is a result of our aggressive and violent instincts taking our attitudes about sex as their object and doing violence to them.<sup>95</sup>

Nietzsche makes two basic criticisms based on internalization, one of which is the Enlightenment taking rational judgment as the sole guiding capacity of a human, and the other, as mentioned above, is the Christian tradition. For Nietzsche, the former is a result of old instincts renouncing their demands, thus reducing humans to "rely[] on thinking, inference, calculation, and the connecting of cause with effect" (*OG*, 57). As for the Christian tradition, it is the internalization that causes a person to become hostile to herself: this is the base on which the Christian tradition has built its ascetic ideals. In the last sections of the second chapter, Nietzsche explains how the bad conscience and the resulting feelings of self-hatred such as guilt and indebtedness come to be known as values through the foundation of Christian ideals. On the other hand, he traces the same feelings in servants' relationship with the Christian God: the image of God sacrificing himself for people leads people to feel indebted to God, with a debt that is impossible to repay: "Debt towards God: this thought becomes an instrument of torture." (63).

To sum up, the notion of internalization of Nietzsche can be approached in the light of Taylor's account of inwardness in terms of causing human beings to create their inner world, soul, and reflexive capacities. Besides, Nietzsche's second inference, emphasizing the change in humans in using their faculties, coincides with the emphasis on the reflexive reasoning in Taylor's explanation of Cartesian inward-turn. The idea of internalization in Christian tradition with respect to bad conscience enables us to see one's relationship with oneself and God. I did not go into detail much<sup>96</sup> because a further analysis would be beyond the scope of this chapter. But now I will complete the missing part as I am going to examine what kind of

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<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 434.

<sup>96</sup> Nietzsche already analyzes internalization in his text in detail.

understanding of inwardness Foucault proposes in his analysis of Christian self-practices in the context of ‘technologies of the self.’

### **3.7. FOUCAULT’S CRITICISM OF ‘INWARDNESS’**

Regarding his investigation of inhibitions about sexuality, in the article *Technologies of the Self* (1988), Foucault states that his focal point is not the interdictions themselves as forms of rules, duties, and prohibitions but the effects of those on the subject, which are manifested through “the drives to seek within the self any hidden feeling” (*TS*, 16). Thus, what interests Foucault is not solely the nature of external constraints but particularly the impact of those on the subject’s relation with oneself. He defines this scope of research as ‘technologies of the self.’ On self-relation, Foucault conducts a historical analysis of how the subjects act upon and transform themselves by the means of certain practices and operations “on their own bodies, thoughts, conduct, and way of being” in pursuit of a state of the good, that is, “a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality” (18).

Among the detailed historical examination of Foucault, stretching from Ancient Greece to the Christian era, I will notably focus on the mode that self-technologies utilized in the Christian tradition. The practice of confession is central to Foucault’s investigation of Christian sets of self-practices. Analyzing it in comparison with the self-examination practices in the Stoic period, Foucault shows us in which ways the practice of confession forces the individuals to monitor their inner lives. Throughout his account on self-technologies in the mentioned article as well as his lectures entitled *Hermeneutic of the Subject*, he distinguishes a crucial shift in the objective of the practices of the self. The main objective that was built around the precept ‘Care of the self’ in Greek and Hellenistic periods was replaced with the precept ‘Know yourself’ (*TS*, 19). For Foucault, along with Cartesian philosophy, the tradition of Christian morality was responsible for the withdrawal of The Delphic principle (22). Hence Foucault's comparative analysis of the practices of

the self, active in the Stoic and Hellenistic periods, expands our comprehension of Taylor's notion of inwardness.

The subject's inward turn is not peculiar to the Christian era. Foucault discerns the same motive in Plato's dialogue of *Alcibiades*, as well as in the Stoics' way concerning with self. Yet, in the context of the subject's relationship with the truth, Christianity, especially through monastic principles, changes the subjects' relationship with themselves drastically, whose influence, for Foucault, can even be traced in today's subjects. The privileged importance Taylor attributed to the inwardness in the formation of the modern subject can be noticed also in Foucault's approach to the impact of Christian self-technologies on subjects.

For Foucault the very basic endeavor of the history of thought should compromise the grasp of the decisive moment of a cultural phenomenon which impacts our modern mode of being subjects (*HS*, 9). In this respect, the shift from self-care to self-knowledge championed by Christian tradition as the condition for accessing the truth and, in grasping the words of the holy book, points to an important turning point in the history of the subject and of inwardness.

The main distinction between the Stoic and Christian traditions in terms of the technology of the self is drawn by the concept of *askesis*, an aggregate of techniques in the examination of the self. Foucault makes a detailed analysis of the Stoics' ascetic life by touching upon concepts, relationships, and practices such as pedagogical games, art of listening, *anachoresis*, *melete*, *gymnasia*, letters to friends and mnemotechnics. All these themes aim at becoming the subject of the true discourse. 'Subjectivation of true discourse', also formulated as the transition of *aletheia* into *ethos*, includes the steps of listening, remembering and repeating. As a practice of self-examination, Foucault analyzes Aurelius' letter to his teacher in which he describes what he did in his daily life. In general, the main objective of the letters of Stoics written to their masters is to "measure the distinction between what has been done and what should have been done" (*TS*, 34). Foucault stresses that the main emphasis of Stoics is not thought but deed. This is one of the significant points that distinguishes Stoics from Christians, and also it indicates that

there are different kinds of understanding of inwardness. Unlike Stoics, the objective of Christian self-examination is presenting thoughts, not the past actions of the day (45). Foucault notes “since the monk must continuously turn his thoughts toward God, he must scrutinize the actual course of this thought” (45). Since the self is treated as an entity prone to all evil thoughts, the thoughts must be always kept under observation. This, in turn, unlike the Stoics’ study of deeds that are part of external reality, constantly pushes one into deeper introspection, and causes the subject to stay ‘inside.’

Another theme Foucault employs in comparing the self-examination practices is the money changer analogy, which is found in both the Stoics and early Christian literature. Through the analogy one is advised to treat her thoughts and actions as a ‘money changer’ who distinguishes the real money from the counterfeit. “When Epictetus says you have to be a money changer, he means as soon as an idea comes to mind you have to think of the rules you must apply to evaluate it.” (38). While monitoring their own thoughts, Stoics take a more practical route, checking whether one conforms to the rules of truth and the appropriate behavior whose rules are sought to be collected in the memory; however, they do not impose strict punishment on the one who fails to follow those rules since for the Stoics the self is something that should constantly be worked on and viewed as an end. However, the same analogy in Cassian’s text appears with the meaning of deciphering the self in a manner of disclosing an unwanted secret (35). In this case there is not such a motivation to contemplate on the error via the right behavior because the self is viewed as something that should be renounced after all. The main objective of examining the thoughts, and even more so the motivations behind it, is the suppression and castigation of the wrong ones but not transformation as in Stoic practices. This is why self-knowledge or the Delphic precept ‘know yourself’ is the most convenient principle for Christian tradition. While ‘care of self’ is important for Stoics since the self is deemed as an end, in Christian tradition self must be renounced for the sake of salvation and must therefore be known for this purpose (35).

The way of distinguishing the tempting thoughts from the divine ones enabling one to come closer to God is confession. Foucault describes the essential constituent of salvation as the following: “to tell all thoughts to our director, to be obedient to our master in all things, to engage in the permanent verbalization of all our thoughts” (47). Compared to Stoic practices, which are identified with “subjectivization of the truth,” the matter here is the “objectification of the self in a true discourse<sup>97</sup>” (*HS*, 333): One does not expand herself toward the truth but turn towards the inside to know what is happening there. The more one confesses, Foucault asserts, the more the unexpressed is ascribed to sin (*TS*, 48), which in turn lead to amplification of the inwardness.

Foucault considers the integration of truth telling into salvation as an important moment in the history of subjectivity (*HS*, 364). Considering Taylor's account of inwardness, it seems that the shift from care of self to self-knowledge and the obligations of self-deciphering and truth-telling in the Christian moral tradition are also another breakthrough in the history of inwardness.

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<sup>97</sup> Foucault in ECS, quotes from Plutarch's text having the similar attitude with Stoics in one's ethical relation to truth: “You must learn the principles in such a constant way that whenever your desires, appetites, and fears awake like barking dogs, the *logos* will speak like the voice of the master who silences his dogs with a single cry.” in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, vol. 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 286.

#### 4. AUTHENTICITY AS A SELF-REALIZATION MODEL

Self-realization and authenticity are closely related concepts both in terms of the frequency of their co-existence in literature and the similarity in their manifestations. One thing that the concepts of authenticity and self-realization (including concepts such as self-actualization, self-fulfillment, and self-development) have in common is that they both involve work on one's self.

What is more important is the objective of the work one does on the self, which is another common feature of authenticity and self-realization. The objective of the work on the self involves the idea of undergoing self-transformation to arrive at the ideal state that one aspires to attain. Therefore, it can be said that both concepts attribute two different states to the self: one is inauthentic or unrealized, and the other is authentic or realized self.

On the other hand, in various self-realization accounts the concept of authenticity is regarded as a moral 'ideal' behind self-realization or an 'instrument' of it. The criterion of self-realization is determined as 'being oneself.' Understanding the different conceptualizations of authenticity and their assumptions, which I will discuss in the following sections, is important in recognizing and discerning the underpinnings of the ideals of self-realization we encounter in today's world, as well as in understanding the alternative idea of self-realization proposed by Foucault as self-creation, in which he rejects the ideals contained in authenticity and propose a different kind of relationship with the 'self'.

It should be kept in mind that an attempt to explain a very general concept that pertains to various domains somehow necessitates an unpleasant gesture of generalization, which in turn excludes different accounts. For instance, the way that Emmanuel Levinas interprets the concept of authenticity in criticism of Martin Heidegger's account does not very much overlap with the classical definition of authenticity since Levinas' account has nothing to do with one's relationship with

the real self but with the ‘other.’ Accordingly, let me identify the authenticity accounts entailing the idea of ‘true self’ for now as classical definitions.

The classical account of authenticity takes one’s congruence with the ‘true self’ as an ideal. The true self, on the one hand, can be thought of as an inherent potential lying in every individual’s core. And due to the positive value attributed to this potential, perhaps because of its uniqueness, it needs to be expressed or realized. An authentic person can be defined as one who underwent a self-transformation through realizing the true self, which was a potential once, and becomes congruent with the true self. Therefore, two ideals of an understanding of classical authenticity can be discerned: ‘self-discovery’ of the true self and ‘self-disclosure’ by becoming one with it and presenting it through conduct.<sup>98</sup> In the following sections, we will see that the true self is not understood as an essential self that is waiting to be “found” in every account of authenticity. While Rousseau’s account seamlessly overlaps with the classical notion of authenticity, Sartre approaches authenticity differently. Here, the idea of the given self is rejected, and it is directed to the idea that one can shape one's self with free will. Authenticity, according to Sartre, is possible when humans accept their free capacities and realize them in their actions. However, as will be clarified at the end, both fulfill the conditions of the classical understanding of authenticity.

I would like to introduce the concept of authenticity by analyzing two different broad accounts. Here I shall refer to the ‘inner sense’ and ‘productionist’ models of authenticity, which are categorized by Somogy Varga in his book *Authenticity as an Ethical Idea* (2011). The inner sense model assumes that each individual has a "stable and *given*" true self consisting of “authentic inner traits, projects, wishes,” waiting to be discovered.<sup>99</sup> In this model, I will address Jean Jacques Rousseau's view of authenticity. As Guignon accurately states “No one in history contributed more to...the idea of authenticity, than the French writer and philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau,” while admitting that not a single word translated as authentic

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<sup>98</sup> Nina Maria Hagel, “Appeals to Authenticity: Discourses on the True Self and the Politics of Identity Construction.”,102.

<sup>99</sup> Somogy Varga, *Authenticity as an Ethical Idea*, (Routledge, 2012), 85.

is found in his works (*OBA*, 29). However, by drawing on dichotomies of inner and outer, self and other, and between nature and culture, Rousseau champions the space of interiority as a guiding authority of one's conduct in life. This space is associated with the "voice of nature," which is defined as the one and only objective of the true self which one needs to seek to lead an ethical life. This, in turn, shows us that Rousseau's formulations are compatible with the account of classical authenticity.

The productionist model, on the contrary, refuses the idea of 'given self' and in fact regards it as a source of inauthenticity. Rather, it proposes 'self-constitution' as a way of being authentic, which can only be possible through free choices. What matters is not the 'discovery' of the true self, but the conscious creation of the self.<sup>100</sup> At this point, I shall refer to Jean-Paul Sartre's authenticity in which he defines human's ontological basis as 'Being-for-itself' which does not involve any given content but is condemned to define oneself in its 'intentionality' with the world of objects. Since existence precedes essence in Sartre's comprehension of human existence, life itself for a human is equivalent to "a continual work in progress."<sup>101</sup>

In referring to those two models of authenticity what I intend to point out in the very end is the following: Although both accounts take diametrically opposite assumptions as their starting point (namely while Rousseau unhesitatingly refers to a human as a being having an essence, Sartre builds his account on the non-existence of an essence), they both inevitably establish their frameworks on the basis of the dichotomies of unreal and real self, and inauthentic and authentic being. Despite different prescriptions, the necessity of 'being oneself,' namely seeking for the true self is emphasized. This, therefore, gives us reason for situating them under the classical version of authenticity.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>101</sup> Lauren Bialystok, "Authenticity and the Limits of Philosophy," *Dialogue*, 53, no.3 (2014):18.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

It seems that today's approach to self-realization promoted by self-help culture relies on a somewhat philosophical legacy of authenticity. The presence of the authentic ideals in today's individualistic societies, which is termed as 'late modernity' in the first chapter, serves as the encouragement of individuals in pursuing their personal needs and thus leads to considering the subject of authenticity as an isolated and atomistic entity whose political and social ties have no influence on her existence.<sup>103</sup> Following Rousseau's account of authenticity in the 'Virtue Model', I shall dwell on those contemporary criticisms against authenticity as they were presented in Taylor's *The Ethics of Authenticity*. Also, I will mention Taylor's own perspective on authenticity in which he conceives it as a "character ideal," a picture of a good life, or an ethical imperative. Indicating the deviation of moral ideal behind authenticity, Taylor intends to show that there is a way to rediscover the genuine meaning of authenticity which can be distinguished if it is stripped of its improper uses. On the other hand, Foucault is so suspicious about the concept of authenticity that his well-known accounts on subject, relations of power, and truth can be interpreted somewhat as his altercation with the assumptions of classical authenticity.<sup>104</sup> This is what I will elaborate on after mentioning Sartre's perspective on authenticity. Foucault's criticism against both Sartre's and classical accounts of authenticity is illuminating in distinguishing how those accounts conceptualize self and what kind of assumptions they make in terms of 'essential' and 'non-essential' parts of the self. Moreover, although both Taylor and Foucault address the maladies of authenticity, Taylor focuses on the deviation of the ideals of authenticity during its integration into modern societies whereas Foucault goes beyond Taylor and problematizes self-congruent premises of authenticity which deem subject, power and truth as self-evident entities.

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<sup>103</sup> Having similar tones of criticism, especially in terms of social and political consequences of appeal to authenticity can be often found in the literature of authenticity,<sup>i</sup> Some of these are mentioned by Taylor in his book *The Ethics of Authenticity*: Daniel Bell's *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, Christopher Lasch's *The Culture of Narcissism and The Minimal Self*, and Gilles Lipovetsky's *L'ère du vide*. As well as Allan Bloom's, *The Closing of the American Mind*.

<sup>104</sup> Nina Marie Hagel in her doctoral dissertation "Appeals to Authenticity: Discourses on the True Self and the Politics of Identity Construction" indicates theories of Foucault's in *The History of Sexuality: Volume One* that can be read as challenge to authenticity.

#### 4.1. 'THE INNER SENSE MODEL': JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU ON AUTHENTICITY

Muriel Leuenberger, in his article “What is the Point of Being Your True Self? A Genealogy of Essentialist Authenticity” examines five essentialist assumptions found in Jean Jacques Rousseau’s account of authenticity: “A distinction between a core and peripheral self, the innateness of the true self, access to the true self through self-examination, the possibility of alienation, and its normative scope”.<sup>105</sup> In this section, while describing Rousseau's understanding of authenticity, I will draw on the framework of Leuenberger.

Rousseau's main texts, *Confessions* (1995), *Dialogues* (1780), and *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* (1782) have the characteristic of being first autobiographical texts. In these works, Rousseau conveys detailed retrospective and instantaneous descriptions of his thoughts and feelings, as well as his natural dispositions, desires, and complaints. Throughout the pages, we witness the account of a man who has a great grip on his inner world, leaving almost no untapped place therein. This literary style of Rousseau also forms the core of his philosophy. For, according to Rousseau, one can refer to only one reliable source to make sense of one’s life, that is, the inner life. For him this is where the essence of human nature resides, and since “nature is always right,” it should be acknowledged as the sole source in leading an ethical life (*Emile*, 92). There is also a part of a human that has no communication with nature. For Rousseau one should not take notice of it since it reflects degenerated convictions of culture and society.

Leuenberger notes that Rousseau addresses two types of selves, namely, the core and peripheral selves, in which the former is accepted as the authentic self. One of the foremost objectives of *Confessions* is to distinguish the traits belonging to the core from those of the peripheral because, to the extent one distinguishes those that belong to the self and that originate from the “impression of external object,” one

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<sup>105</sup> Muriel Leuenberger, “What is the Point of Being Your True Self? A Genealogy of Essentialist Authenticity,” *Philosophy*, 96, no.3 (2021): 413.

can “put or maintain the soul in the condition most favorable to virtue.”<sup>106</sup> In *Emile* (1979), Rousseau focuses on the ideal education of a human considering the essential features of human nature. He discusses how these peripheral traits, which will inevitably be possessed in the future life due to the social character of humans, can be warded off in the early education of a child who remains true to her natural state thanks to her childhood. Rousseau advises caregivers to “form an enclosure around [] [the] child's soul at an early date.”<sup>107</sup>

Regarding Leuenberger’s second point “the innateness of the true self,” one can recall Rousseau’s formulation of happiness established in *Emile* based on congruency of desires and faculties. For him, in the original state of a human, power and desires are in equilibrium but as soon as humans grow up and leave the natural condition, the desires begin to depart from the faculties, that is, humans gradually desire more than they are capable of, and eventually experience ‘dissatisfaction’ (*E*, 80). Rousseau advises people of the following: “Let us measure the radius of our sphere and stay in the center” (81). Asserting that if one violates the framework drawn by nature, namely if a person ignores the core self by desiring things beyond her faculties, she will inevitably fall into contradiction. To avoid this, Rousseau calls for cultivation of the child’s innate characteristics to be immune to future contradictions. He favors negative education, which “consists not at all in teaching virtue or truth but in securing the heart from vice and the mind from error” (93). Hence, if parents offered children more than they want, they would upset the naturally developing desire-faculty balance of the child and create a fabricated dissatisfaction in her, which in turn would cause her to loosen her bond with her core self in the upcoming years.

Rousseau’s insistence on the inner self given by nature and resistance against the peripheral self corrupted due to conventions of culture and society require a better

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<sup>106</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confession*, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau Vol. 5*, ed. C. Kelly, R. D. Masters, P. G. Stillman, trans. C. Kelly. (University Press of New England, 1995), 343 (hereafter cited in text as *C*).

<sup>107</sup> Rousseau, *Emile or On Education*, trans. A. Bloom (Basic Book, 1979), 38 (hereafter cited in text as *E*).

comprehension of his approach to the core self. In his autobiographical works, he almost obsessively examines his inner sphere, namely his emotions, thoughts, character traits, and their instant alterations or transformations as he gets older. Introspection, the “faculty of looking inward upon conscious states,” is the only method through which Rousseau was able to find his true self.<sup>108</sup> “I am fully myself and for myself, without diversion, without obstacle, and during which I can truly claim to be what nature willed.”<sup>109</sup>

Before moving on to the fourth point of Leuenberger, I want to pause for a moment and make a comparison of Rousseau with the philosophers in the chapter of Inwardness. Rousseau’s introspection is reminiscent both to the self-examination of Descartes who investigates his own mind to catch any (un)clear and (in)distinct ideas and to Augustine turning inward to follow the path of God. According to Guignon, Augustine and Rousseau use the inward turn as a means through which they can be elevated ‘upward.’ Rousseau substitutes God with Nature, and through that inward turn he expects to meet with his “natural home as a spiritual or childlike or creative or quasi-divine being” (*OBA*, 32). However, by substituting God with Nature, does Rousseau eventually steer one’s gaze to ‘upward’? In other words, is there an exit door in Rousseau’s introspection? In that sense, Guignon criticizes The Romantic tradition<sup>110</sup>, the heirs of Rousseau. He claims that their inward turn in the name of recovery of the “lost oneness with nature” is just the initial step for the Romantics; their ultimate destination is “the recognition of the absolute priority of the creative powers of the human imagination over both the natural self and nature”(32).

The fourth point of Leuenberger is on Rousseau’s themes of alienation or self-loss. Rousseau associates his introspective style, scrutiny of the contents of the soul with the meticulousness of a scientist: “I will apply the barometer to my soul, and these

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<sup>108</sup> Varga, *Authenticity as an Ethical Idea*, 63.

<sup>109</sup> Rousseau, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau Vol.8*, ed. C. Kelly, trans. C. Butterworth, A. Cook, T. Marshall (University Press of New England, 1995), 9.

<sup>110</sup> “The term “Romanticism” refers to a sprawling and uneven set of tendencies and cultural forms that developed at various times and in very different ways in different parts of Europe in response to the Enlightenment worldview.” Guignon, 27.

measurements, carefully executed and repeated over a long period of time, may furnish me with results as certain as theirs.”<sup>111</sup> Since keeping an eye on the inner world is one of his main objectives, Rousseau often witnesses that his feelings are in a constant flux: he observes that not only conventions of society, but even the basic elements of the external world such as “climates, sounds, colors, darkness, light, the elements, food, noise, silence, motion” have effect in the alterations of the soul (C, 343). He views the soul as having a sensitive structure that is vulnerable to any influence. For Rousseau, many humans, mostly unknowingly, are estranged from their real self due to the external factors transforming them into entirely different people (343). In that sense, the autobiographical works of Rousseau can be interpreted as his individual struggle against the impending threat of self-loss or alienation from his own nature. In *Confessions*, he recalls the moments in which he becomes someone else yet overcomes it by returning to nature (350). Similarly, in the opening passages of *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, he associates his self-loss with being dragged out of the “order of the things” and his quest to discover who he is with detaching himself from “incomprehensible chaos”.<sup>112</sup> Rousseau’s account of self-loss threatening one’s congruence with the true self can be viewed as another essentialist assumption in his interpretation of authenticity.

The last essentialist characteristic laid out by Leuenberger underlines the normative incentive of Rousseau’s account. Encouraging one to be oneself and to adopt the features given by nature, Rousseau puts forward the conditions of the ‘human good’ in a normative sense. This is also one of the points of contemporary criticisms raised against Rousseau’s essentialist formulation of human nature and the good life: they emphasize the impossibility of claiming a sole formulation of human good since for them complex diversities of human experience cannot be explained just by a so-called essence of human nature.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Rousseau, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, 7.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>113</sup> Frederick Neuhouser, “Normative Resources of Human Nature” in *Rousseau’s Critique of Inequality: Reconstructing the Second Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 118

Regarding the discourse of the good life, Guignon points at the affinity between Rousseau's formulation and the ones presented in today's popular self-help literature. One's paying attention to an inner voice given by nature, and thus reconstructing oneself accordingly is a prevalent form of authenticity utilized in today's self-help discourse as an ultimate task of life. Guignon mentions Phillip C. McGraw, known as "Dr. Phil," one of the well-known figures of American self-help industry, who promotes authenticity as a way to good life. Based on the turning points in his life that helped him abandon his previous life (since it "absolutely sucked" due to performing the tasks imposed by society) and adopt a new lifestyle by living in accordance with what he "felt right because they were right, Dr. Phil calls upon millions to realize their given potentials and become who they are (*OBA*, 2).

Self-help culture, which allegedly claims to guide individuals in their relationship with themselves, offers various tools that one can use in order to attain a better version of one or to realize oneself. The classical account of authenticity is one of the tools that the self-help industry utilizes. Although the discourse of authenticity seems to be a pure concept with a noticeably clear claim in itself, in terms of involving the hidden political and ethical assumptions, it should be viewed with suspicion. The approach that I offered can be best dealt via Foucault's 'games of truth', which is defined as "the rules according to which what a subject can say about certain things depends on the question of true and false" (*EW2*, 460). Under what historical and political conditions was the concept of self-realization offered by the culture of self-help, and accordingly the motto of 'be yourself', given to the subject as a 'truth'? Based on Foucault's analysis of truth, it would be meaningful to deepen the research with the following questions: Under what conditions has the discourse 'be yourself' become an object of knowledge that is 'necessary' to be known for one's self-realization? In other words, how, why and under what conditions do the subjects on the path of self-realization become the subjects of this discourse?

These questions are related to Foucault's concepts of 'subjectivation' and 'objectivation', which, the former, can be defined as the conditions which transform one "to become a legitimate subject of this or that type of knowledge", and the latter, the conditions which transform a thing to "become an object for a possible knowledge" (*EW2*, 460). For Foucault, the 'games of truth' takes place at the crossroads of these two processes. This 'hectic' quest of the late modern subject to find her own truth, the resources and the knowledge she applied for and/or presented to her, and the establishment of truth of the concept of self-realization in the interaction between these two, namely the subject and the object of knowledge, can be best understood via the concept of 'games of truth'.

On the other hand, and more specifically, Foucault problematizes the emphasis on 'truth' in the subject's relationship with herself, that is, in making her own existence a knowable object, and asks the following questions within this framework: "...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?" (*ECS*, 295) In reference to Foucault's questions, the following questions can again be raised: "What kind of truth do people, who subscribe to today's self-realization discourse, pursue in relationship with themselves and the world? Which human needs are satisfied in the quest of truth or 'obligation of truth'? What does one, who reaches the truth by realizing herself, serve in the 'big picture'?"

Evaluating the self-realization, authenticity and thus the effort of late modern individuals in 'finding' their own 'truths' at the intersection of Foucault's concepts of subject, knowledge, truth, and power relations will provide a deeper understanding for this study. However, for now, I will not proceed further by subjecting the self-help culture to a Foucauldian critique for now; we will address these points in detail starting from the chapter covering Foucault's critique of authenticity. For the sake of sticking to the subject of authenticity, I will look at Charles Taylor's perspective on authenticity.

## 4.2. VIRTUE MODEL: AUTHENTICITY AS AN IDEAL

Taylor, in his book *The Ethic of Authenticity*, examines the contemporary criticisms aimed at the concept of authenticity. In some of parts, he uses the notion of authenticity interchangeably with the concepts of self-fulfillment and self-realization, in others as a subcategory of them, which is similar to this study's conceptual layout. Although Taylor largely agrees with the criticisms, for him this does not necessitate a wholesale cancellation of the concept of authenticity. For, he believes if the concept itself and its applications are adequately analyzed contextually, it can be seen that authenticity is not a concept that is just in the service of the 'culture of narcissism'. Despite the deviancy in the culture of authenticity, Taylor believes that there is a moral ideal behind authenticity, which he identifies as "important potentialities of a human" leading one to "a more self-responsible form of life" (EA, 74). Like Guignon, Taylor also emphasizes that self-fulfillment has a decisive influence on today's individuals' lives: "today many people feel called to do this, feel they ought to do this, feel their lives would be somehow wasted or unfulfilled if they didn't do it" (17). Considering today's individualistic culture, it is not a surprise that this urge engenders a radical self-centered form of self-fulfillment or authenticity. According to Taylor, this version of authenticity leads individuals to take themselves as the sole focal point of fulfillment while "shutting out, or even unawareness, of the greater issues or concerns that transcend the self" (14). Moreover, Taylor points out 'instrumental reason' brought about by industrial-technological society as another factor that gave rise to the deviancy of authenticity culture: since a person considers her entire surroundings as a tool, everything else will seem 'less real' to her. And regarding self-realization, the main objective of a person will be herself that is to be realized. The 'other,' the romantic partner for instance, will be someone with which she can have a relationship to the extent that she/he serves the aim of self-realization.

To shield authenticity against self-centered points of view and restore its moral ideal, Taylor addresses the *dialogical* character of human life. This idea is the basis

of his insistence that there is a moral ideal behind authenticity. For him, humans can only understand themselves and define their identities within the scope of a common ground, that is, 'language' (33). Taylor refers to another sense of 'language', besides its literal meaning. Since 'language' intrinsically requires an 'other', he deems it a dimension of the inevitable exchanges and encounters. On the other hand, 'language' implies an 'objective' domain in where people interact while uttering their 'subjective' experiences. A human's relational characteristic resulting from her ability to use 'language,' her necessary bonds providing a basis for the formation of identity, choice, or a good life corresponds to what Taylor calls a 'horizon'. His main claim is the following: the modes of self-realization excluding "ties with other...are self-defeating, that they destroy the conditions for realizing authenticity itself." (35). For him, self-realization can lead us to determine our significant potentials. Distinguishing what is 'best' in ourselves entails the idea of 'horizon' since in order to make a choice, there must be a horizon of meanings that leads us to choose a certain one among the others. "Which issues are significant, I do not determine. If I did, no issue would be significant. But then the very ideal of self-choosing as a moral ideal would be impossible." (39).

Taylor's main objective is to explain that to the extent that self-realization or authenticity is rendered the instrument of today's narcissistic culture, it is doomed to self-cancellation due to essential 'dialogical' characteristic of human. What needs to be done, for him, is not to demonize those ideas, but to analyze them in the contextual base, retrieve the genuine meaning of them, and thus reintroduce them to the literature and society as a moral ideal.

For all these reasons, Taylor's account of authenticity intrinsically refers to the idea of moral 'goodness' which can only be determined within the 'horizon' of values. He states that what he means by moral ideal is the "picture of what a better or higher mode of life" (16). However, for him, the 'higher' and 'better' cannot be determined by 'only' the subjective desires of individuals. In this context, he condemns the understandings of 'self-determining freedom' since it champions nothing but the choice itself (37). The idea that one's action is valuable to the extent that it is chosen

freely renders the content of the choice indifferent and unrelated to any horizon of meaning.

Taylor's condemnation of supporters of free choice itself is based on his criticism and justifiable corrections of negative freedom. In his article "What is Wrong with Negative Liberty," he underlines the crucial points which the 'radical' negative freedom thinker, which crudely reduces freedom to the absence of intervention, miss. He states that 'A pure opportunity concept' is misleading by itself. For Taylor, the removal of external barriers and the opening of a space of opportunities for human to do what she 'want' does not mean that she is 'ultimately' free: "We cannot say that someone is free, he is totally unaware of his potential, if fulfilling it has never even arisen as a question for him, or if he is paralyzed by the fear of breaking with some norm which he has internalized but which does not authentically reflect him."<sup>114</sup> According to Taylor, barriers are internal as well as external. To give another example, if someone who has struggled with poverty all her life and was deprived of educational and cultural resources is suddenly freed from the external constraint she lives in and it is said that she now has access to everything, is this person 'now' free to access the cultural product that an 'elite' can access? For Taylor, freedom should be an 'opportunity concept' as well as an 'exercise concept' as suggested by positive freedom.<sup>115</sup> That is, "the capacities relevant to freedom must involve some self-awareness, self-understanding, moral discrimination and self-control."<sup>116</sup> At this point, when we enter the field of positive freedom, another problem arises, which is the main reason why supporters of negative freedom condemn positive freedom as being 'totalitarian'. A person who is self-aware and has the ability to make his choices as a result of the analysis of his own internal processes may not follow the 'good' while self-realizing and liberating herself, therefore she may do things that are harmful to herself or the society. Can we still call this person free? If we say that she is not free, in order to give him her

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<sup>114</sup> Charles Taylor, "What is Wrong with Negative Liberty?" in *Philosophy and Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge University Press: 1985), 213.

<sup>115</sup> According to 'exercise concept' "one is free only to the extent that one has effectively determined oneself and the shape of one's life" negative.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

'freedom', shouldn't we accept that she "cannot be the final authority" for her choices and make her do things she doesn't want for her sake? However, Taylor is not so pessimistic for humanity. According to him, being self-aware, in his words, a 'self-interpretive' animal, also brings with it the ability to determine what 'good' is. His concept of 'strong evaluations' is a key concept for this understanding. Ability to make 'strong evaluations' amounts to the "the fact that we human subjects are not only subjects of first-order desires, but of second-order desires, desires about desires."<sup>117</sup> He does not explain this simply by the fact that human is a rational animal. 'Strong evaluations' are not just about making a rational decision about anything; it is a concept that comes out of and is inherent in desires and feelings. To say at the beginning what we will say last, Taylor aims to make a synthesis of the 'subjective' and 'objective' existence of human beings with this. It is clear that human has desires that she cannot control, that she is exposed to, and in many cases, one's choices and who the one is are determined by them. Yet for Taylor emotions "incorporate a sense of what is important to us *qua* subjects, or to put it slightly differently, of what we value, or what matters to us, in the life of the subject."<sup>118</sup> He puts forward a concept called 'import,' which explains the necessary conditions on which emotions are shaped. Shame, for instance, emerges only in a certain context: my perception of myself, my perception of others, my assignment of the ideal, etc. And he takes this a step further and claims that the 'import' deduced from emotions is very much related to the fact that human is an animal that uses 'language.' To put it very roughly, if we change how we articulate the situation, that is, if we acquire a new vocabulary related to the topic, we can change the imports and therefore change our emotions. Taylor openly states that "language is constitutive of our emotions." This where 'strong evaluations' operate. Since the way people experience emotions is not independent of the way they interpret them, that is, their relationship with language, when we change the way we interpret them, we are no longer doomed to those emotions. In other words, humans are capable of

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 220

<sup>118</sup> Charles Taylor, *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1*, (Cambridge University Press: 1985), 60.

seeing what is behind emotions. According to Taylor, human has an objective capacity to see the 'good,' in a sense, subjectivity also includes objectivity. "Spite, revenge, returning evil for evil, is something we are prone to, but that there is a higher way of seeing our relations with others; which is higher not just in producing happier consequences - less strife, pain, bad blood - but also in that it enables us to see ourselves and others more broadly, more objectively, more truly."<sup>119</sup> Authenticity lies in this 'dialogical' aspect.

Just as the most passionate effort of Foucault's philosophy is to try to destroy the 'horizons' of objectivity, truth, meaning, and to say that these are in fact categories constructed in power relations in history, Taylor's texts also function as a shield to protect these objective horizons from these attacks. However, he agrees with Foucault while revealing how authenticity is utilized in capitalist modernity and individuals are deceived in their quest for self-realization. But they stand apart radically when it comes to the 'genuine' meaning of authenticity and how it is practiced. For Foucault, 'strong evaluations,' which incorporate objective values, are not free from power relations and truth games. Self-realization is only possible with total destruction and a creative construction that is not based on any existing code. Taylor's reasoning that we read between the lines in his many texts that "if there is a choice, one is more important than the other; if there is importance, there is a criterion; if there is a criterion, therefore, there is the truth" is a ground that will lead us to the 'good' for him. But, according to Foucault, it is impossible for freedom to flourish from such a ground.

Before moving on to Foucault's understanding of authenticity, I would like to mention Jean Paul Sartre, another important philosopher for authenticity literature. Sartre's philosophy is in conflict with both Foucault's and Taylor's: Taylor's condemnation of the choice itself stripped of the content is exactly the kind of reasoning that Jean Paul Sartre would oppose since he attributes an ethical value to the free choice itself. Arguing that on the ontological level, for Sartre, a conscious

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 67.

being cannot be deemed separately from being free, he champions the value of freedom and free choice itself, regardless of its content. The ‘popular’ dispute between Foucault and Sartre will be mentioned after laying out the general remarks of Sartre’s understanding of authenticity.

### **4.3. ‘THE PRODUCTIONIST MODEL’: JEAN-PAUL SARTRE ON AUTHENTICITY**

Jean Paul Sartre would probably think that Charles Taylor is one of the defenders of the tradition of the “spirit of seriousness” with regard to Taylor’s account of “inescapable horizons” supposing humans as not the creator of values but the subjects of it. From the fact that Sartre’s existential philosophy strictly rejects an external world having a meaning in itself but that humans are the creators of the meaning through interpretation, he voices that the main goal of his magnum opus *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology* is to “repudiate the spirit of seriousness”.<sup>120</sup> What he meant by this is to undermine the assumptions that “values as transcendent givens (are) independent of human subjectivity” and a thing’s desirability results from its “simple material formation” (*BN*, 626). Therefore, one cannot anticipate an understanding of authenticity from Sartre involving the understandings of self-discovery or unveiling essential self.

In this section, I shall attempt to give a brief interpretation of authenticity found in Sartre’s works. Since his ethical claims on authenticity and freedom are based on his ‘phenomenological ontology’ and it would be hard to comprehend his claims on ethics without at least having a smattering of knowledge on his ontological terminology, my first intention will be introducing Sartre’s ontological terminology on human existence and the external world. And in this chapter, I will partly draw

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<sup>120</sup> Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans, H. E. Barnes (Routledge, 1993), 626 (hereafter cited in text as *BN*); Somogy Varga, and Charles Guignon, “Authenticity” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (Stanford University, 2020), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/authenticity/>.

on Thomas Anderson's work *Sartre's Two Ethics: From Authenticity to Integral Humanity* (1993), which I believe has a profound insight into Sartre's philosophy.

For Sartre, reality comprises two realms: 'consciousness' and nonconscious things. He describes consciousness as containing nothing substantial, that is, as a 'total emptiness' (vi). Similar to Husserl's identification, that is, consciousness is "consciousness of something" Sartre attributes an intentional character to consciousness: "in all of its actions, (it) 'aims at' or is 'directed toward' its object"(x).<sup>121</sup> It is also conscious of itself, but not in the way it is conscious of objects; its relation with itself is built in terms of what Sartre calls 'non-reflectively' or 'non-positionally': "when I am aware of a chair, I am non-reflectively conscious of my awareness", but not deliberately considering my awareness as an object of my conscious (x). Besides, he defines consciousness as 'all spontaneity,' that is nothing can act upon it and by no means can it be in a position of passivity (ix). It is, thus, 'being-for-itself'; 'self-determining', 'cause of itself', 'self-activated', and "a being whose existence posits its essence" (xii).<sup>122</sup>

The realm of unconscious things, on the other hand, is identified as 'being-in-itself' or 'being what it is', that is, a being that is identical to itself (xvi).<sup>123</sup> Compared to 'contentlessness' of the consciousness, Sartre identifies the unconscious things as 'full positivity', which does not contain 'nonbeing' but 'being', and thus cannot access anything other than itself or contact with 'nonbeing'. "It never posits itself as *other-than-another-being*" (xvi). Therefore, he characterizes it as 'passive' and 'inert.'

Even though Sartre's definition should be understood in terms of ontological level, which is the realms of 'beings' and 'nonbeings,' it has implications for human existence and the external objects. To explain human beings' interaction to external

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<sup>121</sup> David Detmer, *Sartre Explained: From Bad Faith to Authenticity* (Carus Publishing Company, 2008), 30.

<sup>122</sup> Thomas Anderson, *Sartre's Two Ethics: From Authenticity to Integral Humanity* (Open Court Publishing Company: 1993), 12.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

objects, I want to introduce his notion of 'nothingness.' For Sartre, a human is the being "through whom nothingness comes to the world" (24). In the other words, a human introduces her 'negativity' to the object of the world. She does so by simply perceiving the world. While perceiving objects, one focuses on certain properties of the objects and disregards the other's properties. For, there is the correspondence of certain properties in one's map of meaning, and others miss the attention of perception due to a lack of any reference point (8). A human being introduces the 'nothingness,' on the other hand, by simply questioning the external world itself. For the act of questioning entails imagining the alternative of 'being,' that is, it raises the possibility of asking 'what if not?' (10). Having the ability of detaching from 'being-in-itself,' humans are deemed the creators of meaning in the world. In other words, human's intervention of positing 'negativity' or 'nothingness' to the realm of 'positivity' shapes the 'non-differentiated' being.

This is where 'freedom' takes the stage. In Sartre's understanding, humans are considered free due to their capability to put a distance between themselves and the external world, and thus to create a meaning out of it (17,18). On the other hand, the equivalent of 'consciousness' to 'nothingness' leads to the impossibility of it being 'self-identical.' Stating that a human "is not himself but presence to himself," Sartre aims to show that "there is no difference between the being of man and his being-free" (25, 440). From this view can one claim that Sartre, on the ontological level, in a way attributes an essential characteristic to 'consciousness,' and thus to a human being? Identifying Sartre with an 'essentialist' view would be a very radical attempt, especially considering his philosophy is woven into the idea of existence preceding essence (25,568). However, when I refer to Foucault's criticism of Sartre's view of authenticity, it will become clear which points of his philosophy 'wink at' the ideas of essentialism. Returning to Sartre's conception of freedom, I can further my examination by referring to his understanding of human deeds. He mentions that every act "is a projection of the for-itself toward what is not" and underlines the impossibility of the way around, that is, "what is can in no way determine by itself what is not" (435). Hence, according to Sartre, no 'factual' state,

including social, biological, cultural structures can determine ‘consciousness’ or human beings, which is equivalent to mentioning that what makes us up is the collection of free choices: ‘everything about our existence is a matter of choice’.

However, he does not consider ‘consciousness’ as the totality of a human being but as the ‘nucleus’ of it (70). Sartre introduces the concept of ‘facticity’ to indicate the social, cultural, and biological bonds of a human being. Besides claiming that a human being is both a free consciousness and a facticity, he argues that one ‘prereflectively’ is aware of the validity of both. Hence, if one denies one of or both aspects of her existence, she does not do it out of her ‘ignorance’ since she is ‘prereflectively’ aware of being both. According to Sartre, if one ignores the totality of her characteristics, she is ‘lying’ since for him “the essence of the lie implies in fact that the liar actually is in complete possession, of the truth which he is hiding.” (48). This is what he calls ‘bad faith’: an attitude of one denying the totality of dimensions of her and identifying herself with only one of them. He describes it as a kind of self-deception since not the ignorance, but the deception requires one to both ‘know and not know’ the truth.<sup>124</sup> Sartre gives the example of a man who is a ‘champion of sincerity’ attempting to convince his friend about his sexual orientation. Since this example has politically problematic aspects, I will put it in another way: imagine you have a friend who tries you to convince you that you are an artist. He does so by referring to your labor on art and your artworks. Yet you do not call yourself an artist since you think that being interested in art and producing creative pieces does not make someone an artist. Sartre would judge both you and your friend to be in ‘bad faith.’ The ‘sincere’ friend is in ‘bad faith’ because he reduces you to your past actions and attempts to fix your identity. Your ‘bad faith,’ on the other hand, arises from your denial about the facts (you are the creator of these works!), and your insistence on refusing the conclusions drawn by the facts. Another famous example concerns a waiter who is forced to accept his role, being a waiter, willingly. It is considered a form of bad faith imposed by society in

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<sup>124</sup> *Jean Paul Sartre: Basic Writings*, ed. S. Priest, (Routledge, 2001), 205.

neglecting the aspect of free consciousness which can enable him to “break away and suddenly elude his condition” (*BN*, 59).

The conflict between ‘you’ and ‘your sincere friend’ arises from the characteristic of ‘ambiguity’ in human existence that paves the way for ‘bad faith.’ The fact that “I am what I am not and am not what I am” may lead one to escape her ‘facticity’ through her ‘transcendence;’ on the other hand, to remain in the factual state because ‘one is not’ yet in the state that ‘transcendence’ would offer her (260). For Sartre, what is necessary is the synthesis of both; he quests for a “valid coordination” comprising both aspects of human reality (260).

In Sartre’s view, for one not to be deceived by her ambiguous nature and thus not to be in a ‘bad faith’ by perceiving her reality in a limited aspect, one must accept herself in her ‘wholeness.’ In one of the footnotes of *BN*, he describes the way to “radically escape (from) bad faith” as “self-recovery”<sup>125</sup>, and he uses it synonymously with authenticity: “...a self-recovery of being... [which] we shall call authenticity, the description of which has no place here. However, he does not further explain the notion of authenticity.”<sup>126</sup> (*BN*, 70). Even though he does not dwell on it further, based on the account of Sartre that we have touched on so far, authenticity can be identified as one’s “willingness to admit that she is both freedom and facticity.”<sup>127</sup> In his other works, *Anti-Semite and Jew* and *Notebooks for an Ethics*, he gives clearer explanations of authenticity. In the former he refers to authenticity as “having a true and lucid consciousness of the situation, in assuming the responsibilities and risks which it involves.”<sup>128</sup> Hence, one can see that Sartre

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<sup>125</sup> This emphasis belongs to Anderson since he underlines the fact that Sartre indicates one’s relation to oneself: “As Sartre describes it in Part I of *Being and Nothingness*, bad faith seems to refer primarily to the relationship individuals have to themselves. It is not first and foremost a social, let alone a political, notion; it is a lie *to oneself* about the dual structure of his or her being. It follows that authenticity, the escape from bad faith, will also primarily involve a relation to one’s self, not to others nor to the sociopolitical structures and institutions of society.” In *Sartre’s Two Ethics: From Authenticity to Integral Humanity*, 16,17.

<sup>126</sup> “Being and Nothingness, as a work of ontology, contains no treatment of (ethics). Even Sartre’s discussion of bad faith is undertaken from an ontological rather than a moral perspective, for it is designed to show that human reality is a combination of both freedom and facticity.” in *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>128</sup> Jean Paul Sartre, *Notebooks For an Ethics*, trans. D. Pellauer, (The University of Chicago Press,1983), (hereafter cited in text as *NE*)

does not only call on human beings to know and accept their situation but to take responsibility of their existence.<sup>129</sup>

In *Notebooks for an Ethics*, Sartre gives a clearer account of authenticity related to the concepts of ‘pure reflection,’ ‘accomplice reflection’ and ‘creation.’ For Sartre, ‘accomplice reflection’ arises from the natural tendency of ‘prereflective consciousness;’ it seeks to be God as a natural tendency. Consciousness, which adopts the attribute of God, “*en-soi-pour-soi*, that is, as cause of itself”, is doomed to find itself in a series of failures because of its desire to accomplish what is impossible for her (NE 479). For Sartre, “accomplice reflection” is “just the prolongation of the bad faith” (We mentioned that bad faith is basically the refusal to recognize oneself as one is.) To avoid the bad faith arising from the illusionary nature of ‘accomplice reflection,’ one must undergo a ‘conversion’ in the light of ‘pure reflection’ which informs one about her true existence, that is, her being identical to freedom. Ceasing to seek for being ‘*en-soi-pour-soi*,’ via ‘pure reflection,’ one recognizes that her very end is the “freedom” itself. Designating freedom as an end pertains to the idea of one is accepting her existence as a ‘diasporic being,’ which equals accepting the fact that “I am not a substantial, necessary thing, which has a right to be, but a contingent, gratuitous freedom, which continually questions itself about the purpose of its existence.” (479).<sup>130</sup> In other words, to the extent that one accepts her conditions where no a priori values justifies one’s life, one can be deemed free.<sup>131</sup> And this is another formulation of authenticity in Sartre’s account: “A new, ‘authentic,’ way of being oneself and for oneself, which transcends the dialectic of sincerity and bad faith.” (474).

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<sup>129</sup> I would like to indicate a point of Anderson’s in dialogue with interpretations that associate Sartre’s ethics with being “idealistic, that is, without content”: “Thus, if a mass murderer like Jeffrey Dahmer, for example, had a true and lucid consciousness of the situation, namely, that he has lured to his apartment, killed, and dismembered over a score of gay males, and has accepted personal responsibility for it, as he finally did by confessing to these crimes, he would fit Anti-Semite and Jew’s definition of authenticity!” in *Sartre’s Two Ethics: From Authenticity to Integral Humanity*, 55.

<sup>130</sup> Anderson, *Sartre’s Two Ethics: From Authenticity to Integral Humanity*, 54

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

As a last point of this section, I would like to point out that authenticity is closely related to the creative capacity of the human being. The following passage of Sartre indicates the intrinsic relationship among freedom, creation, and responsibility:

Therefore, authentic man never loses sight of the absolute goals of the human condition. He is the pure choice of his absolute goals. These goals are: to save the world (in making there be being), to make freedom the foundation of the world, to take responsibility for creation and to make the origin of the world absolute through freedom taking hold of itself (448).

In the previous paragraphs we have mentioned that by positing ‘nothingness’ to the realm of ‘being-in-itself’ which is self-identical, and thus not capable of containing any value in itself, ‘consciousness’ creates a meaning out of it. Hence, in its ontological being, ‘consciousness’ is condemned to be creative. And for Sartre, freedom and creativity are remarkably similar concepts, which both lie at the “original ontological structure” of human beings. And again, the task of authenticity in this picture is to hold a mirror to a person so that she can recognize her creative nature: “Thus authenticity will unveil to us that we are condemned to create and that at the same time...the very structure of freedom imposes this on us.” (515).<sup>132</sup> To sum up, whether, in an ethical sense, it is related to one's freedom or creativity, or in an ontological sense, it is related to ‘facticity’ and freedom, it seems that, Sartre's understanding of authenticity is based on the idea of accepting oneself as one is and recognizing one's own nature.

#### **4.4. FOUCAULT'S CRITICISM OF AUTHENTICITY**

Regarding Sartre's ontological foundation establishing human existence, it can be safely said that any conception indicating a human having an essence or a substance

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<sup>132</sup> Anderson, 56.

does not have a place here. However, regarding his view of authenticity there are plenty of criticisms raised against Sartre indicating that he flirts with the idea of a given self. One of which is undoubtedly Foucault's. We encounter his statement in an answer to a question asked in one of his interviews<sup>133</sup> on the difference between 'aesthetics of existence' found in Ancient Greek's self-practices and Sartre's view on self-creation within his existentialist framework: "I think that from the theoretical point of view, Sartre avoids the idea of the self as something that is given to us, but through the moral notion of authenticity, he turns back to the idea that we have to be ourselves - to be truly our true self."<sup>134</sup> Sartre would definitely oppose Foucault's claim considering his attributions to human consciousness, that is, 'being-for-itself', 'all active', 'self-determining', and to the human existence; "there is no difference between the being of man and his being-free". On the other hand, his account has certain aspects which render us to understand that he attributes certain essential properties to human nature. His notion of authenticity is also another point which supports this claim. Referring to the pre-reflective character of human consciousness, Sartre claims that a human actually has the capacity to recognize herself and if she does not fully acknowledge her existence, she does so not out of ignorance but because of her motivation to deceive herself. Therefore, authenticity functions as a re-recognition, even acceptance of or desiring the 'self,' that is 'given' by her natural existence. It seems that Sartre's authenticity is not far from the ideals of 'being true to oneself', 'self-discovery' and 'self-disclosure'. The idea of recognition of capacities, even though he associates consciousness with 'nothingness,' or presents the future as a sum of potentials pregnant with many possibilities, points at a sense of self-discovery.

Rejecting the assumptions found in Sartre's understanding of authenticity, and thus any claim concerning substantial subject understanding, what can Foucault offer us pertaining to self-creation? If a subject does not have a given essence, what are the alternative ways of creating one's self with an ethical life perspective? Before

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<sup>133</sup> *ONGE, ST.*

<sup>134</sup> *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, vol. 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth, 262, (hereafter cited in text as EW1).*

producing an adequate answer to this question, I would like to take a closer look at Foucault's criticisms of the concept of authenticity. For, Foucault's points undermining the assumptions of authenticity in the light of his considerations on, in very general sense, subject, knowledge and truth, will present us a better understanding of why the idea of self-realization relying on authentic ideals is in need of criticism, and on which premises an alternative interpretation of self-realization can be built. Even though there are not many direct references to the term authenticity in Foucault's texts, his critical philosophy, based on genealogical investigation of the events and concepts, provides sufficient data for us to consider his philosophical stance as a revolt against the notion of authenticity. Nina Marie Hagel in her doctoral dissertation "Appeals to Authenticity: Discourses on the True Self and the Politics of Identity Construction," traces the premises of what might be considered a challenge to the idea of authenticity in *History of Sexuality: Volume One* (1978). The arguments of this section are based on Hagel's inspirational analysis.

Foucault clearly states that the main objective of his works in his last 20 years is "to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects." He describes three 'modes of objectification'<sup>135</sup>: 'dividing practices,' 'scientific classification,' and 'subjectification.' The first two of these correspond to his accounts in the works, *Discipline and Punish* and *History of Madness*, in which the objectification of human beings is mostly accounted for via the analysis of the nature of external constraints. By being stigmatized as mad and sane, sick, and healthy, criminals and 'good boys', people are made to realize that they occupy or conform to certain modes of being subject. Different from the other two modes, the third mode of objectification refers to person's active participation in turning herself into a subject. This is what Foucault investigates in *History of Sexuality*. The main question of this work is "how men have learned to recognize themselves as subjects of sexuality" (*SP*, 778). Foucault in *SP* defines 'subject' in

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<sup>135</sup> It was mentioned at the end of the section 4.1 that the concepts of 'subjectivation' and 'objectivation' are closely related. Foucault underlines 'subjectivation' of subject as well as 'objectivation' of her.

two ways: as a being “subject to someone else by control and dependence” and a being “tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge” (781). Stressing the term’s ‘relational’ aspect, that is, it owes its existence to power dynamics, what Foucault’s intention is to show us that a subject is not a ‘substance’ but a constitution of certain practices that are instilled by ‘games of truth’ and ‘power relations.’ Hence, for Foucault, being the subject of sexuality, and one’s relationship with one’s sexuality cannot be deemed free from ‘games of truth’, or the discourses created by power relations. However, the authentic ideals instilled in the field of sexuality seem not to take these aspects into account.

Since the ‘games of truth’ pertaining to sexuality take different forms throughout history, one can hardly mention a unified and fixed subject of sexuality. For Foucault considers ‘sexuality’ as “a historically singular mode of experience in which the subject is objectified for himself and for others through certain specific procedures...” (*EW2*, 463). However, the authentic understanding of sexuality refers to a single way of being the subject of sexuality; it assumes that sexuality is located in one’s ‘inner self’, and thus, has the potential to reveal the truth about one’s self. What is at work here is the classical framework of authenticity which relies on the ideals of self-discovery and self-disclosure. Hence if one discovers the truth of her sexuality by accessing the core of her self, and is able to disclose this truth in a way that makes it visible to others, it can be said that one is true or loyal to oneself, one is an authentic being, and/or one liberates oneself to some extent. However, for Foucault, that kind of approach to sexuality misses the fact that sexuality is constituted within the ‘games of truth,’ which produce certain discourses leading one to experience things in a certain way. Whereas at the beginning of the seventeenth century, sexuality was a deed or phenomenon that could be spoken ‘freely’ about and practiced without fear of oppression, in the nineteenth century it became legitimate only for conjugal relationships in which sexuality fulfills the aim of reproduction. The rest who did not fit this picture could only talk ‘quietly’ about and ‘secretly’ perform it (*HS1*, 3). Sexuality also becomes a critical issue in population policies, who, how and for what purposes people can

have sexual intercourse becomes one of the most important issues of state policies. Therefore, an individuals' relationship with their sexuality cannot be considered independently from the discourses produced in the current historical period about sexuality.

What appeals to Foucault in this context is the question of how sexuality has become an object of knowledge that has the potential to tell the person his own truth. For, when the truth comes into play, the relations that produce that truth somehow leave one's sight, and one becomes occupied with only the 'truth' itself. For Foucault, people's dealing with their sexuality in order to be authentic individuals or establishing an authentic relationship with their sexuality has developed as a result of certain processes.

In the following parts, first, I will address the 'repressive hypothesis' laid out in *HSI*, in which Foucault shows us how misleading accounts of the operation of power go hand in hand with the authenticist understanding of sexuality. And I will mention two aspects of authentic interpretation of sexuality that can be extracted from *HSI*: the identification of sexual pleasures with natural bodily processes, and the attitude of attributing an artificial unity to sexuality.

An authentic interpretation of sexuality, that is, the view that one can become an authentic being or remain true to her essence to the extent that she can experience her sexuality freely and talk about it without being exposed to censorship, stems from a deficient conceptualization of power relations. Foucault defines this deficient conceptualization as 'repressive hypothesis'. For him, from the seventeenth century onwards subjects' relation to their sexuality has taken the form of resistance to the oppression of power. This stems from the understanding that power solely operates through oppression. The subjects accept a position against the oppression; their relations to sexuality turn into an "effort to speak freely about sex and accept it in its reality" (*HSI*, 9). Talking about sexuality instead of being silenced, or the effort of experiencing the ignored or forbidden sexuality explicitly are regarded as the ways of liberation. However, to Foucault, repression is not the

only feature of the power relations, it is only one of the appearances among others, and thus the influence of power relations on sexuality should be examined “within a general economy of discourses” (*HSI*, 11). For Foucault, the ‘symptom’ of the transformation of sexuality into a unique individual ‘secret’ tells a lot about how the relationship between the individual and power has evolved throughout certain historical periods. Calling his historical research on the different forms of discourses about sexuality ‘archaeology’, Foucault states that his quest seeks answers to questions such as: “what we are obliged to do, what we are allowed to do, what we are forbidden to do in the field of sexuality, and what we are allowed, forbidden, or obliged to say about our sexual behavior.”<sup>136</sup>

Besides the ‘repressive hypothesis,’ Foucault touches upon the view of psychoanalytical tradition which attributes a foundational role to repression in the formation of desires. Repression has a constitutive role in the Freudian concept of ‘Trieb’ explaining a biological mechanism from which one’s drive, impetus and desires stems.<sup>137</sup> According to this concept, we desire something to the extent that the oppressive force comes into play. However, both the ‘repressive hypothesis’ which considers desire and repression separately, and the psychoanalytical view relying on the formative function of repression, addresses “a common representation of power”, which Foucault calls the ‘juridico-discursive’ conception of power. These two views, which interpret power only as a mechanism of repression, foster sexuality and power in a one-sided relationship in the subjects. The concept of power in ‘juridico-discursive’ “can ‘do’ nothing but say no to” sex and pleasure: “dictates its law to sex;” “employs nothing more than a law of prohibition” and imposes censorship on the verbalization of sexuality (*HSI*, 84).

Foucault proposes another way of approaching power relations. He put forwards the term of ‘discipline,’ as a type of technology through which power penetrates individuals. The power relations in the disciplinary technology do not only repress

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<sup>136</sup> “An Interview by Stephen Riggins”, in *EWI*, 126.

<sup>137</sup> “İktidarın Halkaları” in in *Özne ve İktidar: Michel Foucault/Seçme Yazılar 2*, trans. Işık Ergüden-Osman Akınhay, ed. Ferda Keskin (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları),

individuals but also ‘recognize’ the subject of repression through shaping, controlling, and disciplining. This is what he calls ‘individualization.’ What he mentioned in his 1976 lecture about the individuals’ relations to power dynamics is very enlightening in this context:

The individual is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus, a primitive atom, a multiple and inert material on which power comes to fasten or against which it happens to strike, and in so doing subdues or crushes individuals. In fact, it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals. The individual, that is, is not the vis-a-vis of power; it is, I believe, one of its prime effects. The individual is an effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the element of its articulation. The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle.<sup>138</sup>

Alongside discipline aimed at individuals, there is another type of technology which deals with populations. Here is how Foucault formulates the attitude of power relations when it is recognized that the sexuality of individuals is a matter of a population-related problem and thus needs to be meticulously regulated:

It was necessary to analyze the birthrate, the age of marriage, the legitimate and illegitimate births, the precocity and frequency of sexual relations, the ways of making them fertile or sterile, the effects of unmarried life or of the prohibitions, the impact of contraceptive practices (*HSI* 25).

Hence, it would be absurd to expect the form of power built on discipline and population technologies to have a simple relationship with sexuality on the basis of ‘repression’. There are innumerable human conducts that wait to be understood and

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<sup>138</sup>*Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. C. Gordon, trans. C. Gordon, L. Marshall, J. Mepham, K. Soper. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 98.

be turned into discursive knowledge of the field of sexuality, and thus what needs to be done from the point of view of power relations is not silence people about sexuality but provoke them to talk about it out loud. In order to give a 'discursive existence' to sexuality, the apparatuses of power surveil every field where the subject of sexuality in question is by "recording, procedures for observing, questioning, and formulating" those areas:

From the singular imperialism that compels everyone to transform their sexuality into a perpetual discourse, to the manifold mechanisms which, in the areas of economy, pedagogy, medicine, and justice, incite, extract, distribute, and institutionalize the sexual discourse, an immense verbosity is what our civilization has required and organized (33).

From this view, the identification of the discovery and disclosure of sexuality with liberation should be radically criticized. For, sexuality is one of the most effective tools of power relations that is employed to turn one into a subject and tie one to her individuality. For Foucault, the authentic views of sexuality miss the historical aspect of their existence and the fact that "the least glimmer of truth is conditioned by politics" (5). Thus, it can be said that the authentic way of adopting sexuality, namely, people's consideration "that sexual desire is able to reveal what is their deep identity", and thus putting up resistance against any intervention aimed at the components of 'true self', do not undermine the influence of power relations but somehow pave the way for power to exert its influence. For him, since the critical discourses appealing to liberation practices against the oppression misjudge the way power penetrates, they are condemned to fall into the same 'historical network' with what they are against (10).

Foucault mentions a model of self which was popular among the society and the political movements of his time, which he calls the 'Californian cult of the self': "one is supposed to discover one's true self, to separate it from that which might obscure or alienate it, to decipher its truths" (*ONGE* 290). For Foucault, the ideals

of self-discovery and self-disclosure are rooted in the Christian tradition of confession: "...nearly infinite task of telling - telling oneself and another, as often as possible, everything that might concern the interplay of innumerable pleasures, sensations, and thoughts which, through the body and the soul, had some affinity with sex" (*HSI*, 20). Although today the aim is not self-renunciation as in Christian tradition, considering the objectives of today's authentic self-realization practices, that is, examination and expression of the depths of the self, it can be said that contemporary practices have affinity with confessional practices. For Foucault, it is so internalized by Western culture that "Western man has become a confession animal" (*HSI*, 59)

Foucault indicates how the practice of confession, and the authentic understandings of sexuality are inherently related. In the 'repressive hypothesis,' the silenced person desires 'be true to' her sexuality, and thus talk about it. There appears an understanding equating self-realization with verbalizing the sexual experience. In this framework, while confession or verbalizing the truth about the subject (by the subject) are associated with freedom, silence or denial of the truth are associated with repression. However, for Foucault, what is at stake at the end of the day is the opposite: to the extent that one discloses her experiences of sexuality or sexual orientation, one consolidates her place in 'truth games'. The verbalization of sexuality ties one to her individuality and creates more constraints than freedom. According to him, 'the obligation to confess' is so embedded in the culture and so intertwined with the scientific practices of the day such as psychiatric and psychoanalytic sciences that people "no longer perceive it as the effect of power that constrains [them]" (60).

His criticism points to a case that we encounter frequently in social media: individuals, by sharing posts that best 'express' themselves on their social media accounts, somehow feel that they liberate themselves from the pressures of 'others.' However, by conforming to the rules and boundaries of the social platforms that supports them in 'sharing' their 'selves' or data, they, in the long term, can be subjected to the constraints made up of the data that they once shared 'voluntarily.'

Screening of specific advertisements on social media, for instance, which fit one's identity can be interpreted as the effort to further link one to one's existing identity. For Foucault, discovering the truth about sexualities and disclosing it in a manner of confession does not liberate a person but paves a way for one to become stuck in the constraints of a particular type of subject which is made from her self-identification.

Another authentic view that Foucault challenges is the identification of sexual pleasures with natural and biological processes belonging to the body.<sup>139</sup> The restriction of the sexual pleasures is interpreted as a way in which power attacks the biological aspect of a human. However, Foucault argues that there is a power dimension between bodies and their pleasures. "Pleasure and power do not cancel or turn back against one another; they seek out, overlap, and reinforce one another." (*HSI*, 48) He gives the instances of sexualities whose pleasures are designed and 'intensified' by power relations: "those which appear with the different ages (sexualities of the infant or the child)..., those which, in a diffuse manner, invest relationships (the sexuality of doctor and patient, teacher and student), those which haunt spaces (the sexuality of the home, the school, the prison)" (47). In effect, Foucault considers the body itself as a site for 'subjection'; for him the features that are assumed to be natural, that is, physical form, gestures, habits, desires and pleasures are not free from the regulations of power.<sup>140</sup>

Another challenge of Foucault that Hagel points out concerns his criticisms of the artificial unity of sexuality. Foucault rejects the idea of 'sex-in-itself.' For Foucault, the components of sexuality such as "anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, and pleasures" are artificially gathered together by the discourses on sexuality. And the artificial unity itself enables the subject to believe there is such a thing as 'sex-in-itself' to which she can relate through sexual intercourses or sexual identities (154). On the other hand, a seemingly harmonious composition of these elements brings sexuality an attribute of 'truth' and enables

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<sup>139</sup> Hagel, 104.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

the subjects to relate to sexuality under the light of 'truth', and thus feeds the understanding that sexuality has "a causal principle, an omnipresent meaning, a secret to be discovered everywhere" (154). For Foucault, the truth itself "is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint", and what makes something true is enabled by the "the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements".<sup>141</sup> In the same genealogical understanding, Foucault posits that sexual discourses in presenting themselves as 'sex-in-itself', lead people to fail to recognize that what they willingly adopt is the result of a productive and generative operation of power, which exerts its force through not only 'law and taboo' but also disciplinary technologies. (*HSI*, 155).

To sum up, Foucault's problematization of sexuality in terms of techniques of power and the formation of subject and truth unsettles the definitions of authenticity of both Rousseau and Taylor, as well as Sartre. For Foucault, the ideals of authenticity such as being true to oneself, deciphering the truth of the self and revealing it in the true discourse or conduct, emerges in the relations of power, and freedom can no way be in this picture. Moreover, his understanding shows us that the effort made to obtain authentic individuality enables a person to attach her identity, and thus allows her to be regulated and normalized.<sup>142</sup> According to this picture, it can be said that the act of finding your truth may result in finding the truth that is constructed for you.

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<sup>141</sup> "Truth and Power" in *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*, ed. P. Rainbow (New York: Pantheon Book, 1984), 73.

<sup>142</sup> Hagel, 111

## 5. AESTHETICS OF EXISTENCE' AS A MODEL OF SELF-REALIZATION

### 5.1. INTRODUCTION OF FOUCAULT'S TERMINOLOGY

Considering the examination that has been conducted so far, we can now safely start looking for answers to the following questions: Can there be created a form of self-realization that does not rely on the underpinnings of the notion of authenticity? What are the possible ways to go beyond the idea of self-realization which solely focuses on individualistic desires and conceives the individual detached from her inescapable social, political and economic ties? Accordingly, how can one reformulate an understanding of self-realization that does not involve the power dynamics that utilize people's thirst for emancipation for its own benefit? Can any account of self-realization eliminate the idea of 'inwardness'?<sup>143</sup> And finally, can self-realization, which is an inherently reflexive term, have a paradoxical function, such as taking people out of the 'place' they got 'in'?

It would be a mistake, from the intellectual heritage that Foucault left us, to expect a definite answer to these questions, or a specific program of self-realization that we can follow in the formation of ourselves as late modern individuals. For, Foucault considers that his duty as a historian of thought by no means is to tell people what they ought to do or to suggest to them a program by which they can liberate themselves.<sup>144</sup> This is, perhaps, because, as a historian conducting his research from a genealogical perspective, Foucault clearly knows that concepts, teachings or events do not remain as they are throughout the course of history. Any definitive teaching bears the risk of being misused in later generations: "Rousseau, a lover of freedom, was used in the French Revolution to build up a model of social

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<sup>143</sup> The notion which, to Taylor, begins with Platonic philosophy, rises to its peak with Cartesian intervention, which Nietzsche interprets as one of the biggest traps humanity fell into, and which according to Foucault, was inherited from the Christian tradition.

<sup>144</sup> "There is always something ludicrous in philosophical discourse when it tries, from the outside, to dictate to others, to tell them where their truth is and how to find it, or when it works up a case against them in the language of naive positivity." in *UP*, 9

oppression. Marx would be horrified by Stalinism and Leninism.”<sup>145</sup> Neither has Foucault an aim of adapting the entire ethics of Ancient Greek to the contemporary era just because he is very much fascinated by it. Yet he acknowledges the necessity of a new ethics unique to the contemporary era. For, he was living in a time, (we are also experiencing the same conditions, even more radically) where all the transcendental ideals have lost their validity, the truth itself inevitably is deemed a contingent fact, and thus there is not any ground for ethics.<sup>146</sup> Nevertheless, there is a theme of Ancient Greeks ethics, for Foucault, which can speak to today’s people and inspire them in building an ethical relationship with themselves and their environments, namely, the ‘aesthetics of existence’: an approach of taking one’s self as a work of art. In this view, one does not anymore conform to the constraints of ‘tradition or reason’<sup>147</sup> in the formation of one’s self but cultivates the self via ‘creative’ and ‘experimental’ motives, in the way an artist approaches her piece of art. Foucault’s relationship with himself parallels this approach of his. He is not interested in defining his identity as an intellectual: “I don’t feel that it is necessary to know exactly what I am.”<sup>148</sup> Rather than building an intellectual identity and try to fulfill the necessities of it for his whole life, he consciously prefers an experimental attitude towards himself and his works: “The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning.” And French archaeologist and historian Paul Veyne, who is a close friend of Foucault’s, notes in his article, “Final Foucault and His Ethics” in which he expresses his admiration for Foucault’s personality and philosophy, that Foucault, during the last eight months of his life, worked on his last two books in the manner of an ancient philosopher who studies his personal journal to become the subject of the truth.<sup>149</sup> The idea of ‘askesis’, which refers to one’s work on oneself aiming at giving a

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<sup>145</sup> “Truth, Power, Self: An Interview” in in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, 10.

<sup>146</sup> Paul Veyne, “The Final Foucault and his Ethics”, trans. C. Porter, A. I. Davidson in *Critical Inquiry*, 20:1, 1-9 (University of Chicago Press Journals, 1993).

<sup>147</sup> “Truth, Power, Self: An Interview”, 10

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>149</sup> “The Final Foucault and his Ethics”, 8.

‘style’ to one’s self, was the process that Foucault underwent during the last period of his intellectual journey.

Throughout his intellectual labour what he seeks for, essentially, is “to change something in the minds of people” by showing them that “they are much freer than they feel”. This is possible, for him, by demonstrating the fact that the interdictions wear a mask of the ‘truth,’ and in this way keep people from being free; they “have been built up at a certain moment during history”. Foucault's objective in unmasking the limitations by exposing their contingency or by indicating that they are not self-identical or ‘things in themselves’ makes them eligible to “be criticized and destroyed” and thus paves the way for people to be liberated from the boundaries that manifest themselves at times in the forms of identity, norm, taboo, discipline, or power relations.

As I have mentioned in the beginning of this study, while dealing with such a general concept (self-realization) I have attempted to use a ‘genealogical’ lens. And this perspective has brought me to view the premises of the concept of self-realization from a critical point of view, and thus, has led me to deal with the concept of ‘inwardness’, which has given an insight about how a subject builds various relationships with herself, to examine the criticisms of the late-modern interpretation of self-realization, and to delve into the assumptions of authenticity as one of the main underpinnings of the idea of self-realization. Now, in this chapter, I seek the possible ‘way out,’ an alternative perspective of self-realization which does not rely on the points that it has been criticized for so far. Can an alternative way of self-formation which can speak to contemporary individuals be extracted from Foucault’s concept of ‘aesthetics of existence’?

I would like to initiate my quest with Foucault’s views on ‘the games of truth,’ subject and relations of power, and the relationship among them. Some of the points have already been covered so far: in the first chapter the discipline technology of power which has an ‘individualization’ effect on human beings was mentioned, and in the previous section on Foucault’s criticism of authenticity, ‘repressive

hypothesis' which gives an inadequate account on the way power relations operate and his views on subject were touched upon. This section on the criticism of authenticity can be deemed a 'genealogical' practice: taking 'sexuality' as an exemplary case, Foucault underlines the historical contingencies of this concept, undermining the 'truth' attributed to both the concept and the subject of sexual experience. Before delving into Foucault's ethics, I would like to look at Foucault's considerations of 'the games of truth,' subject and relations of power in a more detailed way. Foremost, it is crucial to have more insight about the 'subject' according to Foucault to grasp his ethics, since his ethics are built upon this specific structure.

### **4.3. SUBJECT AND POWER RELATIONS**

I will first start by discussing the aspect of power relations which has not been mentioned yet. I would like to introduce the reason behind Foucault's use of the term 'power relations' instead of just 'power.' For Foucault, the term 'power' refers to "an ensemble of actions which induce others and follow from one another." (*SP*, 786). It is simply this, nothing more or less. Therefore, relating power itself with cruel actions, violence or domination would be a mistake in this picture. For, Foucault gives a quite neutral account of power. There should be a case in which an action modifies other actions: "an action upon an action" (789). An action that is not imposed upon individuals but their actions. Therefore, power itself cannot exist unless there are two actions and exercisers at hand. On the other hand, the exercisers of the power should be recognized "as a person who acts." The power relation can occur only to the extent that both parts are free subjects having 'a field of possibilities' to react or behave against power (790). That is why power relations should not be viewed as a fixed and unchanging one, it is an ever-changing power game in which one rises above the other and the other has the ability to respond at the next moment.

However, power relations yields to domination if it loses its property of ‘relation’: “When an individual or social group succeeds in blocking a field of power relations, immobilizing them and preventing any reversibility of movement by economic, political, or military means, one is faced with what may be called a state of domination.”(*ECS*, 283) Hence, in the case of domination there is no room for resistance, aiming to debilitate the power of the oppressor. However, resistance is the internal element of the power relations: “where there is power, there is resistance” (*HSI*, 95). Considering how Foucault defines the term subject, that is, “subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge,” it can be said that the subject itself only can be understood within the power relations. Accordingly, the identity of the subject bases its knowledge about herself on power relations. We can again recall the ‘modes of objectification’ to envision how power relations act upon subjects, or rather turn human beings into subjects. Foucault’s term of ‘objectification’ can be treated synonymously with his term ‘subjectivization’ which he defines as “the procedure by which one obtains the constitution of a subject”<sup>150</sup>. When scientific knowledge produces an ‘objective’ knowledge about living beings via ‘natural history or biology’ or when ‘technologies of power’ define the ‘delinquent’ and design the conducts ‘proper’ to this ‘category’, or when subjects actively participate in the process of ‘subjectivization’ by fulfilling the necessities of becoming the subject of a certain experience (e.g. sexuality) by acting upon their “bodies and semis, thoughts, conduct”, the subjects appear as the objects of certain power relations. To put it in another way, human beings become object of knowledge of certain fields while at the same time being turned into subjects (*SP 777*, *TS*, 18). It is worth mentioning that all these ‘modes of objectification’ do not reduce subjects into objects which do not have agency to move, act, or decide. We have mentioned that in order for power relations to continue to be a ‘relation’ the interplay of at least two parts is required. In this context, Foucault mentions three types of social resistance: the struggles against ‘forms of domination,’ against ‘forms of

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<sup>150</sup> “The Return of Morality” in *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, trans. A. Sheridan and others, ed. L. Kritzman (New York: Routledge, 1988), 253.

exploitation’, and against ‘subjection’ (*SP*, 781). Foucault mentions that the last one has become the most common form of resistance in the social resistances of his time. When individuals rise to protect their sexual identities against a set of power relationships attempting to force them into binary gender roles, they struggle against the ‘dominating’ form of ‘objectification’. What is paradoxical here is that the resistance itself also plays a role in the process of subjection, or ‘subjectivation;’ one may fall under another kind of subjectivity in fulfilling the roles of ‘resister’. One’s adoption of ‘identity’ of a ‘resister’ may invite again the power relation to operate, “categoriz[ing] the individual, mark[ing] him by his own individuality, attach[ing] him to his own identity, impos[ing] a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him.” (*SP*, 781). What is mentioned here is similar to the framework in the ‘repressive hypothesis’: the identification of a sexual identity with reaction against oppression, or the construction of the liberation movement based on the ‘reaction’, pose the danger of causing the adoption of another kind of subjectivity. To avoid misinterpretations, it should be mentioned that Foucault neither degrades those resistance movements nor proposes not doing anything against oppression due to the threat of subjectification. Nevertheless, it is true that Foucault approaches the notion of liberation with a suspicion. He considers that the objective of liberation should be designed cautiously, otherwise it may fall back to an idea that “there exists a human nature or base that, as a consequence of certain historical, economic, and social processes, has been concealed, alienated, or imprisoned in and by mechanisms of repression.” (*ECS*, 282)<sup>151</sup>. The authentic precept of ‘be yourself’ can be considered

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<sup>151</sup> At this point, it is necessary to mention Foucault’s thoughts on the LGBTQ+ movement of his time. “We don’t have to discover that we are homosexuals... Rather, we have to create a gay life.” These words of Foucault, who is always critical of identity politics, express the danger of a ‘homosexual’ being ‘coming out’, revealing to the public the identity she ‘actually’ has, in a sense, leaving one identity and moving to a new one and staying within its constraints. As we have mentioned in other parts of the study, for Foucault, the truth that is ‘discovered’ or ‘confessed’ is part of the truth game. In this sense, he does not undermine the efforts of the LGBTQ+ struggle, “It is important, first, to have the possibility-and the right-to choose your own sexuality. Human rights regarding sexuality are important and are still not respected in many places,” also calls to take this one step further: “I think that one of the factors of this stabilization will be the creation of new forms of life, relationships, friendships in society, art, culture, and so on through our”. It calls for establishing new forms of subjectivity rather than being stuck inside another identity. That is, an

a liberation practice in this context: if the society assimilates you by forcing you to conform to some norms, you can avoid, and/or resist pressure by ‘being yourself’ (!) To fulfill this commitment, we begin to retroactively fill in this space, or write narratives of our essential selves<sup>152</sup>; they both correspond to the danger Foucault refers to: the practice of liberation presupposes or creates an essence to be returned to or liberated. His criticism against liberation practices brings him to put forward ‘practices of freedom’ which deal with the question of ‘how’ rather than ‘what.’

To Foucault, the discourse of ‘let’s liberate our sexuality’ does not make any sense on its own; one needs, rather, to delve into the work of answering how it is going to be liberated (*ECS*, 283). This requires, first of all, making a proper definition for the substance of freedom, which in this case corresponds to the analysis of “sexual pleasure and erotic, amorous and passionate relationships with others.” (*ECS*, 283) The analysis of the substance of freedom and determining the right conduct to realize the practice of freedom coincides what Foucault calls ethics. For him ethics is “the deliberate practice of freedom” and freedom is “the ontological condition of ethics” (284). Foucault’s consideration on the close link between ethics and practice of freedom relies on his readings of Ancient Greek philosophy. “...ethics as the conscious practice of freedom has revolved around this fundamental imperative: ‘Take care of yourself.’” (285) The Greeks’ problematization of freedom was not a matter of a reaction to a singular event, but it was a matter of life-long work on oneself, which covers every single aspect of life ranging from “clothing,

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ethical effort to manufacture one's self from liberation to freedom. Michel Foucault, “Sex, Power, and the Politics of Identity” in *The Advocate*, 400, (1982) 26-30.

<sup>152</sup> I would like to refer to the field of astrology, which I have not touched on until now, but which is always in the back of my mind and which I believe is very closely related to the subjects I have touched on. Today, it is a resource that people appeal to 'to be themselves'. It has a lot of followers; it works like a religion. People determine their days, career goals, and ideal spouse choices by consulting their astrologers. It provides a common source for the narratives ‘we have to create in order to be ourselves’. One of the best-seller astrology books, *Astrology for the Soul*, can unhesitatingly give advice to one whose North Node is Sagittarius, for example: “...(you) must not allow themselves to question their first feeling of “knowing.” (Your) intuition is almost 100 percent accurate... Additionally, (you) need to trust that they won't 'miss' anything or anyone that is truly destined for (you).” Since astrology claims that every person comes into the world with karma, it believes that a person has an essence to which she must return. Liberation takes place when a person recognizes her own karma, her essence, and acts accordingly. in Jan Spiller, *Astrology for the Soul* (New York: A Bantam Book, 1997), 361.

appearance, gait, (the way of) responding to every event(s)” to “alimentary behaviors or the fulfillment of civic duties” (*ECS*, 286, *UP* 10). The most prominent goal of these studies on oneself is not to be a slave, “not to be a slave (of another city, of the people around you, of those governing you, of your own passions).” (285) Hence, since freedom considered as practice spread over various aspects of life and is pursued in conducts, it takes the form of ethics.<sup>153</sup> In the following parts I will delve into the details of Ancient Greek ethics. For now, I want to continue with the aspect of Foucault’s conceptualization of subject which we have not touched on so far.

We have seen that a subject cannot be spoken of unless it is found in the process of subjectification; to put in another way, an entity as subject appears only to the extent that it attends to free play with power relations. Both definitions of subject mentioned above make it possible to understand the subject in this way.<sup>154</sup> To have a better grip on Foucault’s ‘intervention’ pertaining to subject, we need to see what context his critique fits in in the history of philosophy of the subject. Which figures does Foucault reckon with in describing the subject in this way? He, first of all, looks at Kant and his autonomous subject who possess autonomy of the will. The necessary conditions of being autonomous do not depend on cultural or historical circumstances. Rather, they are all ‘given’ to the subject, and the same applies to

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<sup>153</sup> The term Ethics derived from ancient Greek word *ethos*, which means ‘character’ or ‘custom’. Foucault explains the relationship between *ethos* and the practice of freedom as follows: “(*Ethos*) was a mode of being for the subject, along with a certain way of acting, a way visible to others. A person’s *ethos* was evident in his clothing, appearance, gait, in the calm with which he responded to every event, and so on...A man possessed of a splendid *ethos*... was someone who practiced freedom in a certain way...But extensive work by the self on the self is required for this practice of freedom to take shape in an *ethos*.” in *ECS*, 286.

<sup>154</sup> “Subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge.” While it is quite clear what he means in the first definition, the second definition remains vague, and thus invites various interpretations. Bob Robinson interprets the second definition as such: “in using the term ‘self-knowledge’ Foucault implies that one’s conscience serves as the agent that binds one to those qualities constitutive of the self, and it does this by informing the subject of the self that it *ought* to be. Hence, a subject is defined by its possession of a self-knowledge of not only who it is but of who it ought to be, and it is the latter – the normativity of conscience – which, according to Foucault, produces identity by imposing upon an individual the self as a goal that ought to be realized.” In Elvis Imafidon, “A Case for Foucault’s Reversal of Opinion on the Autonomy of the Subject” in *The Ethics of Subjectivity: Perspectives since the Dawn of Modernity* (London, Palgrave&Macmillan, 2015), 105.

all subjects. Foucault rejects this autonomous subject who allegedly “suppl(ies) the foundations of its freedom” in various phases during his intellectual journey.<sup>155</sup> The first objection can be found in *The Order of Things* (1994) in which he declares ‘the death of Man’: “The death of man is nothing to get particularly excited about... I don’t mean by it the death of god but the death of the subject, of the Subject in capital letters, of the subject as origin and foundation of Knowledge, of Freedom, of Language and History.”<sup>156</sup> The target of this criticism is the figure of sovereign subject which is deemed to have the capacity to determine its conduct.<sup>157</sup> Since, for him, subject is a ‘form’ whose content is filled by ‘discursive practices’ that are variable on the basis of a particular historical moment, so that it cannot be the source of knowledge but the ‘effect’ of it. Besides underlining the subject’s constitution within history, Foucault often emphasizes its lack of unity, or unified essence. For him, the subject is not a substance but a form, which is not identical to itself. One’s varying experiences of being a subject in the different fields of life, that is, being a political subject while giving a vote and having a dissimilar experience of being a subject while fulfilling desires in a sexual relationship at the end of the day exemplifies this lack of unity (*ECS* 290). This point is perhaps one of the prominent reasons behind him calling himself Nietzschean. Nietzsche in no uncertain terms claims that “The ‘subject’ is only a fiction”.<sup>158</sup> He undermines the reasoning which assumes the ‘doer’ behind the ‘deeds.’<sup>159</sup> For him, the subject which is alleged is the center of all conduct, and can solely be described as a “multiplicity” composed of “interaction and struggle” of multiple forces.<sup>160</sup> Nietzsche takes up the same perspective in his views on history.<sup>161</sup> For him, the attitude of historical

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<sup>155</sup> Bob Robinson in the same article mentions three phases of Foucault’s “radical critique of the subject”: the phases are titled as ‘philosophical anthropology’, ‘archaeology’, and ‘power relations’.  
<sup>156</sup> “The Birth of a World”, *Foucault Live: (Interviews, 1961- 1984)*, ed. S. Lotringer, trans. L. Hochroth, J. Johnston (New York: Semiotext(e), 1996), 67.

<sup>157</sup> Robinson, 108.

<sup>158</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Will To Power*, trans. W. Kaufmann, R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 199.

<sup>159</sup> “There is thinking: therefore there is something that thinks”: this is the upshot of all Descartes’ argumentation. But that means positing as “true *a priori*” our belief in the concept of substance that when there is thought there has to be something “that thinks” is simply a formulation of our grammatical custom that adds a doer to every deed.” in *Ibid.*, 268.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 270.

<sup>161</sup> See Chapter 2.

investigation expecting that an event of today and its origin in history share the same identity, has affinity with the assumption that subject has a substance and/or essence and is a unified entity. Foucault, in his article “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” states his affinity with Nietzsche in his anti-essentialist views on subject and history, underlining the function of genealogy, which is to disassociate the ascribed unity of the subject as well as the events: “This is necessary because this rather weak identity, which we attempt to support and to unify under a mask, is in itself only a parody: it is plural; countless spirits dispute its possession; numerous systems intersect and compete.” (*NGH*, 94). Therefore, for Foucault, the subject is an entity whose ‘form’ came into being in power relations and whose ‘content’ is lack of essence.

### **5.3. SUBJECT AND ‘GAMES OF TRUTH’**

Besides power relations his notion of ‘games of truth’ plays an important role in the formation of certain subjectivities and the way the subject constitutes itself, and became an ‘object of knowledge’ (*ECS*, 290). Foucault defines ‘the games of truth’ as “a set of procedures that lead to a certain result, which, on the basis of its principles and rules of procedure, may be considered valid or invalid, winning or losing” (297).

The ‘critical history of thought’, which Foucault puts forward as the objective of his philosophy, cannot be thought of without the concept of ‘games of truth’. For him, ‘truth’ is the main ground on where “discourse, institutions, politics, and subjects” establish their network.<sup>162</sup> As we have mentioned earlier, this concept emerges at the junction point of the modes of ‘subjectivation’ and ‘objectivation’. For Foucault the analysis of the ‘mode of subjectivation’ equals to determining “what the subject must be, to what condition he is subject, what status he must have, what position he must occupy in reality or in the imaginary, in order to become a

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<sup>162</sup> Don T. Deere, “Truth” in *The Cambridge Foucault Lexicon*, ed. L. Lawrol, J.Nale, (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 517.

legitimate subject of this or that type of knowledge” (EW2,459). Again, determining ‘the mode of objectivation’ corresponds to “a question of determining under what conditions something can become an object for a possible knowledge” (460). It is the effect of truth which leads to the construction of ‘the knowing subject and the known object’. For instance, the analysis of how the concept of mental illness emerged today is possible by examining which ‘truth games’ ‘madness’ was involved in in the history. In this sense, Foucault asks the following questions: “How, in the Western world, madness had managed to become a precise object of analysis and scientific inquiry...How was the mad subject placed in this game of truth defined by a medical model or a knowledge?” (EW3,289-290). The formation of the knowledge on madness and accordingly the division of the ‘mad’ and ‘sane’ subjects, in short, the ‘truth’ of madness, are very much connected with the political and economic conditions involving the historical processes such as the birth of capitalism, the new wave in urbanization, the fluctuation in population, and thus the birth of normalizing society. Hence, it is very clear that Foucault does not dissociate ‘games of truth’ from power relations. An object of knowledge legitimizes itself, namely be articulated in truth only to the extent that it has a cooperation with power relations, and power relations build its network via connecting to truth of a knowledge. In that sense, Foucault criticizes the ideas claiming truth is external to power and vice versa. The understanding that his critique aims at is Marxist ideology theory, which claims that if the ‘machinations of power’ that determines the false ideology or discourse are eliminated, the truth can be revealed.<sup>163</sup>

Foucault’s consideration on the immanence of truth and power, in other words, his criticism against ideas accepting truth with ‘self-evident’ property is based on his battle against ‘traditional correspondence theory of truth’. According to this theory, in order to consider something as true, there should be correspondence between the knowledge of the subject and “pregiven objects in reality”.<sup>164</sup> However, here,

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<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

neither subject nor object is treated with their historical existence. For Foucault, in order to an object and a subject emerge in reality, and thus correspond to each other, they must enter into 'games of truth'. Hence, reducing to truth to mere 'logical' correspondence, ignoring the historical constitution of subject and object, and accepting truth as a universal and ever-lasting fact amount to neglecting the fact that truth is a historical constitution and directly related to power relations.

Foucault, in this context, puts forward two types of truth: 'demonstrative truth' and 'truth-event'. The former, for him, corresponds to "knowledge of the kind we call scientific basically presupposes that there is truth everywhere, in every place and all the time".<sup>165</sup> Scientific knowledge, starting from 'universal' truth, tends to treat events that do not fit its claim of truth as errors and mistakes, which in this case they only serve to support the truth itself. However, Foucault's 'archaeological' method has an inverse direction: he starts his investigation with 'particulars', namely, discourses and practices. In other words, errors and mistakes themselves are the ones that bring Foucault to the 'truth' of knowledge, if there is so. His method is relevant to the second type of truth which he calls as 'truth event' and defines as "a dispersed, discontinuous, interrupted truth which will only speak or appear from time to time, where it wishes to, in certain places; a truth which does not appear everywhere, at all times, or for everyone; a truth which is not waiting for us, because it is a truth which has its favorable moments, its propitious places, its privileged agents and bearers. It is a truth which has its geography."<sup>166</sup> Taking 'madness' as an example, an approach which starts from universals will put forward a 'scientific' definition explaining what 'madness in itself' come to mean and will test specific cases to understand whether those cases conform the definition of madness. However, 'archaeological' method will first of all focus on the "different events and practices which are apparently organized around something that is supposed to be madness".<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Michel Foucault, *Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the College de France, 1973-1974*, ed. J. Lagrange, trans. G. Burchell, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 235.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 235

<sup>167</sup> Deere, 519.

Foucault also applies 'games of truth' to his concept of 'subjectivity' and defines it as "the way in which the subject experiences himself in a game of truth where he relates to himself" (*EW*2,461). The subject's self-experience means that she treats herself as an object. The subject's objectification is possible by making her own existence an object of knowledge that can be analyzed, interpreted and understood as "a domain of possible knowledge". This relationship that the subject establishes with herself develops within the framework of certain forms of truth. Confession practices are one of these forms. Here, the subject assumes that she can reach the truth by expressing the processes she experiences 'inside'. Psychiatric practices are another example of truth games set up for the subject. Here, too, there is a claim that the internal processes of the subject are pregnant with the truth. This is the most important point in terms of the subject of this study. For this reason, it is meaningful to repeat the questions that we emphasized in the other part of the study: In today's world, what kind of truth does the concept of self-realization, which is monopolized by the culture of personal development, promise the subject about herself? Since when does the path of truth consist in one's taking herself as an analysis object? Or is self-realization something that can happen without any assumption of truth?

#### **4.4. FOUCAULT'S 'ETHICAL TURN'**

Up to this point, regarding the concepts of power relations and truth games, we have mentioned the way human beings are turned into subjects via 'coercive practices'; however, for Foucault, this is not the only case pertaining to a subject's relationship with the games of truth. In his lectures at the College de France, he deals with games of truth in terms of their involvement in "self-formation of the subject" (282). In his article, "Technologies of the Self," which corresponds to the period in which his concern shifts more to a subject's relationship with herself, he formulates his objective for twenty-five years as the historical quest of the ways how "humans develop knowledge about themselves" (*TS*, 18). Through different fields of knowledge, (e.g., "economics, biology, psychiatry, medicine, and penology"),

which Foucault analyzes “as very specific ‘truth games’”, humans are enabled to acquire ‘tools’ to understand themselves and their environments. He puts forth “four major types of these ‘technologies’” in which subjects use the knowledge acquired by truth games to “produce, transform, or manipulate things”, “use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification”, “determine the conduct of individuals”, and to work on their selves in order to transform themselves (18). Accepting that in his previous works he much more focuses on technologies of domination and power, Foucault clearly states that his interest shifted to “how an individual acts upon himself in the technology of self” (19). He defines ‘technologies of self’ as such: “(the technology) which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and semis, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.” (18). We can understand this theoretical shift he made in his conceptualization of the subjectivation process, that is, the shift from the analysis of coercive practices to the self-relationship of the subject, through his many articles and interviews, but I would like to follow the traces of this through his accounts in the second volume of the *History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure* (1978).

His last major work, *History of Sexuality*, has two main questions: first, he asks how ‘sexuality,’ which “did not appear until the beginning of the nineteenth century” as a unified term, appeared as a distinct “experience” and “caused individuals to recognize themselves as subjects of a sexuality”? (UP, 4) Secondly, Foucault is interested in the question of “why is sexual conduct, why are the activities and pleasures that attach to it, an object of moral solicitude?” (UP, 10) To give an adequate account of these specific questions, he feels the urge to break with the certain conceptions which give an adequate answer only to the nature of interdictions imposed upon the sexuality of subjects. For him, “the notion of desire, or of the desiring subject” should come into play in order to carry out a comprehensive analysis on the formation of sexual experiences and subjects of sexuality.

According to Foucault, a historical analysis on the formation of experiences of 'sexuality' should be conducted on three axes: "the formation of sciences that refer to it", "the systems of power that regulate its practice", and "the forms within which individuals are able, are obliged, to recognize themselves as subjects of this sexuality". And all these axes require specific tools for the analysis of sexuality: his study on the fields of "medicine and psychiatry" and "punitive power and disciplinary practices" provides him analytical tools for first two axes, which are, respectively, "the analysis of discursive practices" and "the analysis of power relations and their technologies." For the third axis, however, Foucault acknowledges he needs to come up with a new theoretical tool to conduct an adequate research on sexuality. For, the third axis requires not an 'outside view' of the subject but viewing of the subject 'within' her subjective experiences. And this is possible, for Foucault, through the genealogy of "desiring (hu)man":

(the analysis of) the practices by which individuals were led to focus their attention on themselves, to decipher, recognize, and acknowledge themselves as subjects of desire, bringing into play between themselves and themselves a certain relationship that allows them to discover, in desire, the truth of their being, be it natural or fallen (*UP*, 5).

This above-mentioned 'theoretical shift', the emphasis on the 'ethical turn' in secondary literature to describe his last period, or the comments that he is now 'more' concerned with the subject's experience, all that corresponds to the shift of his interest from the history of interdictions to the desiring subject. This quest, pivoting on the questioning of moral value of sexuality, led him to conduct a long historical study going back to the ancient Greek and Greco-Roman, as well as early Christian periods. For, he recognized that in classical antiquity, sexual activity and sexual pleasures were already problematized within the scope of morality: an understanding of morality sharing no affinity with Christian morality, as well as contemporary connotations of morality. Hence, his quest on the desiring subject brought him to self-technologies of the ancient Greek and Greco-Roman periods

which were built around the precepts of the ‘*gnōthi seauton* (know thyself)’ and ‘*epimeleia heautou* (the care for self).’ The Greek’s conscious work of freedom, which Foucault calls ethics, are practiced in the light of those precepts. He also refers to ethics as “the kind of relationship [one] ought to have with [oneself]” (*ONGE*, 263). One’s care for oneself, the work conducted on one’s own existence; the exercises aimed at controlling the soul and body, the maintenance of this control in the relations with others’ attitudes (as spouse, sexual partner, friend, and citizen) by adoption of the right attitude are the main goals of Ancient Greek self-practices. We have seen that the process of objectification takes place in the triad of knowledge, power, and ethics. If ethics are also a mode of objectification, why does Foucault approach it as a vehicle of emancipation? Foucault at times is accused of instilling hopelessness in people or of weakening their motivation to transgress boundaries by depicting their ‘imprisonment’ in a very profound manner. However, it is clear that Foucault sees an opportunity for emancipation in these self-practices. There is something special in the way the Greeks practiced ethics that distinguishes it from other self-technologies (e.g. Christian and contemporary ones). The peculiar relationship of Greek ethics with the other two objectification modes, namely with power and knowledge, allows for the possibility of a ‘way out’ by introducing “new forms of subjectivity”, which are not dictated by power strategies aiming to reduce one to a subject by tying one to one’s identity. Hence the very question of Foucault is “What is at stake, then, is this: how can the growth of capabilities [*capacites*] be disconnected from the intensification of power relations?”<sup>168</sup> Before examining the characteristics of ancient freedom practices which have the potential to offer one the opportunity to create one’s self without being subjected to the constraints of an external system, I would like to touch on how Foucault approaches his project within the role that he attributes to philosophy.

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<sup>168</sup> “What is Enlightenment?” in *EWI*, 317, (hereafter cited in text as *WE*).

## 5.5. 'CRITICAL ONTOLOGY OF OURSELVES'

The term “problematization” has an important function in Foucault’s historical investigations. He defines “the study of problematization” as the “way to analyze questions of general import in their historically unique form.” (*WE* 318). In a more general sense, Foucault characterizes “the proper task of a history of thought” as “defin(ing) the conditions in which human beings ‘problematize’ what they are, what they do, and the world in which they live.” (*UP*, 10). Conducting genealogical investigation of problematizations, that is, the examination of the problematized phenomena in their historical singularity, and the inquiry of the discourses, rules or power relations in which they are produced, and the inquiry of the resulting practices that put people in a relationship with a certain subjective experience, corresponds to the ‘historico-critical’ function that a philosophical inquiry must fulfill. For Foucault, philosophy must first of all have a critical function. The question, for instance, of why sexuality is problematized in the realm of morality today (while it was treated within the framework of “art of existence” in ancient Greece, it was a matter of strict prohibitions developed around the church in the Christian tradition, and its appearance in the modern ages was molded in ‘scientia sexualis’, medical and psychological knowledge) allows us to take a critical distance to our relationship with sexuality or, as Foucault puts it, stand “at the frontiers” of our “sexuality” (*WE*, 315). Or, when we ask why the way of realizing oneself is presented as “discovering oneself” and “being oneself”, and when the accompanying questions of “what is so-called ‘self?’” and, “what does it mean to be ‘oneself’ today?” are asked, these questions lead us to view this issue within its historical context and thus allow us to take a critical attitude toward our ‘sexualities’. In general, Foucault invites us to problematize our very being, namely, that the way how we think, act, give value, and relate to ourselves. He calls this inquiry “the historical ontology of ourselves.”

Constructively criticizing Kant’s prominent article “Was heist Aufklärung? (What is Enlightenment?),” Foucault states that Kant underlines a significant point pertaining to the critical attitude of philosophy. In this article, which was published

in a monthly magazine in 1784, Kant depicts the characteristics of the human of Enlightenment: the 'enlightened' is the one who has courage to use her own reason (315). For Foucault this article opens up a new horizon in the activity of philosophizing by "rais(ing) the philosophical question of the present day" (305). The questions of "What's going on just now? What's happening to us? What is this world, this period, this precise moment in which we are living?", as well as "What are we in a very precise moment of history?" highlight that the problems of philosophy (should) first of all rely on the issues of the "present time" and our mode of being "in this very moment" (*SP*, 785). However, for Foucault, Kant's critical perspective on today is set on determining the limits of knowledge and "identif(ing) the universal structures of all knowledge" accordingly (*WE*, 315). To Foucault, philosophy should take another path in its critical method; "the critical question of today," rather than sticking with the 'limits' and 'universal structures', should the question concerning those limits and open up a critical space presenting the possibility of exceeding these limits. Accordingly, for him, we should position ourselves on a 'frontier' where we can acknowledge where we stand, observe what is behind, and envisage what is beyond. Being 'at the frontier' entails the idea of demolishing the limit itself by taking one step beyond. According to Foucault, to go one step further, to eliminate the limit, implies examining the conditions in which the limit reveals itself as a truth, as 'universal, necessary, obligatory,' and this is possible with an 'archeological' and 'genealogical' historical investigation. Foucault also defines this 'limit-attitude' as an 'experimental' action (perhaps this is related to his attitude of not offering a particular "recipe" for any liberation movement). Unlike the liberation movements that move from theory to action, the limit-inquiry enables one to determine the areas that require struggle for change by opening up a space for historical inquiry and putting itself to the test of contemporary reality (316). This is what Foucault defines as "the critical ontology of ourselves", namely being at the frontiers, testing the limits with a historico-critical attitude, identifying the spots from where it can be eliminated, and finally crossing beyond it. It is a form of the philosophical ethos that Kant initiates in "What is Enlightenment?" by problematizing 'today' and 'us' as we are today, and

Foucault reorients its critical function by rejecting the attitude of determining universal boundaries and instead positing the idea of transcending them. “The critical ontology of ourselves” is a work of freedom, and thus an attempt at ethical living. And it transcends the perspective of liberation movements having the objective of self-discovery and self-disclosure. For, to Foucault “the critical ontology of ourselves” eventually leads to “the displacement and transformation of frameworks of thinking, the changing of received values and all the work that has been done to think otherwise, to do something else, to become something other than what one is.” This radical shift of the subject rests on a historico-critical attitude toward today, through which one can discover that the truths ascribed to identities, power relations, and institutions are historically contingent, and thus, conceive that things could be another way around. “The critical ontology of ourselves” brings about the following three questions pertaining to the axes of knowledge, power, and ethics: “How are we constituted as subjects of our own knowledge? How are we constituted as subjects who exercise or submit to power relations? How are we constituted as moral subjects of our own actions?” (318). With these queries, Foucault offers subjects a kind of ‘way out’ from being attached to their identities by being exposed to “individualization techniques and of totalization procedures” of modern power structures (*SP*, 782). This radical ‘way out’ is possible with ‘creative’ and ‘experimental’ work that subjects perform on themselves. It is neither a matter of a ‘reformation’ of the qualities that a subject possesses nor a restoration of the relationship that one has with power structures. Foucault’s project is devoted to shaking the ground of considerations of being subject; he invites us to a ‘refusal’ of what we are. In Foucault’s understanding, the subject is so immersed in power relations and truth games that the exit can only be possible by deserting the place it occupies. Foucault also calls this process ‘desubjectivation’.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> This idea relies on the thought of philosophers, Nietzsche, Bataille, and Blanchot, to whom Foucault owes much in his intellectual journey. For him, while in traditional phenomenology ‘experience’ has the function of rediscover(ing) the sense in which the subject that (one) is indeed responsible”, in the line that Nietzsche, Bataille, and Blanchot open up “experience has the function of wrenching the subject from itself, of seeing to it that the subject is no longer itself, or that it is brought to its annihilation or its dissolution.” in “Interview with Michel Foucault” in *EW3* 241.

One might rightly ask how the change in one's relationship with oneself, that is, this ethical work on oneself, relates to all these political categories. Moreover, reservations may be held that the categories of the practices of the self of ancient tradition and of the 'aesthetics of existence', which is defined as the reproduction of one's self as a work of art, would elicit a form of narcissism or self-indulgence.<sup>170</sup> For the former question, it could be said that, Foucault considers ethics and aesthetics not independent from politics but within it. As it is strongly emphasized in the previous paragraphs, one's work on oneself requires asking one's current state of being in life, which eventually brings into question one's relationship with others and with the coercive force of power that one is subjected to. Since one's very being is political, the ethical work cannot be deemed free from politics. Moreover, we have put forth that ethics in ancient Greece was foremost related with the practices of freedom aimed at not being a slave of either passions of the body, or governors of the city. "It is certain that if one takes the history of the care of the self in Greek philosophy, the relationship with politics is obvious." And for the latter critics, Foucault's reservation should first be recalled regarding the application of a historical theme in today's world: "...you can't find the solution of a problem in the solution of another problem raised at another moment by other people. You see, what I want to do is not the history of solutions - and that is the reason why I don't accept the word *alternative*. I would like to do the genealogy of problems, of *problematiques*." (*ONGE*, 256) Hence, the criticisms pointing to the danger of self-indulgence that 'aesthetics of existence' may bring should first of all

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<sup>170</sup> "Jürgen Habermas registered ethical concerns about Foucault's putative affinities with the 'aesthetic modernism' of 'nihilistic dark writers of the bourgeoisie' like Nietzsche, which he equates with irrationalism, nihilism, and amoralism...According to (Richard) Wolin, dedifferentiating aesthetic and ethical experience lead necessarily to 'aesthetic decisionism', the tendency to aestheticize and instrumentalize others as mere material for one's own self-fashioning, with disturbing implications for human empathy, mutuality, and solidarity."; "(Somongy) Varga criticizes (aesthetics of existence) as 'recasting of a merely aesthetic self-fashioning, oriented towards the 'aesthetic' achievement of an original 'personal' style',...assesses the aesthetics of existence as an 'aesthetic Modernism,' in which the radicalization or 'totalization' of the aesthetic dimension leads to an "arbitrary artistic stylization" and an idea of "life as art," which seems not to provide a critical standpoint" in Graham Longford, "Sensitive Killers, Cruel Aesthetes, and Pitiless Poets": Foucault, Rorty, and the Ethics of Self-Fashioning, *Polity*, 33, no. 4 (2001), 569-592, The University of Chicago Press, 573. See Dan Eugen Ratiu "The "Aesthetics of Existence" in the Last Foucault: Art as a Model of Self-Invention", *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 55, no. 2, (2021), 60.

focus on the aspect of how those ancient practices are applied in today's world before criticizing the concept itself, since in Foucault's writings there are nearly no clues about how it is going to work in the contemporary world. However, I believe that the individuals of the contemporary world can relate to Foucault's interpretations of ancient techniques of self-fashioning. And, they can extract an alternative way of self-realization.

On the other hand, a person's care of her self, one's work done to her self in terms of regulating her body, thoughts, conducts, "implies a relationship with others ...enables one to occupy (her) rightful position in the city, the community, or interpersonal relationships" (*ECS*, 287). Today, we see governors that swear at the public, commit corruption, and deceive their friends or left-wing party members who mob their comrades and objectify women within the party, perhaps because these people do not ask themselves the Socratic question of 'Do I care enough about myself?', or because they have no idea about the relationship between ethics and politics.

## **5.6. 'AESTHETICS OF EXISTENCE', 'ART OF LIFE'**

Foucault defines 'aesthetics of existence' as follows: "the formation and development of a practice of self whose aim was to constitute oneself as the worker of the beauty of one's own life." This concept is very much related with the Greek concept '*tekhne tou biou (art of life)*'. First of all, we need to look at what the concepts of 'aesthetics' and 'tekhne' suggest for one's relationship with oneself. The Greek term 'tekhne' denotes 'art, craft, technique, or skill.' Hence, taking life as the object of 'tekhne' introduces the objective of gaining mastership over all the aspects of life, like a guitar master having a good grasp of every single string of her instrument. And Foucault underlines the fact that for Greeks the problem is not the *tekhne* of the self but "it was the *tekhne* of life...how to live" (*ONGE*, 260). Greek's emphasis on life, rather than self can be interpreted such that one's work on oneself cannot be simply reduced to psychological processes but corresponds to a wider

concept covering one's relationship to life. On the other hand, the terms of aesthetics in an ethical work introduces the idea of giving 'style' to existence. What Foucault observes from Ancient Greek self-technologies is that an individual has the perspective of treating herself as a work of art; as if the person is a sculptor and the self is a sculpture to be sculpted. Foucault states that today's people are not very familiar with relating aesthetic concepts to self. This is first of all because contemporary individuals are mostly accustomed to think of self-related concepts with the terminology offered by ethics and psychology, and also because their way of thinking on aesthetics are limited to the modern artist and her piece of arts. Hence, the term aesthetic cannot find its applications in the other fields: "What strikes me is the fact that, in our society, art has become something that is related only to objects and not to individuals or to life. That art is something which is specialized or done by experts who are artists. But couldn't everyone's life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object but not our life?" (261).

The term 'aesthetics of existence' has affinity with the way Foucault uses the term 'experience.' For him, an experience is "something that one fabricates oneself, that doesn't exist before and will exist afterward".<sup>171</sup> Approaching one's self and life itself with the possibilities offered by aesthetics, that is, envisioning one's own self as a field where one can apply her creativity, corresponds to a kind of experience, a unique experience she can have with herself. The product a person can obtain as a result of 'aesthetic' experience, her new form of existence, carries her to a place that is radically different from what she was before. "Why should a painter work if he is not transformed by his own painting?"<sup>172</sup> There is something tricky about approaching the relationship of one and her existence through the analogy of artist-artwork, since there is a general tendency to think of the artwork as a separate entity from the artist; thus, it may give rise to the assumption of there being an isolated self-governing process behind and an immature self waiting to be worked with.

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<sup>171</sup> "Interview with Michel Foucault," 243.

<sup>172</sup> "An Interview by Stephen Riggins" in *EWI*, 131.

This assumption may be somewhat valid considering how the philosophical tradition of the ancient Greek conceptualizes self; that is, Plato and Aristotle locate reason in a place separate from the other capacities of the self, wherein it regulates the passions of the body. However, the idea that Foucault seeks to convey to us with the analogy of artist-artwork is not based on the idea that the capacities of the self interact with each other within the dichotomy of ruler and ruled. Rather, he assumes that the artist and the work of art have a reciprocal communication with each other: the work of art is a manifestation of the artist's existence, and as the work is shaped, the artist is also shaped. Therefore, in the concept of 'aesthetics of existence', it is the creative process itself that matters, and one can transform oneself through the creative process.<sup>173</sup>

In his article "What is Enlightenment?", Foucault gives us the clues of how 'aesthetics of existence' might take shape in modernity. In this article, Foucault examines the manifestation of the attitude of modernity in Kant's philosophy, which we have mentioned above. Another figure discussed in the context of one's relation to modernity is Baudelaire. Here, Baudelaire appears as an example of an artist who establishes a continuity between the art he produces and his self. Although Foucault does not refer directly to the term of 'aesthetics of existence' here, his comments on the artist persona of Baudelaire gives us enough clues to

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<sup>173</sup> One's producing oneself as a work of art and approaching oneself as an art product brings to mind Marx's concept of 'self-objectification'. This concept is closely related to human freedom and self-realization and is in stark contrast to the concept of 'alienation.' Marx does not consider human existence independent of its relation to others and nature. Nature is not a meaningful structure in itself independent of a subjective effect, human is the one who manufactures nature. Therefore, when a person realizes herself in action by using her labor according to her desires and talents, she transforms both herself and nature. Self-objectification, in a sense, means the union of the objects of nature which embodied in one's labor with one's being. One does not stay away from the field, that is, herself and nature, where one use her labor, as it is the case in 'alienation' but becomes a part of them: "It is only when the objective world becomes everywhere for man in society the world of man's essential powers...that all objects become for him the objectification of himself, become objects which confirm and realize his individuality, become his objects: that is, man himself becomes the object... My object can only be the confirmation of one of my essential powers – it can therefore only exist for me insofar as my essential power exists for itself as a subjective capacity; because the meaning of an object for me goes only so far as my sense goes (has only a meaning for a sense corresponding to that object)." in *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto*, trans. M. Milligan, (New York: Prometheus Books, 1988), 107-108

conclude that Foucault considers him within the context of ‘aesthetics of existence.’ In the context of Baudelaire, Foucault underlines a point he did not address in the ancient Greek aesthetic ethics, which is the relationship one establishes with one’s own time. We referred to this aspect in the context of ‘ontology of ourselves,’ which we mentioned above as one’s identification of oneself in the very ‘moment’ of the time and revealing and going beyond the limits that constrain oneself. Thus, the modern version of ‘aesthetics of existence’ can be considered in terms of the interplay of the artist herself, her work, and her responsibility for time. Foucault quotes from Baudelaire wherein he describes the man of modernity: “Away he goes, hurrying, searching...He is looking for that quality which you must allow me to call ‘modernity.’...He makes it his business to extract from fashion whatever element it may contain of poetry, within history.” (WE 311). Here, the artist’s grasp of the spirit of modernity with his artistic tools also causes him to establish a peculiar relationship with himself, or is the result of this special relationship with himself. “...modernity for Baudelaire is not simply a form of relationship to the present; it is also a mode of relationship that must be established with oneself.” The ‘dandy,’ a social figure of the early 19th century who adopted an aristocratic lifestyle in, is the most prominent example of a person of modernity who establishes an aesthetic relationship with himself. Baudelaire defines ‘dandies’ as follows: “These beings have no other status, but that of cultivating the idea of beauty in their own persons, of satisfying their passions, of feeling and thinking...”<sup>174</sup> The dandy figure, which Baudelaire sees as “the symbol of the aristocratic superiority of mind”<sup>175</sup>, is not a person who constructs himself by accepting the way he is and by revealing the truth inside himself, but rather a person who invents himself outside his own borders with the resources given by the spirit of the time.

The points we have mentioned so far do not yet make it clear what kind of lifestyle the ‘aesthetic of existence’ corresponds to. Do the standards of aesthetic self-formation amount to creative and original ones which are only dependent on one’s

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<sup>174</sup> Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life*, trans. P. E. Charvet, (Penguin Books, 2010).

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

imagination? Is it something that relative? If I lived in ancient times, for instance, can I wake up one day and state that ‘I will continue my life as a clown from now on,’ would this be something that is considered normal in the society? The answer to these questions lies in the difference between ethics and morality. Foucault presents this difference by comparing Christian morality and Ancient Greek ethics.<sup>176</sup> A prominent difference manifests itself in the way people relate to obligations. The source of morality in the Christian tradition is religious text, which is considered the embodiment of the will of God, and it is given to people in the form of a code of rules. Thus, people have no choice but obey the rules. For, in case of any violation they are accused of opposing the will of God, which is the biggest sin one can commit. Hence, people’s relationship with the obligations in Christian tradition means being in the shadow of divine punishment and on the verge of being guilty. However, in Foucault’s account, the ethics of Ancient Greece lack this normative regulation. One of the most obvious reasons for this is that there is no scripture that can be applied to everyone. There is not an only source that can be cited as the source of ancient Greek ethics; what we might call Greek ethics can only be deduced retrospectively from the sum of the scattered sources in which certain philosophers expressed their views on certain issues. “Pythagorean austerity was not the same as that of the Stoics, which was very different in turn from that recommended by Epicurus.” (*UP*, 21). However, one can discern the continuity of certain themes and the rules in various ancient texts. For instance, Foucault indicates the generality of the following four themes concerning sexuality: “apropos of the life of the body, the institution of marriage, relations between men, and the existence of wisdom.” (21). Moreover, he emphasizes that the obligations in the ancient ethics were “reserved for a few people in the population; it was not a question of giving a pattern of behavior for everybody.” (*ONGE*, 254) It was not possible, for instance, to come across a rule where women were the subject, because “the Greek ethics were linked to a purely virile society”, their names could only be mentioned in terms of being the wives of men (256).

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<sup>176</sup> We touched upon this subject partly in part in 4.7. entitled “Foucault's Criticism of ‘Inwardness’”.

Concerning the relationship people have built with obligation within ethics, the rules do not aim to have people renounce or repress their passions, thoughts, or conducts, but rather to give a style to them. It is a matter of tempering conduct. And if the rules are not followed; for example, if one is observed to overindulge in the pleasures of the body or neglect his duties in the city by spending time with his young lover, his conduct will be judged according to the degree of moderation and excess, but this person will not be called sinful or deviant. Foucault emphasizes that the content of the rules is constituted based on “an axis of experience” and “a cluster of concrete relationships: relations to the body, with the question of health” (*UP*, 260). Hence, the ancient obligations foremost involve the rules of conduct; they include detailed exercises for ones seeking austerity, and thus are mostly interested in the evolvment of one’s control over her conduct. Hence, the main issue of the ancient ethics is: “Which *tekhne do* I have to use in order to live as well as I ought to live?” (ONGE 260). Many examples of such ascetic exercises<sup>177</sup> can be found in Foucault's 1981-82 College de France lectures entitled “The Hermeneutics of the Subject”. One of these is the Pythagorean technique of “the purifying preparation for the dream”: “Since dreaming while you sleep is...to be in contact with a divine world...before sleep, then, [one] must engage in a number of ritual practices that will purify the soul ...Among these techniques are those of listening to music, inhaling perfumes, and also, of course, examination of conscience...” (*HS*, 48). Foucault refers to terms frequently used in the literature of self-techniques, one of which is *anakhoresis* from Roman Stoic texts, meaning “the individual withdraws into herself and cuts herself off from the external world” (50). Another is the term *paraskheue*, which is found in Epicurean and Stoic texts, which means preparing oneself for life: “we have to arm ourselves, to be equipped for life.” (88). Even sleeping positions have a counterpart in ascetic practices. In the letter Marcus Aurelius wrote to his master Fronto, we come across the expression “turning on my side to sleep”, which Foucault explains is “an important medico-ethical precept of the time. Sleeping on your back exposes you to erotic visions; sleeping on your side

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<sup>177</sup> Ascetic practices denote “an exercise of the self on the self by which one attempts to develop and transform oneself, and to attain to a certain mode of being.”

promises a chaste sleep.” (160). Again, in the same letter, we come across the following statements about dietetic practices: “After easing my throat I went off to my father and attended him at a sacrifice. Then we went to luncheon. What do you think I ate? A little bread, though I saw others devouring oysters, beans, onions, and fat sardines.” (158) Here Aurelius gives an account of his daily nutritional exercise to his master. Finally, we can mention *hypomnemata*, a special kind of notebooks having a prominent place in the memory practices. For, they involve “quotations, fragments of works, examples, and actions to which one had been witness or of which one had read the account, reflections or reasonings one had heard or had come to mind.” (ONGE, 273). On the other hand, when it comes to Christian tradition, the focus of the moral practices shifts from conduct to the inner world. One reason for this is that in Christianity, the inner world is perceived as a place pregnant with sins that may go against the grace of God, and the other reason is that worldly life and the human body are perceived as elements to be renounced because life is seen as a preparation for the next world. For this reason, the most important Christian ascetic practices are the confession practices, in which one should carefully examine one’s inner world and verbally convey all one’s desires that may conflict with the will of God to the religious representative. The paradoxical combination of self-knowledge and self-renunciation forms the practice of confession; one must know herself very well in order to renounce her own desires, body and thoughts, not a single foreign element in self is allowed. Thus, life perspectives such as ‘art of life’ or ‘aesthetics of existence’ in ancient Greece, or self techniques symbolized by the precepts ‘know thyself’ and ‘care for self’ can take limited place in the self-practices of the Christian tradition. The set of strict moral codes of Christian morality is not flexible enough to be applied to one’s unique relation to oneself. These rules bond the person and the self, in an impervious manner.

Another tradition that Foucault examines in contrast to self-practices in Ancient Greece is the tradition of psychoanalysis. Foucault likens its analysis method to Christian confession practices. Like the Christian tradition, there is an assumption

of truth lying in one's inner world and waiting to be confessed and revealed. The contents of the unconscious, which are perceived as a hidden part of one's true self, need to come to the surface of the consciousness. An individual will be able to recognize herself by recognizing her 'genuine' desires, which are usually associated with sexuality. For Foucault, the psychoanalytic tradition tells a lot about the relation of the modern subject to truth. In modernity, one's relationship with truth is different from that in Ancient Greece. In Greek ethics, truth was not something that someone could reach by revealing the secrets in her inner world, but by regulating her bodily pleasures, behaviors, and thoughts within the framework of certain rules, one could become a subject of truth via self-control. That is why the self-practices focused more on the deeds of daily life, the relationship with the other, and the responsibilities in the city, and their repetition, recollection, and exercise, rather than the relationship with truth. Only to the extent that one could apply them could one communicate with the truth and become a subject of it. However, this modern form of knowledge on self, which Foucault believes embodied by psychoanalysis, seems to bypass all these stages, and directly focus on truth itself. Foucault expresses his criticisms of the modern subject's relationship with truth with the following questions: "After all, why truth? Why are we concerned with truth, and more so than with the care of the self? And why must the care of the self occur only through the concern for truth? ...How did it come about that all of Western culture began to revolve around this obligation of truth which has taken a lot of different forms?" (*ECS*, 295). And, in this context, Foucault propounds that we, as modern subjects, are victims of self-knowledge like Oedipus, but not in terms of the content of the truth that is attached to ourselves but our way of approaching truth itself.<sup>178</sup> He considers that Freud was wrong in his interpretation of the Oedipus tragedy, and interprets the tragedy in this way:

We are subject to an Oedipal determination, not at the level of our desire, but at the level of our true discourse. In hearing the true

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<sup>178</sup> James W. Bernauer, "Michel Foucault's Ecstatic Thinking", *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 12, no.2-3,(1987), 174.

discourse of desire, Freud thought that he was hearing desire speaking, whereas it was the echo of his own true discourse, whereas it was the form to which his true discourse was subject.<sup>179</sup>

For Foucault, Oedipus's playing a deadly game with truth does not denote that the truth in the form of desire within us has to come out sooner or later or that the content of truth has such a strength that it determines our life, but rather indicates the fact that the western human is determined by the system of compulsions called truth, and is tied to her identity through it. Therefore, for Foucault, psychoanalysis seems in alliance with the triad of power, knowledge, and ethics which represent the different modes of objectification of a human being.<sup>180</sup> By producing truth about one's self through scientific knowledge, psychoanalysis conducts people's relationship with themselves.

I would like to end this chapter by addressing the general framework of the ethical self-practices. This framework includes four phases of the ethical work that one conducts on oneself. These stages will give one a concrete idea of how the ethical model we referred as 'aesthetic of existence' may actually work as a self-realization practice. It will also draw a clearer picture of why I propose 'aesthetic of existence' as an alternative to the models of self-realization that have been viewed with suspicion from the very beginning of this work.

As it has been mentioned several times, Foucault's term of ethics refers to "the kind of relationship [one] ought to have with [one]self" and the way "how the individual is supposed to constitute himself as a moral subject of his own actions" (ONGE 263). The relationship one establishes with oneself in being an ethical subject has four aspects: determining the substance of the ethical work, the relationship with the guidelines of the work, the form and the content of the practice, and the purpose of this process. The first stage, the determination of substance, is led by the question "Which is the aspect or the part of myself or my behavior which is concerned with

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<sup>179</sup> *Lectures on Will to Know: Lecture at College de France, 1970–1971*, ed. D. Defert, trans. G. Burchell (Palgrave&Macmillan, 2011), 197.

<sup>180</sup> Bernauer, 169.

moral conduct?” (263). This stage is also explained by the concept of problematization: “What is the ethical substance that is problematized?”<sup>181</sup> We mentioned above that among the Greeks, sexuality is a matter of ethics, and there are many expressions regarding the moderate use of sexual pleasures in the ascetic practices. Foucault calls the substance of an ethical work within the framework of sexuality *aphrodisia*. It can be understood as a cluster of the acts, gestures, and contacts that produce sexual pleasure, and Foucault stresses that the term deals with act, desire, and pleasure in a unity.<sup>182</sup> On the other hand, in the Christian tradition, ethical substance is defined via the “problematization of internal evil”.<sup>183</sup> In other words, the aspect of the self to be subjected to ethical work is the one’s inner world, but not actions, gestures and relationships. If we include in this scheme the late modern practices of self-realization that are mostly fed by authentic understanding, it can be again observed that the substance of self-work is one’s the inner world of one in which one's true self lies.

Foucault calls the second stage pertaining to the relationship with the guidelines of the work the ‘mode of subjectivation.’ “Is it, for instance, divine law that has been revealed in a text? Is it natural law, a cosmological order, in each case the same for every living being? Is it a rational rule? Is it the attempt to give your existence the most beautiful form possible?” (*ONGE*, 264). We have discussed in detail above the relations between the rules and the self-study, which developed within the framework of ancient Greek ethics and Christian morality. Yet to go over it once more, ancient technologies of the self, which could be formulated as 'aesthetics of existence', focused more on the concrete application of these rules in one's

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<sup>181</sup> Marli Huijer, “The Aesthetics of Existence in the Work of Michel Foucault”, *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 25, no.2 (1999), 71.

<sup>182</sup> “The dissociation-or partial dissociation at least-of this ensemble would later become one of the basic features of the ethics of the flesh and the notion of sexuality. This dissociation was to be marked, on the one hand, by a certain ‘elision’ of pleasure (a moral devaluation through the injunction given in the preaching by the Christian clergy against the pursuit of sensual pleasure as a goal of sexual practice; a theoretical devaluation shown by the extreme difficulty of finding a place for pleasure in the conception of sexuality); it would also be marked by an increasingly intense problematization of desire (in which the primordial sign of a fallen nature or the structure characteristic of the human condition would be visible).” in UP 42.

<sup>183</sup> Huijer, 70.

relationship with oneself than on the rules themselves. Foucault calls this “politico-aesthetic choice” (267). And in terms of the content of the prescriptions, Foucault states that one cannot find, “long lists of possible acts, such as one finds later in the penitential books, the manuals of confession, or in works on psychopathology...that served to define what was licit, permitted, or normal, and to describe the vast family of prohibited gestures.” (*UP*, 38). Again, if we examine the types of ethical principles both in the culture of self-help and in the tradition of psychoanalysis, it can be said that both convey their prescriptions in a mode of truth; while the former considers the truth on a more mystical basis, the latter’s truth is molded in the form of scientific knowledge. The suggestions made in the self-help literature for people to change themselves, some of which we have mentioned in the first chapter, consist of information that is not personalized, has practical function in daily life but remains too superficial to be applied to different situations. To give an example: “If we are one hundred percent ourselves, we will be able to become one with existence and realize the inner light, love, trust and serenity within us.”<sup>184</sup>

The third stage concerning ‘self-forming activity’ brings about the following questions: “What are the means by which we can change ourselves in order to become ethical subjects?...How [can] we work on this ethical substance?” (*ONGE*, 265). This aspect of ethical work concerns the ascetic practices themselves. It refers to the exercises one practices pertaining to the fields of clothing, dietetic program, physical exercises, bodily hygiene, sexual intercourse, sleeping position, the use of memory, rhetorics, domestic relations, love affairs, responsibilities in politics and so on. Hence this stage covers the way an individual works on herself in giving style to her ethos and in becoming an ethical subject. In today’s world, ascetic practices seem to be monopolized by religious knowledge. Of course, one can mention the secular or non-secular sect-like structures having specific ascetic programs. However, my comment only covers the types of knowledge that dominates the culture and, thus, available to the access of public. On the other hand, to reiterate Foucault’s criticism mentioned above, scientific knowledge aimed at

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<sup>184</sup> See 4.1.

the transformation of one, namely, psychological knowledge, are based on one's relationship with the truth rather than the practices that shapes one's behavior. In psychoanalysis, the priority is to express the truth that lies in the unconscious of the person, the aspects such as what she feeds herself during the day or how she treats her body throughout her life remain minor details.

The last stage is about the *telos* of self-forming activity, which requires asking the questions of "Which is the kind of being to which we aspire when we behave in a moral way? For instance, shall we become pure, or immortal, or free, or masters of ourselves, and so on?" (265). In giving style to their existence, ancient Greeks seek to obtain mastery on their selves and thus to build ethical relationships with the other. Another point that can be considered as the *teleologie* of self-fashioning endeavor is "to live a beautiful life, and to leave to others memories of a beautiful existence." (254). Aesthetic terms do not only indicate the person's relationship with the rules, the way of approaching ascetic practices, and the creative intervention in this entire process, they are also used to describe the characteristics of life that are desired to be achieved. On the other hand, when it comes to Christian morality the *telos* of the ethical practice becomes purity. Confession as a self-deciphering method serves one's struggle against the temptations of the soul, and thus the purification of the soul. And when it comes to late modernity, the *telos* of self-realization practices appears as authentic aspirations, that is, the ideals of 'being oneself,' 'self-discovery', and 'self-disclosure'.

To summarize the points we have made so far, we first examined the subject's relationship with power relations and games of truth. The subject appears as the entity that comes into being by being subjected to the constraints of the system of power and the knowledge produced via games of truth. We touched upon the idea that human beings are turned into subjects via 'modes of objectification', which are dividing practices, scientific classification and subjectification. Then we examined the idea that the 'ethical turn' of Foucault's entails, namely that, his main issue was shifted from the analysis of oppressive mechanisms that repress, the subject and bind people to their identity to the relationship that subject establishes with herself.

And this was what he calls ethics. The subject that we see in this last period of Foucault is an active subject working on herself with the tools she has acquired in order to become an ethical subject rather than being a passive subject under the coercion of power. Apart from examining the place of subject in Foucault's philosophy, we also traced the practices of freedom. Here, he emphasized freedom practices rather than liberation practices and underlined the close link between ethics and freedom. An ethical practice was possible by making a critical ontology of our present position in history, and this was what he also called limit-attitude, which involves the stages of stepping up to our own limits, analyzing how we are limited as a subject and determining the possible resistance points. 'Ontology of ourselves' provides us the prospect of disclosing and transcending the modes of objectification and creating other kinds of subjectivities. He also gave clues about constructing different kinds of subjectivities in the ancient self-practices, which we mentioned mainly referring to the second volume of the *History of Sexuality* and his interview "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress". The 'aesthetics of existence' presents us a way of stepping up to our own limit and creating a new subjectivity, that is, pursuing an active and creative perspective in our relationship with ourselves, in our relationship with the rules we take into account in transforming ourselves, and in applying these rules to our own lives. And thus, asking the following question: How do I relate to knowledge, truth, and power in my relationship with myself? Therefore, Foucault's the term of aesthetic has a close link with ethics and politics. The subject can only free herself by conducting her siege carefully and by making a creative surpassing of her limits.

## CONCLUSION

What does self-realization mean in today's world? Why do we want to realize ourselves? What resources do we use to realize ourselves? What principles are we based on and what kind of work do we do on ourselves? These questions constituted my starting point as I began this study. The concept of self-realization is both powerful and dangerous. It is a powerful concept because we can transcend the limits we have or are given to us by maximizing our life force by realizing ourselves. It is also a dangerous concept because our desire for self-realization can be manipulated very easily, thus, we can waste the power we have by pouring our energies into the places directed by the exploitative power relations; and worst of all, we can think that we are realizing ourselves while doing this.

Today's world, namely late modernity, is referred to as an era in which the desire for self-realization is very intense. In the first chapter, both Taylor and Giddens explained to us this persistent emphasis on self-enhancement today. Considering the idea of self-realization is monopolized by the culture of self-help, I believe that philosophers have a great responsibility to reclaim the concept which bears great potential.

Although the prescriptions offered by the self-help culture to people in a sense sound very striking, or even if the suggestions they involve have a functional aspect in one's self-improving activity, namely that they are practical and result-oriented, the political and ethical assumptions on which this literature builds itself confine people to the limits of their identity. However, I should point out here that the main focus of this study is not the critique of personal development culture; I take it as just a starting point. For this reason, its sub-branches, for example, self-help schools that are mostly based on psychology and philosophical knowledge, remained out of my field of study. While I admit that the background of my criticism is lacking, it still indicates a key point.

Another focus of the thesis is the concept of authenticity. I have dealt with this concept under the concept of self-realization. For, the ethical principle of 'be

oneself' is one of the most emphasized precepts within today's self-realization interpretations. Hence, it was important for me to analyze the underpinnings of the idea of 'be oneself.' The classic interpretation of authenticity is based on the ideas of 'self-discovery' and 'self-disclosure': discovering something as 'one's own' in one's self and revealing it in one's existence. It, therefore, proposes a clear distinction between the inner and outer self. We, as individuals of late modernity, are no way surprised by this distinction. For, our mind sets are inclined to reason within this dichotomy, and many others. But was it always like this? Or is this the truth itself?

In the second part of the study, I stated that the concept of genealogy that Nietzsche and Foucault used as a method of criticism and historical analysis was inspirational in this study, and I thought it necessary to go much further back to the *Sources of Self* to examine what kind of assumptions the concept of authenticity is based on and what kind of self-enhancement practice it is. This was also something that Trilling, the author of *Authenticity and Sincerity*, emphasized. In the third chapter, I examined the concept of 'inwardness', which according to Taylor constitutes the modern self. There, Taylor stresses that the self is not always something that resides within us, as it is today. The self that is found in the Homeric texts did not correspond to a unified locus but was embodied in various organs of the body. In Plato, the self began to take a unified shape under the hegemony of reason. The self, which gained a reflexive skill through Augustine's relationship with God, became an entity that no longer needs anyone but itself with the intervention of Descartes. During the Inwardness chapter, I also touched upon the different forms of relationship a person has with the universe. Along with the line stretching from pre-modern time to modernity, human beings' turning inward corresponded to the transition from a cosmocentric universe understanding to an antropocentric one.

The self-realization models in late modernity, of which the ideal of authenticity is an important pillar, are built on such a history of humanity and philosophy. Therefore, approaching the effort of the self-realization motivation of the late modern individual, who is 'highly self-determined, atomistic and independent' with

suspicion would not be inappropriate. In this sense, Taylor expresses very reasonable concerns in his book *Ethics of Authenticity*: The current application of the concepts of self-realization deepens the position of individuals who are narcissistic and who establish an instrumental relationship with their environment, and even leads people in this direction. The most important reason for this is that the concept itself has lost its ethical, political, and aesthetic contexts. However, once these ties are rebuilt, its kinship with the conception of freedom will be revealed. One of the ways of emancipation that Foucault stresses is the emancipation of the relationship that a person establishes with herself.

Foucault defined the subject as “tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge;” ethics meant the relationship that a person establishes with herself. One of the modes of subjectification was to interfere with the relationship that one established with oneself. Moreover, the disciplinary technologies that came about with the formation of the modern state were the technologies that gave particular importance to the individual and supported her capacity for development. Therefore, on the one hand, it is crucial to examine the methods and practices of self-realization that are given to people in the name of freedom. On the other hand, an alternative self-realization model should be posited in a way that does not allow for power relations to intervene with one’s relation to oneself.

In the line extending from the ideal of authenticity to the thought of ‘Aesthetics of Existence’, the stops I visited to understand the different interpretations of the concept of authenticity were the understandings of authenticity of Rousseau, Taylor and Sartre. While I observed that Rousseau brought an essentialist interpretation close to classical authenticity, surprisingly, I did not observe that Sartre gave a diametrically opposite interpretation to classical authenticity. To put it very reductively, Sartre called authenticity the acceptance of oneself as one is. Taylor, on the other hand, viewed authenticity as a moral ideal. Foucault, the other hand, confronted these three thinkers in his critique of authenticity.

I think that Foucault's interpretations of ancient Greek self-practices and 'aesthetics of existence' provide a very rich resource for evaluating the concept of self-realization in a political and ethical context today. The ethical practices of the Greeks, above all, exceed the ideal of authenticity. The goal of self-realization of self-techniques is not to examine the self, to find truth there and to reveal it. (We touched on Foucault's confession practices, which are the common denominator of Christian ethics and psychoanalysis more than once throughout the study.) It focuses on the actions that make up one's life. The rules of self-realization do not impose themselves on the person with the discourse of truth; the person relates to the rules via the mediation of the relationship she establishes with herself. To think of self-realization as a creative act today is also to go beyond the limits of our own identity. And this brings about questioning the power relations and its dominant forms of knowledge and removing the veil of truth from them. To consider the concept of self-realization at the crossroads of ethics, politics, and aesthetics, seems to provide a powerful possibility of emancipation.

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