

NARCISSUS, BAUDELAIRE, AND FOUCAULT: A RESPONSE TO PIERRE
HADOT

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by

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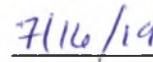
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2019

Pierre Hadot's criticism that Michel Foucault advocates a modern day form of Dandyism has animated much discussion among modern ethical theorists. Yet, little research has been done into the history of Dandyism and its importance to Hadot's criticism. In order to properly situate their disagreement, this thesis traces the history of Dandyism from Beau Brummell to Charles Baudelaire, examining connections between Foucault's thought and this intellectual history. After demonstrating the reasonableness of Hadot's critique, this thesis examines Hadot's own unstated philosophical assumptions, arguing that his writing on the myth of Narcissus provides substantial evidence of his Perennialist disposition. Finally, this thesis examines Richard Shusterman's theory of somaesthetics to argue that Shusterman's pragmatic conception provides a better model that can successfully incorporate both Hadot and Foucault's ethical projects.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis.



Chair, Thesis Committee



Date

PREFACE AND/OR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis advisors, my family for their support, and all of the people who listened to me ramble about my topic throughout these past two years. I would like to dedicate this thesis to Alva Noë and Claudia Close. It is due to their guidance and support that I had a chance to attend San Francisco State University.

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INTRODUCTION

That Pierre Hadot, a seminarian turned philologist, turned philosopher, turned historian, and—in his last years—turned philosophical therapist, can claim to be one of Michel Foucault’s profound influences must be one of the most fortuitous associations in recent philosophic history. It is hardly debatable that Hadot’s subsequent fame, after years of relative and likely amenable obscurity, resulted from this unique connection with the most cited scholar in modern humanities publication. Yet for all this, while Foucault was profoundly influenced and inspired by Hadot’s scholarship, the relationship does not appear mutual. Hadot’s comments on Foucault have generally tended toward the critical, though this may not be a result of incommensurability as much as untimeliness. As Hadot remarks in *Reflections on the Idea of the “Cultivation of the Self,”* the differences between Foucault and himself “could have provided the substance for a dialogue between us...[that] was interrupted all too soon by Foucault’s premature death” (Hadot *Philosophy* 205).

I want to insist this is not a trivial point. To understand Hadot’s criticism of Foucault we must engage Hadot on his own terms, in his project and sensibilities so to speak. This task is in no manner simple; the dizzying diversity of traditions that Hadot draws from will task even the most diligent and far-reading scholar. However, in this paper I will argue that Hadot’s disapproval of Foucault’s thought is primarily motivated by, and intimately bound up in, his commitment to perennialism—specifically as expressed in the works of Plotinus. It is this commitment that creates the seemingly unbridgeable gulf between their different “tacit attempt[s] to offer contemporary mankind a model of life” (Hadot, *Philosophy* 208).

In order to properly delineate the particulars of these differences, this paper will first take on a genealogical project; to fully animate Hadot's critique of Foucault's project as "a new form of Dandyism, late-twentieth century style," it is necessary to trace the philosophical lineage of Dandyism from its start in Regency Britain up to its intellectual peak with Baudelaire (Hadot, *Philosophy* 211). From here, the paper will proceed to elaborate Foucault's own "ethical turn," noting its continuities with the Dandyist movement that preceded it. Having framed Foucault ethics and its relationship to Dandyism, this paper will then investigate Hadot's own conversations and earlier works—especially his work on the myth of Narcissus—to provide more context and weight to his criticism. Finally, I will enlist Richard Shusterman, his commentary on this debate, and his influential work in *somaesthetics* to argue that his concept of *somaesthetics* provides a potential bridge between Foucault's anti-essential, body-centric perspective and Hadot's non-egoist cosmic perspective, allowing for a notion of "care of the self" that pragmatically appreciates both the existential and aesthetic dimension of "spiritual exercises" or "techniques of the self." I believe this pragmatic reconfiguration best allows for the type of society-wide experimentation with diverse, individualized forms of life necessary to address Foucault's final ethical concerns with "the political struggle for respect of rights, of critical thought against abusive techniques of government and research in ethics that seeks to ground individual freedom" (Foucault, *Ethics* 299).

DANDYISM FROM BRUMMELL TO BAUDELAIRE

At this point it is necessary to digress from their philosophical disagreement to examine the cultural and philosophical history of Dandyism. In keeping with Foucault's project of genealogy, it is necessary to interrogate this intellectual tradition Hadot is linking Foucault to, as well as outline the historical exemplars whose personages are evoked by the term. By doing so, we can uncover any intellectual prejudices hidden by the modern uses of the term, and more accurately frame Hadot's substantive criticism. Accordingly, this section will progress from a brief historical recounting of the foundations of Dandyism with Beau Brummell to its philosophical apex in Charles Baudelaire's *The Painter of Modern Life*.

It is a surprising fact that the history of Dandyism, a significant cultural movement in France and England in the 19th century, has, to this point, only received one academic, book-length treatment. In a way, this may be fitting, as most historical reference consist of anecdotes or autobiographies about the most famous individual dandies—Brummell, Wilde, d'Orsay, Disraeli—which seems in line with their deeply held commitment to radical originalism. This is, however, a bit unfortunate for the student of Dandyism in search of a diversity of historical narratives. Luckily, the primary text that this paper will consult, Ellen Moers book *The Dandy: From Brummell to Beerbohm* (1960), is as authoritative, well researched, and expansive as one could hope.

A central contention of Moer's book is that Dandyism, as a movement, can be thought of as fundamentally reactionary; during the Regency period in England and contemporaneous beginning of the French Republic following the Revolution, the aristocracy in both countries felt endangered by the increasing power of commerce, democratic sentiments, and a burgeoning *petit bourgeois*. France had, in essence, attempted to

destroy their aristocracy by abolishing the nobility—though their efforts seem to have been mostly unsuccessful as they returned in about the same numbers following the foundation of the French Empire under Napoleon nearly half a century later. Within this new social climate, those wishing to distinguish themselves could not merely resort to their expensive tastes, ostentatious living quarters, or substantial estates. After all, a mere merchant, born of low class, could conceivably acquire all the *accoutrements* of aristocratic living, while in no way comporting themselves with the necessary *panache* of the true aristocrat. It is in reaction to this collapse of the traditional social classes that the dandy struts forth into English society. In their quest for self-distinguishment, the dandy would eventually pass from aristocratic pretensions to a sort of rigid individualism that, paradoxically, further differentiated the dandy from both the democratic masses and the remnants of the traditional nobility, that could only ape the more original of its practitioners; due to this, Moer considers the dandy a somewhat autonomous, novel class, occupying the negative space between the nobility and the lower classes:

What the utilitarian middle class most hated in nobility was what the court most worshipped in the dandy—a creature perfect in externals and careless of anything below the surface, a man dedicated solely to his own perfection through a ritual of taste. The epitome of selfish irresponsibility, he was ideally free of all human commitments that conflict with taste: passions, moralities, ambitions, politics, or occupations. (Moers 12-13)

The dandy's birth as a reactionary movement to the "utilitarian middle class," will, in many respects, be the fundamental form that connects the disparate historical moments during which Dandyism reoccurs throughout modern Western history.

Strangely, within this historical period we can pinpoint the exact birth date of the first dandy; Beau Brummell, unanimously regarded as the first, and therefore archetypal dandy, was born July 7th 1778 to exactly the sort of upper middle class family the dandy would come to revile. While the tales, anecdotes, and travails of Brummell are unendingly humorous, unbelievable, and in the end tragic, for the purposes of this paper it is enough to say that Brummell made his way through the upper echelons of British society, defined a pared down male fashion sensibility and meticulous regime of grooming that reigns through to contemporary times, and, most consequently, spawned legions of imitative, young English dandies. Brummell the man, in true dandy fashion, became an original aesthetic model of life that would subsequently transform Parisian fashion sensibilities and provide a novel response to the more dramatic democratic movement found in French Republic.

Later in life, Brummell, escaping British debtors who were fed up with his lavish spending, decamped to Caen in France. This, in turn, led to many fashionable young dandies following suit; the salons of Paris began swarming with these British expatriates, leading to numerous depictions in the literature and press of the time. Dandyism in France, however, was no mere imitative reflection of its British counterpart. It developed in artistic and unconventional spaces, merging with Romantic sensibilities—the heroic individual, the rejection of materialism, embrace of excess and extremity. Yet, it was decidedly modern. French Dandyism extolled the city and modern dress, was suspicious of earnestness or

sentimentalism, and thoroughly rejected Rousseau's uncorrupted state of nature. If Britain gave birth to the dandy, France immortalized it:

[T]he dandy ideal in France could become an abstraction, a refinement of intellectual rebellion. Because the dandy was foreign, the French could idealize him for what he was *not*; not middle-class and drab, not philistine and stupid, not buried in the tedious, undistinguished existence of those who merely lived out their time in the bourgeois century. (Moers 13)

As Foucault and Hadot are both French thinkers, it is this intellectualized strain of Dandyism that most directly matters for the purposes of this paper. However, an appraisal of the historical origins in England was necessary to appreciate the novelty of this historical movements; while French Dandyism will claim historical figures from Caesar to Alcibiades as early dandies, such assessment can only be considered a wishful reassessment from a genealogical perspective. Proto-dandies abound in history, but it is the unique circumstances of Britain at the beginning of the Regency that led to Dandyism proper.

Though many French thinkers wrote about Dandyism, none wrote with as much philosophical intensity or devotion as Baudelaire. It is in his work *The Painter of Modern Life* "the dandy tradition reached its apogee. Baudelaire brought out all the capacity of the dandy figure for rebellion: for scornful, silent, unsuccessful rebellion against the mediocre materialism of a democratic era" (Moers 283). This text will also serve as a crucial point of intersection with Foucault's thoughts; while much of this genealogy depends on making explicit certain implicit historical allegiances in Foucault and Hadot's works, the link between

Foucault and Baudelaire, though not particularly well known, is straightforward—he has a substantial discussion of Baudelaire's *The Painter of Modern Life* in *What is Enlightenment?*

Baudelaire begins his discussion by drawing out the historical conditions that gave rise to Dandyism. First, it is only during “periods of transition, when democracy is not yet all-powerful, and aristocracy is only just beginning to totter and fall,” that the ground is set for “certain men who are socially, politically and financially ill at ease, but are all rich in native energy,” to create some new social class, by which they can distinguish themselves (Baudelaire 28-29). Again, in the case of England this need was exacerbated by the increased wealth of the merchant class, and in France the democratization process was far more advanced during the French Republic. What is clear, regardless of country, is that this distinguishment must require serious effort and knowledge if it is to be effective in “establishing a new kind of aristocracy, all the more difficult to shatter as it will be based on the most precious, the most enduring faculties, and on the divine gifts which work and money are unable to bestow” (Baudelaire 28-29). Yet, how does one do this? Fashion can be imitated, mannerisms copied, diction refined, tastes cultivated, all without providing the necessary “gap” between the divine dandies and the phonies. First, one must make the task incredibly onerous, bordering on that sort of regimentation required of the monastery. The primary task of Baudelaire’s essay is, in many ways, to heroicize this all-consuming effort, further isolating the dandy from the masses. While this heroic aspect of Dandyism will be what seduces Foucault, it is worth examining a less esoteric effect of this intense self-fashioning—those *nouveau riche* and democratic masses whose wealth came through trade or labor likely did not have the same degree of leisure time necessary to adhere to the regimen

of Dandyism. For the same reason the monk retreats to the monastery, the dandy requires total leave of economic, political, and social pressure in order to focus entirely on their self-construction. Baudelaire himself admits nearly as much:

It is thanks to my leisure that I have developed," he writes, "much to my financial detriment, but greatly to the advantage of my faculties of feeling, meditating, and that of dandyism." So he concludes that men of worldly pursuits, political and business men, might often become worthy men, but not divine. (Rhodes 393)

These aspects of Dandyism— elitism, reactionism, anti-democratism—were all concerns that animated an anti-Dandyism backlash in Britain, and continue to provide fodder for critics like Hadot who think Foucault holds these sentiments in embracing the dandyist position.

How exactly is asceticism repurposed for the aestheticism that Dandyism embraces? Asceticism, practiced in religious contexts, normally seeks to transform the self in a spiritual way—refining one's connection with a deity or purifying one's soul for example. Baudelaire, however, desires a transformation of the social self in such a way as to make one a divine amongst masses of mortals. If the monk performed ascetic exercises to transform himself to a spiritual end, the dandy performed his exercises on himself to an artistic, aesthetic end. In so doing, the dandy could separate himself by pursuing not "the need to be original (with the naïveté of a romantic or the extravagance of a Bohemian) but the need to make of oneself something original—as the artist creates an original work out of his own being (Moers 282). This originalist bent separates Dandyism from other ascetic movements in a variety of ways.

First, there is not a hierarchy or master-apprentice relationship that often defines monastic orders. In the case of Dandyism, the transformative process is fundamentally creative and proceeds from oneself to oneself, without the intervention of a defined or semi-defined path of advancement as in a monastery. We could liken the distinction of the monk and dandy to that of the apprentice in a master's studio, and the modern self-taught artist. While a dandy will often emulate aesthetic aspects of other dandies—as most artists who normally work within some formal constraints—the dandy himself is the singular creator and creation. Thus, the dandy is forever committed to “all the complicated material conditions to which they submit, from an impeccable toilet at every hour of the day and the night to the most perilous feats of the sporting field,” in order to transform themselves from mere aristocrat to something so original it borders on divinity (Baudelaire 28).

One more critical argument suggested in *The Painter of Modern Life* is the historical necessity of the growing secularism in the French Republic to the development of this heroic form of Dandyism. This push against Catholicism, subsequent to the attempted destruction of its institutional presence in post-Revolution France, lead to a substantial disavowal of Catholicism's code-based ethics amongst the intellectual and artistic groups that would become the dandies. It is into this ethical negative space—just as it had with the negative social space—that Dandyism creates a new, alternative form of life. S.A. Rhodes, in his compelling 1928 account of Baudelairean Dandyism, dramatically foreshadows the historical concerns that animate this modern quest for a non-codified ethics from Baudelaire, to Hadot, and finally to Foucault;

“[artists] [i]n the seventeenth century, [like] Corneille and Racine had not only their rigid aesthetics to control their artistic work, but a rigid moral and religious code as well...In the nineteenth century, however, not only the work but the life of the artist also is controlled by his aesthetic creed. Baudelaire carried this doctrine to its furthest application, and made of his art not only the labor of his being and the moral guide of his life, but also a bulwark against democratic equality and, what seemed to him, degeneration. (Rhodes 389)

Baudelaire, responding to the immediacy of this historical moment, is motivated by the same desire as Foucault more than a century later—the desire for a new ethics, free from strict moral codes, that emphasized individualism, aesthetics, and originalism. While Foucault will be lead, based on Hadot’s writings, to the Greeks and Romans as inspiration, both Baudelaire and Foucault realize that any considered response, be it Dandyism or some undefined alternative, cannot return to the same historical moment as the Greek and Romans. Once codified ethics became dominant in Western thought, any non-codified ethics will be received in opposition to its hegemonic alternative; a society, once subject to laws, can only understand other societies without laws as *lawless*.

FOUCAULT’S AESTHETIC ETHICS

Paradoxically it is necessary, before delving into Foucault’s later ethical thought, to proceed non-chronologically and look at one of his last essays: *What is Enlightenment*. This will be done in order to, first, examine his only explicit writing on Baudelaire and Dandyism,

and second, use this late-life thinking to inform our understanding of his less explicit personal view of the ethical project he was attempting to outline. Though the entire text is informative, this paper will focus more or less exclusively on his discussion of Baudelaire, to note his understanding of Dandyism, and then trace continuities between their thinking. The Kantian concern with modernity is relevant tangentially, but this paper will not concern itself with the fundamental question “*What is Enlightenment?*” nor what potential answers mean for questions of governance and limit-attitudes.

The first terminological issue is Foucault’s description of his notion of modernity and Baudelairean Dandyism as equivalent historical attitudes:

[M]odernity for Baudelaire is not simply a form of relationship to the present; it is also a mode of relationship that has to be established with oneself. The deliberate attitude of modernity is tied to an indispensable asceticism. To be modern is not to accept oneself as one is in the flux of the passing moments; it is to take oneself as object of a complex and difficult elaboration: what Baudelaire, in the vocabulary of his day, calls *dandysme*

(Foucault, *What Is* 40)

This passage is of the utmost importance for understanding Foucault’s view of Baudelaire. The dandy, in his asceticism, is affecting an attitude toward both himself and the present. This attitude, while corresponding to a particular geographical area and time in history, should not be thought of as simply “an epoch, or ...set of features characteristic of an epoch...preceded by a more or less naive or archaic premodernity, and followed by an enigmatic and troubling ‘postmodernity’” (Foucault, *What Is* 38). Instead, we should consider

this attitude, expressed in the French dandy, as a novel historical invention. In Foucauldian terminology, modernity, as a function of the Enlightenment, is an attitude of problematization of the self. Unlike previous practitioners of asceticism,

[m]odern man, for Baudelaire, is not the man who goes off to discover himself, his secrets and his hidden truth; he is the man who tries to invent himself. This modernity does not 'liberate man in his own being'; it compels him to face the task of producing himself. (Foucault, *What Is* 38)

Here, we are exposed to the first expression of Dandyism as an anti-essentialist philosophy—something that greatly endears it to Foucault's sensibilities. If there has been a primary questioning in Foucault's oeuvre, it is undoubtedly questioning surrounding the subject or self. Though his anti-essentialism motivated much of his work, it was seldom expressed both succinctly and explicitly in his writing. However, from the gluttony of recently published books of Foucault in conversation, it is possible to draw two quotes for conclusive evidence. Here, they will be quoted at length, as they provide significant support for connecting Foucault's own views to those he assigns to Baudelaire:

[The self] is not a substance. It is a form, and this form is not primarily or always identical to itself. You do not have the same type of relationship to yourself when you constitute yourself as a political subject who goes to vote or speaks at a meeting and when you are seeking to fulfill your desires in a sexual relationship...it is precisely the historical constitution of these various forms of the subject in relation to the games of truth which interests me.

(Foucault, *Ethics* 291)

Furthermore:

I do indeed believe that there is no sovereign, founding subject, a universal form of subject to be found everywhere...I believe, on the contrary, that the subject is constituted through practices of subjection, or, in a more autonomous way, through practices of liberation, of liberty, as in Antiquity, on the basis...of a number of rules, styles, inventions to be found in the cultural environment. (Foucault, *Politics* 50-51)

At last, we are equipped to evaluate Foucault's relationship with Baudelaire. If we are to take modernity, and therefore Dandyism, as a sort of attitude toward the present and ourselves, then Foucault is unquestionably supportive of this attitude; in its denial of a universal subject and its ascetic self-transformative practices Dandyism represents a clear historical example Foucault can examine when he begins considering the implications of his—to be discussed—investigations into Greek ethics.

I think it is reasonable at this point to make a minor disclaimer as to the purpose of this paper. While there has been, in recent years, a blossoming of work in modern virtue ethics by academic philosophers, this work would require to substantial a detour to consider at length. I hope this paper can provide important insights to Foucault ethical project in a way that very well may be compatible with future research in virtue ethics. However, for the goal of this paper—a lengthy, critical reading of the meaningful disagreements between Foucault and Hadot—a detour into modern virtue ethics, or other areas of ethical research, would unnecessarily complicate the argument.

Yet, we cannot, at this point, attribute to Foucault complete sympathy with Dandyism. While he has endorsed the ascetic framework of Dandyism, he has not addressed the fundamental aesthetic nature of it. As we shall see, this is a critical aspect of Dandyism that Hadot will attribute—quite negatively—to Foucault’s project. It is thus pivotal to properly consider Hadot’s criticism that we first establish its validity. To do this, we must venture out from *What is Enlightenment* into Foucault’s early work on Greek ethics. Foucault does, however, provide us with a suggestion as to how he diverges from Baudelaire on this subject: “ascetic elaboration of the self—Baudelaire does not imagine that [this has] any place in society itself, or in the body politic. [It] can only be produced in another, a different place, which Baudelaire calls art” (Foucault, *What Is* 40). In noting this, Foucault seems to be subtly pushing back against the Dandyism elitism that has segmented the task of self-transformation within the artistic world. It appears that Foucault may envision these ascetic practices as, *contra* Baudelaire, being necessary exactly where Baudelaire cannot imagine their functioning. This does not, however, address the question of the role of aestheticism directly, and thus we must turn to *The History of Sexuality*.

Foucault’s late life focus on classical Greek ethics may seem, to a reader with a cursory familiarity with his work, a bizarre diversion from his preceding focus on things like “epistemes,” “governmentality,” “power/knowledge.” Yet, when understood as a fortuitous byproduct of his genealogical interrogation of sexuality in *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, it becomes much clearer. As Foucault traced our modern sexuality back to its Christian origins, he found himself needing to further understand the preceding Greek and Roman ethics that Christian think responded to and evolved from. It is in doing so that Foucault first

encountered the stark difference between these ethical systems and that which Christianity—through to modern secularism—began to espouse. What he realized was that modern secular ethics, for all its seeming rejection of Christian ethics, was still trapped in “a social morality which seeks the rules for acceptable behavior in relations with others” (Foucault, *Technologies* 4). Only upon inspection of Greek texts did Foucault discover an historical antecedent, an ethical system, not driven by attempts to codify behavior or one’s relationship to oneself. From this extensive genealogy, Foucault began his now famed attempt to reclaim the primacy of *epimelesthai sauton* or to “take care of yourself”;

Since the sixteenth century, criticism of established morality has been undertaken in the name of the importance of recognizing and knowing the self. Therefore, it is difficult to see concern with oneself as compatible with morality. "Know thyself" has obscured "Take care of yourself" because our morality, a morality of asceticism, insists that the self is that which one can reject. (Foucault, *Technologies* 4)

In this notion of *epimelesthai sauton*, Foucault found material to begin a new questioning of the philosophical schools that populated Ancient Greece. What he found was the traditional understanding of their ethical systems was misguided by the modern framework of codified ethics. The difference between Epicureanism and Platonism was not simply the difference between what prohibitions they made, but rather a difference in fundamental attitude, which lead to divergent forms of life; “there were...different styles of life...[e]ach philosophical school—Stoic, Epicurean, Platonist, and so on—represented a style of life that had a corresponding fundamental inner attitude” (Davidson, *Ethics* 124-25). From this realization,

Foucault discerned a four-part structure to how ethics function—however for this paper the particulars of this view are not necessary.

It is in this notion of stylization that Foucault found the radically individual ascetic aestheticism he will later admire in the Baudelairean dandy. Here, finally, is an ethics that focuses on individuals and their relationship to themselves. Most importantly, here is an ethics that allows one to affect change on oneself, to transform the self by means of the self, resisting the external techniques of transformation required from a codified ethics—be it the church, the government, or any other disciplinary power. One can almost sense the excitement in Foucault's writing as he is discovering just the sort of framework to deal with the mesh of power entanglements that seem to so thoroughly enclose the modern subject:

We are a long way from a form of austerity that would tend to govern all individuals in the same way, from the proudest to the most humble, under a universal law whose application alone would be subject to modulation by means of casuistry. On the contrary, here everything was a matter of adjustment, circumstance, and personal position... [t]herefore, in this form of morality, the individual did not make himself into an ethical subject by universalizing the principles that informed his action; on the contrary, he did so by means of an attitude and a quest that individualized his action, modulated it, and perhaps even gave him a special brilliance by virtue of the rational and deliberate structure his action manifested (Foucault, *Use* 62).

Foucault only needed to wait a few more years before encountering the Baudelairean dandy as the modern torchbearer of this ethics. In doing so, Foucault found evidence of the

viability of this ethical attitude in modern times—of this ascetic aestheticism—and it is in the dandy that Foucault conceived of as an example from which a new, original form of life could be created. As we shall soon see, however, Hadot considers this to be Foucault's gravest mistake.

HADOT'S PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND

In order to understand Hadot's negative criticism of Foucault, we must first outline the positive argument with which it is contrasted. Beginning with Hadot's most explicit statements, I will detail his commitment to perennialism, and building from this, attempt to show that his charge of Dandyism is a modern analog of Plotinus's criticism of Narcissus.

Like Foucault, Hadot was averse to simplistic moral statements and preferred to leave—at least in lectures and publications—his own specific ethical commitments obscured whenever possible. However, as evidenced by the interview at the end of *Philosophy as a Way of Life* and his conversations in *The Present Alone is Our Happiness*, Hadot was dramatically more forthcoming in dialogue. Beginning with *The Present Alone*, we are able to see Hadot at his most edificatory:

I think of the fundamental philosophical choice as an overcoming of the partial, biased, egocentric, egoist self in order to attain the level of a higher self. This self sees all things from a perspective of universality and totality, and becomes aware of itself as part of the cosmos that encompasses the totality of things. (86)

The word “choice” is notable here; Hadot does not claim that the fundamental philosophical *truth* is this metaphysics of “universality and totality.” This is not to say that Hadot is not committed to this truth—but rather this reveals that his understanding of philosophy, as a way of life, consists of a choice of how to live. In doing so, Hadot is reversing a common philosophical assumption: that throughout modern history philosophers have derived their ethics, from Hume to Kant to Bentham, based on their *understanding* of the world and existence. Rather, Hadot argues, “[e]thics—that is to say, choosing the good—is not the consequence of metaphysics, but metaphysics is the consequence of ethics” (Hadot *Philosophy* 283). What philosophers are tasked with, in discourse, is providing examples of the good, of choices we can make, and of the concrete exercises we can perform to live in accordance with it. These are the “spiritual exercises” and “techniques of the self” that animate both Hadot and Foucault’s respective projects; Hadot refers to this work as providing a *form of life*, a way of being in the world.

It is worth spending a little more time sketching Hadot’s own philosophy in order to situate—within his own work—the charge that Foucault espouses an “ethical model as an aesthetics of existence...[i]n other words, this may be a new form of Dandyism, late twentieth-century style” (Hadot *Philosophy as a Way* 211). As mentioned in the introduction, Hadot understood Foucault to be engaged in the same project of providing a form of life derived from ancient sources. As such, he was willing to forgive Foucault “giving short shrift to these [historical] aspects” of ancient thinkers, in terms of neglecting to focus on integral aspects of their philosophy that Foucault perceived as irrelevant his project (Hadot *Philosophy as a Way* 208). Much commentary on Hadot’s criticism of Foucault has tended toward a

broadside in this regard, charging him with an academic persnickiness about historical accuracy. While easier for Foucault defenders to dismiss Hadot on this reading, it is a patent oversimplification. Within his essay, Hadot makes two main historical critiques of Foucault: Seneca's discussion of pleasure includes a goal of transcending the self, and St Antony's spiritual exercise of "therapeutic writing" is not an exercise in self-constitution (Hadot *Philosophy as a Way* 209). The first is an allegation of suppression, the second of misinterpretation. It is this second claim, that of misinterpretation, that Hadot construes as an academic failure in Foucault's work. However, in contrast to the pervasive narrative, Hadot's main criticism is not a historical one, but rather an existential, moral disagreement.

What is this existential disagreement? Hadot's recognition of the surprising closeness of their methods, as demonstrated thus far, makes this exceedingly difficult to interpret. Both Foucault and Hadot are probing ancient philosophy for concrete techniques and exercises used to transform the self. Each is deeply concerned with the philosophical form of contemporary life and look to history for alternate ways of being. Furthermore, Hadot is seemingly just as dismissive as Foucault of the search for abstract "truths" in theoretical structures built around these philosophies:

The same spiritual exercise can, in fact, be justified by extremely diverse philosophical discourses. These latter are nothing but clumsy attempts, coming after the fact, to describe and justify inner experiences whose existential density is not, in the last analysis, susceptible of any attempt at theorization or systemization." (Hadot *Philosophy as a Way of Life* 212)

For Hadot these diverse discourses should be understood as spiritual exercises in and of themselves. He even goes as far as to say that, throughout his career, his “main preoccupation has been precisely to show that what was considered to be pure theory, abstraction, was practice in both its mode of exposition and its finality” (Hadot, *Present* 88). Neither Foucault nor Hadot are looking to these ancient philosophies for theoretical “truths” or systems, in order to reclaim some historical way of being that has grasped the correct, universal *form of life*.

Yet, there is at least one incontrovertible difference between the two. By overly focusing on the aesthetic, or stylized aspect of ancient forms of life, Foucault’s project—in Hadot’s reading—is denying precisely what is valuable in attempting to reclaim spiritual exercises. For Hadot, the inner existential or mystical nature of experiences brought upon by spiritual exercises is the material by which one is able to transform the self toward the Whole. While both theorist have sought to rehabilitate these spiritual techniques as part of conceiving of philosophy as a way of life, the difference is Hadot wants to promote the existential experience of mystical awareness—the perennial transformation—from these exercises, while Foucault has no concern for these matters. What Foucault is doing, according to Hadot, is accepting one half of the fundamental philosophical choice, while denying the other—accepting the need to transform the self, but rejecting the “toward universality” that Hadot endorses. This is all the more dramatic due to their near philosophical kinship; the weight of their disagreement, like bad blood between brothers, is only increased by the nearness of their perspectives.

Discussion in the literature, to this point, has focused on Hadot's explicit criticism of Foucault in *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, neglecting the rest of Hadot's publications. In a serendipitous development, I discovered during my research into Hadot's earlier texts that his criticism of Foucault's Dandyism has an antecedent, at least two decades prior, in his much lauded portrait of Plotinus, the enigmatic Neo-Platonist thinker. Following Plotinus, Hadot reads Foucault's decision to neglect the perennial, existential component of spiritual exercises as an expression that has historical antecedents, specifically in the myth of Narcissus. In Narcissus he sees a connection to the modern dandy—each focuses unduly on transforming the self by affecting change on the body *for the sake of the body*. As this paper will address, this criticism of Hadot does not do sufficient justice to Foucault's project; the “techniques of the self” that Foucault concerns himself with, while aesthetic, are by no means simply for the body—freedom from domination in power relations seems to be much more descriptive of Foucault's goal. As we shall see however, for Hadot, any aesthetically focused practice of asceticism neglects the fact that the goal of these spiritual exercises is to realize “the self” does not consist of the body, but the totality, that spiritual exercises are performed.

Luckily, Hadot does not need his defenders to imagine a response to Foucault's challenge. In his book *Plotinus, or The Simplicity of Vision*, Arnold Davidson, in the introduction, translates a significant passage of his much celebrated *le mythe de Narcisse et son interprétation par Plotin* involving Hadot's distinction between the aesthetic experience of the self as expressed in Narcissus and Ulysses. In the section, Hadot is responding to critics who equate the aesthetic appreciation of the transformation of the self that Narcissus undergoes

when he gets lost in his bodily reflection—neglecting his identity in the Whole—with that of Ulysses who successfully identifies himself with the Whole. They accuse Ulysses, seen as the exemplar by Hadot, as just as aesthetically “taking refuge in [him]self” as Narcissus (12). It is not difficult to imagine Foucault responding with a similar inversion of Hadot’s criticism. How, then, does Hadot respond? By explicitly rejecting the equivalence between the “self” and the physical body:

We have said that for him it is a question of provoking a reversal from the “narcissistic” tendency that makes the individual take an interest only in what he believes to be his self, this is, his own body. The essential point of this method therefore consists in making the soul discover that the “self” is other than the body. We have described above the stages of what one could call the flight of Ulysses...The exercise consists therefore in turning consciousness away from the attention to and exclusive concern with the body in order to return it inward. (Hadot, *Plotinus* 12)

Narcissus is unique, according to Hadot, within Greek mythology. There are many admonishments against one's reflection, but his is the only myth that involves love of one's reflection. The myth of Eutelidas, closest in type to that of Narcissus, differs in a single meaningful way—Eutelidas dies by his own evil eye, reflected back at him in the water. Narcissus is alone in dying from this love of self-reflection. In Hadot’s rendering of Plotinus’s interpretation of the myth, and its central problem of narcissism, we receive the clearest approximation of Hadot’s perspective I have found in any text. As such, it will be quoted at length:

In Plotin, individuality and totality are radically opposed, mutually denying each other; in becoming “someone,” one becomes non-All, one adds a negation to “All.” That continues until we eliminate this negation. If you reject all that is other than the All, that is, the nothingness of individuality, you are enlarged. If you reject this, the All will be present to you; “[b]y accessing [the All] at the level of the intellect, the human self has access to a universal vision, total, of reality, in which everything particular point of view must fade.” Can we talk about “me” at this level? This will only be possible if one means “me,” not as individuality entrenched in itself, but as the interiority of consciousness...which reaches universality through thinking about the Whole. So, there is no contentment, either [through the] aesthetic or erotic for the “me.” [*translation mine*] (Hadot, *Le Myth* 32)

Finally we have a clear understanding of their disagreement. As mentioned previously, Foucault is an anti-essentialist—there is no Whole to be discovered lurking in the self. Due to this, the historical “techniques of the self” he describes are focused on a conception of the self that is inherently embodied. This is a complete anathema to Hadot. Spiritual exercises cannot be appropriated as a method for transforming a self purely restricted to the body, because the exercises themselves are methods to achieving an existential experience that reveals this to be *false*. Foucault is disputing the mystical experience that is the entire point of the spiritual exercises, from which philosophies and religions are built. As such, for Hadot, Foucault must, like Narcissus and the Dandy, fall in love with the corporeal reflection of the self. These “techniques of the self” certainly are

transformative, but cannot be more than an aesthetic consideration. Therefore, these ascetic efforts are nothing more than new strokes on a canvas or the fresh shaping of the clay mold. How could we accept Foucault's insistence that we accept the concrete, individuality of the physical self, when we experience, for Hadot, "the psychic content of these exercises...the feeling of belonging to a whole is an essential element: belonging, that is, both to the whole constituted by the human community, and to that constituted by the cosmic whole" (Hadot *Philosophy as a Way* 208).

Hadot, in his criticism of Foucault as espousing a twentieth century Dandyism, is making a far deeper claim than he may at first appear: Foucault and Baudelaire have fallen for the trap that the myth of Narcissus is supposed to demonstrate. Their focus on the individual, embodied self—the "relating of the self to the self"—is the same deadly mistake Narcissus makes obsessing over his reflection. While Foucault can appropriate these spiritual exercises for his project, Hadot seems to be glibly advising he stick with his fellow Narcissists and leave the ancient Stoics and Epicureans, whose perennial baggage he tries to forcefully eject, to those seriously pursuing a contemporary model of life that addresses the necessary mysticism of human experience.

SOMAESTHETICS, PRAGMATISM, & RECONCILIATION

It should be apparent, at this point, that the consensus opinion in the literature often mischaracterizes the nature of Foucault and Hadot's disagreement. James Miller, for example, in one of the more cited essays on this issue, argues that "Pierre Hadot has shown, [that] Foucault leaves a good deal out. For example, he tends to ignore the stress in Stoicism

on developing a consciousness of the self as a fragment of nature, participating in an ability to reason that is universal” (Miller 878). Yet, it is clear that Foucault did so not due to a lack of competence with the subject matter, but rather due to a difference in the goal of his philosophical project. While Foucault can rightfully be admonished for historical mischaracterization of Greek and Stoic thought, it is far from clear that criticism of his deliberate choice to de-emphasize their universalizing *telos* is warranted. It has been the work of my paper thus far to demonstrate that there is a substantive, gnawing disagreement between Foucault and Hadot, one that speaks directly to our current historical moment; only now, after this genealogy has been completed, can a more thorough appraisal be made of the merits, biases, and political ramifications of their projects.

Beginning with Foucault, we must first address that for all of Foucault’s current and historical association with supporting marginalized groups—he does embrace a sort of elitist Dandyism in regards to just what sort of “aesthetic model of life” his *techniques of the self* desire to affect. This affinity with the anti-*petit bourgeois*, can be traced back through the history of Dandyism to its creation as a social movement in opposition to the mundane, non-divine middle classes. Foucault, in stressing “subversion and experiments with hard drugs, sexual sadomasochism, and other physical techniques,” fundamentally commits himself to modern Dandyism (Abrams 187). He differs from Baudelaire, in that his goal is not exclusivity in itself, but creating a new form of life in order to affect political and societal change. His asceticism is reactionary not due to the need for distinguishment but for the need for disruption; in order to disrupt the mechanisms of disciplinary power, bio-power, and governmentality, we must create a form of life that dramatically acts upon itself to

dislodge, as much as possible, the pernicious forces that normally determine the form of life that the masses take:

Such an artist is not content with self-stylization; he “tries to invent himself”; to “create a new way of life,” “something radically Other.” (FR 42) “What must be produced,” Foucault urges, “is something that doesn’t yet exist and about which we cannot know how and what it will be...It’s...the creation of something entirely different, a total innovation.” (Shusterman, *Practicing* 27)

Foucault does not dismiss the utility of his new non-code based ethics for the *petit bourgeois*. He does, however, not consider this to be the primary goal of his ethical project. The Foucauldian dandies, in their inconceivable originality, will usher in a new form of life that will not be content to avoid the political and social spaces that Baudelairean dandies shunned. In doing so, society, politics, and power relations themselves may change to the point that each person can find themselves a part of the Dandyist project of creative, original self-fashioning.

Regarding Hadot, it is clear that his dramatic rejection of the body neglects some relevant, critical aspects of asceticism, both in Antiquity and in terms of its utility for the present. It is here that I will introduce Richard Shusterman, who wonderfully manages to critique both Hadot and Foucault for their respective dogmatism. In terms of Hadot, by adopting a pragmatist approach Shusterman attempts to demonstrate that he is neglecting an emphasis on the bodily aspect of spiritual exercises that he too quickly derides as purely aesthetic and narcissistic. Hadot, for Shusterman, is mistaken to pass over the physical, bodily aspects that these spiritual exercises involve. In fact, for Shusterman cultivation of the

body is absolutely necessary to experiencing the existential experience that Hadot venerates. The ascetic and aesthetic, the pleasurable and profound can coexist, and must necessarily coexist, to even entertain the notion of spiritual life:

The higher *somaesthetic* forms [Yoga and Zen for ex.] therefore make pleasure the essential byproduct of an ascetic yet aesthetic quest for something better than one's current self, a quest pursued by mastering one's body and refining it into a vessel of experienced beauty so that it may be surrendered to still higher powers and joys potentially within us. (Shusterman, *Somaesthetics* 546)

Several components of this argument are relevant to Hadot's project and deserve consideration. First, spiritual exercises, according to Shusterman, belong to a "*somaesthetic* form," that must meaningfully correlate to the "form of life" they exhibit. Just like Zen and Yoga have their *somaesthetic* forms—postures, breathing techniques, garments, and mannerisms—so did the Epicureans and Stoics—wardrobes, dietetics, interpersonal greetings. These "higher forms," are integral to practicing these spiritual exercises effectively. Once mastered, the body can then hold "experienced beauty," the aesthetic reaction to the "existential density" of the experiences rendered by the spiritual exercises.

Shusterman further integrates these *somaesthetic* forms by arguing that the rapturous mystical experience, "as in the Sufi mystic Al-Ghazali's formula of 'transport, ecstasy, and the transformation of the self,'" *requires* a sort of rigorous physical training to endure their intensity. Practice in things such as breathing and posture "not only prepare and structure ecstatic experience but they provide a controlled field where...that soaring self-surrender can fall back on a safety net of disciplined self-mastery in preparation for a further leap"

(Shusterman 545). The experiential aspect of these spiritual exercises, be it “the view from above,” or vigorous writing regiments, requires somaesthetic forms to transform the body to be prepared for transformations of the self.

Hadot, however, seems entirely dismissive of these bodily aspects of the ascetic experience. In one of the more critically useful citations I found in my research, we have Hadot’s only reference, be it in conversation or writing, to the sort of spiritual exercises that Shusterman references:

An initial hint about the answer can be found in one of Hadot’s footnotes, in which he explains why he would not discuss the theories attempting to connect spiritual exercises with the “[...] magico-religious/shamanistic traditions of respiratory techniques and mnemonic exercises” (1995, 116)...he does not engage in the possible discussion [sic] because the spiritual exercises he is interested in “[...] are mental processes which have nothing in common with cataleptic trances, but, on the contrary, respond to *a rigorous demand for rational control*” (1995, 116; italics mine). (Banicki 622)

I find this passage quite disappointing. As an admirer of Hadot’s own “rigorous demand for rational control,” it disturbs me that he is so dismissive of—what is so integral to most Eastern mystical traditions—the integration of ascetic bodily training to achieving mystical experience and access to his sought-after unity with “the Whole.” The invocation of “cataleptic trances” as somehow equivalent to the spiritual raptures that mystics from far-ranging traditions, both Western and Eastern, undergo, is indicative of an unfortunate critical attitude among even the most open-minded of philosophy academics. In this

regard—though I profess no personal opinion on mysticism—I think Hadot has unnecessarily restricted the scope of his project and actually ignored the potentially necessary ascetic practices in order to attain wider mystical experience of perennial “Whole.”

Furthermore, Shusterman provides reason to question Hadot’s fierce criticism of bodily focus as necessarily narcissistic;

[t]he philosophical life of self-cultivation and self-perfection is sometimes criticized as an isolating narcissism...[w]e can best work on the wider social and natural world only by mastering our primary instrument of action, which is our self. (Shusterman, *Pragmatism* 28)

Having attained Hadot’s desired state, through the rigors of rational practice and cultivation, would we even be in the proper *physical* state to act upon our newly realized unity with “the Whole?” Is not this realization, in and of itself, selfish if not accompanied by action? Hadot himself seems to imply as much when he said in conversation that “[i]t is true that one could think that in order to take care of others one must first transform oneself: but this self-transformation consists precisely in being attentive to others” (Hadot, *Present* 108). It appears to me, as massively under read in comparison to Hadot as I may be, that no Stoic would endorse a notion of self-transformation that simply consists in each person recognizing their membership in “the Whole” or “Logos.” This requires further action, be it social or personal, which requires our bodies, our instruments, to affect change in the world that we now found ourselves transformed with. Here too, I find Hadot wanting.

I think Shusterman’s position is eminently compatible with Hadot’s understanding; in trying to universalize the perennialism underlying ancient wisdom, Hadot neglects the

unique historical bodies that instantiated the quest. While Zen, Yoga, Stoicism, and Epicureanism may each systematize and theorize out from mystic experience in different ways, the transformation of the self is the same in each—the body conforms to a higher *somaesthetic* form to practice the universal spiritual exercises that then transform the “self” from embodied individuality to identifying with the Whole. Each tradition’s *somaesthetic* form is novel, and necessary.

Shusterman is in line with Hadot about both perennialism and the nature of spiritual exercise in bringing about mystical experience. However, Shusterman is less willing than Hadot—who ironically spent his career detailing the minutiae of ancient philosopher’s forms of life—to dismiss the multitudes of historic *somaesthetic* forms as extraneous. Certainly, for the project of creating a contemporary model of life one must often shear the ancient theoretical and *somaesthetic* forms accompanying the spiritual exercises, but one must not forget the necessity of them.

Following Shusterman’s work in *somaesthetics*, I think Hadot and Foucault’s projects are not mutually exclusive, but actually compliment each other. To do so, one need only embrace the pragmatist critique of aesthetic-ascetic dualism:

I think people have overemphasized the repressive denial in askesis and forgotten the positive aspects. The other mistake people make is in contrasting the aesthetic and the ascetic. Pierre Hadot does that. He criticizes Foucault for talking about the philosophical life as aesthetic—Hadot says no, it’s an ascetic, disciplined life. But in my point of view there’s no inherent contradiction at all. Confucius makes that pretty clear in the Analects. He

praises his favourite student, Yan Hui, for being able to derive pleasure from the most humble things that his conditions of material hardship provided him. And when you go back to the American idea of the “simple life” in Thoreau, you find a similar celebration of the basic pleasures and beauty of plain living. (Rector and John 2)

Hadot need not worry about the strict delineation of the body and aesthetics from asceticism as they are indispensable from it; “[a] wiser pragmatism regards the aesthetic/ascetic opposition as a false dichotomy, since even the simple, ascetic life involves a creative regime of self-stylization and affords its own enjoyment and beauty” (Shusterman, *Pragmatism* 31). Hadot, again, needlessly cloisters his asceticism away from its transformative, aesthetic value in daily life. In doing so, he is neglecting a great tradition of wisdom—as indicated by Shusterman’s allusions.

It is for an almost mirroring of this reason that Shusterman derided Foucault’s project. For Shusterman, the “puerile *somaesthetics*” that he charges Foucault with subscribing to, is just as unnecessarily exclusionary as Hadot’s rational asceticism. In the light of this, Shusterman thinks one can forgive Hadot for failing to recognize “aestheticism means...the earnest sort of deep spiritual transformation we expect of the ethical ideal of self-care,” when Foucault’s *somaesthetics* is dominated by “his excessive concentration on the sensationalist pleasures of drugs and sex, and by his choice of the Baudelairian [d]andy to embody his *somaesthetic* ideal” (Shusterman, *Somaesthetics* 557). This is not to say that Shusterman is severe Foucault critic, or even inherently disapproves Foucault’s fixation with S&M. Rather, it is the claim that Foucault, in a distinctly non-Foucauldian fashion, is

privileging his pleasure preferences as superior, while suppressing those he deems “those middle-range pleasures that make up everyday life’ (dismissively denoted by the American ‘club sandwich,’ ‘coke,’ and ‘ice cream’ or a ‘glass of wine’)” (Shusterman, *Somaesthetics* 541). While it is apparent that Foucault understood these “middle-range pleasures,” as monopolizing our concept of pleasure in the same way normative sex does, it does not necessarily mean that the response is to singularly advocate limit-experiences such as drug use and near-death experiences. By doing so Foucault “reduces our range of pleasures, thus confounding his explicit aim of rendering us infinitely more susceptible to pleasure through multiple modalities” (Shusterman, *Somaesthetics* 541).

Where does this leave Foucault’s project? Shusterman, in considering this disagreement between Foucault and Hadot in light of *somaesthetics*, has focused on emphasizing the necessity of aesthetics for the transformative ascetic practices Hadot is concerned with, while also challenging Foucault’s aesthetic privileging of extreme, radical, or subversive practices. Yet, this reconciliation, as explicated thus far, leaves out the consequences of *somaesthetics* for the intended goal of Foucault’s ethical project: “[to] allow us to play these games of power with as little domination as possible” (Foucault, *Ethics* 298). Shusterman, in his pragmatic disapproval of Foucault’s “puerile *somaesthetics*,” neglects to examine whether it is exactly this puerility that Foucault considered necessary to create the new stylized forms of life that would help with “the political struggle for respect of rights, of critical thought against abusive techniques of government and research in ethics that seeks to ground individual freedom” (Foucault, *Ethics* 299). It seems clear that Foucault was impressed by the practices of freedom expressed in the socially marginal spaces he

encountered in San Francisco and Berkeley toward the end of his life. Can Shusterman's *somaesthetic* ascetic practices, incorporated into everyday life—not the limit-experience, revolutionary moments that Foucault emphasized—still accomplish Foucault's goals?

In contrast to Foucault, I think that Shusterman's pragmatic *somaesthetic* theory is substantially more prepared to instantiate the sort of society-wide freedom in power relations he desired. First, it is necessary to remember that Foucault's modern ethical model is the dandy—the reactive, anti-*petite bourgeoisie* artist who made of his whole being an artwork. When Foucault acknowledges Baudelaire considered that “ascetic elaboration of the self...can only be produced in another, a different place, which Baudelaire calls art,” Foucault reveals his hand; though Foucault desires the dandy to maintain his radical originality and individualism, he rejects their social isolationism (Foucault, *What Is* 40). In order to affect the potential social change Foucault saw in the dandy, the Dandyist “elaboration of the self,” must extend throughout society—not just in the rarified, elitist world of art. In contemporary society, Foucault found compelling evidence for the potential of this in the revolutionary practices of sexual and drug-related pleasure in various marginal communities in the Bay Area. Here, individuals were engaged in aesthetic-ascetic practices of freedom, developing new forms of life that had the potential to subvert the sort of domination present in mainstream practices of sexual pleasure. Though artistry could be considered a component of their practices, these were social practices removed from the exclusivity of the art world; in essence these were non-artists who, due to their marginalized pleasure preferences, were fashioning original transformative aesthetic practices of the self just as Dandy did centuries earlier. These spaces were ethical without being juridical, that

experimented with power relations without falling into immobile dominance, and did not require some universalizing, codified system in order to function. In short, Foucault found them to be microcosms instantiating *The Ethics of The Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom*.

For all this, however, Foucault is still beholden to the exclusivity—or reactivity—of Dandyism. Though these spaces may have instantiated the sort of power dynamics he envisioned, it is clear that, though they have expanded in terms of number of participants since Foucault's time, they are not sufficient to affect the society-wide change he desired. It is here that the sort of pragmatism embraced by Shusterman becomes critical. If the goal of Foucault's project is a non-universal conception of ethics, the creation of new forms of life, and the aestheticization of the ascetic practices that the self uses to transform the self, he must appreciate that these shall resolve themselves in entirely different ways depending on, not just one's historical circumstances, but one's economic, geographic, and cultural surroundings. Pragmatism, as a philosophical attitude, is more than aware of this—it is in many respects the fundamental assumption of its outlook:

[L]ife cannot be isolated from the environmental conditions in which it is lived and from which it draws energies and occasions for action. Different conditions provide very different tools and possibilities for making one's life into an attractive, fulfilling project, and pragmatism is a philosophy that is very appreciative of changing contexts and the need to adapt one's thinking and behavior according to context. (Shusterman, *Pragmatism* 32)

The pragmatism expressed in *somaesthetics* allows for an embrace of a pluralism of ascetic practices, styles, and *telos*—be they Foucauldian limit experiences, Shustermanian model

parents, Zen Masters, or Perennialist Stoics. Under this pragmatism, I could just as radically transform myself by engaging in the ascetic-aesthetic practices of vigorous jazz improvisation or quiet attentiveness to the sensations of chopping vegetables for dinner as contemplating cosmic physics or navigating an underground S&M club. Furthermore, I could embrace a different *telos* for my ascetic practices based on responding to the existential density of my experiences, the desire for novel pleasure relations, or whatever else motivates me to attempt to constitute myself differently—I, for example, have recently had a strong desire to engage in “techniques of the self” that would make me more sensitive and attentive to the minutiae of the nature world. Instead of seeing Foucault and Hadot as incompatible theorists, one of which must be right or wrong, a pragmatist can appreciate them as advocating for two distinct paths amongst an infinite plurality of possible and uncreated choices. By doing so, we actually acknowledge Foucault's fear of a codified, universal morality without embracing the reactive, elitist bent that was traced back to his embrace of the Dandy.

In summation, I think Richard Shusterman's pragmatic approach can salvage two equally viable—and dare I say compatible—approaches to Hadot's fundamental philosophical question. Foucault can deny the necessity of the mystical to spiritual exercises while also expanding his somaesthetics to embrace a wide economy of pleasures. While Hadot certainly would not agree with his overall project, I think it would make the charge that Foucault is simply expressing a modern form of Narcissism less potent. The aesthetic appreciation of experience and the cultivation of pleasure as argued by Shusterman is transformative on a level that is, if not spiritual, at least meaningful in a way that the Dandy's self-transformation is not. Finally, Hadot has much to gain from this improved Foucauldian

project. It corrects his overweening perennialism that neglected the culturally and historically unique somaesthetic enactments of spiritual exercises. While it is not necessary to reappropriate the unique somaesthetic practices when extracting spiritual exercises for contemporary use, one must be aware that the contemporary use will generate its own unique somaesthetic practices. Perhaps, in this generation that has all too willingly adopted Hadot's appropriation of ancient spiritual exercises, it would do well to examine the higher somaesthetic that helped transform them from mere "productivity hacking" to "mystical, existential experiences." If not, I am sure Foucault will direct them in how to cultivate the self through orgiastic LSD parties when their experience of Yoga at the local mall fails to be transformative. For me, however, I think that Richard Shusterman got about as close as you can to encapsulating the right attitude:

My idea of askesis is the reminder that one doesn't need to be a genius of infinity to lead an aesthetic life; you can do it by being a good Dad, a good member of the community, a good teacher. And the beautiful harmonies you embody can be rewarding to yourself and also appreciated, even posthumously remembered by others. This is what Kundera calls "minor immortality." In my view, there's nothing wrong with that. We don't need to be godly in our perfectionism to have lived a good life. (Rector and John 7)

Foucault and Hadot both sketch exciting and enriching models of life that many will find enticing. For the rest of society, Shusterman provides a pragmatic model that—while appreciating a plurality of rigorous, exacting, or radical practices—allows for aesthetic-ascetic practices that are immediately available in everyday life while appreciating the diversity of

environmental conditions human life springs from and thrives in. Regardless of who we emulate, what *telos* we choose, or what aesthetic-ascetic exercises we engage in, we will be exhibiting a concern of the self that should “allow us to play these games of power with as little domination as possible” (Foucault, *Ethics* 298).

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