Chapter Nine

Sexuality and Hierarchies
Power in the Domain of Physicality
I. Introduction: Sexuality, Power and Discourse

a. Body, Power and Language: the Roots of Sexuality

At the end of the last chapter, I showed how Foucault suggests the role of power in the body, thereby implicating the domain of physicality, the last category of the triad I am trying to highlight. In a 1975 interview, Foucault identifies that this play of power on the body is articulated through notions of physical ‘beauty’ and health:

Mastery and awareness of one’s own body can be acquired only through the effect of an investment of power in the body: gymnastics, exercises, muscle-building, nudism, glorification of the body beautiful. All of this belongs to the pathway leading to the desire of one’s own body, by way of the insistent, persistent, meticulous work of power on the bodies of children or soldiers, the healthy bodies.¹

The two notions that the work of power on the body invokes, those of beauty and virility, both suggest the construction of a sexual paradigm, but this construction gets translated into ‘sexuality’, only when it enters a discursive domain through language. Sexuality is, as Foucault shows in a 1963 article, the linguistic articulation of the physicality of sex:

Sexuality is only decisive for our culture as spoken, and to the degree it is spoken: not that it is our language which has been eroticized now for nearly two centuries. Rather...the universe of language has absorbed our sexuality, denatured it, placed it in a void where it establishes its sovereignty and where it incessantly sets up as the Law the limits it transgresses. In this sense, the appearance of sexuality as a fundamental problem marks the transformation of a philosophy of man as worker to a philosophy placed on a being who speaks.²

Sexuality is the discursivization of the play of power in the domain of physicality, and it functions, as Foucault shows in the same article in three ways: first, it tries to accord human beings subjectivity in the post-Nietzschean ‘death of God’ situation; secondly, it invites people to incessantly ‘transgress’ its norms; thirdly, it leads to a ‘circular’ discursive web, where the linguistic construct of sexuality is questioned by rebellious linguistic forms:

Perhaps the emergence of sexuality in our culture is an “event” of multiple values: it is tied to the death of God and the ontological void which his death fixed at the limit of our thought; it is also tied to the still silent and groping apparition of a form of thought in which the interrogation of the limit replaces the search for a totality and the act of transgression replaces the movement of contradictions. Finally, it involves the questioning of language by language in a circularity which the “scandalous” violence of erotic literature, far from ending, displays from its first use of words.³

These introductory comments on sexuality have two major implications: first, that power is the fundamental category in sexuality; and second, that this power is, however, not a repressive one, because it produces the discursive construct that sexuality is.

³ Ibid., 50.
b. *From the Repressive Hypothesis to ‘Bio-Power’*

It is evident that, as far as sexuality is concerned, power does not play a repressive role, because power as operative on the body actually goes on to ‘produce’ sexuality. In a 1977 interview, Foucault shows how his objective is to study this ‘positive’ role of power:

‘Sexuality’ is far more of a positive product of power than power was ever repression of sexuality. I believe that it is precisely these positive mechanisms that need to be investigated, and here one must free oneself of the juridical schematism of all previous caracterisations of the nature of power...as juridical and negative rather than as technical and positive.4

While this idea of power as non-repressive is consistent with the Foucauldian notion of power established in the last two chapters, it seems, at first glance, with sexuality, where one commonly perceives nothing but taboos and interdictions. Realizing the reader’s possible doubt, Foucault proceeds to give examples of the ‘productive’ role of power in sexuality.

The first example Foucault gives is a historical one, where through the practice of the apparently prohibitive confessional, the medieval Christian church encouraged one to speak about sex, and produced the discourse of sexuality. In a 1978 interview, Foucault says,  

It is often said that sexuality is something people in our societies dare not talk about. It is true that people dare not say certain things. Nevertheless, I was struck by the following: when one thinks that, since the twelfth century, all Western Catholics have been obliged to admit their sexuality, their sins against the flesh and all their sins in this area, committed in thought or deed, one can hardly say that the discourse on sexuality has been simply prohibited or repressed. The discourse on sexuality was organized in a particular way, in terms of a number of codes, and I would even go so far as to say that, in the West, there has been a very strong incitement to speak of sexuality.5

The second example Foucault gives, in a 1975 interview, is how the eighteenth-century restriction on children’s masturbation actually went to intensify the practice of sex itself:

The restrictions on masturbation hardly start in Europe until the eighteenth century. Suddenly, a panic-theme appears: an appalling sickness develops in the Western world. Children masturbate. Via the medium of families, though not at their initiative, a system of control of sexuality, an objectivisation of sexuality allied to corporal persecution, is established over the bodies of children. But sexuality, though thus becoming an object of analysis and concern, engenders at the same time an intensification of each individual’s desire, for, in and over his body... What is the response on the side of power? An economic (and perhaps also ideological) exploitation of eroticisation, from sun-tan products to pornographic films. Responding precisely to the revolt of the body, we find a new mode of investment which presents itself no longer in the form of control by repression but that of control by stimulation.6

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The next example that Foucault gives, this time in a 1977 discussion, is about women and the feminist movement. Foucault shows how formulations of sexuality tried to tie women to their role as sex objects, but far from this apparently 'repressive' role, what it finally leads to is the production of the women's movement, from within the specificities of sex itself:

For a long time they tried to pin women to their sex. For centuries they were told: "You are nothing but your sex." And this sex, doctors added, is fragile, almost always sick and always inducing illness. "You are man's sickness." And towards the 18th century this ancient movement ran wild, ending in a pathologization of woman: the female body became a medical object *par excellence*... But the feminist movements responded defiantly. Are we sex by nature? Well then, let us be so but in its singularity, in its irreducible specificity. Let us draw the consequences and reinvent our own type of existence, political, economic and cultural...Always the same movement: to use this sexuality as the starting point in an attempt to colonize them and to cross beyond it toward other affirmations.  

The final example that Foucault gives, in the same discussion, is of homosexuality. Discursive formations on sexuality tried to brand homosexuals, confine them, and often seek to 'cure' them, but this 'repressive' technique itself confers a positivity on the homosexual, producing, paradoxically, the resistant discourse of homosexuality. Foucault says,

Take the case of homosexuality. Psychiatrists began a medical analysis of it in the 1870s: a point of departure certainly for a whole series of new interventions and controls. They began either to incarcerate homosexuals in asylums or to try to cure them. Sometimes they were looked upon as libertines and sometimes as delinquents... In the future we will *all* see them as manifesting forms of insanity, sickness of the sexual instinct. But taking such discourses literally, and thereby turning them around, we see responses arising in the form of defiance: "All right, we are the same as you, by nature sick or perverse, whichever you want. And so if we are, let us be so, and if you wish to know what we are, we can tell you better than you can." The entire literature of homosexuality, very differently from libertine narratives, appears at the end of the 19th century: recall Wilde and Gide. It is the strategic return of one "same" desire for truth.  

There are two consequences that stand out from this analysis of sexual power. The first concerns the types of domains in which this power operates. If we leave out the first example Foucault gives, which is of a more general nature, the three domains that Foucault delineates are those of health (masturbation appearing as harmful for children's health), women (in terms of their being sexual objects for men, most commonly in maritality), and homosexuality. As the chapter proceeds, I will show how these are the three categories that Foucault repeatedly turns to in his elaboration of the 'history of sexuality'. The second consequence is about the nature of the 'productive' sexual power. It can be observed how this sexual power is productive not only of a discourse about itself, as with power in the discursive domain of mentality or the socio-politico-economic domain of materiality, but with discourse that can be resistant in itself, of discourse that can talk about 'pleasure' beyond prohibition.

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Foucault sums up this peculiarity of sexual power in his construction of a special category of multiple, corporeal, non-repressive power called ‘bio-power’. Two characteristic features of this ‘bio-power’ are evident: first, it is a power that is embodied, it having been already established how sexuality imbues the body with power; second, that this power can itself constitute the apparently resistant category of ‘pleasure’, in its formulations of rules of sexual practice. Foucault defines this ‘bio-power’ in a 1977 interview stating,

What I want to show is how power relations can materially penetrate the body in depth, without depending even on the mediation of the subject’s own representations. If power takes hold on the body, this isn’t through its first having to be interiorised in people’s consciousnesses. There is a network or circuit of bio-power, or somato-power, which acts as the formative matrix of sexuality itself as the historical and cultural phenomenon within which we seem at once to recognise and lose ourselves.\(^9\)

Thus, resistance to and ‘liberation’ from ‘prohibitive’ norms of sexuality are entailed within bio-power itself, and I can conclude this introduction to Foucault’s notion of sexuality with a discussion of how Foucault analyses the retrogressive side of apparent ‘sexual liberation’.

c. \textit{The Politics of Sexual ‘Liberation’}

One of the commonest agencies that claim to ‘liberate’ a person sexually is psychoanalysis. For Foucault, however, it is more a means to perpetrate the dominant discourse of sexuality itself, especially because, as Foucault observes in the 1977 interview quoted above, psychoanalysis has the same therapeutic nature as the medieval confessional:

One can certainly say that psychoanalysis grew out of that formidable development and institutionalisation of confessional procedures which has been so characteristic of our civilisation. Viewed over a shorter span of time, it forms part of that medicalisation of sexuality which is another strange phenomenon of the West... It cannot be denied that psychoanalysis is situated at the point where these two processes intersect.\(^10\)

Thus, disciplines like psychoanalysis and sexology are attempts at normalizing ‘pathological’ instances of sexuality, and are tools of control, rather than of liberation. Foucault says, in a 1977 discussion, that ‘sexual liberation’ is based on the very constructs of dominant sexuality:

I believe that the movements labeled “sexual liberation” ought to be understood as movements of affirmation “starting with” sexuality. Which means two things: they are movements that start with sexuality, with the apparatus of sexuality in the midst of which we’re caught, and which make it function to the limit; but, at the same time, they are in motion relative to it, disengaging themselves and surmounting it.\(^11\)

With these introductory points about the Foucauldian notion of sexuality in mind, I can now proceed to analyse the different texts by Foucault on the ‘History of Sexuality’.


\(^10\) Ibid., 191.

II. The History of Sexuality, Volume I: a Project Abandoned

a. Sexuality as a Search for Truth and Knowledge

It was quite expected, in keeping with his tri-hierarchist schema, that after dealing with the political construction of 'mental' discourses and 'material' prisons, Foucault would soon deal extensively with the play of power in the domain of physicality. This expectation takes its material form in *La Volonté de savoir*, published in 1976, as the first of a projected six-volume set on the 'history of sexuality'. As the title, literally meaning 'The Will to Knowledge', itself suggests, Foucault analyses in this book how 'sexuality' gets constructed with the 'confession' of people to their sexual act under the governance of a dominant will to know. In a 1977, conversation, Foucault talks about the objective of this book:

> The first volume of my book is concerned with getting an overview on something whose permanent existence in the West is difficult to deny: regulated procedures for the confession of sex, sexuality and sexual pleasures.\[12\]

However, the English translation, which appeared in 1978, ignores this title and makes it a nondescript *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. This adopted title of the text, which I follow in my analysis, not being adequate, I would look into the basic problematics of the text, as regards its connection to knowledge before I begin to state what it contains.

The way Foucault deals with sexuality in this text is, of course, in conformity with the basic premises of bio-power and its non-repressive role that have already been discussed in the 'Introduction' to this chapter. But this text deals with another problematic too, one that concerns a periodic approach to sexuality. Foucault clearly opposes himself to the idea that modern 'liberal' sexuality, ushered in by Freud, is a radical break from the earlier austere regimes. Connecting Freud to the Enlightenment, Foucault says in the 1977 conversation,

> It seems to me that the mere fact that I've adopted this course undoubtedly excludes for me the possibility of Freud figuring as a radical break, on the basis of which everything else has to be re-thought. I may well attempt to show how around the eighteenth century there is installed, for economic reasons, historical reasons, and so forth, a general apparatus in which Freud will come to have his place.\[13\]

Thus, this book runs back to the Enlightenment, and even beyond, to the medieval Christian confessional, because it proposes to look into the production of knowledge and truth in sexual practice. One can recall how Foucault said, 'I use 'History of Sexuality' for want of anything better. The first projected title, which I subsequently dropped, was 'Sex and Truth'.'\[14\]

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\[13\] Ibid., 212.

\[14\] Ibid., 209.
b. Beyond the ‘Repressive Hypothesis’ of Sexuality

Foucault begins the book with the common presumption that most people make—that the Victorian Age was one of prudery and total sexual austerity. Sex was thoroughly repressed and when illegitimate categories did gain any sanction, it was just to construct them as ‘others’, the ones that the ideal Victorian self must avoid. Foucault says,

It was forced to make a few concessions, however. If it was truly necessary to make room for illegitimate sexualities, it was reasoned, let them take their infernal mischief elsewhere: to a place where they could be reintegrated, if not in the circuits of production, at least in those of profit. The brothel and the mental hospital would be those places of tolerance: the prostitute, the client, and the pimp, together with the psychiatrist and his hysteric—those “other Victorians”, as Steven Marcus would say—seem to have surreptitiously transferred their pleasures that are unspoken into the order of things that are counted.15

For Foucault this presentation of sexuality as essentially repressive, as classifying all individuals into two categories of the normal self and the pathological other, has two distinct political purposes. On the one hand, it suits perfectly well the designs of the bourgeois order to project sex not as a means to the unproductive labour of pleasure, but merely a means to reproduce the labour force. On the other, a repressive version of sexuality confers on the few who choose to speak against it the honourable label of a rebel making their attempts to reinforce the dominant repressive model acceptable. The ‘repressive hypothesis’ of sexuality is thus a political construct serving a dual political purpose, and Foucault questions its reality.

Accordingly, when Foucault attempts to probe the history of sexuality, he refuses to question the repressions of sex, and he rather questions the ‘repressive hypothesis’ itself:

The question I would like to pose is not, Why are we repressed? But rather, Why do we say, with so much passion and so much resentment against our most recent past, against our present, and against ourselves, that we are repressed? By what spiral did we come to affirm that sex is negated? What led us to show, ostentatiously, that sex is something we hide, to say it is something we silence?16

This questioning takes the form, in Foucault of a triad of questions: a ‘historical’ one about whether sexual repression is a historical fact; a ‘historico-theoretical’ one, as to whether mechanisms of power are necessarily repressive; and a ‘historico-political’ one, as to whether means of ‘liberation’ are not themselves part of the same ‘repressive’ network. The objective of such an analysis is, as Foucault shows, to examine how ‘polymorphous techniques of power’, i.e. what I have discussed earlier as ‘capillary power’, establish a ‘regime of power-knowledge-pleasure’, corresponding roughly to the domains of tri-hierarchization, through ‘discursive’ constructions about sexuality, promoted by an insatiable ‘will to know’. From such a perspective, sexuality does take up a non-repressive, discursively productive form.

16 Ibid., 8-9.
Following this course of analysis, Foucault comes to the conclusion that sexuality shows, in Western societies, a proliferation, rather than a repression. He says,

A first survey made from this viewpoint seems to indicate that since the end of the sixteenth century, the "putting into discourse of sex", far from undergoing a process of restriction, on the contrary has been subjected to a mechanism of increasing incitement; that the techniques of power exercised over sex have not obeyed a principle of rigorous selection, but rather one of dissemination and implantation of polymorphous sexualities; and that the will to knowledge has not come to a halt in the face of a taboo that must not be lifted, but has persisted in constituting—despite many mistakes, of course—a science of sexuality.17

This proliferation of discourses on sex takes place at two levels: through an ‘incitement’ of people to discursivize more and more about sexual practices; and through the creation of the mysterious and ever-interesting category of the profligate pervert. One can schematize these two Foucauldian categories of the proliferation of sexuality in the following way:

i) The incitement of discourse on sexual practice

Quite contrary to the accepted notion of repression of sexuality from the seventeenth century, Foucault shows how there was a steady proliferation of discourses concerning sexual practice, and not only was this in the form of ‘scandalous’ discourse created in resistance to repression, but one that was incited by the agencies of power themselves. Foucault says,

...the tightening up of the rules of decorum likely did produce, as a countereffect, a valorization and intensification of indecent speech. But more important was the multiplication of discourses concerning sex in the field of exercise of power itself: an institutional incitement to speak about it, and to do so more and more; a determination on the part of agencies of power to hear it spoken about, and to cause it to speak through explicit articulation and endlessly accumulated detail.18

This ‘incitement’ can be traced best in the evolution of the Catholic pastoral practice of confession from the Council of Trent to the seventeenth century, where everyone was forced to speak about sex to the authorities. The continuous current of this injunction to speak about sex can be traced right up to Sade and the Victorian anonymous texts like My Secret Life. Foucault notes how this was soon buttressed by political needs to incite discourse on sexual practices. The first instance of this is economic, where the capitalistic need to maintain labour force made the state invent the category of ‘population’ and maintain a strict roster of its citizens’ sexual practices. The second instance is in the educational field, where a concern for children’s sexuality in general and masturbation in particular saw to the rise of a special type of architecture in schools to generate discourses on child sexuality. The third instance is of medical sciences, embodied by sexology and psychoanalysis, and criminology, which also developed a huge corpus of knowledge on sexual practices. Thus, in all the three domains—economic materiality, educational mentality, and medical physicality—one can notice how power structures of the age incited production of sexuality, and Foucault sums it up saying,

17 Ibid., 12-13.
18 Ibid., 18.
Surely no other society has accumulated—and in such a relatively short span of time—a similar quantity of discourses concerned with sex. It may well be that we talk about sex more than anything else; we set our minds to the task; we convince ourselves that we have never said enough on the subject, that, through inertia or submissiveness, we conceal from ourselves the blinding evidence, and that what is essential always eludes us, so that we must always start out once again in search of it.19

Thus, one can see how, as opposed to the repressive hypothesis, the Victorian age actually ‘produced’ sexuality, and I can move on to the second point Foucault highlights.

**ii) The creation of the category of the ‘pervert’**

While a continuity can be noticed from the medieval confessions to the nineteenth century discourses on sexuality, Foucault observes a major disjunction in their respective obsessions. While the pastoral practice involved itself mostly with sanctioned marital conjugal practice, the latter busied itself with apparently ‘pathological’ forms like children’s sexuality, criminal sexuality, homosexuality, etc., to give rise to the category of ‘perversion’. For Foucault,

> Although not without delay and equivocation, the natural laws of matrimony and the immanent rules of sexuality began to be recorded on two separate registers. There emerged a world of perversion which partook of that of legal or moral infraction, yet was not simply a variety of the latter.20

For Foucault, the creation of this category of the ‘pervert’ did not lead to its total repression, but a moderation through four processes. The first involves what Foucault calls ‘lines of penetration’, or that unlike incest and adultery under the pastoral rule, the ‘perversions’ in modern sexuality were not banned and prohibited, but controlled through the penetration of a relatively permissive supervisory gaze. The second involves a ‘specification of individuals’ or that unlike the pastoral law where the aberrant sexual performer was uniformly banished, modern sexuality confers subjectivity on these ‘perverts’ making them into specific categories of sexual subjects, like homosexuals, paedophiles, and so on. The third process involves ‘perpetual spirals of power and pleasure’, or that instead of robbing sex of all its pleasure, power in modern sexuality actually accorded aberrant sexual practices a ration of pleasure to make its observation and discursivization all the more natural and possible. The fourth process incorporates ‘devices of sexual saturation’, or that unlike the unilateral monogamous heterosexual model of sexuality under the pastoral regime, modern discourses on sex include all types of sexuality within their ambit. Foucault sums up this fourfold production of a varied and intense sexuality on the basis of the construction of the category of the ‘pervert’ saying,

> Nineteenth-century “bourgeois” society—and it is doubtlessly still with us—was a society of blatant and fragmented perversion...it acted by multiplication of singular sexualities. It did not set boundaries for sexuality; it extended the various forms of sexuality, pursuing them according to lines of indefinite penetration. It did not exclude sexuality, but included it in the body as a mode of specification of individuals... Modern society is perverse, not in spite of its puritanism or as if from a backlash provoked by its hypocrisy: it is in actual fact, and directly, perverse.21

c. ‘Ars Erotica’ versus ‘Scientia Sexualis’

It has already been established how modern Western sexuality is based on generating knowledge about human sexual practices of all forms, and Foucault sees how this happens on two separated registers, the ‘physiology of reproduction’ and the ‘medicine of sex’. Whatever be the forms of these two different enterprises, what is clear is that sexuality in the Western context did not confine itself to pleasure or its interdiction, but branched into a ‘science’ geared towards truth and knowledge about sex. This is what Foucault calls the ‘scientia sexualis’. This type of sexuality is markedly different from that which proliferated in China, Japan, India, Rome, and the Arabo-Moslem societies, and which Foucault calls the ‘ars erotica’. In this latter form of the erotic art, pleasure itself is constitutive of truth, and its practice is a secret that few know, as opposed to the necessity in the former to constitute the truth about sex outside of pleasure and get it known by all and sundry. Foucault says,

On the face of it at least, our civilization possesses no ars erotica. In return, it is undoubtedly the only civilization to practice a scientia sexualis; or rather, the only civilization to have developed over the centuries procedures for telling the truth of sex which are geared to a form of knowledge-power strictly opposed to the art of initiations and the masterful secret... 22

For Foucault, the mainstay behind the formation of this scientia sexualis has been the act of confession, which has been an integral part of Western life from the Lateran Council of 1215 to the constant need for confessing to the church, to one’s parents, to the police that is present even today. Apart from its obvious differences with ars erotica, in its preclusion of pleasure and its doing away with secrecy, Foucault notes two more interesting differences between these two forms of sexual discourse. First, while revelation in ars erotica is voluntary, confessions are always extracted under coercion from the presence of a more powerful interlocutor. Secondly, in ars erotica, knowledge about sexual practice is passed from the authority to the subordinate, whereas under scientia sexualis, it is always the reverse.

Foucault shows how this extortion of sexual confession got constituted into a science of sexuality through five steps. The first is through ‘a clinical codification of the inducement to speak’, or that confessional techniques were connected with medical procedures to make the results therefrom scientifically acceptable. The second is through ‘the postulate of a general and diffuse causality’, or that all forms of sexual practice were accorded a causality to some event or feature of the individual’s life. The third step is through ‘the principle of a latency intrinsic to sexuality’, or that the true import of sexual practice was hidden from the subject, who had to confess it to an authority to know about its ‘scientific’ implications. The fourth step, connected to the third, is through ‘the method of interpretation’, or that the superior agency to which one confessed had the capability to interpret acts of the sexual

22 Ibid., 58.
subject and extract the truth from it. The final step is through ‘the medicalization of the effects of confession’, or that modern confessional techniques are not aimed at coding sin and transgression, as in the pastoral regime, but at constituting distinctions between the normal and the pathological and therapeutic operations they entail. Two characteristic features of scientia sexualis emerge from these five steps: first, Western sexuality is formed around the notions of the normal and the pathological and have normalizing therapeutic functions; second, in relation to truth, while the individual speaks the truth about his or her sexual practice, it is this confession that is, in turn, supposed to reveal the truth about the individual.

In spite of making this distinction between the science of sexuality and the erotic art, and crediting modern Western sexuality to have opted for the former, Foucault notes that through its very working, this science can often incorporate elements of the erotic art, as is evident in the current proliferation of ‘authoritative’ literature on sexuality, which people read to know more about sexual practices and the pleasures they encompass. Foucault says,

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tia sexualis versus ars erotica, no doubt. But it should be noted that the ars erotica did not disappear altogether from Western civilization; nor has it always been absent from the movement by which one sought to produce a science of sexuality. In the Christian confession, but especially in the direction and examination of conscience, in the search for spiritual union and the love of God, there was a whole series of methods that had much in common with an erotic art... And we must ask whether, since the nineteenth century, the scientia sexualis—under the guise of its decent positivism—has not functioned, at least to a certain extent, as an ars erotica.23

Therefore, for Foucault, modern Western sexuality has the potential in it to incorporate both the forms of sexuality, and in spite of its basic scientific form, it can also talk about the secrets of pleasure. It is the deployment of this dual sexuality that Foucault discusses next.

d. The Deployment of Sexuality

As is evident from the discussion above, sex becomes the very mirror in which the individual gets to know the truth about himself or herself. Foucault observes how this deployment of sexuality as the means to know is based less on the actual physiological act of sex than a representational ‘logic’ formed out of things said about it. He says,

In the space of a few centuries, a certain inclination has led us to direct the question of what we are, to sex. Not so much to sex as representing nature, but to sex as history, as signification and discourse. We have placed ourselves under the sign of sex, but in the form of a Logic of sex, rather than a Physics... Whenever it is a question of knowing who we are, it is this logic that henceforth serves as our master key.24

It is the deployment of this ‘logic of sex’ that Foucault proposes to study in his current project, and he outlines next the objective, method, domain and periodization of his enterprise one after the other, to schematize what his ‘history of sexuality’ incorporates.

23 Ibid., 70-71.
24 Ibid., 78.
i) The Objective of the Study

The primary objective of Foucault's current study is to establish that the deployment of sexuality does not take place on the basis of a monolithic repressive power, which operates through principles of negation, prohibition and censorship enforced through the rule of a uniform coercive apparatus, but through multiplicities, which cannot give rise to a singular 'theory' of power but can only constitute its 'analytics'. Foucault says,

The aim of the inquiries that will follow is to move less toward a "theory" of power than toward an "analytics" of power: that is, toward a definition of the specific domain formed by relations of power, and toward a determination of the instruments that will make possible its analysis. However, it seems to me that this analytics can be constructed only if it frees itself completely from a certain representation of power that I will term—it will be seen later why—"juridico-discursive".25

Foucault attempts next to probe how, in spite of it being in reality 'polymorphous', power always appears as juridical and repressive. He gives two reasons for this. The first is strategic: for Foucault, power deliberately hides its multiple forms and makes only one limited form appear, because its operational success relies on its ability to hide its mechanisms. The second reason is historical: monarchy, which emerged as an institution in the Middle Ages, deliberately suppressed other minute forms of power to establish its absolute supremacy over people; for Foucault, modern society has yet not got out of the clutches of this unitary monarchical power. Foucault shows how bio-power is quite different from this power:

At bottom, despite the differences in epochs and objectives, the representation of power has remained under the spell of monarchy. In political thought and analysis, we still have not cut off the head of the king... it has gradually been penetrated by quite new mechanisms of power that are probably irreducible to the representation of law. As we shall see, these power mechanisms are, at least in part, those that, beginning in the eighteenth century, took charge of men's existence, men as living bodies.26

Foucault's objective in this study of the 'history of sexuality' is thus to see how sexuality gets deployed as the means to truth through a multiplicity of minute corporeal powers.

ii) The Method for the Study

It is clear from the objective of Foucault's study that the method involved will be one that studies the power exercised over human bodies not in terms of a binary repressive law but as a multiplicity of power relations. Foucault states five features of this multiplicity of bio-power. First, this power is exercised from 'innumerable points' through 'mobile relations'. Secondly, this power is not exterior to processes in the three domains of materiality, mentality, and physicality, like economic processes, systems of knowledge and sexual relations, but is constituted from within them. Thirdly, this power is not imposed from above by an enforcing agency, but comes 'from below', from the actuality of human bodies. Fourthly, in spite of being 'intentional' to a certain extent, this power is also 'non-subjective'

25 Ibid., 82.
26 Ibid., 88-89.
and is beyond the scope of the individual subject. Finally, this power itself entails resistance, not in the form of a 'single locus of great Refusal', but rather in the form of a 'plurality of resistances' present throughout the power network. Accordingly, Foucault says,

...the question that we must address, then, is not: Given a specific state structure, how and why is it that power needs to establish a knowledge of sex? Neither is the question: What over-all domination was served by the concern, evidenced since the eighteenth century, to produce true discourses on sex? Nor is it: What law presided over both the regularity of sexual behavior and the conformity of what was said about it? It is rather: In a specific type of discourse on sex, in a specific form of extortion of truth, appearing historically and in specific places (around the child’s body, apropos of women’s sex, in connection with practices restricting births, and so on), what were the most immediate, the most local power relations at work? How did they make possible these kinds of discourses, and conversely, how were these discourses used to support power relations?27

This makes Foucault frame his method on the basis of four ‘rules’. The first is what he calls the ‘Rule of immanence’, or that sexuality is not hidden away under a prohibitive power, but can be studied in its emergence from ‘local centres’ of power-knowledge. The second comprises the ‘Rules of continual variations’, or that power relations are continuously modified, rather than being identifiable in a binary model of men, adults, parents, doctors exercising sexual power on the one side and women, adolescents, children, patients being continuously deprived of it. The third is the ‘Rule of double conditioning’, or that the ‘local centres’ of power and the strategies adopted to exercise power are not independent entities, but ones that continuously constitute and reinforce each other. The final methodological rule of Foucault is the ‘Rule of tactical polyvalence of discourses’, or that the discourse of sexuality is not the mere ‘surface of projection’ of power mechanisms, but the very multiple matrix in which the precepts of sexual power get tactically constituted.

iii) The Domains of the Study

After laying down the objective and method of his study, Foucault delimits the domains that will be incorporated in its course to ‘four great strategic unities’, around which sexuality unfolded its power-knowledge-pleasure nexus from the eighteenth century. The first concerns ‘hysterization of women’s bodies’, whereby the female body was projected as nothing but a bundle of pathological sexual passions. The second is about ‘pedagogization of children’s sex’, whereby child-sexuality, and especially masturbation was made an object of observation and control. The third comprises ‘socialization of procreative behavior’, or how procreation was made the sole objective of sex. The final domain concerns ‘psychiatrization of perverse pleasure’, whereby all forms of ‘perverse’ sexual practice, and especially homosexuality, were made the object of clinical intervention.

27 Ibid., 97.
In addition to these four areas of possible research, Foucault talks about the domain of the 'family' too, as the matrix in which the strategies of sexuality are constituted. In this context, Foucault introduces the concept of 'deployment of alliance', through which from time immemorial marriages have been organized to foster kinship ties and property rules, and which was supplemented, in the wake of new politico-economic structures in the eighteenth century, with the 'deployment of sexuality'. Foucault lists three main differences between these two deployments: while the deployment of alliance relies on a binary prohibitive system of rules, the deployment of sexuality is mobile and polymorphous; while the former is aimed at simply enforcing an established law, the latter extends the area of control as it functions; and finally, while the former is based on economic needs and contracts, the latter is rooted in the sensations of the body. For Foucault, these two diametrically opposite modes of deployment get superimposed, in the eighteenth century, within the institution of the family:

The family is the interchange of sexuality and alliance: it conveys the law and the juridical dimension in the deployment of sexuality; and it conveys the economy of pleasure and the intensity of sensations in the regime of alliance.28

This is why the family occupies such an important position in a study of modern sexuality, and the four domains of research already identified cannot but be studied as operating in two dimensions—the husband-wife axis and the parents-children axis—within the family. This also explains, as Foucault shows, how for psychoanalysis, the primary sexual repression is rooted in incestuous transgressions of the family, and for psychiatry a pathological case can only be cured when it is removed from the family into confinement.

What comes out from this discussion is that the domain of Foucault's study of the 'history of sexuality' concerns the deployment of sexuality through the four strategies mentioned above within the institution of the family. Summing it up, Foucault says,

Hence the domain we must analyze in the different studies that will follow the present volume is that deployment of sexuality: its formation on the basis of the Christian notion of the flesh, and its development through the four great strategies that were deployed in the nineteenth century: the sexualization of children, the hysterization of women, the specification of the perverted, and the regulation of populations—all strategies that went by way of a family which must be viewed, not as a powerful agency of prohibition, but as a major factor of sexualization.29

It should also be noted that the four specific areas of research that Foucault specifies here intersect to constitute the three thematic unities that I have already stated (see p. 403 above), and which Foucault takes up in his subsequent volumes. The concerns for hysterization of the woman and masturbation of the child intersect in the domain of health; the concerns for procreation as also the hysterical woman intersect in the domain of marital relationships; while those for perverseness and procreation intersect in the domain of homosexuality.

28 Ibid., 108.
29 Ibid., 113-14.
iv) Periodization for the Study

Foucault notes that if one wishes to write a 'history of sexuality' from the point of view of the 'repressive hypothesis', one is likely to consider two major ruptures: one in the seventeenth century, when 'great prohibitions' came to be clamped on sexual practice; and the other in the twentieth century, when sexuality was apparently 'liberated' from these taboos. For Foucault, however, a totally different periodization has to be followed: first, one should look into the confessional techniques of medieval Christianity, for the beginnings of a speaking about sex; next, one should turn to the eighteenth century, when sexuality gets penetrated by other structures like pedagogy (in child-sexuality), medicine (in the treatment of women), and demography (in dealing with procreative sex); finally, one should move to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when sexual pathology becomes a specific clinical practice through psychoanalysis, and sexuality gets subjected to a new form of political intervention, culminating in programmes of eugenics in certain states.

The second principle of periodization that Foucault uses takes a different direction and a different point of departure. The repressive model of sexuality would assume that sexual strictures were aimed, as a means of domination, at the lower classes. Foucault observes, however, that under the feudal as well as the capitalist regimes, norms of sexuality were directed at members of the upper classes—the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, with their women and perverts being taken to the doctor, their children being supervised in schools and so on. The lower classes were thoroughly excluded from the principles of sexuality, and Foucault attributes this exclusive sexual concern in the upper classes to the concept of lineage, which the lower classes had no reason to adhere to. The second line of periodization follows this line of thought and considers two ruptures: first, how in the eighteenth century, the bourgeoisie formed for itself a sexual specificity, replacing the feudal insistence on 'blood' with its own material norms of sexuality; and secondly, how in the mid-nineteenth century it was forced, grudgingly though, to accord the proletariat too a sexuality. Initially, when the bourgeoisie formed its own sexuality, it did not feel any necessity to inculcate the same into the proletariat for whom mere reproduction of the labour force was sufficient. Later, however, they were forced to include this latter class also within its sexuality for two reasons. First, rapid industrial centralization gave rise to congested cities where the two classes had to cohabit in close proximity, and the risk of epidemics, prostitution, and venereal diseases made the bourgeoisie incorporate the proletariat within its sexual norms. Secondly, advancement in industrialization did not need a surfeit of labour force any more, and instead what was needed was population control, especially among the poorer classes. The two succeeding stages of exclusivization and globalization of sexuality provide Foucault's proposed study with the second type of periodization that it wishes to follow.
e. Life, Body and the Race: the Politics of 'Bio-Power'

After formulating the different categories that his study of the deployment of sexuality would involve, Foucault returns to where he began from and lays down the basic features of ‘bio-power’, power as working in the domain of physicality. He begins by citing how the absolute power that the sovereign enjoyed over the subjects’ lives and bodies, right from the days of the Roman law, gets thwarted to a great extent with the coming of the Classical age. Foucault credits this to a fundamental change in the nature of power by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Earlier, power was exercised as a means of ‘deduction’ (prélèvement), where the sovereign agency could seize one’s property or one’s life in its bid to govern; from the seventeenth century, however, power has ceased to play a deductive repressive role, and has instead sought to proliferate itself through a multiplicity of incitement and control. As far as power over life and the body is concerned, Foucault notices how, from the onset of the Classical age, it was constituted in two forms. The first took the form of ‘disciplines’, for which the body was a machine, whose productive power could be optimized through a surveillance aimed at invoking docility; for Foucault, this first form constituted an ‘anatomo-politics of the human body’. The second form was of ‘regulatory controls’, whereby the biological processes of the body, like birth, mortality and reproduction, were regulated through, what Foucault calls, a ‘bio-politics of the population.’ This two-pronged exercise of power, through the army, school and workshops on the one hand, and demography and medicine on the other, constitutes what Foucault calls ‘bio-power’.

This ‘bio-power’ is also related to processes of history. On the one hand, it can be associated very easily in chronological terms with the advent of capitalism in Western history:

This bio-power was without question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism; the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes.30

Secondly, the economic development in the eighteenth century and the massive demographic growth that it caused linked politics and the course of history to the body much more firmly than the erstwhile interface between the two through famines and warfare could. Thirdly, and this is the most interesting point that Foucault raises, resistance to power from the nineteenth century onward also based itself on the body, so that unlike earlier struggles for abstract ‘rights’, modern modes of struggle, and this includes Marxism, stress on basic needs for the survival of the human body. Through these three ways, after the Classical age, history itself got shaped by human life and the body, and corresponding to his term ‘bio-power’, Foucault coins a term ‘bio-history’, to show how history gets constructed in the domain of physicality.

30 Ibid., 140-41.
In attempting to find the fundamental change that happened in the Classical age in terms of this 'bio-history', Foucault notes how the primacy of 'blood' in the earlier stages of this period soon gave way to that of sexuality. Blood acted as a symbol of residual feudal power, through its invocation of repressive themes of death, warfare and lineage, but under the bourgeois regime, it was fast replaced by the actuality of that construct of disciplinary regulation and knowledge called sexuality. Explaining this transition, Foucault says,

The new procedures of power that were devised during the classical age and employed in the nineteenth century were what caused our societies to go from a symbolics of blood to an analytics of sexuality. Clearly, nothing was more on the side of the law, death, transgression, the symbolic, and sovereignty than blood; just as sexuality was on the side of the norm, knowledge, life, meaning, the disciplines, and regulations.31

Foucault notes how at the transition point between these two modes of bio-history stand two interesting forms dealing with sexuality and the power of blood. The first is that of Sadism, where the analytics of sexuality cannot be established without a symbolics of pain and bloodshed. The second, and which is doubtless of more political importance, is racism, where notions of sexuality get mingled with the desire to maintain the purity of 'blood'.

Foucault discusses racism in detail right up to the principle of eugenics in Nazi Germany, where sexuality was regulated with a certain notion of superiority of blood in mind. In a 1977 conversation, Foucault shows how racism in the form of anti-Semitism, is rooted in the Christian revulsion at Jew consanguinity, that is a transgression of blood in sexuality:

Modern antisemitism began in that form. The new forces of antisemitism developed, in socialist milieus, out of the theory of degeneracy. It was said that the Jews are necessarily degenerates, firstly because they are rich, secondly because they intermarry. They have totally aberrant sexual and religious practices, so it is they who are the carriers of degeneracy in our societies... Pre-Hitlerism, the nationalist antisemitism of the Right, adopted exactly the same themes in 1910.32

It can be further noted how Foucault credits psychoanalysis with a progressive anti-Fascist agenda, in its locating sexuality beyond body and blood in old-fashioned repressive 'law':

It is to the political credit of psychoanalysis...that it regarded with suspicion... the irrevocably proliferating aspects which might be contained in these power mechanisms aimed at controlling and administering the everyday life of sexuality: whence the Freudian endeavor (out of reaction no doubt to the great surge of racism that was contemporary with it) to ground sexuality in the law—the law of alliance, tabooed consanguinity, and the Sovereign-Father, in short, to surround desire with all the trappings of the old order of power. It was owing to this that psychoanalysis was—in the main, with a few exceptions—in theoretical and practical opposition to fascism.33

31 ibid., 148.
f. The Proposed Project and its Abandonment

From the above discussions, it is clear that power structures operate on the body, through the means of devices like life and race, with sexuality as their weapon. It would, however, be wrong to assume that in this power-play the physical act of sex occupies the position of the real agency, and sexuality—that discursive construct based on the action of power on the body is just a spectre. On the contrary, as Foucault shows, sexuality is the real substratum for 'bio-power', and the act of sex is just an element in its deployment:

We must not make the mistake of thinking that sex is an autonomous agency which secondarily produces manifold effects of sexuality over the entire length of its surface of contact with power. On the contrary, sex is the most speculative, most ideal, and most internal element in a deployment of sexuality organized by power in its grip on bodies and their materiality, their forces, energies, sensations, and pleasures.34

Sexuality functions in two ways to make sex possible. First, it connects itself to knowledge about the self and makes the pursuit of sex an act in conformity with the human will to knowledge. Secondly, it makes the pursuit of sex appear desirable and pleasurable, through its discursive construction of the same, and makes human beings engage in sexual acts. Thus, it is not the actuality of sex that has to be the point of departure for sexuality, but rather, the reality of sexuality alone can lead one to a realization of sex. Foucault says,

So we must not refer a history of sexuality to the agency of sex; but rather show how “sex” is historically subordinate to sexuality. We must not place sex on the side of reality, and sexuality on that of confused ideas and illusions; sexuality is a very real historical formation; it is what gave rise to the notion of sex, as a speculative element necessary to its operation.35

Accordingly, at the end of this introductory volume, Foucault proposes to study the ‘history of sexuality’, not through an analysis of sexual acts down history, but through an analysis of the proliferation of discourses in the four areas he has already identified. For Foucault, an analysis of constructions around the onanistic child, the hysterical woman, the practitioner of aberrant sexual forms, and the contraceptive-using couple, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can bring out the roots of our modem sexuality.

It is quite interesting to note, and I really do not know whether it is fortunate or unfortunate for the reader, that Foucault abandons this project right after the introductory volume. Though he sticks to his basic premises about ‘bio-power’ and the primacy of discourses on sexuality over the actual act of sex, and also to the three broad areas of research that I have already identified—health, marital conjugality, and homosexuality, that is to his objective, method and domain of research, as far as periodization is concerned, he makes a major departure from the proposed bourgeois Classical age to the Greco-Roman era in the two subsequent volumes of ‘history of sexuality’ that I would analyse one after the other.

34 Ibid., 155.
III. The History of Sexuality, Volume 2: a Morality of the Self

a. A Change in the Direction of 'Subjectivization'

Foucault had promised in 1976 to come out with five more volumes on the 'history of sexuality', but for eight long years there was no book that came out of the project. Finally, when in 1984, two volumes—L'Usage des Plaisirs (The Use of Pleasure) and Le Souci de soi (The Care of the Self)—came out simultaneously as the second and third volumes of The History of Sexuality, the reader couldn’t but be surprised at their content. Explanations were provided in the ‘Introduction’ to the text, but Foucault had to provide a lot more in interviews, which I would deal with before I enter the text to understand fully this change in stance.

In the last interview that Foucault ever gave, between the publication of this last pair of books of his and his most untimely death, Foucault talks about the problem:

It is true that when I wrote the first volume of The History of Sexuality seven or eight years ago, I absolutely had intended to write historical studies on sexuality starting with the sixteenth century and to analyze the evolution of this knowledge up to the nineteenth century. And while I was doing this project, I noticed that it was not working out. An important problem remained: why had we made sexuality into a moral experience? So I locked myself up, abandoned everything I had written on the seventeenth century, and started to work my way back—first to the fifth century in order to look at the beginnings of the Christian experience, then to the period immediately preceding it, the end of antiquity. Finally I finished three years ago with the study of sexuality in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. 36

The change is thus aimed at finding how sexuality gets rooted in subjective practices of morality, and Foucault shows in another 1984 interview, the role of the subject in this change:

I very nearly died of boredom writing those books: they were too much like the earlier ones... So I changed the general plan: instead of studying sexuality on the borders of knowledge and power, I have tried to go further back, to find out how, for the subject himself, the experience of his sexuality as desire had been constituted. 37

The change is thus constitutive, as Foucault expresses most succinctly in another 1984 interview, of the construction of the subject in sexuality in terms of the self-control of desires and sexual activities that he or she performs. Foucault justifies his change in direction saying,

Yes, I have changed direction. When I was dealing with madness I set out from the "problem" it may have constituted in a certain social, political, and epistemological context: the problem that madness poses for others. Here I set out from the problem that sexual behavior might pose for individuals themselves (or at least to men in Antiquity). In the first case, I had to find out how madmen were "controlled": in the second how one "controls" oneself. 38

It is this construction of subjectivity that one, therefore, needs to look into in this change.


38 Michel Foucault, ‘The Concern for Truth’ (interview with François Ewald, in Magazine littéraire 207, May 1984, pp. 18-23), trans. Alan Sheridan. in Ibid., 258.
In Foucault’s final interview, Foucault gives a term for this constitution of the subject—'subjectivization'—and shows how it involves the rationalization of the organization of one’s self-consciousness. This 'subjectivization' comprises the basic thrust of the apparent change in perspective in volumes 2 and 3 of *The History of Sexuality*. Foucault says,

> It is experience which is the rationalization of a process, itself provisional, which results in a subject, or rather, in subjects. I will call subjectivization the procedure by which one obtains the constitution of the subject, or more precisely, of a subjectivity which is of course only one of the given possibilities of organization of a self-consciousness.  

The main theme of a 'history of sexuality' thus becomes the subjective stylization of a certain way of existence, a certain 'art of living', as Foucault says in another 1984 interview:

> It should be clearly understood that I am not writing a history of morals, of behavior, a social history of sexual practices, but a history of the way in which pleasures, desires, and sexual behavior were problematized, reflected upon, and conceived in Antiquity in relation to a certain art of living.  

It is this 'change' in perspective—seeing how sexuality involves a set of morals, which bring in a process of subjectivization, whereby an individual is induced to pursue a self-control over his or her body, determining a particular art of living—that constitutes Foucault’s moving over to distant periods in history to search the roots of modern sexuality. It is this change that has to be kept in mind to understand the connection between the three volumes to the fullest.

### b. *A Cautious and Elaborate ‘Introduction’*

Foucault begins the second volume of his 'history of sexuality' (translated by Robert Hurley in 1986) with an extremely long introduction, because as I have already stated he had quite a few explanations to make. Foucault begins by stating how according to his schema of analysing things (which I have identified as the means to study *tri-hierarchization*) he could not write a 'history of sexuality' only on the basis of the knowledge it entails and the power structures it involves; he had to incorporate a genealogy of how sexuality pervades individual bodies too. It is this imperative of including the physical into an analysis which would have otherwise comprised only the mental and the material that causes the 'change' in this volume:

> But it was clear that to undertake this genealogy would carry me far from my original project. I had to choose: either stick to the plan I had set, supplementing it with a brief historical survey of the theme of desire, or reorganize the whole study around the slow formation, in antiquity, of a hermeneutics of the self. I opted for the latter... It seemed to me that by framing the question in this way, and by attempting to develop it for a period that was rather far from the horizons with which I was familiar, I would be going more closely into the inquiry that I have long been committed to—even if this reproach were to demand a few years of additional work.  

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This genealogical approach towards the subjectivized interpellation of the individual body into sexuality leads Foucault to three different epochs: the Greek antiquity of the fourth century BC, the Greco-Roman culture from the last two centuries BC to the first two centuries AD, and the medieval Christian pastoral regime. In all the three epochs, Foucault notices a certain *problematization* of sexuality, or that in spite of there being no interdiction to follow a rigid moral code, subjects perform a stylized self-control over their sexual practices. It is this ‘problematization’ that constitutes the subject matter of the three volumes Foucault proposes:

I have followed a simple chronological arrangement: this volume, *The Use of Pleasure*, is devoted to the manner in which sexual activity was problematized by philosophers and doctors in classical Greek culture of the fourth century B.C.; *Care of the Self* deals with the same problematization in the Greek and Latin texts of the first two centuries of our era; lastly, *The Confessions of the Flesh* deals with the formation of the doctrine and ministry concerning the flesh.42

It should be noted that Foucault’s premature death robbed readers of the chance to delve into the proposed fourth volume of *The History of Sexuality*, but I have tried to reconstruct, from articles written by Foucault on the subject mentioned above, what would have probably been included in this volume, in the fifth section of this chapter.

After having explained the raison d’être for the ‘shift’ in this book, Foucault moves on to elaborate, within the ‘Introduction’ itself, the forms that this ‘problematization’ of sexuality takes. It is commonsensically assumed that while Christian morality saw sex as dangerous for the self, and prescribed strict monogamous and heterosexual conjugal relations, if not absolute celibacy, the Greeks lived in a very permissive regime. Foucault observes, however, a problematization of this apparent liberalism in Antiquity, operating through four discursive processes. The first concerns a fear of the harmful effects of the sexual act and Foucault shows how Greek physicians like Aretaeus and Soranus prescribe a restricted sexual practice. The second process involves the ideal of marital conduct, and Foucault shows how Pliny advocates marital fidelity as rigorously as later Christian missionaries. The third problematization involves the image of the homosexual, and though the Greco-Romans definitely did not prohibit gay practice, Foucault shows how portrayal of effeminate habitual homosexuals in Plato, Aristophanes, Epictetus, Dio Chrysostom, or Apuleius, is almost similar to the stereotypical portrayal of the category in nineteenth century literature. Finally, Foucault also shows how abstentious ‘Platonic’ love was quite a significant category in Greco-Roman thought, where love was not to lead one to mere pleasure but to truth. Thus, while there was no doubt sexual freedom in the Greek age as opposed to the strictly repressive pastoral period, one can see there exist simultaneously forms of morality, corresponding to the very four requirements of Christian ethics, problematizing the very notion of sexuality.

What this absence of any rigorous moral code and yet a self inflicted following of the same implies is what has been already established as stylized moral 'subjectivization', a deliberate self-control of the sexually free individual. What is even more interesting is that these ethics were always directed towards 'free men', and never to the subjected ones like slaves and women, proving once again that the observance of sexual morals was a personal subjective choice, aimed at acquiring a certain style of existence, rather than an obligation to interdictions. Thus, for Foucault, morality in the domain of sexuality has to do more with ways to 'conduct oneself' than with the following some laid down law. Foucault shows how this takes place through three processes. The first is that of the 'determination of the ethical substance', or the setting up of certain parts of the self as the prime material for moral conduct. The second procedure is that of the 'mode of subjection' (mode d'assujettissement), or the way in which the individual recognizes himself or herself as obliged to put a self-inflicted rule into practice. The third concerns 'ethical work' (travail éthique), or exercises that one performs on oneself to transform oneself into an ethical subject. These three procedures together comprise a fourth category, the 'telos of the ethical subject', the final self-controlled end product that one envisages oneself as. Summing it up, Foucault says that morality can only be exercised through 'modes of subjectivation' (the same thing as what he would later call 'subjectivization') involving an 'ascetics' of 'practices of the self':

In short, for an action to be "moral", it must not be reducible to an act or a series of acts conforming to a rule, a law, or a value... There is no specific moral action that does not refer to a unified moral conduct; no moral conduct that does not call for the forming of oneself as an ethical subject; and no forming of the ethical subject without "modes of subjectivation" and an "ascetics" or "practices of the self" that support them. Moral action is indissociable from these forms of self-activity, and they do not differ any less from one morality to another than do the systems of values, rules, and interdictions. 43

Foucault elaborates that this book of his will thus deal with the training or 'ascetics' (askēsis in Greek) that one practices over oneself through a moderation in the 'use of pleasures' (chrēsis aphrodisiōn) in relation to one's health, one's marital relationship, one's homosexual relationships, and in the overall relationship to 'truth'. Foucault says,

In this volume, I would like to take note of some general traits that characterized the way in which sexual behavior was considered by classical Greek thought as a domain of moral valuation and choice. I will start from the then common notion of "use of the pleasures"—chrēsis aphrodisiōn—and attempt to determine the modes of subjectivation to which it referred: the ethical substance, the types of subjection, the forms of elaboration of the self, and the moral teleology... I will study the way in which medical and philosophical thought worked out this "use of the pleasures", formulating several recurrent themes of austerity that would center on four great axes of experience: the relation to one's body, the relation to one's wife, the relation to boys, and the relation to truth. 44

Having finished with his 'Introduction', Foucault moves on next into this proposed subject.

41 Ibid., 28.
44 Ibid., 32.
c. Introduction to the Key Terms Used in the Book

Having explained to the reader his change in stance in the current volume as also its objective, method, domain and periodization, Foucault proceeds next to introduce four key Greek terms that he uses here to analyse sexual subjectivization. They are *aphrodisia*, the Greek blanket term for all sexual acts and concepts (which the Romans call *venerea*); *chrēsis*, the term for 'use', referring to the way one uses one's pleasures; *enkrateia*, the term for 'mastery', or how one controls one's desires and becomes the master of oneself; and *sōphrosynē*, the term for 'moderation', dealing with how the ethical subject minimizes sexual acts. I will show how Foucault discusses these four terms one after the other.

i) Aphrodisia

Foucault notices how there is very little material in ancient Greek writing on the actual acts that comprise the *aphrodisia*, but this should not, as he says, be interpreted as the consideration by Greeks of sexual activity as sinful. On the contrary, Foucault observes how the Greeks define *aphrodisia* through a circular network involving all the three factors of desire, pleasure, and the sexual act itself. He spots, however, two major problematizations in this otherwise desirable category. The first concerns the role one assumes in sexual acts, with *aphrodisia* entailing two complementary acts: an *aphrodisiazēn*, or the active 'masculine' role, and also an *aphrodisiasthēnai*, or the passive role fit for women and slaves. Under the Greek moral expectations, it was contemptible for a free man to take pleasures in the passive role. The second concerns the naturalness and hence baseness of *aphrodisia*—even animals copulate—and the *energeia* the act possesses to make it most likely to be excessive. This is why Plato, Aristotle and Aristippus talk about controlling one's sexual urges and using them sparingly. Both the problematizations lead to the same thing, a self-inflicted reasonable 'use' of one's pleasures, in spite of one being free to seek *aphrodisia* in any form that one desires.

ii) Chrēsis

While the necessity of a 'use of pleasures' has already been stated, Foucault explains at this stage of the book how this *chrēsis* in the Greek system through three strategies. The first is the 'strategy of need', or limiting the use of one's pleasures to the minimalist factor of fulfilling one's elementary sexual needs, and not going to any excesses beyond that. The second is the 'strategy of timeliness', or limiting the use of one's pleasures only to certain instances of 'right time'—the kairos. Foucault shows how this timeliness was regulated by three factors: one's age (one should not have sex at too young or too old an age), the time of the year (with correlations between climactic variations and the sexual act), and the time of the day (dietary and religious considerations, as well as the need for decency limiting sexual acts to the evening and night). The third strategy is the 'strategy of status', or that one should use one's pleasures in conformity with one's status in society, thus limiting it.
iii) Enkrateia

The strategies of *chrēsis* point towards one thing, that one should be able to perform an *enkrateia*, i.e. master one's sexual urges. Foucault shows how this self-control presupposes an 'agonistic relationship' that one must develop with the pleasurable side of oneself, leading to a 'heautocratic' structure (*heauton* is the Greek word for 'self'), where the self has to be taken special care of and disciplined in a certain manner. For Foucault, this heautocratic structure formed itself on two schemas: that of public life, as in the model of a chariot with its steeds and driver in Plato’s *Phaedrus*; and that of domestic life, as in the model of a child with an adult tutor in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. What both these schemas imply is that to achieve *enkrateia*, one needs to train one's self in a certain manner, undergo a certain *askēsis* of the self, a certain heautocratic stylization of existence.

iv) Sōphrosynē

The category of *enkrateia*, or the mastery over one's self, implies that one would use this mastery to lead to a moderation of one's sexual urges. The category of *sōphrosynē* is therefore a consequence of the exercises over the self. It should be noted, however, that the very fact that this moderation stems from a 'mastery' makes it obvious that *sōphrosynē* is not an enslavement to moral norms that limit one's desires, but rather a spontaneous decision to moderate oneself arrived at out of total freedom. This idea of limiting one's sexual acts out of free choice and not through obligations, gives the Greek sense of sexual moderation, what Foucault calls, a 'virile' character. This notion of virility, freedom and activity in the exercise of sexual control explains why sexual ethics in the Greek age is always addressed to the man, and the woman is never the locus of strategies of sexual limitation as she would be later in Western society. Sexual morality arises out of a control over one's self, and therefore it can concern only the man, who can exercise such control, and never the woman, who for the Greeks are inferior objects and unfit to exercise any control whatsoever, not even over their own selves. The category of *sōphrosynē* is important because it leads man to this freedom-power nexus, makes him the ruler over himself and others, takes him to the *logos*, the truth.

After defining these four key terms that constitute Greek sexuality and its modes of subjectivization, Foucault proceeds to examine the working of the same in the four areas of research he has already identified: a 'dietetics' concerning health, an 'economics' concerning marital relationships, an 'erotics' involving homosexuality, and a general relation to truth. It can be observed that the first three areas, on which Foucault deals in detail in this volume as well as the next, correspond to the three themes in sexuality I have already identified, while the fourth area, which Foucault discusses very briefly in the current volume an does not take up in the next, concerns the broader paradigm of the link between sexuality and truth.
d. *Dietetics, Health and Sexuality*

Foucault begins the study of his first area of research, that concerning the correlation between sexual practices and health, with a statement as to how dietetics or regimen was integral to Greek medicine. He shows how whether it is the Hippocratic tradition, which locates the birth of medical sciences in providing an appropriate diet for the sick, or the Platonic tradition, for which regimen arrived as a later date as a supplement to the by then corrupt "divine" clinical forms, there is an unequivocal connection between dietetics and health. The relations between this dietetics-oriented medical practice and sexuality comes from the assertion by Hippocrates in Book VI of his *Epidemics* that 'regimen' included regulations in exercises, foods, drinks, sleep, and also *aphrodisia*. While the purpose of this regimen is definitely to aid a control of sexual excesses, Foucault states how the age perceived two types of danger that could come from an excessive practice of the regimen too:

The possibility of a danger in the very practice of "diet" was readily acknowledged. For if the aim of regimen was to prevent excesses, one might exaggerate the importance one lent to it and the autonomy one permitted it to assume. This risk was generally perceived as having two forms. There was the danger of what might be called "athletic" excess; this was due to repeated workouts that overdeveloped the body and ended by making the soul sluggish, enveloped as it was within a too-powerful musculature... But there was also the danger of what could be called "valetudinary" excess; that is, the constant vigilance that one applied to one's body, one's health, to the least ailment.¹⁵

Foucault shows how this controlled use of regimen required two particular forms of attention on the part of the individual. On the one hand, it required a 'serial' attention to the sequence of elements of the regimen, because the value of activities was determined only in relation to those that preceded or followed them. On the other hand, it also required a 'circumstantial' attention, aimed at the appropriateness of the external factors like climate or time.

Foucault mentions how there are two treatises on dietetics, both attributed to Hippocrates, that belong to this ancient Greek age: the *Peri diaitês hygiainês (A Regimen for Health)* and the *Peri diaitês*. While the first does not mention anything about the role of dietetics in *aphrodisia*, the second gives explicit advice as to the association of sexual activity with alimentary and climactic factors. The primary concerns that the text shows towards the sexual act is in terms of it generating heat in the body, it being a means of evacuating moisture from the body, and the evacuation of a vital bodily element itself leading to probable loss of weight. Accordingly, the text prescribes hot and dry food and a surfeit of sexual relations during the cold and wet winter, cold and moist food and a virtual abstention from sex in the hot and dry months of summer, and a moderate use of both food and sex in the intermediate seasons of spring and autumn.

Foucault notices two very interesting features of this interface of health and sexual practices. First, quite contrary to the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century treatises on health and regimen, here the space given to the problem of sexual relations is very limited compared to that given to exercises and food. Secondly, and again at divergence with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century discourses on sexuality, the Greek regimen says nothing about the form of the sexual act. Unlike the concerns of the bourgeois society with proper positions, contraception, masturbation, and 'perverse' sexual practices, which have been discussed in an earlier section of this chapter, the Hippocratic system shows dietetics being relevant for sexual practice only in terms of appropriate seasons and appropriate food accompanying it.

Foucault moves next into other texts, not explicitly medical ones, to see how Antiquity felt the need to control sexual activities on reasons of health. This anxiety of the age about the effects of sex on the body do not come, however, from a consideration of sex itself as evil, but as Foucault shows on the basis of two specific sets of reasons:

The regimen of the aphrodisia, with the need to moderate their practice, did not operate on the assumption that sexual acts in themselves and by nature were bad. They were not the object of any disqualification based on principle. The question that was raised concerning them had to do with use, a use that was to be modulated according to the condition of the body and external circumstances. However, the need to have recourse to a careful regimen and to bring vigilant attention to bar on sexual practice was justified by two sets of reasons that reveal a certain anxiety about the effects of this activity.46

The first set of reasons concerns the ill effects excessive sex can have on the body. For Greek thought, the sexual act is physically beneficial only for phlegmatic patients, people suffering from indigestion and women, because it helps them get rid of excessive fluids and humours collected in the body. For 'normal' men, sex is always bad for the health, because it draws away vital heat from the body. Foucault shows how Aristotle says in his *Generation of Animals* that the brain is the worse affected by excessive sex, while he says in his *Problems* that it is the eyes and the loins, and for Diocles the gall bladder, kidneys, lungs, eyes, and spinal cord are harmed most by sexual activities. The second reason concerned the health of the progeny, because it was believed that excessive health weakens the quality of reproductive fluids, thus hampering the 'primary' purpose of sex, i.e. giving birth to children.

Foucault shows that this association of health hazards with the sexual act resulted from three concerns. The first is about the 'violence' of the sexual act, which makes Hippocrates believe that a person suffers a temporary epileptic seizure during the act, and makes Plato talk about orgasm being mixed with distress in his *Philebus*. The second concern is about the 'expenditure' that the sexual act entails, in terms of ejaculation of a bodily fluid that has the vital capacity in it to give birth to another body. Hippocrates shows in his book

The Seed how this fluid is formed from the most vital parts of the body like the brain and the marrow, and Aristotle claims in his Generation of Animals that the semen is the end product of the most important part of alimmentation. Ejaculation is thus not only the expulsion of any bodily fluid, but an expenditure of a vital part of oneself. The third concern was about the relation of sex to 'death and immortality', because as Plato shows in his Laws, sex is a means on the part of mortal human beings to 'cheat' death and leave a part of them living in the form of descendants even after death. Not only does this include a broader global anxiety of life and death within the sexual act, it also marks sex with a futility, because the descendant is also doomed to die as certainly as the parents who gave birth to him or her to 'cheat' death.

Foucault mentions next how J. Van Gulik shows in his La Vie sexuelle dans la Chine ancienne, that the same thematic complex was present in ancient Chinese culture too. The Chinese people of yore were also fearful of the harmful consequences of sex, anxious of the costly act of ejaculation, wary of the violence it entailed between the sexes, and obsessed with the production descendants of good quality. In ancient China, however, all this resulted not in a rejection of sexual practices, but in the principle of 'wilful retention', thus heightening the pleasure principle, according to the needs of what Foucault has already identified as ars erotica. Foucault notices the same themes of anxiety in the Christian doctrine of the flesh too. Thus, Saint Augustine associated the involuntary violence of the sexual act with the Fall, the involuntary movement symbolizing human rebellion against God. And thus, the Christian pastoral ministry set rigid rules of maritality and sexual economy, where there was no wastage of semen in unnecessary pleasure, and all of sex was aimed at procreation and immortalization of the God's people. Foucault says, however, that the medieval pastoral machinery codified all this in the form of strict juridico-moral obligations, and did not leave it unto the people themselves to decide on the best use of sexual practice. Thus, in spite of bearing resemblances with ancient Chinese and medieval Christian norms of sexuality, the Greek concern about the interface between health and sex took a different form, a form that for Foucault was aimed at developing a 'techné' of subjective existence:

Among the Greeks, these same anxiety themes (violence, expenditure, and death) took shape within a reflection that did not aim at a codification of acts, nor at the creation of an erotic art; rather, its objective was to develop a technique of existence. This technique did not require that the acts be divested of their primordial naturalness; nor did it attempt to augment their pleasurable effects; it sought to distribute them in the closest conformity with what nature demanded... This techné created the possibility of forming oneself as a subject in control of his conduct... 47

Having covered the first area of Foucault's research, I move on to the second, the discussion of the 'economic' institution of marriage in Greek treatises of the fourth century BC.

47 Ibid., 138.
Foucault begins his discussion on maritality in Greek society with a statement from Demosthenes that characterizes the curious role of marriage in Antiquity. Foucault says,

At the end of the legal argument Against Neaera, attributed to Demosthenes, the author delivers a sort of aphorism that has remained famous: "Mistresses we keep for the sake of pleasure, concubines for the daily care of our persons, but wives to bear us legitimate children and to be faithful guardians of our households."

This statement has two major implications concerning the nature of sexual activities between men and women in ancient Greece. First, it is evident that pleasure is thoroughly excluded from maritality, with the purpose of marriage being procreation and not pleasure. This would make the Greek system markedly different, as Foucault shows following Van Gulik, from the Chinese system, where one of the duties of the wife was to provide as much pleasure as possible to the husband. The second implication is that an adult Greek man could go for sources of heterosexual pleasure outside marriage. This would make it different from the medieval Christian sexual ethics, where one had to maintain strict monogamous marital fidelity. In short, marriage did not restrict a Greek man sexually, and apart from contracting another marriage, or having sex with a married woman (who was therefore the property of another man), he could have his pleasure anywhere and in whatever way he wanted.

However, this simple conception of the infidel and promiscuous Greek male gets problematized by two observations that Foucault makes. On the one hand, treatises of the age are not altogether blind of jealousy in women over their husband's parallel affairs. On the other, it is also seen that public opinion expected a man who was about to be married to exhibit a certain change in his sexual behavior, in terms of restraining his earlier sexual excesses. Thus, in spite of there being no law to state the same, the Greek age does put a premium on marital fidelity and sexual control in a married man. For the married woman, fidelity was binding because she was a man's property; but that for the man too, a regular principle of fidelity was cultivated and exercised proves once again the act of subjectivization, in determining for oneself a controlled style of existence.

The development of a self-stylized marital faith in the Greeks had nothing to do with reciprocal love, but was on the one hand an exercise in male power, and on the other an economic act. While the first is obvious from the understanding of enkrateia that Foucault has already provided, it is the second that Foucault takes up at this stage, through an analysis of Xenophon's Oeconomicus. This text takes up the dual character of Greek land-owning economy, where one needs to take into consideration both the agora, or the marketplace, and

48Ibid., 143.
the *oikos*, or the household. For the economy to flourish it becomes imperative for the wife to take as good care of the household, in terms of a proper distribution of the wealth brought from the *agora*, as it is for the husband to look after agricultural produce and trade. This makes the marital relation essentially economic, and the role of both spouses equally important in it. However, a few essential disjunctions appear between the husband and wife in regard to this. One the hand, the physical differences between the husband and wife warrant, as Xenophon shows, that the former works outdoors, while the latter controls the indoors, but on the other, some other differences like that of age (according to Plato in *Laws*, a man should marry after thirty while a girl should marry between sixteen and twenty), and lack of education might impede a proper fulfilment of this responsibility. It is to solve this problem and allow a proper economic functioning of the *oikos*, that Xenophon presents in the dialogue the twofold advice of Ischomachus, a successful landowner, concerning marital life.

The first advice concerns the necessity of communication between the husband and the wife. To see to the proper economic functioning of the *oikos*, it is imperative for the husband to ‘educate’ the less experienced and less educated wife, and for the wife to discuss her problems with the husband who knows more. One can see how the economic concern implants in marriage a relationship of faith and trust between the spouses. The second advice concerns the sexual act itself, whereby the wife is required not to resort to deceptive means like makeup to enhance her physical beauty, because resorting to deception might have serious economic implications, and the husband is required to restrain his extramarital relations to give the wife her due respect and position, to ensure a smooth functioning of the *oikos*. Ischomachus’s story shows how fidelity and a certain reciprocity enter the Greek marital domain through economic reasons and the husband’s *enkrateia*, and Foucault says,

This preeminence of the wife, which the husband must protect, was implied by the act of marriage... Now, what Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus* and Ischomachus’ discourse show is that while the husband’s wisdom—his *enkrateia* but also his knowledge as head of a family—was always ready to acknowledge the wife’s privileges, the wife, if she was to preserve them, must in return exercise her function in the house an accomplish the tasks that were associated with it in the best possible way.49

Foucault picks up three more texts from the period to show how moderation gets cultivated within the institution of marriage, establishing what he calls a ‘double sexual monopoly’ demanding a certain constancy from both the spouses within the marital economy. The first text is Plato’s *Laws*, which suggests that a married person, man or woman, should not have sexual relations outside marriage. Though Plato wants this to be an enforceable law in his Republic, he observes how difficult it might be to coerce people into this mode of

marital fidelity and talks of other self-inducing modes like public opinion, glory, honour and shame to ensure the practicability of this ethics. The second text is Isocrates’s *Nicoles*, where Nicoles, a powerful ruler tells his fellow citizens how he has not had sex with anybody but his wife after his marriage. For Foucault, while on the one hand, Nicoles thus sets an ethical example in front of his subjects, on the other, he also shows how efficient mastery over others as a ruler, has a prerequisite in mastery over one’s self. The third text Foucault takes up is *Economics*, attributed to Aristotle, where the discussion on how to own and use a household profitably meanders into an exposition on the nature of marital togetherness. The author argues for perfect togetherness in marriage, because for him the partnership, or *koinônia*, between a man and a woman is a most natural act, since human beings are a ‘syndastic’ species, i.e. creatures destined to live in pairs. The economic benefit of marriage lies in its ability to produce children as a means to future ‘advantage’, and this is why both the partners must work together for it. Foucault notes, however, that this partnership or togetherness is not based on an egalitarian system, where the husband and wife have the same powers. Much like what Aristotle says in *Nicomachean Ethics*, in *Economics*, the wife is essentially governed by the superior husband, and the domestic power structure follows the aristocratic model, where everyone gets power according to his or her ‘worth’—the husband has more power than the wife, who has more power than the children, who have more power than the slaves, and so on.

Thus, one finds in the Greece of fourth century BC the emergence of a marriage ethics, which would appear, to introduce reciprocity and equality into the marital structure. This might make one assume that this was the beginning of the later Christian ethics concerning marital fidelity. Foucault shows, however, that it would be wrong to assume so. He shows how while the pastoral regime demanded fidelity as a law, for the Greeks it was more a case of wilful moderation. Secondly, while in pastoral power the two spouses were equally responsible for fidelity, here the husband definitely exercises all the power. Finally, unlike the Christian morality where conjugality itself constituted the problematics, in the Greek system it is an instrument of politico-economic institutions. Foucault says,

...in order to understand the working out of sexual conduct as a moral problem, it is necessary to emphasize that, in classical Greek thought, the sexual behavior of the two spouses was not questioned from the standpoint of their personal relationship. What occurred between them assumed importance from the moment it became a question of having children. Apart from that, their mutual sex life was not an object of reflection and prescription: the point of problematization was in the moderation that each of the two partners needed to show for reasons and in forms corresponding to their sex and their status... In this we are far from the Christian teaching where each spouse would have to ensure the other’s chastity, being careful not to cause him or her to commit the sin of the flesh—either through indecent entreaties or through harsh refusals. 50

Now I will move to the third area of Foucault’s research—homosexuality in classical Greece.

50 Ibid., 183-84.
f. The ‘Erotics’ of Love of Boys, and Sexuality

Turning to the ‘love of boys’, or what we now call ‘homosexuality’, Foucault notices an apparent disjunction between the commonly assumed permissiveness of the Greek age for the same and the acute anxiety that most texts of the period show towards this type of love. He shows, however, that this paradox appears only if we consider the Greek love for boys from the perspective of our own notions about homosexuality. For the Greeks love of boys did not constitute a separate sexual category, and was very much like that of girls. Moreover, this should neither be read as signs of a bisexuality in Greek men, because current notions of bisexuality also presume a certain structure of ‘peculiar’ desire, which was not present in the Greeks. For the Greeks, as Foucault shows, a common love for beautiful humans was at play:

We can talk about their “bisexuality”, thinking of the free choice they allowed themselves between the two sexes, but for them this option was not referred to a dual, ambivalent, and “bisexual” structure of desire. To their way of thinking, what made it possible to desire a man or a woman was simply the appetite that nature had implanted in man’s heart for “beautiful” human beings, whatever their sex might be.\[51\]

Therefore, it is not paradoxical that, just as in the case of heterosexual alliances, in spite of the love of boys being permitted and even upheld in certain institutions and through religious rituals, there was a denunciation of the overly promiscuous boy, or the ‘effeminate’ man, and there was an attempt to constitute a subjectivized code of ethics in this domain too. Was has to be studies is how this ethical code adopted a different style from that involved in self-control in love of women within the domain of maritallity.

Foucault notices five peculiarities of this type of love, which make its construction different from that in marital love. First, in this type of relationship activity and passivity were not structurally predetermined, as in the case of the husband and wife, and the functional construct of one of the lovers being the erastes (the active ‘lover’) and the other the eromenos (the passive ‘beloved’) had to depend on other categories of superiority like age and status, a breach of which, though possible, would not have been considered very favourably. Secondly, the love of boys involved a practice of ‘courtship’ which was absent in Greek marital love, and a whole discourse had to be created about what favours the erastes might grant in his act of wooing, and how soon and with what entailed duties the eromenos could respond to it. Thirdly, while marital love took place in the enclosed space of the household and the power of the husband over his wife was granted, the love of boys took place in ‘open’ public spaces, and the power of the lover over his boy was not sanctioned as total and final, and the eromenos could possibly change his lover. Fourthly, unlike the marital domain, where love could sexually last for the whole of one’s life, the love of boys was fleeting and could exist only as long as the boy was young enough to be a natural eromenos. After a certain age, when

\[51\] Ibid., 188.
the boy grew into a man, if he still indulged in passive homosexual love, he was likely to be considered effeminate and unfit for masculine tasks. This is why love of boys branched off after some time into philia, the lifelong bond of friendship, which was also unheard of in marital love. Finally, and this is the most important difference, it was in the love of boys that one could see more specifically the work of Eros, this type of love being between two free thinking subjects (and not between a masculine subject and a necessarily inferior feminine object), thereby incorporating an ‘erotics’ where desire can work at best. This also implies that ethics in this domain of love would involve two codes, since both the erastes and the eromenos are subjects capable of enkrateia, unlike marital love, where the woman is powerless, and therefore in no need of control. Summing up the differences Foucault says,

In economics and dietetics, the voluntary moderation of the man was based mainly on his relation to himself; in erotics, the game was more complicated; it implied self-mastery on the part of the lover; it also implied an ability on the part of the beloved to establish a relation of dominion over himself; and lastly, it implied a relationship between their two moderations, expressed in their deliberate choice of one another.\(^5\)

Since the exclusivity of this erotics lies in the fact that it conceives of a sóphrosyné for the passive sexual partner too, and since the moderation of the active partner has already been discussed in relation to other domains, Foucault concentrates here more on the techniques of self-control for the ‘beloved’, and, in spite of there being celebrated texts like Plato’s Symposium and Phaedrus and Xenophon’s Symposium, which deal with the love of boys from the perspective of the active partner, he takes up Demosthenes’s relatively obscure Erotic Essay to analyse the same in terms of the eromenos. This text deals with what conducts the young boy should treated as signs of endoxos, or ‘honour’, and cultivate, and what conducts he should treat as marks of aischyné, or ‘shame’, and avoid. Though this honour is nothing close to the ‘honour’ that would be constructed round the woman later in Europe and become a major factor in her marriage and future life, it also demands certain tests from the boy as observable in his general demeanour, his ways of looking, ways of talking, and the company he kept. In terms of the actual sexual act, this test was constituted by how long the boy could resist from yielding to his suitor, how long he could retain his physical ‘honour’ with a diligent ‘epimeleia heautou’, or ‘care of the self’.

Foucault probes next the fundamental reason behind this requirement of the boy to resist the sexual act of the erastes. Foucault shows that sexual practices rooted in the ‘penetration model’, where one partner is necessarily active and the other passive, posits an immediate ‘isomorphism’ in the socio-political domain of power, where one dominates and the other is dominated. While this poses no problems for sexual relations with women or

\(^5\) Ibid., 203.
slaves, who are obvious objects of power, it is sufficiently problematic for a boy, whose current age might make him inferior to the erastes, but who is to be in near future one of the rulers of the city state. This was why the 'virile' notions of sexuality demanded of the boy an exercise of his masculine self-control and a resistance to this demeaning proposition as long as possible, and giving in finally only under duress. The city-state could not conceive of being ruled by a man who once 'prostituted' himself obligingly as the sexual object of another man, and Aeschines mentions in Against Timarchus a law that bars such a person from holding an office of power. This makes Foucault comment on the duality of the sexual role of the boy:

Hence the problem that we may call the "antinomy of the boy" in the Greek ethics of aphrodisia. On the one hand, young men were recognized as objects of pleasure... But on the other hand, the boy, whose youth must be a training for manhood, could not and must not identify with that role... The relationship that he was expected to establish with himself in order to become a free man, master of himself and capable of prevailing over others, was at variance with a form of relationship in which he would be an object of pleasure for another. This noncoincidence was ethically necessary. Thus, in the Greek system, it was quite normal to be enamoured of a boy, but it was considered para physin (against nature) for the boy to enjoy his object position. Thus the boy had to show a double enkrateia: one the one hand, he had to master the possibilities of pleasure in a homosexual relationship and resist the advances of the erastes for as long as possible; on the other hand, he had to, at some point of time, master his disgust for this role and give in to the superior lover for the 'benefits' he might get out of the relationship. And it should be noted that these 'benefits' were not just money and gifts, but, since this love was mostly operative in pedagogical situations, the lasting friendship of the great thinker, a proper training towards manhood, and an access to knowledge and truth. Sexuality being attached to 'truth' in this process, I would turn directly to Foucault's final area of research.

g. 'True Love': Truth and Sexuality

Foucault notes how from within the domain of love of boys, there arises the Socratic-Platonic doctrine of love, where pleasure and its masterful control lead one to 'truth'. This search for 'true love' is markedly different from the Christian quest for the same, because while the Christian 'true love' is divorced from all forms of pleasure, situated around the female body, and framed on the basis of interdictions, the Greek notion of the same is rooted in pleasure achievable in a masculine domain through a subjective stylization. For Foucault, ...it is one of the most remarkable aspects of Greek reflection on the love of boys that not only does it show how—for reasons we have seen—this love constituted a sensitive point that demanded an elaboration of behavior and a rather delicate stylization of the use of the aphrodisia, but it was around this issue that the question of the relations between the use of pleasures and access to truth was developed, in the form of an inquiry into the nature of true love."
Though Foucault observes that it would be unfair to construct a theory of love based on texts of the Socratic-Platonic school alone, the very fact that treatises on love of the Pythagorean cycles, as well as those of Antisthenes, Diogenes the Cynic, Aristotle, and Theophrastus have not survived, makes him rely on texts by Plato and Xenophon to construct this ‘true love’.

Xenophon shows in his *Symposium* and *Memorabilia* how Socrates makes a distinction between ephemeral love of the body and a deeper love of the soul, and how for him it is the latter which holds the truth about a relationship, and how *Eros* should be used as a means to a more permanent, more reciprocal, and hence more truthful *philia*. Plato gives this Socratic theme a new turn. In his *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, Plato first of all reproduces what other people have to say about love, and shows how for most, love is enquired into only on the basis of the mundane details of physical practice. In contrast to this, he presents, through Diotima and Socrates in the former text and Socrates alone in the latter, an enquiry into the ‘true’ nature of love. The first feature of this Platonic ‘true love’ is that it shifts the focus of studying love from a ‘deontology’, concerning behaviours of lovers, to an ‘ontology’, concerning the nature of love itself. The second feature is that the object of love has to be shifted from the boy’s body to his soul, because what is at stake in love is not just the boy’s honour, but also truth. At a third level, this disembodied love can truly reach truth because in it the ‘dissymmetry’ between the active ‘lover’ and the passive ‘beloved’ converge into a relationship of reciprocity. In the ‘penetration model’ of physical sex, *Eros* can only come from the *erastes*, and the *eromenos* can only present an *Anteros*, the possibility of truth in love being cancelled through these mutually conflicting drives. Truth can emerge from love only when there is perfect reciprocity between the two lovers and this can only appear, as Plato argues, when there is no penetration, i.e. no physical relation. The final feature of Platonic erotics involves a reversal in the roles of the one who courts and the one who is courted. Since the object of love shifts from the body and honour of the boy to truth, it is no more the ignorant boy who is sought after by the more experienced elder, but the boy himself tries to seduce the knowledgeable man to access truth through him. This is, as Plato shows, the case with Socrates, who never runs after boys, but whom boys continuously chase and try to seduce to procure greater knowledge.

Foucault shows how Platonic erotics can thus be considered from three viewpoints. First, it attempts to solve the inherent difficulty in Greek love of boys as to the status given to the latter as objects of pleasure. Plato resolves this difficulty by taking away penetration from this love and thereby according it a dialectic reciprocity, where the future leader that the young boy is does not suffer the ignominy of a passive *eromenos*. Secondly, the Platonic notion of love reverses the objective of love and the purpose of courtship from a hunt for
beauty to that for truth. This is how for this erotics, *ehrēsis* and *askēsis* get defined in terms of a search for truth, and all the stylization and subjectivization that sexuality entails get centred around this fundamental quest. Thirdly, this throws a very interesting light on received notions of Greek sexuality, because while it is normally believed that the Greeks were especially permissive of homosexuality, it appears that it was in this domain that they constructed the most austere ethics, suggesting and advising total abstention. Foucault cannot but exclaim in surprise as he sums up these three observations:

> In a way that may be surprising at first, one sees the formation, in Greek culture and in connection with the love of boys, of some of the major elements of a sexual ethics that will renounce that love by appealing to the above principle: the requirement of a symmetry and reciprocity in the love relationship; the necessity of a long and arduous struggle with oneself; the gradual purification of a love that is addressed only to being per se, in its truth; and man’s inquiry into himself as a subject of desire.\(^{55}\)

Foucault establishes how in classical Greek thought it was the relationship with boys that called for the subtlest and strictest forms of austerity. He notices, however, how two transformations take place in Western thought to give shape to modern sexuality. The first of these shifts is of the centre of sexual problematization from boys to women. Foucault notices how, though homosexuality and pederasty continued in their accepted forms for quite some time after the Greek age, and they still continue albeit in a more repressed way, soon the locus of sexual problematization shifted to women in terms of virginity and reciprocal marital conduct. The second shift that Foucault mentions is that which happened in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, from women to the body in general, leading to a pathologization of children’s sexuality and certain forms of adult sexual practice. Foucault notices how between these two shifts, the pastoral regime brought in two processes of unification between the different elements of the uses of pleasures. On the one hand, there was a ‘doctrinal unification’, talked about by Saint Augustine, where the game of death and immortality, the institution of marriage, and the conditions of access to truth were brought together as parts of the same theoretical ensemble. On the other hand, there was a ‘practical unification’ that centred the different arts of existence around the imperatives of abstention, purification and decipherment of the self, so that a ‘purifying hermeneutics’ replaced the aesthetics of pleasure as the core of the problematization of sexual conduct. Foucault credits the beginning of these changes to the Greco-Roman era from the last two centuries BC to the first two centuries AD:

> This change was the result of a whole series of transformations. We have evidence of the beginnings of these transformations, even before the development of Christianity, in the reflection of the moralists, philosophers, and doctors of the first two centuries of our era.\(^{56}\)

This is the age that he takes up for discussion in the third volume of *The History of Sexuality*.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 245.

\(^{56}\) Ibid., 254.
IV. The History of Sexuality, Volume 3: The Self and ‘Reciprocity’

a. Technologies of the Self as Geared to the Other

As has already been stated, Foucault published the third volume of his ‘History of Sexuality’ in 1984 along with the second volume. It has also been stated that Foucault deals with modes of subjectivization and the problematization of sexuality in the domains of health, marital love, and homosexuality in this volume too, though in a different period. However, and this also has been hinted at towards the end of the last section of this chapter, there are two major differences in this volume as regards one’s subjective control over sexual practice. First, a system of reciprocity gets involved in the practices of the self, and second, women slowly dislodge boys as the primary locus for the problematization of sexual practice. All this involves a new strategy towards subjectivization, one that Foucault will call ‘technologies of the self’. In a 1982 article, Foucault defines this means to subjectivization stating:

“It seems according to some suggestions of Habermas, that one can distinguish three major types of techniques... techniques of production, techniques of signification or communication, and techniques of domination. But I became more and more aware that in all societies there is another type of technique: techniques that permit individuals to affect, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their own bodies, their own souls, their own thoughts, their own conduct, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves, modify themselves, and attain a certain state of perfection, happiness, purity, supernatural power. Let us call this kind of technique technologies of the self.” 57

It can be observed how among the two functions of the technology of the self, there is constitution of the self as well as its transformation. It is this transformation of the notion of the self already formed in Antiquity that really concerns the current volume. The limited subjectivity, and hence the limited morality, of the Greeks of the fourth century BC, restricted only to a particular group of male citizens, expands in the first two centuries of the current era through the practice of technology of the self geared towards reciprocity, to include women as a chief focus, and soon get transformed into a global uniform moral strategy under the Christian regime. Foucault comments in a 1984 interview on this ‘expansion’ of morality:

“At first, the morality of antiquity addressed itself only to a very small number of individuals; it did not require everybody to obey the same pattern of behavior. It concerned only a very small minority of the people, even of the free people. There were several forms of freedom; the freedom of the head of state or of the leader of the army had nothing to do with the freedom of the wise man. Then this morality expanded.” 58

The purpose of the third volume of The History of Sexuality is to show how this self technology works through a renewed form of epimeleia heautou or the ‘care of the self’, towards the forging of a reciprocally tending relationship with the other.


b. *Dreams and the Pleasures of the Self*

Foucault begins this book with a discussion of how the last two centuries BC and the first two centuries of our era construct a particular instance of the technology of the self, namely dreams. To do this he takes up Artemidorus’s *The Interpretation of Dreams*, which is the only available text on ‘oneirocriticism’ from the period. This text does not merely compile the most famous examples of prophetic dreams, but also undertakes a project on interpretative method. Based on the assumption that dreams reflect as well as prophesy reality, the author tries to establish a technique of interpretation with which one can know this oneiric truth about oneself. To sum up the objective of this book by Artemidorus, Foucault says,

> There is no question of looking in such a document for the formulations of an austere morality or the emergence of new standards of sexual conduct. What it does offer are indications concerning current modes of valuation and generally accepted attitudes. Philosophical reflection is certainly not absent from the text, and one finds in it rather clear references to contemporary problems and debates; but these references concern the procedures of decipherment and the method of analysis, not value judgments and moral contents.59

Accordingly, Foucault proceeds to study what model of dream-analysis this text provides.

Artemidorus provides first a typology of dreams or ‘nocturnal visions’. Dreams can primarily be of two types: *enypnia*, or ‘state dreams’, which reflect the current state of affairs the individual dreamer is in; and *oneiros*, or ‘event dreams’, which forebode some future event that might take place. A second line of bifurcation runs within this typology, classifying these two types of dreams into two further sub-types each. This classification is based on the obviousness of the object of the dream, and this way, state dreams can be of two types—one in which desire is manifested immediately by the recognizable presence of a desirable person or object, and the other in which there is an image that has to be interpreted to find its object. Similarly, event dreams can also be of two types—‘theorematic dreams’ in which the future event is foreboded in terms of concrete appearances, and ‘allegorical dreams’ where the relation between the image and the event is indirect. For Artemidorus, ‘virtuous’ people have no *enypnia*; they only have *oneiroi*, because first, they can control their desires and not let them appear in unconscious dreams, and secondly, because gods speak directly to the virtuous to make them know the future in advance. He says how oneirocriticism comes to use only in the case of ‘allegorical dreams’, because the three other forms of dreams are either of no significance or are too obvious to decode. He also says how this analysis of allegorical dreams takes place with the use of a twofold ‘analogy’, a ‘natural analogy’ of resemblance of images with possible events, and an ‘analogy of value’ classifying the images into good or bad.

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This text becomes relevant for a 'history of sexuality' not only because dreams reflect a person's subconscious desires, and dreams are modes of self-fashioning, but also because Artemidorus devotes as many as four chapters of his book to sexual dreams alone. In his discussion, he classifies sexual dreams into three categories, based on the nature of the acts they depict: those in conformity with the law (kala nomon), those contrary to the law (para nomon), and those contrary to nature (para physin). Though these categories are not really all that watertight, and Artemidorus does not follow the classification very rigorously, I can show how Foucault takes up these three types of sexual dreams one after the other.

Artemidorus talks of seven different types of kala nomon sexual dreams based on the type of partner involved. The first is where one dreams of having sex with one's wife or mistress, in which case the allegorical premonition is always positive. The second case of dreaming of a prostitute, however, has negative implications, because not only does going to a brothel indicate disgrace and expense, but the brothel being a place like a cemetery where everyone has access, it also portends death. The third type of dream is with an unknown woman, where the value of the dream depends on the estimable social and material value the woman represents. In the fourth type of dream, involving sex with a slave, it is of no significant concern if the master is the active partner, but if he sees himself as passive to the slave, it is a very ominous sign. The fifth type involves dreaming of a female acquaintance, where the dream augurs well if the woman is rich and unmarried, but is bad if otherwise. The sixth type of dream is of having sex with a man, which is positive for a woman dreamer, but whose value in the case of a male dreamer has to be determined in terms of the relative age, status and wealth of the active and passive partners. The final type of kala nomon sexual dreams involves masturbation, which is always negative with the foreboding of future slavery.

Artemidorus restricts para nomon sexual dreams largely to incest, that too, incest only between parents and children, and moreover, considering the predominantly masculine world of the author, only cases where the dreamer is a man, i.e. father or son. When a father dreams of having sex with his daughter, the signification is always unfavourable. When he dreams of his son, it is also usually negative, apart from when the dream involves a journey with the son, which indicates a joint project between the two. Such an incestuous dream is absolutely ominous if the father is in a passive position, whether the dreamer is the son or the father. Interestingly, Artemidorus considers the son's incestuous dreams about the mother as mostly positive, because mother signifies Mother Earth, and such a dream portends prosperity and leadership of the son. Such a dream is negative, however, if the son is ill, because then penetrating Mother Earth symbolizes death and burial.
Artemidorus classifies the *para physin* sexual dreams into three categories. The first concerns deviations from the 'natural' position in heterosexual relationships (the implications of the man’s passivity in homosexual dreams has already been discussed), where the implications are always negative. The second category comprises 'variants' of the sexual act like oral sex, where also the significance is negative, unless the person is one who professionally uses his mouth, being a public speaker, flute player, or a professor of rhetoric. The third type of 'abnormal' sexual dreams concerns the nature of the partner, with Artemidorus listing five such possibilities: relations with gods, with animals, with corpses, with oneself, and relations between women. The significance of such dreams is always negative, but, as Foucault notes, the last two categories are surely interesting. Dreams of relations with oneself do not include masturbation (as that is *kata nomon*); they involve instead ‘abnormal’ dreams of penetrating or having oral sex with oneself. The last category is even more curious, especially because male homosexuality is usually considered as *kata nomon* in the text. Foucault interprets this by saying that since Artemidorus bases his typology of sexual acts strictly on the penetration model, lesbianism is considered abnormal, because it either involves no penetration or devises deceptive improvisations of the same.

Foucault observes two peculiarities in this model of oneirocriticism. The first is that it assumes that the dreamer is present as a performer in all of his or her dreams. Never is a dream cited where the dreamer is just a detached observer. This has serious implications in terms of the certain subjectivity that Artemidorus accords the dreaming self. The second is that the dreams are not analysed in terms of the intensity of the act or the desire it embodies, but only in terms of the socio-economic markers that it entails. The ‘isomorphism’ between the penetration model and social dominance is at full work in this interpretative technique, as also are attempts to associate sex with economics. Foucault sums up the two observations as:

We can summarize all this by saying that the guiding thread of Artemidorus' interpretation, insofar as it is concerned with the predictive value of sexual dreams, implies the breaking down and ordering of such dreams into elements (personages or acts) that are, by nature, social elements; and that it indicates a certain way of qualifying sexual acts in terms of the manner in which the dreaming subject maintains, as the subject of the dreamed-of act, his position as a social subject.\(^6^0\)

It is this notion of the 'social subject' that is of utmost importance in the construction of sexuality of this period. While, just as in the preceding Greek age of antiquity, here also there is the creation of a subject who has to have control over its sexual acts and desires, here the subject thus formed can be defined only in relation to others in society. This is the major change in modes of subjectivization that this age presents. The subject cannot but take into consideration the other in its stylized attempt to care for the self.

\(^{60}\) *Ibid.*, 33.
c. *Cultivation of the Self and Relation to the Other*

Foucault notices how texts written in the last two centuries BC and the first two centuries AD, by the likes of Soranus, Rufus of Ephesus, Rufus Musonius, Seneca, Plutarch, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, show a certain concern for the excesses of sexual practice in the three domains of research mentioned above. They talk about the possible abuse of the body through unregulated sex, they valorize marital obligations, and show a certain distrust for the love of boys, and accordingly they get appropriated by the austere Christian morality of the succeeding era. For Foucault, however, these texts do not comprise a rigorous and prohibitive doctrine of sex, and constitute instead a manual towards taking care of the self in a particular fashion. While it would be easy to associate this rise of the self to the ‘individualism’ that people assume to be characteristic of the Hellenistic and the Roman ages, Foucault shows how this individualistic notion gets problematized on three grounds. First, in the social domain, the independence awarded to the self is always defined in relation to the groups one belongs to and the institutions one is answerable to. Secondly, in the domestic domain, subjectivity is determined only in correlation with family relationships and domestic activity. Finally, even in the absolutely private domain, the subject status of the self is always complemented by its simultaneously being an object of knowledge to itself. Therefore, instead of talking of ‘individualism’, Foucault wishes to identify in this age the peculiar process of ‘cultivation of the self’, which entails a new intensification of the relations of the self:

The demands of sexual austerity expressed in imperial times do not seem to have been the manifestation of a growing individualism. Their context is characterized instead by a phenomenon that has a rather long historical range, but reached its peak at a particular moment. I am referring to the development of what might be called a “cultivation of the self”, wherein the relations of oneself to oneself were intensified and valorized.\(^{61}\)

The form that this ‘cultivation of the self’ takes is a renewed interest in the Socratic theme of *epimeleia heautou*, or the ‘care of the self’, and Foucault shows how this principle operates.

Foucault shows how the *epimeleia heautou*, or what in Latin would be called the *cura sui*, is the philosophical mainstay of most doctrines of the age. Epicurus begins his *Letter to Menoeceus* by stating that philosophy should be considered as a permanent exercise of the care of oneself. Zeno, Musonius and Plutarch repeat the same thing. For Seneca, the care of the self is an activity that a man must devote himself to in exclusion of other occupations. For Marcus Aurelius looking after oneself constitutes a better means to knowledge than reading or writing. And Epictetus says in his *Discourses* that the very definition of ‘man’ is of a being who was destined to care for himself. That philosophy takes the form of this duty is best proved by the fact that unlike the Greek academies, which were frequented only by youngsters, Seneca or Plutarch offer counsel to men of all ages, because care of the self is not

restricted to the young ones alone. This philosophical obsession for taking care of oneself takes the form of exercises in self-introspection and Foucault shows how Pythagoreans and the Stoics both reserve certain parts of their day for this purpose. This takes an even more interesting form in the Neo-Pythagoreans and the Epicureans who take the care of the self out of solitude into community exercises and institutionalized structures.

Foucault shows how this interface with philosophy connects cura sui with two forms of knowledge. On the one hand, it is connected to medical knowledge, because it also believes like the medical sciences that the body is primarily ill and ruled by 'pathos' and has to be taken care of. On the other hand, it is also connected to the knowledge of the self. Foucault shows how Plutarch and Epictetus talk about subjecting the self to repeated tests, and Seneca goes a step further to specify in his De ira that there should be two tests, one morning examination, aimed at deciding what one is supposed to do during the day, and an evening examination to review the acts of the day. This makes the word 'speculator' key to this type of practice, because one has to keep a constant watch on oneself to gain self-knowledge. It also shows how the age believed in conversio ad se, or 'conversion to the self', where practices on the self were to lead one, circularly, into-knowing the self, and Seneca shows that when one gains access to one's own self, one enjoys an immense pleasure—gaudium or laetitia—which is quite different from voluptas, the pleasure one has in external objects.

It has already been stated that a certain modification in relations with others was the reason behind this new strategy of 'care of the self'. For Foucault, these relations can especially be noted in the domains of marital practice and politics. Talking of marital relationships first, Foucault shows how there is no possibility of knowing what the nature of marriage actually was in the Hellenistic and Roman ages, but one cannot but notice a certain 'institutionalization' and 'publicization' of marriage. Marriage, which was essentially a private matter in the Greek age, becomes in these later times much more public, with the passage of laws like the famous de adulteriis. The consequence of these transformations within marriage lie in an enhanced status of women, the emergence of 'reciprocity' in marriage, and the conversion of heautocracy into a 'relational role'. Foucault says,

They show that marriage was interrogated as a mode of life whose value was not exclusively, nor perhaps even essentially, linked to the functioning of the oikos, but rather to a mode of relation between two partners. They also show that, in this linkage, the man had to regulate his conduct, not simply by virtue of status, privileges, and domestic functions, but also by virtue of a 'relational role' with regard to his wife. Finally, they show that not only as this role a governmental function of training, education, and guidance, but that it was involved in a complex interplay of affective reciprocity and reciprocal dependence.
In the political domain, the greatest change that this age shows is in the decline of the city states and the establishment of the empire. On the one hand, this change results in a decline of the traditional dominant classes and a reduction in the political role of the average citizen; on the other, it marks the emergence of multiple centres of local power in everyday life. The new political form saw new modes of subjectivization, because the free man was no more the automatic and absolute agent of power, but had to 'recruit' his self as a political subject in relation to 'others' in the form of the monarch and his agencies. The new forms of political power act over the subject in two apparently opposite ways. On the one hand, the self could define itself only in relation to others; on the other, power rested no more in an absolute exercise of the self over the others, and so it had to be defined more rigorously as emanating from and acting within the self. This leads to the peculiarities of the 'care of the self'.

For Foucault, this had three consequences for political activity in relation to the subject. First, political activity gets connected to a 'relativization', whereby power is relativized in two ways. On the one hand, attaining public offices rested no more on one's birth alone, and one had to cultivate qualities in the self to achieve a position of status. On the other, in the new political system, a citizen was the ruler (in certain personal domains) and the ruled at the same time, and therefore had to extract his subjective position from within a complex network of power. Secondly, political activity gets connected with a 'moral agent', whereby, in order to rule effectively in such a complicated and polymorphous power equation, the subject had to cultivate an amount of virtue and morality in the self. Thirdly, political activity gets connected with 'personal destiny', where one's successes are always connected to provoking the wrath of gods or the enmity of fellow citizens. One has to thus regulate one's powers in terms of future consequences, keeping in mind these others.

Thus, for Foucault, certain changes during the Hellenistic and Roman periods, especially in the domains of marital and political life, bring in the notions of reciprocity and community into the exercise of power, and transform the very modes of subjective regulation:

In view of these changes in matrimonial practice and in the political game, one can see how the conditions under which the traditional ethics of self-mastery asserted itself were transformed... Consequently, the principle of superiority over the self as the ethical core, the general form of "heautocratism", needed to be restructured... The reflection on the use of pleasure that was so directly linked to the close correlation between the three types of authority (over oneself, over the household, and over others) was modified in the very course of this elaboration.63

It is with these changes in mind that Foucault proceeds to examine how sexuality gets constructed in the three domains he has already identified—one's own body, the household and conjugal relationships, and homosexual relationships with boys.

63 Ibid., 94-95.
d. The Body, Regimen and Sexuality

Foucault shows how health and concern for the body were public obsessions in the Hellenistic and Roman ages, so much so that health was associated not only with the body but also to the environment. Oribasius, in his *Collection of Greek and Latin Physicians*, credits Antyllus to have talked of the different medical ‘variables’ of a house, like its architecture, its orientation, and its interior design; moreover, the different periods of time—days, seasons, ages—were also considered as having varying medical values. To examine how this concern for health was connected to sexual practices, Foucault picks up Galen’s *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body* for analysis. For Galen the ‘demiurgic’ creation of human beings was aimed as an immortal work, but the corruptibility of the materials used made humans mortal, and sexual practice is a *sophisma*, a trick, incorporated by the demiurge itself, to cover this shortcoming. This trick is brought into play through three elements: the organs of sex, a capacity for extraordinary pleasure in the sexual act, and the *epithumia*, or the intense longing in the soul to make use of these organs. As far as the physiology of the sexual act is concerned, one notices in Galen a carrying over of some of the ideas of Antiquity. On the one hand, he also believes in a basic isomorphism in the man and the woman in terms of sexual physiology; on the other, he also believes in the violence of sex, that the sexual act is a ‘paroxysmal process of excretion’ and close to epilepsy and convulsions.

This last point itself, however, indicates a possible pathology of sexual activity, because it is associated with paroxysm on the one hand, and excretion of a vital substance on the other. This dual pathologization leads to the formulation of two sexual diseases in the age. On the one hand, there is the disease of constant violent excitation, present in men in the form of satyrasis or priapism, and in women as hysteria. On the other hand, is the disease of unlimited secretion, which the Greeks call *gonorrhoea* and the Latins *seminis effusio*. The concern for these diseases place the individual in a complex space defined by diverse factors like his or her temperament, the climate, and the food consumed, and though Rufus of Ephesus would talk about the therapeutic side of sex, in its being able to purge the body and soul of unwanted fluids and emotions, the discursive constructs of the age about sexuality mostly centre around abstention. Though neither was sex itself considered evil, as it would be later under the pastoral regime, nor was abstinence regarded as a binding duty, there was in the age, as Foucault shows, a certain concern for the fragility of the human body and the effects excessive sexual acts can have on them. Accordingly, medical treatises of the age talk of a sexual regimen for the body and the soul to protect them from the vagaries of uncontrolled indulgence. Foucault takes up next the salient features that constitute this sexual regimen, and discusses four variables that control the same.
The first variable concerns the ‘auspicious occasion for procreation’. The belief of the age in *euteknia*, or ‘noble offspring’, not being possible unless the soul is in complete tranquillity and the body in perfect health at the time of the coitus. Keeping every factor in mind, Soranus advises sex only immediately after menstruation to obtain the best results. The second variable concerns the age of the subject. One should not have sex in old age because the body fails to replenish the vital semen ejaculated after a certain age. One should not indulge in sexual activities when too young too, because then one needs the vital elements for one’s growth. All the philosophers of the age agree that though a boy attains sexual capability at around fourteen, he should wait much longer before practising sex. As far as girls are concerned, Soranus says that they should have sex only after the menstrual cycle is thoroughly and regularly established, and Rufus of Ephesus puts this age at eighteen. The third variable concerns the *kairos*, or ‘favourable time’, of the year or the day for sexual practice. Winter and spring are considered the best seasons, while autumn is accepted by some and rejected by others, and summer is generally considered a season for abstinence. The right hour of the day for sexual practice is between a moderate meal and sleep, i.e. at night, or before the afternoon nap. The fourth variable concerns individual temperaments, and Rufus of Ephesus shows that coition is best suited for those who are ‘hot and moist’, and those with cold or dry constitutions should either avoid sex, or follow a regimen to alter themselves.

It is obvious from the above observations that sexual regimen of the age was not just aimed towards the body, but also towards the soul. It is to be noted that it is the soul that guides an individual to choose inappropriate times for sex and indulge in its excesses, and therefore, it is in the control of the soul that a true control of sexual activities lies. Moreover, desire being manifested in two forms—that of the body and that of the soul—there needs to be a perfect correlation and co-ordination between the two. It is in this context that Galen and Rufus of Ephesus talk about *doxa*, or the excesses of the soul, where the soul fills itself with *kenai*, or vain and empty representations, that the body cannot live up to. This leads to a suspicion of *phantasiai*, or ‘images’, that the soul produces. Accordingly, one is advised not only to disregard dream images and images presented through dramatic, literary or musical forms, but also images presented by sight, sexual practice thus being advisable only in the darkness of the night. This taking away of visibility from sexual practice, and imposing an ethical regimen upon oneself implies, and as Galen corroborates, that *aphrodisia* should be made as disjunct as possible from the principles of pleasure and desire. The features of this regimen would thus establish several continuities with the subsequent pastoral control of sexuality, but what, for Foucault, would be its most immediate implication is the ‘reciprocity’ that it establishes between the body and the soul, and I can now move on to examine how Foucault establishes the act of reciprocity in greater detain in the domain of marital relations.
The discourse on maritality in classical antiquity deals with marriage as a socio-economic act, and talk about the duties and the restraint the husband must perform to exercise power over his wife. Texts from the first two centuries BC to the second century of our era that deal with marriage show, however, a major change in this in three ways. First, while the socio-economic function of marriage is not denied in the Hellenistic and Roman conception of marriage, much more emphasis is laid on the personal relationship between the husband and wife. Secondly, marital ethics is no more a case of exercising total power over others, but one of inculcating a certain ‘reciprocity’ between the husband and the wife. Finally, it is in this age that for the first time actual problems of sexual practice come to the forefront in discourse on matrimony. I will follow Foucault’s discussion of these three one after the other.

Foucault shows how in all reflections on marriage in the age, and particularly in the Stoic texts, there is a great emphasis placed on the personal relationship between the two spouses. This relationship, which Foucault calls ‘the marriage tie’ has three features. First of all, it is a ‘dual’ relation, or that, as Musonius Rufus says in his On the Purpose of Marriage, marriage has a dual purpose: not only is it aimed at procreation, it also entails a shared life together. Hierocles is also quoted to have said that humans are syndyastikoi, or ‘conjugal’ animals (Aristotle also called the human species ‘syndastic’, see p. 429 above), and not synagelaslikoi, or destined to live in herds, and therefore the best form of human life is noticed in the marital pair and not in the social herd. The second feature of the marriage tie is that it is a ‘universal’ relation, or that it is obligatory to marry, and though the Epicureans and the Cynics were theoretically opposed to marriage, for the Stoics marriage becomes a universal compulsion. Thirdly, it is a ‘singular’ relation, or that among all possible forms of relationships—friendship, social bonding, parent-child relationship—it is marriage which, as Musonius Rufus argues in his Is Marriage a Handicap for the Pursuit of Philosophy?, is the best and the ‘most venerable’. These three features indicate a perfect communication between the two spouses, and quite at difference with the monologic discussion between the two in Xenophon’s Oeconomicus (see p. 427 ff. above), Hierocles suggests that the husband should also discuss his problems with the wife, and for Musonius Rufus, the marriage tie survives on homonoeia, or ‘like-mindedness’ between the spouses. Foucault shows further how this enhancing of a reciprocal marriage tie was itself a step towards ‘the cultivation of the self’:

If relationship with a woman who is “the wife”, “the spouse”, is essential to existence, if human beings are conjugal individuals whose nature is fulfilled in the practice of shared life, then there could not be an essential and primary incompatibility between the relationship one establishes with oneself and the rapport one forms with the other. The art of conjugality is an integral part of the cultivation of the self.64

64 Ibid., 163.
In terms of how 'reciprocity' gets incorporated within the marital bond, Foucault notices how there is in the age a 'conjugalization' of sexual relations, in the sense that sexual practice gets restricted within the institution of marriage alone. This introduces reciprocity within marriage in two ways. On the one hand, while earlier it was prohibited only for the woman to have any extramarital relations, in this age it becomes virtually imperative for the man too to exercise fidelity. On the other, this restriction implies that it is not only the woman who has to seek all pleasure from within her marriage, the man too has to secure all legitimate pleasure from his wife alone. Musonius Rufus makes it vary clear in his On the Aphrodisia that marriage can constitute the only place for legitimate sexual relations. This makes premarital and extramarital sex matters of prime concern for the Hellenistic and the Roman ages, and it should be noted that adultery with a married woman is no more defined only in terms of the affront it causes to her husband (though this interpretation also exists, as one can note in Epictetus), but, as Seneca shows, through a 'symmetrical' fidelity between spouses.

Finally, the monopoly of marriage as the only place for sexual acts automatically brings in pleasure into the marital domain. This is why, though Aphrodite is still one of the components of marriage, and, as Seneca says in his Fragments, the husband and wife should not behave exactly like a lover and his mistress, Eros, which was so longer considered fit only for the love of boys, enters the marital discourse. It should not, however, be thought that this inclusion of pleasure into marriage entailed a freedom to the spouses to pursue pleasure to the full. Instead, Foucault notes how there is a 'dehedonization' of pleasure, and a model of sexual austerity is expected of both the spouses, not only because as Galen has already been shown to have said that one should dissociate pleasure from the sexual act, but also because the ultimate goals of marriage are procreation and companionship and not pleasure. Foucault shows how two, apparently incompatible, principles formulate the marital doctrine of the age:

Hence there is a valorization of sexual pleasures (provided they are incorporated into the matrimonial relationship and well integrated within it), combined with the recommendation of an austerity in their practice, which enables them actually to play this positive role in the conjugal union.65

This principle of 'dehedonization' of sex might appear, on the surface, to be very close to the earlier Platonic ethics or the later Christian morality, but Foucault shows how the impetus in taking pleasure away from sex in this age comes neither from the 'external utilities' of the sexual act (as in the Platonic insistence on children alone being the goal of marriage) nor from its 'internal negativity' (as in the Christian consideration of sex itself as sin and evil). It comes instead from a principle of reciprocity in marital relations, which marks this age as one dedicated to a special mode of 'cultivation of the self', in terms of a relation to others.

65 Ibid., 180.
f. *Love of Boys and Sexuality*

Coming to the third theme of homosexuality, or ‘love of boys’ to be more specific, Foucault shows how this particular type of love loses its intensity to heterosexual marital love to a great extent in the last two centuries BC and the first two centuries AD. He credits this, however, not to a change in people’s tastes, but a change in the nature of its problematization:

In the first centuries of our era, compared with the lofty formulations of the classical period, reflection on the love of boys lost some of its intensity, its seriousness, its vitality, if not its topicality... This does not mean that the practice disappeared or that it became the object of a disqualification. All the texts plainly show that it was still common and it was still regarded as a natural thing. What seems to have changed is not the taste for boys, or the value judgment that was brought to bear on those who had this partiality, but the way in which one questioned oneself about it.66

The contextual factor that added to this new way of thinking was the passing of comprehensive public laws on parental right, because of which the parents could fight against sexual abuse of their children by tutors. No wonder Quintilian says in his *Institutio oratoria* before a boy is entrusted to a teacher, the latter’s ‘morals’ should be made sure of. Coming to analyse this new type of problematization, Foucault notices that there are three texts from the period on the subject: Plutarch’s *Dialogues on Love*, a dialogue *Affairs of the Heart* attributed to Lucian, and four lectures by Maximus of Tyre on Socratic love. Since the third text is just an exposition of other texts with no original thesis of its own, Foucault leaves it aside and analyses the other two texts one after the other.

*Plutarch’s Dialogues on Love* begins and ends under the sign of marriage. It begins with Plutarch having come with his wife on a pilgrimage to Thespiae, shortly after their wedding, to offer a sacrifice to the god and to ask him to bless their union. On arriving at their host’s, they find themselves drawn into a debate as to whether the young Bacchon, courted by many lovers of boys, marry the woman who is pursuing him. The debate takes place between Protogenes and Pisias, advocates of love of boys, on the one side, and Anthemion and Daphnaeus, advocates of the love of women, on the other. Plutarch soon abandons the role of a witness, and, as the first four debaters leave, he starts arguing with Pemptides and Zeuxippus, to formulate a general theory of love. In the process, it is marital love that turns victorious and Bacchon’s marriage is decided upon. The dialogue ends with everyone preparing to form a procession to offer a sacrifice to the benevolent god of Thespiae. But in this text, which could be interpreted as one simply arguing against homosexuality, what appears as most interesting is the personage of Ismenodora, Bacchon’s ‘pursuer’—she is a widow, older, richer and of greater social status than Bacchon, and it is she the woman who is courting the boy Bacchon. This is what Foucault pays the most attention to in his analysis of what is said about the love of boys vis-à-vis marriage in this text by Plutarch.

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66 ibid., 189.
The very fact that Ismenodora is characterized in this dialogue with all the traits of the erastes, and that for Bacchon it is not as much of a choice between two different forms of love as between two different lovers, makes it possible for Plutarch to argue for the conception of a single love, and how within it the love of women (more specifically one’s wife) is the more natural and more desirable one. To come to the arguments that the text presents, first the advocates for the love of boys decry the love of women on three accounts: that it is nothing more than a natural inclination found also in animals, that it involves deception because the woman is prone to makeup and adornment as opposed to the plainly beautiful boy, and that it cannot dissociate itself from pleasure as a true love of boys can. The argument that the advocates for the love of women provide against this is twofold: first, love of boys is rooted in hypocrisy, where the lover poses as a great sage but simply waits for an opportunity to have sex with a boy; second, the love of boys poses a major problem as far as the eromenos is concerned, because if he is virtuous, the erastes can make love to him only through force, and if he concedes willingly, it is a sure sign that he is effeminate and unworthy. Plutarch’s argument opposes itself to both these dualistic tendencies and instead shows how there is just one Love, ordained for humans by the gods, and aimed at providing one with lifelong companionship. It is from this perspective that the love between husband and wife comes out as much more ‘perfect’ than the love of boys. It is more so because, going back to the ‘dilemma of the eromenos’ mentioned above, love of boys does not involve reciprocity of pleasures, and it is what Plutarch calls acharistos, or without consent from the beloved. It is this charis, the voluntary consent that a woman gives and which the like of Sappho and Pindar call the basis of true love, that qualifies the marital love of women as much more proper than the love of boys from the perspective of a fulfilment of the obligation of reciprocity in a unified love. Love entails a ‘relational model’, and it is a lack of this in the love of boys that makes it, for Plutarch, inferior and without grace. Foucault says,

In terms of this relational model, pederasty can only be inadequate in view of the strongly marked difference between the erastes and the eromenos, the dilemma of passivity, and the necessary fragility that is due to the age factor. It lacks the double and symmetrical activity of loving, hence it lacks the internal regulation and the stability of the couple. It is wanting in that “grace” which makes it possible for the aphrodisia to be combined with friendship in order to constitute the complete and perfect form of Eros. Pederasty, Plutarch might say, is a love that lacks “grace”.67

In the text Affairs of the Heart, attributed to Lucian, Theomnestus, who feels equally inclined toward both kinds of love, asks Lycinus to serve as an impartial judge and tell him which of the two is better. To do this, Lycinus recalls a dialogue between Charicles, an advocate for the love of women, and Callicratidas, an advocate for the love of boys. The arguments that these two men present are based on two points the naturalness and the pleasure

67 Ibid., 209.
principle that the two types of love embody. As far as naturalness is concerned, Charicles gives the usual argument that the love between two different sexes is more ‘natural’, as it is ordained and it can alone lead to the propagation of the species, while Callicratidas talks about the evolved differences between human beings and animals, and argues that just as it is ‘natural’ for humans to wear clothes and live in houses, which animals do not, it is quite ‘natural’ for them to indulge in love of boys, which is a more evolved form of love. As far as pleasure is concerned, Charicles provides four arguments in favour of the love of women: the first is of course about the pederastic hypocrisy, the second is about the transience of love of boys in terms of age, the third is about reciprocity which is present in love of women and absent in love of boys, and the final argument claims that while women can provide all the pleasures that boys can give the boys cannot offer all the pleasures of women. In reply to this, Callicratidas invokes the standard argument of women using makeup and being deceptive, but he goes beyond that too. He constructs the category of areté, or ‘virtue’, and not charis as the foundation of love. For him, love of boys is nobler because while the love of women cannot do without sexual pleasure, in pederastic love, one always has the Socratic-Platonic end of totally non-physical philia. While for Lycinus, Callicratidas emerges victorious in the debate, Theomnestus gets his own answer, because it follows from the argument that love of boys can only be better if it is dissociated from sex, and conversely, as long as love is associated with aphrodisia, it is very difficult to argue against the merits of marital love.

On the basis of all this, Foucault sees the emergence in the age of a ‘new erotics’, where the privileged place for homosexuality is usurped by heterosexual love, presented in terms of reciprocity and the rigour of mutual abstention. He recounts as examples romantic and adventurous fictional texts of the age, like Chaereas and Callirhoe written by Chariton of Aphrodisias, Leucippe and Clitophon by Achilles Tatius, and Heliodorus’s Ethiopica. He spots three important features of these texts. First, they always involve heterosexual love and culminate in, or have as a vital fictional juncture, marriage. The second feature is that in all these narratives, both the hero and the heroine undergo a series of adventures throughout which they retain an absolutely reciprocal longing and fidelity for each other. The final feature is the premium the texts put on virginity, so that not only do the two lovers resist all seductive attempts by others in the course of their adventures, even after they finally meet, they wait for marriage to finally consummate their desires. Summing up, Foucault says,

Thus there begins to develop an erotics different from the one that had taken its starting point in the love of boys, even though abstention from the sexual pleasures plays an important part in both. This new erotics organizes itself around the symmetrical and reciprocal relationship of a man and a woman, around the high value attributed to virginity, and around the complete union in which it finds perfection.68

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68 Ibid., 232.
Towards the Sexual Ethics of Christianity

There are certain features stand out from the construction of sexuality in the Hellenistic and Roman ages. First, in relation to health, one notices a strong advice towards abstention; secondly, in relation to conjugal love, one notices the inculcation of reciprocal fidelity and the absolute imperative of sexual acts limited to matrimony; finally, in relation to the love of boys, one notices a strong denunciation of homosexuality in favour of heterosexuality. These three features bear striking resemblance to the code so sexual ethics that was imposed upon medieval Europe by pastoral Christianity, and Foucault asks,

A whole corpus of moral reflection on sexual activity and its pleasures seems to mark, in the first centuries of our era, a certain strengthening of austerity themes... Does this mean that one must recognize, in the schema thus constituted, the lineaments of a future ethics, the ethics that one will find in Christianity, when the sexual act itself will be considered an evil, when it will no longer be granted legitimacy except within the conjugal relationship, and when the love of boys will be condemned as unnatural?69

It is definitely a difficult question to answer, and Foucault shows how, right from the Renaissance, there have been conflicting attempts in both Catholicism and Protestantism to appropriate or to disown the thought of this age, so that while Karl Barth would say that Epictetus was a 'true' Christian, Salmasius among the Protestants, and Arnauld and Tillemont among the Catholics would deride Stoicism as a mere pagan philosophy. Accordingly, Foucault tries to see what changes this age brought into sexuality and assess its possible influence or identity with constructions on sexual practice in the subsequent pastoral regime.

Foucault notices, on the one hand, that the theme of 'austerity' cannot be a marker towards identity between the sexual thought of the two ages. First, this theme was also present in Antiquity, and secondly, as has already been established sexual austerity for the Greeks and Romans had little to do with the Christian conception of sex itself as evil, and was rather aimed at subjectivization and a stylization of modes of existence. Foucault says,

Thus, as the arts of living and the care of the self are refined, some precepts emerge that seem to be rather similar to those that will be formulated in the later moral systems. But one should not be misled by the analogy. Those moral systems will define other modalities of the relation to self: a characterization of the ethical substance based on finitude, the Fall, and evil; a mode of subjection in the form of obedience to a general law that is at the same time the will of a personal god; a type of work on oneself that implies a decipherment of the soul and a purificatory hermeneutics of the desires; and a mode of ethical fulfillment that tends toward self-renunciation. The code elements that concern the economy of pleasures, conjugal fidelity, and relations between men may well remain analogous, but they will derive from a profoundly altered ethics and from a different way of constituting oneself as the ethical subject of one's sexual behavior.70

On the other hand, for Foucault what cannot be denied is that this age does bring in certain changes in Western sexuality, in terms of the premium put on marriage and reciprocal fidelity, and these do reflect in the sexual ethics of Christianity, which I now take up for discussion.

69 Ibid., 235.
70 Ibid., 239-40.
V. The History of Sexuality, Volume 4: Constructing an Unavailable Text

a. Confession, Truth and Subjectivization in Christianity

In his 'Introduction' to the second volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault talks about a fourth volume to his project, titled *The Confessions of the Flesh (Les Aveux de la Chair)*, where he was supposed to discuss sexuality as it is constructed under the Christian regime (see p. 420 above). However, since Foucault died in 1984 itself, he never got to publish this fourth volume. It is very unfortunate in the sense that without this volume, which would have connected Foucault's exposition of Western sexuality in the ancient age (discussed in Volumes 2 and 3) with that in more recent times (as in Volume 1), the projected 'history of sexuality is bound to remain incomplete. Fortunately, since one knows the projected periodization of this volume as well as its areas of research (the same three areas of health, the heterosexual practice of fornication, and homosexuality), it is possible to reconstruct, albeit sketchily, some of its contents, on the basis of some articles and interviews of Foucault on the subject. This is what I attempt to do in this section of the chapter.

But before I move in to the three themes of research, I would like to examine what the characteristic features of sexuality in this period are. What is evident from the projected title of the volume is that the construction of sexual knowledge under the pastoral regime relied heavily on the technique of confession. While Foucault discusses the use of confession in constructing sexuality from the Middle Ages onward in his first volume, where he connect confessional techniques to the will to know and the will to truth, in his subsequent volumes, Foucault shifts the focus to the art of subjectivization. It may be worth noting that in a 1977 conversation (appearing, most interestingly, under the same title as the projected fourth volume) Foucault connects the exaction of truth and the creation of subjectivity in confession:

What I mean by 'confession', even though I can well see that the term may be a little annoying, is all those procedures by which the subject is incited to produce a discourse of truth about his sexuality which is capable of having effects on the subject himself.\(^7\)

While this is a statement about confession in general, Foucault connects confession, with its two features of producing the truth and producing subjectivity, to Christianity, the immediate matrix of the current discussion, in a 1982 article, where he shows how Christianity is confession *par excellence*, because the religion is itself constituted through self-inflicting techniques, whereby one constantly needs to search the truth, and more specifically the truth about oneself. Connecting Christianity, confession, truth and subjectivity, Foucault says,

As everybody knows, Christianity is a confession. This means that Christianity is a very special type of religion—one that imposes obligations of truth on its practitioners. Such obligations in Christianity are numerous. For instance, there is the obligation to hold as truth a set of propositions that constitute dogma, the obligation to hold certain books as a permanent source of truth, and obligations to accept the decisions of certain authorities in matters of truth. Christianity requires another form of truth obligation: Everyone in Christianity has the duty to explore who he is, what is happening within himself, the faults he may have committed, the temptations to which he is exposed. Moreover, everyone is obliged to tell these things to other people and, hence, to bear witness against himself.72

The most obvious, almost commonsensical, feature of Christian sexual ethics is its insistence on austerity and renunciation. Foucault establishes the connection between this feature and the ones already discussed—cultivating truth and subjectivity through confession—in the same 1982 article, where he shows how the self-knowledge gained from confessions urges one to steer clear of external illusions and temptations as also of the palpable reality of the self. Within Christian sexual ethics, thus, the more one knows, the more one renounces:

I would also like to underline that the Christian discovery of the self does not reveal the self as an illusion. It gives place to a task that cannot be anything else but undefined. This task has two objectives. First, there is the task of clearing up all the illusions, temptations, and seductions that can occur in the mind and discovering the reality of what is going on—within ourselves. Second, one has to get free from any attachment to this self, not because the self is an illusion but because the self is much too real. The more we discover the truth about ourselves, the more we have to renounce ourselves; and the more we want to renounce ourselves, the more we need to bring to light the reality of ourselves. That is what we could call the spiral of truth formulation and reality renouncement, which is at the heart of the Christian techniques of the self.73

This brings one to an implied feature of Christian sexual ethics. Since it relies so much on renouncing the corporeal, it follows that for it, sexuality will be primarily disembodied and working in the mind or the soul. With these introductory ideas about the nature of Christian sexual thought, I will now proceed to analyse the three areas of research, one after the other.

b. The Body and the Mind: Health and Christian Sexuality

Foucault deals with his first area of research—the interface between health and sexuality under Christianity—through an analysis of the fourteenth book of *The City of God* by Augustine, in the 1982 article already quoted from above. Foucault shows that while for Artemidorus, the principle concern in sexual practice was penetration (see p. 436 ff. above), for Augustine, it is erection, the focus in sexuality thereby changing from an ‘inter-personal’ domain in the Greco-Roman age to an ‘intra-personal’ domain in the Christian paradigm. Augustine mentions how after the Fall, Adam covers his genitals with a fig leaf because it were behaving erratically, getting erect by itself with him having no control over it. The pathologization of sexuality in Christianity, therefore, does not concern an inter-personal


domain of actual sexual practice, but an intra-personal control and knowledge over one's own body and soul. It is this intra-personal sexuality that Augustine calls 'libido', which involves the pathological autonomous movement of sexual organs. This libido definitely comprises a health hazard, but for Augustine, the cause behind it as well as the remedy lie less in the body and more in one's 'will'. The cure for this pathology of sexuality lies in knowing the truth about one's internal comportment, and this is how Foucault explains the use in Christianity of the normalizing technique of confession, aimed at being a 'permanent hermeneutics of oneself.' Thus, under the Christian regime, sexual practice and the concern for health it entails get disembodied and rooted in the mind, and a whole set of new technologies of the self emerge in the form of monastic and penitential practices. Foucault says,

> Shall we say that after Augustine we experience our sex in the head? Let us say at least that in Augustine's analysis, we witness a real libidinization of sex. Augustine's moral theology is, to a certain extent, a systematization of a lot of previous speculation, but it is also an ensemble of spiritual techniques. The techniques were developed mainly in the ascetic milieu and in monastic institutions, and those relayed by the Augustinian theory of libido had, I think, a huge influence on Western technologies of the self.\(^\text{74}\)

Thus, in Augustinian theology, the problematization of sex in terms of health shifts focus from relations between people, involving penetration, to relations with oneself, involving erection. For Foucault, this Christian idea that one can engage in pathological sexual practice with oneself, gets carried over to the concerns regarding health around masturbation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. While masturbation was not dealt with as pathological in the Greco-Roman era, it is the pastoral 'libidinization' and 'intra-personalization' of sex that leads to the future pathologization of masturbation under Christianity.

c. **Chastity of the Mind: Fornication in Christian Sexuality**

To examine how Foucault visualizes the Christian notion of heterosexual practice, comprising the act of fornication on the one side and its resistance or chastity on the other, I turn to another 1982 article, where he analyses Cassian's *Institutiones* and *Conferences* to study the same. This article is of direct relevance to this part of the chapter, because proposed to include it as a part of the unwritten *The Confessions of the Flesh*. Foucault shows how Cassian identifies eight sins and arranges them in pairs. He pairs pride with vainglory, sloth with accidie, avarice with wrath, and fornication with greed. Fornication and greed are brought together for three reasons: first, they are both 'natural' vices; second, they are the two vices that involve the participation of the body; and finally, they have a direct causal connection between them, because over-indulgence in food and drink abets one's urge for fornication. Thus, of the eight sins, fornication is especially vicious, being innate, natural, and physical in origin, and it needs to be as totally destroyed through the cultivation of chastity.

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\(^{74}\) *Ibid.*, 15.
In his fifth Conference, Cassian talks about three types of sexual practice. The first consists of the 'joining together of the two sexes', the second takes place 'without contact with the woman', i.e. masturbation, and the third is ‘conceived in the mind and the thoughts'. In the twelfth Conference, he gives names to these three forms of sex: fornicatio, immunditia, and libido, respectively. For Foucault three points come out of this classification and the discussion that follows it. First, it should be noticed that fornicatio, or fornication, is restricted to heterosexuality alone; secondly, adultery is given no separate place in the tabulation of sexual vices, but is included within the apparently accepted practice of fornication itself; thirdly, when it comes to employing strategies to cultivate chastity, even in the domain of actual sexual relations, Cassian deals more with libido than with fornication. Foucault says,

Cassian's analysis has two special features: one is that he does not deal separately with adultery but places it with fornication in its limited sense, and the other is that he devotes attention mostly to the other two categories. Nowhere in the various texts in which he speaks of the battle for chastity does he refer to actual sexual relations.  

The last point is especially significant, because though the taking away from sex the actuality of the physical act can possibly be attributed to the fact that Cassian was primarily addressing an audience of monks who had in any case taken vows to renounce all sexual relations, remembering that the text was not always limited to the monastic circles, this can be associated with the general trend of the period towards disembodiment of sexual practice.

This idea of disembodiment becomes clear when Cassian lays out in his twelfth Conference six stages towards chastity, and shows that abstinence from heterosexual fornication can come not through a control over one’s sexual acts, but only through a control of the libido. The first stage comes when one is not ‘smitten by a carnal impulse’ on waking in the morning. The second stage arrives when one is able to stop thinking of the voluptariae cogitationes, or ‘voluptuous thoughts’ that might involuntarily come to one’s mind. At the third stage, one can look at a woman without any feeling of desire. At the fourth, one does not feel any ‘movement of the flesh’ or erection at any point of time in the course of one’s day’s work. The fifth stage appears when one is able to calmly contemplate the act of procreation, when it arises in the course of a discourse, without feeling any sense of sexual pleasure. The final stage towards chastity is achieved when the image of a ‘seductive’ woman does not appear to one even in one’s dreams. This is how Cassian visualizes the attainment of chastity.

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Cassian puts involvement of the wilful act as well as the explicit will to commit an act under the same category of what he calls *concupiscence*. This category is one’s enemy in the ‘spiritual battle’, and it is against this that a ‘disinvolvement’ has to be made, leading to chastity. It is understandable, therefore, that the total abstinence that Cassian advocates consists of a control not just over one’s body but also the soul. For Foucault, this insistence can be understood in relation to the monastic life that Cassian’s discourse was primarily addressed to, but one can also spot in it a general ‘asceticism’, that can be applicable to mass conjugal ethics. This is especially so because this asceticism involves a dual subjectivization, where the individual objectivizes himself or herself to confessional techniques, to become the subject of sexual knowledge about oneself. For Foucault this change in conjugal sexual ethics in the Christian era can be located in the thought of the Stoics, the Cynics, as well as in monasticism, and not just to the advent of Christianity in Europe:

So far as consideration of sexual behavior was concerned, some fairly involved thinking went on between the Hellenistic period and St Augustine. Certain important events stand out such as the guidelines for conscience laid down by the Stoics and the Cynics, the organization of monasticism, and many others. On the other hand the coming of Christianity, considered as a massive rupture with the earlier moralities and the dominant introduction of a quite different one, is barely noticeable. It is with this understanding of how conjugal heterosexual love gets imbued with the notion of total abstinence, and this abstinence itself is constructed more in the mind than in actual sexual performance of the body, that I can turn to the third area of Foucault’s research.

**d. Consciousness and Life-Style: Homosexuality in Christianity**

Unfortunately, I could not locate any single text by Foucault dedicated to the construction of homosexuality in medieval Christian Europe. However, among the many articles and interviews where he mentions the subject, there is one 1982 interview where he discusses homosexuality, if not exclusively in medieval Europe in Christian Europe all the same, and I choose this text to discuss what Foucault has to say about the construction of homosexuality in the West under Christian rule.

The first point that Foucault makes in this interview is in perfect tandem with the main feature of Christian sexual ethics that there is a basic disembodiment, whereby the actual sexual practice, as also laws permitting or forbidding it, are of little importance compared to the ‘consciousness’ that the form of sexual practice produces in the mind. It was so with the Christian notions of sexual health and conjugal fornication, and Foucault shows that it is the same with homosexuality too. In Christian homosexuality, as Foucault shows, it is the ‘gay’ consciousness that matters more than any concrete element of the sexual act itself:

Sexual behavior is not, as is too often assumed, a superimposition of, on the one hand, desires which derive from natural instincts, and, on the other hand, of permissive and restrictive laws which tell us what we should or shouldn't do. Sexual behavior is more than that. It is also the consciousness one has of what one is doing, what one makes of the experience, and the value one attaches to it. It is in this sense that I think the concept "gay" contributes to a positive (rather than a purely negative) appreciation of the type of consciousness in which affection, love, desire, sexual rapport with people have a positive significance.77

Just as it is 'gay consciousness' that helps homosexuals have a 'positive' idea of themselves, it is the same thing, as articulated in the form of an alternate 'life-style', that makes other people feel threatened by homosexuality, and treat it in 'negative' light. While the persecution of homosexuality may be rationalized with religious taboos on the act itself, Foucault shows how it is not the act, but the radical potentials of gay life-style that actually cause it:

I think that what most bothers those who are not gay about gayness is the gay life-style, not sex acts themselves... I was talking about the common fear that gays will develop relationships that are intense and satisfying even though they do not at all conform to the ideas of relationship held by others. It is the prospect that gays will create as yet unforeseen kinds of relationships that many people cannot tolerate...you can see how, in the military for example, love between men can develop and assert itself in circumstances where only dead habits and rules were supposed to prevail. And it is possible that changes in established routines will occur on a much broader scale as gays learn to express their feelings for one another in more various ways and develop new life-styles not resembling those that have been institutionalized.78

The very probability of an institutionalization of this consciousness makes Foucault say that this gay consciousness is not an individual one but something like a 'collective consciousness'. This has been evident in homosexuals forming secret groups right from the Middle Ages, and more concretely in our own times, when homosexuals have taken their consciousness to the level of what Foucault calls 'class consciousness', and waged political struggles for their rights. In a 1977 conversation, Foucault likens the American homosexual movement to the feminist movement and makes gay assertion a case in establishing the homosexual consciousness of community based on their sexual specificity:

The American homosexual movement makes that challenge their starting-point. Like women they begin to look for new forms of community, co-existence, pleasure. But, in contrast with the position of women, the fixing of homosexuals to their sexual specificity is much stronger, they reduce everything to the order of sex... Anyway that's quite normal since homosexuality is a sexual practice which is attacked, barred and disqualified as such. Women on the other hand are able to have much wider economic, political and other kinds of objectives than homosexuals.79

78 Ibid., 301.
Coming back to the interview I was discussing, Foucault shows next how this ‘consciousness’ that Christianity produces in and around homosexuals gets reflected in discourses by homosexuals on their sexuality. Foucault notices that right from the Middle Ages, heterosexual love developed on two panels—pre-sexual courtship and the actual act of sex—and given the austerity of Christian sexual ethics, it is the former that usually gets talked about in literature. As regards homosexuality, however, the way Christianity suppressed it left no scope for courtship. Accordingly, Western homosexual practice is all sex, where people have to clandestinely secure partners and have quick sex, without often even getting to know each other’s names. Therefore, when homosexuality found a voice in literature, it took a form very different from heterosexual literature, in that it talked more of the sexual act itself, and post-coital pleasure than pre-sexual courtly love. To explain it further, Foucault says,

...for a homosexual, the best moment of love is likely to be when the lover leaves in the taxi. It is when the act is over and the boy is gone that one begins to dream about the warmth of his body, the quality of his smile, and tone of his voice. It is the recollection rather than the anticipation of the act that assumes a primary importance in homosexual relations. This is why the great homosexual writers of our culture (Cocteau, Genet, Burroughs) can write so elegantly about the sexual act itself, because the homosexual imagination is for the most part concerned with reminiscing about the act rather than anticipating it. 80

This is how homosexuality gets constructed in its own peculiarities under the Christian rule.

e. Obedience and the Christian Sexual Ethics

From the above discussion on the form sexuality takes in the three domains of personal health, heterosexual love, and homosexual love, under Christianity, one can identify two key features of the period: that it professes a code of strict abstinence in all the three domains, and that this code is constructed in a disembodied way where a consciousness and an imagining of the act has more value than the actual physical act itself. But in addition to these two implications, or in conjunction to them, one can notice a third feature of the age, that as opposed to the free subjectivization of the Greco-Roman era, for Christian sexual ethics, subjectivity is always accompanied by a code of rules which the individual must be obedient to. I will end this part of the chapter with what Foucault says in a 1984 interview:

This elaboration of one’s own life as a personal work of art, even if it obeyed certain collective canons, was at the centre, it seems to me, of moral experience, of the will to morality in Antiquity, whereas in Christianity, with the religion of the text, the idea of the will of God, the principle of obedience, morality took on increasingly the form of a code of rules... From Antiquity to Christianity, we pass from a morality that was essentially the search for a personal ethics to a morality as obedience to a system of rules. 81


VI. Conclusion: The Principle of Tri-Hierarchization Unfolded

The first spectacular thing about Foucault’s discussion of sexuality is his working out of the non-repressive hypothesis. While traditionally sexuality is conceived of in terms of prohibitions and repression, Foucault shows how regimes lead to a production of discourses on sex, rather than a suppression of the same. He shows that even when sexual activity is controlled, it is never through a brutal interdiction, but through a meticulous production of bodies of knowledge concerning sexual practice. Foucault says in a 1984 interview,

For a long time many people imagined that the strictness of the sexual codes, in the form that we know them, was indispensable to so-called “capitalist” societies. Yet the lifting of the codes and the dislocation of prohibitions have probably been carried out more easily than people thought they would... In sum, people were wrong when they believed that all morality resided in prohibition and that the listing of these prohibitions in itself solved the question of ethics.82

The above quote also shows a concern for resistance to sexual regimes, though not in the stereotypical binary mode, to show Foucault in a particularly charged dehierarchist light.

The second spectacular thing about this discussion is how, by the time he reaches his last book, Foucault completes the construction of what I had pre-empted and labelled as the principle of tri-hierarchization, when I began analysing his first text. I have structured Foucault’s works in a certain way to show how he starts with the basic assumption of a correlation between power and knowledge and then incorporates the idea of the body within it, to achieve a tripartition of domains of discursive formations. I have also shown how Foucault adds the notion of hierarchy to each of these three domains to discuss one after the other constructions in ‘mental’ representational forms, ‘material’ forms of socio-politico-economic structures of control, and ‘physical’ sexual practices. But what emerges more clearly after Foucault’s discussion of sexuality is that these domains do not act in isolation in the perpetration of hierarchies. To understand tri-hierarchist politics, the workings of a ‘physical’ individuality, a ‘mental’ truth and a ‘material’ power have to be analysed together. Having reached the end of Foucault’s works, and still trying to establish the features of tri-hierarchization, as they are articulated by Foucault, I will end this section of the thesis with a quote from the last interview Foucault gave, where this principle gets explained to its full:

I tried to locate three major types of problems: the problem of truth, the problem of power, and the problem of individual conduct. These three domains of experience can only be understood in relation to each other, not independently. What bothered me about the previous books is that I considered the first two experiences without taking the third one into account. By bringing to light this third experience, it seemed to provide a kind of a guiding thread which, in order to justify itself, did not need to resort to somewhat rhetorical methods of avoiding one of the three fundamental domains of experience.83