The Foucauldian Art of the Self and the Pedagogic Problem

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Abstract

In the paper, I analyze relations between power, freedom, and formation of the self in reference to Foucault's works since this triangle is central not only to philosophy of education, but also goes to the heart of the problem with Foucault's late intellectual enterprise. Furthermore, I argue that Foucault's last will can be found, not in the ancient care of the self, but in his limit-attitude aimed at losing one's identity which might be also understood as an exercise of being nobody and de-subjectivation. Yet,

this task appears to be a serious problem for educational practice which does not exist without subjects and is based on the model of Althusser's interpellation wherein a teacher takes the role of a policeman.

Keywords: Foucault, aesthetics of existence, the subject, education.

Foucaultovska umetnost sebstva in pedagoški problem

Povzetek

V članku analiziram razmerja med oblastjo, svobodo in oblikovanjem sebstva s sklicevanjem na Foucaultova dela, saj je takšen trikotnik osrednjega pomena ne samo za filozofijo izobraževanja, temveč se dotika tudi jedra problema Foucaultovega poznega intelektualnega dela. Nadalje, zagovarjam trditev, da je Foucaultovo poslednjo voljo mogoče najti, ne v antični skrbi za sebstvo, temveč v mejni drži, cilj katere je izguba lastne identitete, kar lahko razumemo tudi kot vajo v biti-nihče in de-subjektivaciji. Toda tovrstna naloga se zdi resen problem za izobraževalno prakso, ki ne obstaja brez subjektov in temelji na modelu Althusserjeve interpelacije, znotraj katerega učitelj privzema vlogo policaja.

Ključne besede: Foucault, estetika eksistence, subjekt, izobraževanje.

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I have decided to choose, as a starting point for my contribution, Gert Biesta's and Carl Anders Säfström's claim, from their "A Manifesto for Education," that freedom is the core of educational interest (cf. Biesta and Säfström 2011). Trying to analyze the issue of freedom, I refer to Michel Foucault's works since he gives us one of the most accurate, intriguing, but also disturbing descriptions of a post-modern world. In my research, I also reach much beyond the educational context in order to examine first of all the mechanism of freedom, not only its realization. In Foucault's philosophy, the problem of freedom goes hand in hand with issues of power and formation of the subject. This triangle consisting of three fundamental issues, from a pedagogical point of view, simultaneously refers us to difficulties in reading the philosopher's late thought, difficulties which suggest a break within his thought. However, the effort to understand reasons for these difficulties allows us to reveal a new, unexplored field of reflection. Thus, firstly, I intend to throw some light on the problem with Foucault's late thought. Then, I present his concept of power as a relationship of forces arguing that this concept is present not only in his genealogical period of writing, but also in his late works, which allows us to argue that there are no contradictions in his philosophy and that the issue of self-formation remains connected with power. In the third section, I deal with the art of the self of the ancient type of subject, positing that this part of Foucault's works has mainly a descriptive character and therefore we cannot stop our research at this point. The fourth section is devoted to an analysis of the inner connection between power and freedom and the distinction between power and domination. This allow us to claim, first, that formation of the self, regardless of the way it is constituted, results from an interplay between power and freedom, and that in each case the subject remains the product of something initially external to itself. Second, it is possible to say that what is dangerous is not power, but the state of domination. Subsequently, I argue that the Foucauldian idea of the aesthetics of existence cannot be identified with the ancient attitude and is, in fact is at odds with its normative and therapeutic orientation. It can be found, not in the formation of the self, but in losing the self, in the art of being nobody, which means that the question about the individual cannot be formulated in terms of freedom and power, but beyond them. This raises the question: how to conceive of education aimed at losing

one's face? For it seems that there are not only *institutional obstacles*, but also more serious hurdles referring to what is educational itself.

I. The problem with Foucault's late works

The problem with late Foucault "is probably one of the most widely discussed topics in research published on Foucault" (Harrer 2005, 76). Let me recall briefly the main difficulties that emerge when one deals with Foucault's late writings. The issue of the aesthetics of existence, focused on self-formation, belongs to the last period of Foucault's activity called the period of problematization. In the 1980's, the philosopher displaces the axis of his analysis from power to the issue of subjectivity, to the issue of the "different modes by which […] human beings are made subjects" (Foucault 2002, 326). In this way, the subject, regarded as being able to free itself from power and "to make their life into an *oeuvre*" (Foucault 1990, 10), becomes central to his thought. The subject is no longer perceived as a passive effect of power, "as a marionette, a subservient and silent body" (Huijer 1999, 64), but an active creator of the self. What also needs to be said is that this type of a free subject is a result of the philosopher's research into ancient thought. Taking the above-mentioned into account, some of the researchers have talked about the "return of the subject" (cf. Dews 1989), about the "ethical turn" in Foucault's philosophy, about the conversion from the poststructuralist into a humanistic position (cf. Smith 2015, 39), about the philosopher's transformation from a libertine into a liberal (Komendant 1995, 8). Yet, one needs to bear in mind that at the same time, Foucault maintains his previous claims about power, declaring that his last writings do not represent a break with the earlier ones dominated by the perspective of *the death of man* (cf. Deleuze 1990, 130–136; Flynn 1994, 28; Veyne 1997; Harrer 2005, 75–76). In other words, in Foucault's late thought the issue of a free subject appears, while the definition of power, in light of which the subject is an epiphenomenon of blind forces, is still retained.

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II. Power

To identify the issue, let me begin with the problem of Foucauldian power. Foucault draws his concept from Nietzsche's idea of "power without enclosing it within a political theory" (Rajchman 1997, 96). The "hazard of battle becomes a better metaphor for the exercise of power than the establishment of Law" (ibid., 97), and such power, as he proves, is much more difficult to recognize. In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, the French philosopher contrasts his concept of power, which he calls strategic, with the juridico-discursive model of power. The main difference between them consists in the mechanism of how they function. Power, in the juridico-discursive conception, possessing only the rule of prohibition, is reduced to a requirement of obedience. According to Foucault, in that ossified type of analysis, the law is the only form of power, which means that the juridico-discursive conception is not able to see modern forms of power which exceed the law. Therefore, he considers that type of analysis to be inadequate for analyzing our present, where the methods of power are not ensured "by right but by technique, not by law but by normalization, not by punishment but by control, methods that are employed on all levels and in forms that go beyond the state and its apparatus" (Foucault 1978, 89). In other words, although the king lost his head a long time ago, the juridico-discursive conception does not see this change. That is why it gives importance to "the problem of right and violence, law and illegality, freedom and will, and especially the state and sovereignty" (ibid.). The old type of analysis is not able to move on from the symptoms of the power of feudal sovereign to the code of modern power, even though—as Foucault proves in his *Society Must Be Defended*—there is a wide gulf between them. Power, in the course of its history, trying to pretend to be non-power, increasingly abandons what defined the king's power, namely the rules of transcendence, visibility, and transparency, and, first of all, leaves its connection with the law. It stops announcing itself, merges deeper and deeper with the social body, realizing itself through immanence, invisibility, and secretiveness. And what is interesting, Foucault's hypothesis, exactly at this point, is analogous to Carl Schmitt's reflection, as it was Schmitt who wrote about the intrusion of power, escaping the emblem of power, into the nineteenth-century political scene. That change raises the need for a genealogical analysis of power

which, reaching to the *nature* of power, is able to trace its masks and sidesteps. Thus, the Foucauldian model of analysis emphasizes the productive effectiveness of power, its strategic resourcefulness, and its positivity. It does not reduce power to "a group of institutions and mechanisms that ensure the subservience of the citizens of a given state" (ibid., 92). The French philosopher chooses an ontological perspective, conceiving of power:

> in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies. (ibid., 92–93)

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Therefore, power is not something that can be acquired, seized, shared, or held, but it is the network of relations, the bloodstream of an individual body, as well as the social one. To think of human freedom within such a vision of power seems to be difficult. For it seems that there is no escape from the tentacles of power and the individual is doomed to be a passive product of blind power forces, all the more so as Foucault in one of his last interviews (entitled "The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom") inscribes power in human relations. He declares:

> when ones speaks of *power,* people immediately think of a political structure, a government, a dominant social class, the master and the slave, and so on. I am not thinking of this at all when I speak of *relations of power*. I mean that in human relationships, whether they involve verbal communication such as we are engaged in at this moment, or amorous, institutional, or economic relationships, power is always present: I mean a relationship in which one person tries to control the conduct of the other. (Foucault 2000d, 292–292)

Although Foucault changes the level of his analyses, that is, shifts from an impersonal to personal level, the definition of power is maintained. Within this framework, the issue of self-formation appears, which allows us to reason that this problem remains connected with power.

III. How to make a free subject?

The issue of self-formation and the issue of the aesthetics of existence—that is a question about how the subject, in a free act, can form itself—are inextricably intertwined with Foucault's scrutiny of ancient philosophy to which he devoted his last years. The ancient type of subject, and the way in which it is produced, which emerge in this examination, stand in opposition with the modern type of the subject, present in the middle period of his works, who is perceived to be a passive product of power. However, rather than a simple change of the object, it is a shift within the existing body of thought. In order to grasp this shift, one should trace the steps that led towards it.

In Foucault's works, the issue of subjectivity and the subject's freedom is preceded by the question of the mode by which a modern subject has been produced, as the subject of desire, that is, the subject who defines its identity by necessary reference to its sexuality. The issue of sexuality appears at the end of the 1970's and is closely intertwined with the mechanism of knowledge and power. At the beginning of the eighties, Foucault includes that theme in the analysis of the games of truth, which means that the character of the main question changes, since it does not refer any more to the mechanism of coercion, but to the relation between truth and the subject. Therefore, the question is: how the subject is formed in the face of truth? What is the price which I must pay to be really me? What should I remove from myself, what should I do to be able to recognize myself as myself? The ancient kind of subjectivity was guided by the motto of *the arts of existence*, and this slogan was realized in the imperative of the care of the self and was linked with the requirement of knowledge of the self. Foucault explains that the arts of existence meant "intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an *oeuvre* that carries certain aesthetic values and

meets certain stylistic criteria" (Foucault 1990, 10–11). He spotlights the fact that ancient ethics was a matter of moral conduct, a matter of relation to the self and to others. In that way ethics, as a task of making one's life into a work of art, was linked with the aesthetics of existence. This task was accomplished through "technologies of the self, 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 souls, 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" (Foucault 2000c, 225). Ancient ethics, in contrast to Christian morality, did not focus on prohibition or obedience to one law, but placed emphasis on the individual's freedom. Such freedom consisted in choosing suitable ways in which "one would be able to give one's conduct the form that would assure one of a name meriting remembrance" (ibid., 93). It stemmed from the fact that moral reflection in antiquity was based not on the codification of acts, but on stylization of conduct, on an aesthetics of existence. That kind of requirement was open-ended, in the sense of being bereft of precise settlements. The proper task of ancient ethics could be found in practicing moderation which, like practicing freedom, was understood as an exercise of self-mastery. The self-control manifested itself in human behavior, in the way in which a man related to himself, and to others. At the same time, governing the self was conceived of as a sort of an art. For that reason, what was liable to value judgements was much more one's attitude towards sexual pleasures than sexual pleasures themselves. To put it in other words, what was judged was the art of using pleasures, not the types of them. Moreover, in examining differences between ancient and modern types of subjectivity, a different relation connecting truth and the subject who constitutes itself in the face of this truth, needs to be highlighted. The ancient type of the subject seems to be more autonomous because between it and truth there was no institution with its requirement of objectification, unlike in the case of the modern subject, as a successor of the Christian tradition, where both the process of attaining one's identity and the verification of it have been mediated by an authority external and superior to the subject. In other words, along with the appearance of the institution of confession, truth leaves the intimate room of human interior and moves to the public common space. Therefore, what has been changed is the

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way of the functioning of truth, its problematization, and as a result, the way of producing the subject.

In order to draw a conclusion from Foucault's analyses of the formation of the subject, we have two options: either *we return to the Greeks*, that is, we assume that Foucault, in presenting Epicurean and Stoic ethics, provided us with a blueprint of how to escape the oppression of power, or we bemoan the fact that we do not know any positive aspect of Foucault's last will. The first choice, although modified, is very willingly employed by pedagogical theory since the postulate of ancient care of the self is, indeed, an educational postulate of self-cultivation in which the individual makes his way towards himself. Consequently, a world of power is no longer challenging, since we know the way how to elude it. Namely, "passive subjection (*assujetissement*)" needs to be replaced with "active subjectivization (*subjectivation*)" (cf. Leask 2012, 64). In this way, Foucault's educational suggestions could be easily placed in the framework of the concept of *Bildung*, understood "as a critical and emancipatory enterprise, i.e. as a process in which human beings became truly free and in which they emancipated themselves from all kinds of power including the power of the actual given State" (Masschelein and Ricken 2003, 140). And, as a matter of fact, at this conclusion we could stop our examination of the late Foucault. Yet, is this a comprehensive interpretation of his last works? Did the great exposer actually leave, as his philosophical testament, an appeal: "defend yourselves against power by practicing stoicism"? It seems that we can get much more from his thought. Furthermore, I argue that we not only *can* draw more conclusions from his thought, but we *should*. For in our demanding post-modern world we cannot satisfy ourselves with easy answers. And, in post-Platonic thought, we cannot rely on responses that tend to enclose the world in a binary opposition between good and evil, freedom and power, truth and lie. Moreover, bearing in mind the Foucauldian world of power relations, one has to agree with the idea that all educational concepts regarded as emancipatory projects "actually can be understood as a privileged medium through which a certain power apparatus ('un dispositif de pouvoir') has been invested" (ibid., 139). What, then, has been left to learn from the Foucauldian lesson?

IV. Power-freedom

First of all, we need to make Foucault's portrayal of power complete. According to Foucault, the essential attributes of power are its instability and mobility resulting in a reversibility of roles, which, in turn, annihilates the permanent division into master and slave. The second feature, central to power, connected to the changeability of relations, is freedom. As he puts it: "Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power." (Foucault 1978, 95) The points of resistance, spread in the network of power, are not merely the counterbalance of power, they are—he claims—"the odd term in relations of power; they are inscribed in the latter as an irreducible opposite" (ibid., 96). Therefore, the thinking of power also must think about freedom. And Foucault does not leave this conviction in the last period of his writings. In "The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom," he declares that "power relations are possible only insofar as the subjects are free" (Foucault 2000d, 292), even if that freedom is limited and exists only as the option of killing oneself, or the other person. In consequence, "in power relations there is necessarily the possibility of resistance because if there were no possibility of resistance […], there would be no power relations at all" (ibid.). In this attitude to power, there is a noticeable echo of the establishment of power relations that might be found in Hobbes' thought, whom Foucault recalls in his *Society Must Be Defended*, and from whom he simultaneously distances himself. For this relation is never set up as a result of a resolution of the strongest, but always as a result of the decision of the individual who surrenders; even if his choice is limited to an alternative: to give up or to die.

Thus, in examining Foucault's power relations, one should think about the concepts of freedom and power taken together, since in the Foucauldian perspective, in contrast to the traditional, freedom is not conceptualized as an opposite of power or as the absence of it. In the same way, power is not understood as something that "is bad in itself" (ibid., 298) and of which we must break free as, according to Foucault: "Power is not evil. Power is games of strategy." (ibid.) What is dangerous, are states of domination in which power relations remain blocked and frozen. Domination is something dangerous

for the reason that it annihilates the essential feature of power which is the reversibility of relations. In this way, domination destroys power because it destroys the freedom inherent in power. It is therefore crucial to keep in mind that Foucault distinguishes "between power relations understood as strategic games between liberties […] and the states of domination that people ordinarily call 'power'" (ibid., 299). Analogically, we can also differentiate between freedom and liberation. In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault postulates an end to thinking about power, among other things, in terms of "liberty and sovereignty" (Foucault 1978, 90), and at the same time maintains that resistance is an irreducible part of power. These statements, considered together, appear to be contradictory. Yet, they become comprehensible when the difference between freedom and liberation is taken into account. In other words, one must leave the conception of power as a yoke from which a human being must liberate itself towards an authentic and free self, since liberation can take place only in the case of domination.[1] Thus, on the ontological level, as well as the personal, freedom and the practice of freedom belong to power, not to liberation.

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Foucault does not change his concept of the subject but makes a shift on the power-freedom line. Moreover, it might be said that "Foucault's earlier and later thinking on subjectivity are compatible and continuous" (Harrer 2005, 83), as the mechanism of fabrication of subjects through disciplinary power and the mechanism of ancient ethical self-constitution are the same. They work according to the same scheme. The freedom of the ancient subject— especially in comparison with a criminal or a madman as subjects—sounds so clear because violence linked with domination is not present there. What needs to be emphasized, is that the subject, in each case, is not autonomous

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1 In the interview "The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom," Foucault says that he always was suspicious of the concept of liberation, since "if it is not treated with precautions and within certain limits, one runs the risk of falling back on the 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 mechanism of repression. According to this hypothesis, all that is required is to break these repressive deadlocks and man will be reconciled with himself, rediscover his nature or regain contact with his origin, and reestablish a full and positive relationship with himself." (Foucault 2000d, 282)

and independent. Although to a different extent, both the modern subject and the ancient remain products of something external to them. The aim of the ancients, as Foucault points out, was "the subjectivation of a true discourse in a practice and exercise of oneself on oneself" (Foucault 2005, 333), making the truth one's own, not "the objectification of the self in a true discourse" (ibid). The fact that the subject was assigned the role of a producer of the self made the relation between the subject and truth much more individualized, since the implementation of this relation consisted in individual decisions. However, and this needs to be emphasized, those decisions remained within the framework of *a true discourse*. And the techniques of the self, through which an ancient subject constituted its subjectivity, came from outside, from culture and society. As Foucault says: the techniques of the self are not what the individual invents, but they are "models that he finds in his culture and are proposed, suggested, imposed upon him by his culture, his society, and his social group" (Foucault 2000d, 291).

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V. How to elude being a subject?

Foucault's study of the ancient type of subject is complemented by the call for a new philosophical ethos. In "What is Enlightenment?" from 1984, Foucault delineates "a historical ontology of ourselves" (Foucault 2000e, 315) with its ethos defined as "a historico-practical test of the limits we may go beyond," "as work carried out by ourselves upon ourselves as free beings" (ibid., 316). However, in attaching importance to this idea, one needs to make an assumption that the ancients are not the model of the new ethos, but only its tenuous inspiration as the work on the self. Otherwise, the interpretation would suffer from contradiction with the Foucauldian nominalist approach

to history. Therefore, it is doubtful that the ancient techniques of the self imitatively return in Foucault's thought as a model which can be separated from its historical context and applied to different circumstances. It refers also to the issue of *parrhesia*, described in *The Government of the Self and Others*, which should not be welcomed as an ethics of truthful speech or at least not without an attempt at a problematization of it. For, as Zachary Simpson points out: "Foucault appears to advocate a practice of truthful speech, while also being committed, as many commentators have shown, to the project of showing truth to be produced, intermeshed with power relations, and situated." (Simpson 2012, 100) Another argument why we should not treat Foucault's history of the ancient subject as prescriptive—but as a part of his work on "a historical theory of knowledge" (Detel 2005, 10)—is that he definitely does not yield to the temptation of the myth of Greece. In his last interview "The Return of Morality," he says: "All of antiquity seems to me to have been a 'profound error.'" (Foucault 1988b, 244) He also adds that he finds the Greeks "neither exemplary nor admirable" (ibid.). If, then, a demand for an aesthetics of existence is present in Foucault's late philosophy, it contains a different content than the ancient aesthetics.

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In both cases, one deals with the art of life which transforms human life, and which combines notions of ethics and aesthetics. In one of his interviews from 1982, Foucault says, explaining why he is not a good academic:

> For me, intellectual work is related to what you called "aestheticism," meaning transforming yourself. […] You see, that's why I really work like a dog, and I worked like a dog all my life. I am not interested in the academic status of what I am doing because my problem is my own transformation. […] This transformation of one's self by one's own knowledge is, I think, something rather close to the aesthetic experience. Why should a painter work if he is not transformed by his own painting? (Foucault 2000a, 130–131)

In a way, "writing became for Foucault a kind of ascesis, a technique of the self" (Dean 1994, 200). Yet, the two modes of the art of the self do not share the same goal and they are guided by different rules. The aim of ancient aesthetics

was the shaping of one's own life, shaping "the self" to deserve remembrance of the descendants. And moderation was its rule, whereas the aim of Foucault's aesthetics is rather to escape from oneself as "the self," to elude subjectivation.[2] The perfect illustration of this aim can be found in Foucault's many statements. For example, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, he acknowledges: "I am no doubt not the only one who writes in order to have no face. Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same: leave it to our bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order. At least spare us their morality when we write." (Foucault 1972, 17) In *The Use of Pleasure*, he explains that his research was encouraged by curiosity "which enables one to get free of oneself" (Foucault 1990, 8). The philosopher says:

> After all, what would be the value of the passion for knowledge if it resulted only in a certain amount of knowledgeableness and not, in one way or another and to the extent possible, in the knower's straying afield of himself? There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all. (ibid.)

And in "The Concern for Truth" one can read: "What can the ethics of an intellectual be—I claim this title of intellectual, though, at the present time, it seems to make certain people sick—if not this: to make oneself permanently capable of detaching oneself from oneself (which is the opposite of the attitude

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2 Let me recall here a significant remark, made by Frédéric Gros about scepticism that is not even mentioned in Foucault's lectures about the ancients: "The Skeptics are not mentioned; there is nothing on Pyrrhon and nothing on Sextus Empiricus. Now the Skeptical school is actually as important for ancient culture as the Stoic or Epicurean schools, not to mention the Cynics. Study of the Skeptics would certainly have introduced some corrections to Foucault's thesis in its generality. It is not, however, the exercises that are lacking in the Skeptics, nor reflection on the *logoi*, but these are entirely devoted to an undertaking of precisely de-subjectivation, of the dissolution of the subject. They go in a direction that is exactly the opposite of Foucault's demonstration […]. This silence is, it is true, rather striking. Without engaging in a too lengthy debate, we can merely recall that Foucault took himself for…a skeptical thinker." (Gros 2005, 548, note 21)

of conversion)?" (Foucault 1988a, 263) It all brings into clear view the fact that Foucault's model of the work on the self, "which makes a virtue of constantly seeking to become other to oneself" (Ure 2007, 51), is not only different from the ancient model, but in fact is at odds with its fundamental normative and therapeutic orientation.

The principle which rules Foucauldian aesthetics is related to the issue of limits the same way his entire philosophical enterprise is concerned with testing limits, pushing against them, and transgressing them. Therefore, Foucault's thought would not be a moderate attitude, but an extreme approach, even if we agree with the claim that Foucault's transgression does not involve overcoming limits, but merely illuminating them (Simons 1995, 69). The problem of limits can be found in almost every dimension of his philosophy, on the theoretical level and on the practical level which are, indeed, one. The illustrative example of this unity would be the body. And Shusterman is right when he says that Foucault's works exemplify the idea of somaesthetics, that is, "the critical, meliorative study of the experience and use of one's body as a locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation (*aisthesis*) and creative self-fashioning" (Shusterman 1999, 302). Yet, he is wrong when he recognizes the searching for pleasure as the only aim of Foucauldian somaesthetics neglecting the issue of the exploration of limits. In a previously mentioned interview, the French philosopher claims that his dream is to "die of an overdose of pleasure of any kind," since "the real pleasure would be so deep, so intense, so overwhelming" that he could not survive it (Foucault 2000a, 129). He also mentions—as one of his most beautiful memories—the memory of the day when he was struck by a car in the street and he was sure he was dying. A drug experience may be added, as well, to the experiences of exploration of limits. Certainly, Foucault's stories might be treated as a sort of provocation or a part of his private life that does not need any comments. However, if they are seen from the perspective of limits, they reveal another fragment of the Foucauldian puzzle, where the body links with mind, and theory with practice. The issue of limits is present also in the philosophical ethos of the historical ontology of ourselves which Foucault characterizes *explicite* as "a limit-attitude." In "What is Enlightenment?" he explains:

We have to move beyond the outside-inside alternative; we have to be at the frontiers. Criticism indeed consists of analyzing and reflecting upon limits. But if the Kantian question was that of knowing what limits knowledge must renounce exceeding, it seems to me that the critical question today must be turned back into a positive one: In what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory, what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints? The point, in brief, is to transform the critique conducted in the form of necessary limitation into a practical critique that takes the form of a possible crossing-over. (Foucault 2000e, 315)

The historical ontology of ourselves is, indeed, a limit-examination, an effort to think in a different way than we have thought until now, an attempt to transgress the constraints that determine our thinking and our being, since Foucault's message is not how to constitute ourselves, but how to lose our identity. Thus, paradoxically, his art of the self is not an art of perpetuating but forgetting.

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VI. Educational implications of Foucault's thought

There are at least two crucial educational conclusions to be drawn from Foucault's philosophy. Firstly, to articulate the aims for education one needs to take into account that formation of the self takes place between power and freedom, within the field of their interplay, and the educational task cannot be conceived of as an emancipation towards the autonomous and authentic self. Secondly, education should be sensitive not to the power relations present in each educational process, but to the states of domination, since it is not power that is dangerous, but the state of the coagulation of power relations meaning the state where instability and mobility of relations disappear. Consequently, the essential interest of education can be found not in freedom, but in a ceaseless watchfulness being able to recognize the threat of domination.[3]

Yet, there is another conclusion stemming from Foucault's thought that

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3 Ian Leask, drawing from Foucault's concept of subjectivity and power, depicts a portrait of "pedagogy reconfigured," that is, of pedagogy that assumes the role of a

seems to be more interesting and at the same time more challenging. Namely, education should be thought of neither in terms of formation of a specific mode of the subject according to given social and cultural requirements nor in opposition to them, but in terms of the evasion of being a subject. For if we take Foucault's claim seriously, that everything is dangerous (cf. Foucault 2000b, 256), that everything has the potential to turn out to be its opposite, we can simultaneously assume that every form of subjectivation is at a constant risk of becoming its degenerative form. And the subject's identity can easily become the individual's prison. Thus, the educational process, throughout centuries understood as a voyage towards oneself, can no longer lead to recognition or formation of one's identity. Instead, it should give a human being the tools for the deconstruction of its already established identity. What is important is that the human identity can be understood not only in terms of nature or essence of the subject, but also as the social roles and labels that are imposed upon us. Thus, the question "Who am I?" must be replaced with the question: "What can I do not to be enclosed in my identity?"

To put it in other, and maybe more provocative, words, if education learns Foucault's lesson, it will consist in preparing a human being to be nobody. In order to discard the usual connotations of "nobody," and to introduce new aspects of the meaning of the word, I want to refer to Emily Dickinson's poem. She writes:

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particular point of resistance based on the critical attitude and suitable for post-modern governmentality: "[…] pedagogy can no longer be taken *solely* as the oppressive, vertical, imposition of Power. Instead, the possibility now emerges that it can also be the theatre of subjects' creation of new 'practices of self,' new kinds of relations—especially *via* continued resistance to domination. As we have seen, discursive self-production and self-creation does not equate with the processes of institutional fabrication; accordingly, the description of schools as being fundamentally carceral, as being concerned with the 'external' production of docile bodies, can be supplemented, even rethought, in a fairly radical fashion. Teachers and students alike can now be regarded as creative agents, capable of voluntary and intentional counter-practices, and always able, in principle, to resist aspects of the kinds of managerialism, instrumentalization, and commodification they face daily." (Leask, 2012, 67)

I'm nobody! Who are you?
Are you nobody, too?
Then there's a pair of us—don't tell!
They'd banish us, you know.

How dreary to be somebody!
How public, like a frog
To tell your name the livelong day
To an admiring bog! (Dickinson 2003, 23)

At the first level of interpretation, this poem appears to be an uncomplicated encomium of privacy, anonymity, and modesty, that has no need for the splendor of fame and admiration of others. However, at a deeper level, it reveals a more intriguing issue, namely the threat that is hidden in speech and naming. The message introduced in the second stanza is easy to identify: when you want to be somebody, you have to constantly talk about it, you have to keep repeating your name, finally becoming just one of many frogs in a bog. Another danger emerges in the first strophe: speaking about being nobody will result in banishment. Yet, does such a banishment mean anything when you are nobody, and you are already outside? I believe that this threat should be interpreted rather as an exile from the state of being nobody, that is, from the state of suspension in which, for a while, one can live without a name and identity. I am nobody and free, but when you recognize me as such, when you label and call me nobody, I stop being nobody. This thought sounds stronger in another version of this poem in which the peril of exile is replaced with a different threat: "Don't tell! they'd advertise—you know!" (Dickinson 1976, 133)

Dickinson does not distance herself from the body, although the word nobody strongly evokes in our minds such associations. Her *nobody* does not mean the body that does not exist nor the body that denies itself, but the body without a name, without a face of identity. It is the body described by Sloterdijk as *yesbody*. He states: "[…] no life has a name. The self-conscious nobody in us—who acquires names and identities only through its 'social birth'—remains the living source of freedom. The living Nobody, in spite of

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the horror of socialization, remembers the energetic paradises beneath the personalities. Its life soil is the mentally alert body, which we should call not *nobody* but *yesbody*." (Sloterdijk 2001, 73) To be nobody may be pictured as Odysseus' rescue from Althusser's interpellation which means recruiting "subjects among individuals (it recruits them all) or 'transforms' individuals into subjects (it transforms them all)" (Althusser 2014, 190). In an example given by Althusser when a policeman hails "Hey, you there!" the individual turns around because he recognizes that "the hail 'really' was addressed to him and that 'it really was he who was hailed' (not someone else)" (ibid., 191), and it is through this physical conversion he becomes the subject. Being without a name means to be without a disposition to react, to turn around. And the Foucauldian limit-attitude holds out the possibility of the transgression of being somebody, the possibility of losing one's face and being without a name. The limit-attitude as being "at the frontiers" (Foucault 2000e, 315) means also that, for a short moment, we are beyond power, but also beyond freedom since we cannot think of them separately. We are neither free nor subjected.

Yet, is an education aimed at losing one's identity possible? The fact that education takes place in the institutional framework is the first obstacle. The administrative obligation of producing and accumulating formal documentation such as attendance lists, reports, or diplomas causes teachers to be like "our bureaucrats and our police" (Foucault 1972, 17) who keep attaching our body to our identity. The system of documentation is based on the model of Althusser's interpellation and the teacher takes the role of a policeman who makes us subjects subjected to an educational regime, as if an educational system could not exist without its subjects. Accordingly, the individual whose attendance is not reported, by acknowledging his identity, does not exist as a subject of education. In that way, we are, first, subjected to schooling, then we smoothly become subjected to other orders of society like the law, the state, or morality. Thus, it can be said that we do not merely go to school; we emerge from school (cf. Leask 2012, 60), we emerge as subjects who, being set into motion by school training, keep marching by ourselves. In other words, institutional education, being closely linked with other social orders, cannot be focused on losing our identity and teaching us how to be nobody, but on cultivating the self since being nobody means being out of any

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social order. Do not parents inculcate a fear of being nobody in their children perceiving education as a protection against this fall? Within this educational machine the function of memory is not how to forget and lose, but how to remember and collect. We collect not only knowledge, but also our names, achievements, and failures, all of them have to be catalogued and remembered to bear witness of who we are. We educate in order to shape and cultivate ourselves. Furthermore, from the historic point of view, the school with its disciplinary system, as a reflection and representation of social demands, is a crucial part of the painful process of giving "a memory to the animal, man" (Nietzsche 2007, 38).[4] The human animal, who initially is only in the present, is shaped in order to be between the past and the future since education to the same extent is a process based on remembering and "a process that will deliver its promises at some point in the future" (Biesta and Säfström 2011, 541). In consequence, the present becomes a moment in which we need to remember what has happened in the past and to hope to be more a self than we are at the moment. Therefore, placing Foucault's limit-attitude within a paradigm of learning in order to make a connection between his philosophy and interest of educational research, as Thompson does, might be questionable. We can easily agree that: "Learning means change and transformation in that it implies an experience that is singular, determinative and irrevocable for the learner" (Thompson 2010, 362), but we need to add that learning inevitably involves remembering as an action of a conscious subject.

However, it seems that there is another, more serious, obstacle. Even if we differentiate between education in its institutional form and education itself, and even if we assume that institutional education ignores what is educational, we cannot neglect to ask whether the concept of being nobody is educational. According to Masschelein, by all means, the Foucauldian work

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4 Nietzsche writes: "'How do you give a memory to the animal, man? How do you impress something upon this partly dull, partly idiotic, inattentive mind, this personification of forgetfulness, so that it will stick?' … This age-old question was not resolved with gentle solutions and methods, as can be imagined; perhaps there is nothing more terrible and strange in man's prehistory than his *technique of mnemonics*. 'A thing must be burnt in so that it stays in the memory: only something that continues to hurt stays in the memory' – that is a proposition from the oldest (and unfortunately the longest-lived) psychology on earth." (Nietzsche 2007, 38)

on the self, designed to lose ourselves, can be described in educational terms "as an e-ducative practice" (Masschelein 2006, 563), providing that the word "e-ducative" is derived not from *educare* (that is to train or to mold), but *educere* (which means to lead out) (cf. Bass and Good 2004, 162). In this sense "an e-ducative practice is not (or not in the first place) about gaining knowledge or competence which resolves ignorance and incompetence" (Masschelein 2006, 563). It is, as he holds, a practice in which the subject loses himself and liberates his outlook, obtaining "the possibility to have a gaze on the world, without being captured by a regime" (ibid., 569). Yet, this position raises some doubts. In *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault uses the term *educere* to describe the educational action of a philosopher with the result that the individual could "finally arrive at himself, exercise his sovereignty over himself and find his entire happiness in this relationship" (Foucault 2005, 135). This action was "necessary for the constitution of the subject by himself" (ibid.,134) and aimed at leading out the individual from a condition Foucault calls, following Seneca, *stultitia*. In other words, education originating from *educere* was understood as a "certain action carried out on the individual" (ibid.) whom an educator-philosopher offers a hand in order to extricate him from *stultitia*, from a state of stultification. In the same lecture, Foucault depicts *stultus* as the individual who "constantly changes his life" (ibid., 132), "who is dispersed over time" (ibid., 131). As he points out: *stultus* is "not only open to the plurality of the external world but also broken up in time. The *stultus* is someone who remembers nothing." (ibid.) And the state of being without a face is definitely closer to the state of *stultitia*, that is, the state of dispersion of the self, than to a condition of *sapientia*, the condition of being educated. Thus, being nobody rather than belonging to what is educational, is opposed to what is educational. *Stultus* is a fool, he is not educated. He is beyond demands of society and time. Furthermore, since he is without a face, he cannot be recognized through the prism of the concepts of anthropological description, upon which education is based, like subjectivity, freedom, responsibility, and consciousness. Like Francis Bacon's faces he remains un-faced.

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This conclusion needs to be completed by remembering that Foucault's philosophy bears a strong poststructuralist hallmark that undermines and challenges educational thought (cf. Hodgson and Standish 2009, 311–312).

This dangerous and challenging trait, too many times, has been omitted and his philosophy has smoothly become a part of educational reflection. Following Foucault, one could say that, in a way, educational thought, through absorbing threatening poststructuralism, took it over and at the same time made it defenseless. But perhaps this situation is unavoidable; does not, exactly in that way, every discipline as power-knowledge crack down on guerrilla thought?

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