

## OPSOMMING

<b>Titel van die verhandeling:</b>	<b>Politiek, etiek en transgressie. 'n Kritiese ondersoek na die werk van Michel Foucault.</b>
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In sy argeologieë van kennis, genealogieë van mag en etiek, en sy latere problematiserings van die eties-politieke poog Foucault om die verhouding tussen die "Self" en die "Ander" te beskryf, asook die limiet waar die twee in wisselwerking tree. Hy kom tot die gevolgtrekking dat konstruktiewe en bevrydende verandering teweeggebring kan word deur transgressie te pleeg jeens die limiete wat die Self afsluit van die Ander. In die algemeen kan die Self beskryf word as dit wat bekend of gebruiklik is, en die Ander as die onherleibare vreemde wat die limiete van die bekende definieer. Die verhouding tussen die Self en die Ander is van uiterste belang aangesien identiteit of bewussyn, hetsy individueel of sosiaal (kollektief), nie kan toetree tot die Werklike deur sy eie interne ontwikkeling nie, maar slegs deur die daadwerklike ontdekking van dit wat *anders as sigself* is.

Foucault se werk kan dus verstaan word as 'n eksperiment op die grense van ons gemoderniseerde normaliteit, as 'n poging om transgressie teen laasgenoemde te pleeg. Die motief kan gevind word in die besondere etiese impuls van 'n verruiming van die Self: transgressie om ruimte te maak vir die ander, vir diegene wat uitgesluit en verontreg word deur die heersende strukture van normaliteit. Ons politieke taak as die analise van magsrelasies en as die stryd teen mag vind dus plaas uit hoofde van 'n etiese gevoeligheid teenoor andersheid wat na aanleiding van die logosentriese Westerse metafisika gemarginaliseer is. Transgressie is dus die bevestiging van verskil, 'n bevestiging wat die andersheid van verskil bekragtig sonder om dit te verskraal of na die gelykenis van die Self te omskep.

Die politiek, implisiet aan sy argeologiese analises en eksplisiet aan sy genealogiese analises verwys na die moontlikhede vir handeling: wat ons kan doen om transgressie te pleeg jeens die limiete blootgelê deur sy historiografiese ondersoeke. Foucault kom tot die gevolgtrekking dat 'n konfrontasie met die Ander 'n voorwaarde is vir die moontlikheid van menslike vryheid. Die vryheid wat Foucault voorstaan is nie 'n bevryding of transending van alle beperkinge nie wat 'n onuithoubare ligte bestaan tot gevolg sou hê, maar 'n verruiming van die limiete wat ons

individuele en gemeenskaplike bestaan vorm gee; teen dit wat ons bestaan onuithoubaar swaar maak.

*Politics, ethics and transgression: A critical inquiry into the work of Michel Foucault*

Teen die einde van sy lewe het Foucault sy ware belangstelling beskryf as "politiek as etiek". Sy latere werke was gerig op die bevordering van nuwe vorme van subjektiwiteit wat beliggaam is in die tegnologieë van die self asook die sorg vir die self wat 'n kreatiewe, etiese ingesteldheid veronderstel. Hy verruil egter nie die politieke gemoeidheid wat sy genealogieë van mag gerugsteun het, vir 'n etiese gevoeligheid nie. Sy etiese wending is eerder 'n skakeling tussen teorie en praktyk is. Denke en handeling word verbind in 'n etiese sin, maar op só 'n manier dat dit verreikende politieke resultate tot gevolg het. Hierdie interpretasie druis in teen besware wat deur talle kritici teen Foucault geopper word, naamlik dat hy hom skuldig maak aan 'n etiese ongevoeligheid en sinisme, en dat sy analyses van mag in moderne samelewings polities gevolgloos of oneffektief is, en wel omdat sy analyses sou uitloop op 'n opskorting van 'n normatiewe raamwerk in terme waarvan bestaande magspraktyke gekritiseer kan word. Ek poog om aan te toon dat hierdie kritiek op 'n misvatting berus, onder meer omdat dit uitgaan van 'n konvensioneel "moralistiese" vooroordeel waarteen Foucault (soos vroeër ook Nietzsche) hom juis verset. Hierdie vooroordeel maak dit onmoontlik om die eiesoortige etiese impuls wat onderliggend is aan Foucault se werk na behore raak te sien en te waardeer.

Sleutelterme: politiek; etiek; transgressie; Self; Ander; estetiek van die bestaan; sorg vir die self; argeologie; genealogie; mag/kennis-binding; denke van die limiet

Foucault's work can thus be interpreted as an experiment on the limits of our modernized normality, as an effort to transgress these limits. What motivates Foucault's transgressive, Other-directed praxis is not simply an excessive sense of the nihilistic void, rather the particular ethical drive of creating a space for the Other, while at the same time exceeding the limits of the Self. Transgression is an affirmation of difference, an affirmation which confirms it openly of the different, without denial or recapitulation. For Foucault, transgression is not an end in itself, a cancellation of ethics, as it is a confirmation of the ethical. It is aimed at exposing the covered problem of evil lodged in the thoughtlessness of aggressive conventionalism, the transcendentalization of contingent identities, and the treatment of goodness as a quality wedded into the intrinsic order of things. It aims to expose the tyranny of the limit, which lies in its abstraction from particularity in terms of identity and sameness. Our political task, as the analysis of power relations and the struggle against power, is anchored in this ethical versatility: a sympathy towards that which is marginalized and excluded by the hegemonic Western metaphysical tradition.

## SUMMARY

<b>Title of the dissertation:</b>	<b>Politics, ethics and transgression. A critical inquiry into the work of Michel Foucault.</b>
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Foucault's archaeologies of knowledge, genealogies of power and ethics, as well as his later problematizations of the ethical-political can be seen as attempts to define the relation between the "Same" and the "Other", and to provide a concrete description of the limit where they interact. He comes to the conclusion that constructive and liberating change can be brought about by the transgression of the limits that separate the Same and the Other. In general, the Same could be defined as that which is known, familiar or ordered, and the Other as that mysterious unexplained "something" that lies outside and defines the limits of the known, that which is exterior and foreign. The relationship between the Same and the Other is of particular significance because identity or consciousness, whether it is individual or social, cannot accede to the Real through its own internal development but only by the radical discovery of what is *other than itself*.

Foucault's work can thus be interpreted as an experiment on the limits of our modernized normality, as an effort to transgress these limits. What motivates Foucault's transgressive, Other-directed philosophising is not simply an excessive sense of the aesthetical, but rather the particular ethical drive of creating a space for the Other, while at the same time expanding the limits of the Self. Transgression is an affirmation of *difference*, an affirmation which confirms the *alterity* of the different, without denial or recapitulation. As such, transgression is not so much the cancellation of ethics, as it is a *confirmation* of the ethical. It is aimed at exposing the covert problem of evil lodged in the thoughtlessness of aggressive conventionality, the transcendentalization of contingent identities, and the treatment of good/evil as a duality wired into the intrinsic order of things. It aims to expose the tyranny of the limit, which lies in its abstraction from particularity in terms of identity and sameness. Our political task, as the analysis of power relations and the struggle against power, is anchored in this ethical sensibility, a sympathy towards that which is marginalized and excluded by the logocentric Western metaphysical tradition.

The politics which is implicit in his archaeological analysis and which becomes more explicit in his genealogies, refers to the possibilities for action: how can the limits exposed by his historiographical research be transgressed? Foucault concludes that a confrontation with the Other is a necessary condition for the possibility of emancipation. Foucault's conception of freedom does not entail the liberation from or transcendence of all limits. This would amount to an unbearable lightness of existence. Freedom rather entails work on the limits that shape out individual and collective existence. It amounts to the expansion of the limits, the lifting of the heaviest of burdens that crushes us and pins us to the ground.

Towards the end of his life, Foucault described his true interest as "politics as ethics". His later works were aimed at the promotion of new forms of subjectivity, embodied in technologies of the self, as well as the care of the self. This creative, ethical sensibility is not, however, a substitute for the political concern which characterizes his genealogies of power. Rather, his ethical turn is a link between theory and practice, because ethics, for Foucault, is a practice; ethos is a manner of being. Thought and action are linked in an ethical sense, in such a way so as to result in far-reaching political consequences. This interpretation goes against an increasingly common criticism of Foucault: that of an ethical insensibility and cynicism and the inability to provide a politically engaged critique of modern forms of power, since his analysis has as one of its consequences a suspension of a normative framework for criticizing exercises of power. I endeavour to show that these objections are misplaced, since they rely on a moralistic bias that implicitly gives priority to the idea of fundamental order governing cultural formations. Foucault (as Nietzsche before him) challenges established morality in pursuit of a higher ethical sensibility.

Key terms: politics; ethics; transgression; Self; Other; aesthetics of existence; care of the self; archaeology; genealogy; power/knowledge-nexus; thought of the limit.