

## The governmentality of teaching and learning: acquiescence or resistance?

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### Abstract

This article critiques the ethics of teaching and learning (T&L) practices in the university. It argues they consummate contemporary regimes of government through the backdoor of the classroom. To this end, the university is first depicted as an organisation opened up by the imperatives of advanced liberalism. The article then examines Henry Giroux's critical pedagogy, which links the cultivation of critical citizens to a democratic polity. However, Giroux's proposal for student emancipation through juxtaposing knowledge with power is rejected in favour of a Foucauldian framework of governmentality. It understands the teaching and learning regimes (TLRs) of active learning as a solution to the imperatives of the conduct of conduct incited by advanced liberal government, which traditional T&L practices of passive learning are unable to satisfy. The innocuousness of these changes in student conduct is subsequently interpreted in terms of its ethical import. Following Michel Foucault's demarcation of ethics from morality, four elements of ethics are discerned and mapped onto TLRs: the ethical substance, or *what* to act on (mind); the ethical work, or *how* to act upon (individualisation); the mode of subjectification, or *who* must act (autonomous learners); and the ethical conduct, or *why* we must act (self-entrepreneurial subjects). Finally, the article suggests the academic's purgatory between their former identity as a teacher and their current role as an instructor can be resolved in the classroom itself through an agonistic ethical relation to the student, which is simultaneously a form of resistance of TLRs.

**Keywords:** critical pedagogy, governmentality, ethics of teaching and learning, advanced liberalism, Michel Foucault, global university.

### Introduction

The 'enfant terrible' of contemporary German philosophy (Delattre, 1999), Peter Sloterdijk (2013: 3), encourages those of us enthralled by thought to reorient our gaze from the ideal to the real; his rationale is that reason unfolds in time, such that 'philosophy is its place comprehended in thoughts'. One area yet to be grasped by thought is the ontological stage on which the play of teaching and learning (T&L) is performed. Such an endeavour falls within a broader remit of understanding the link between what David Harvey (2000: 15) calls 'body talk' and 'globalisation talk', which exist at mutually exclusive ends of the scalar spectrum. Mindful, too, of Zygmunt Bauman's (2002: 17) point that macro discourses impinge ethically

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upon our micro lives, the task in the vocabulary of educators is to critique the ethical import of teaching and learning (T&L) practices inside the classroom, as well as their relationship to the world outside that harbours them.

To this end, I would like to posit that the university provides the bridge between the ethical (body) and political (global) levels that Harvey highlights. Although an unremarkable supposition, it can be qualified by reducing the world beyond the classroom to advanced liberal societies, where we are born, live and die in an organisation of one shape or another (Etzioni, 1967: 1).<sup>1</sup> On this understanding, it is plausible to imagine those elite research entities, which assume organisational form as global universities (henceforth, the ‘university’), as the bridge that links the content of the ethical to the context of the political.<sup>2</sup> More tellingly, I would like to claim that the university inadvertently provides the platform through which the global governs the individual, which requires a further qualification about the mode of the organisation in mind here. Indeed, ever since Max Weber (1947: 338) introduced bureaucracy into the temporality of thought as the ‘exercise of control on the basis of knowledge’, the organisation has assumed many guises.<sup>3</sup> Suffice to say that the conception has shifted from that of a functional machine within fixed boundaries, which deploys control to direct the behaviour of subjects, to that of a substantive network. The latter shape of the organisation is characterised by porous frontiers that foster a productive power. It draws its vitality from the external environment and governs the processes in which agents act. In short, contemporary ‘open systems’ approaches assume an ontology of becoming rather than being, which makes these organisations a bundle of ‘interdependent flows and activities linking shifting coalitions of participants’ (Scott and Davis, 2007: 30) that are ‘inseparable from the transactional contexts’ in which they are embedded (Emirbayer, 1997: 287).

The open systems view of the organisation provides a useful framework to conceive of the university today as a scaffold of the micro and macro that offers a window onto the ethics of T&L. For a start, there is the extra-organisational context of the global whirlpool of power, knowledge and ethics, which Michel Foucault convinces us to think of as governmentality. Similarly, recent changes and reforms in higher education are indicative of how the university has been cajoled to embrace the transactional contexts of advanced liberalism. As an open organisation, the university encounters a landscape where research is instrumental and funded by the private sector, while cut backs in public funds are typically offset against student fees. Likewise, students shop around in their choice of university; in

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<sup>1</sup> I borrow Mitchell Dean’s (2010: 10-11) idea of advanced liberalism as an ‘assemblage of rationalities, technologies, and agencies’, hence regimes of government (in contrast to neoliberalism as a ‘range of programmatic rationalities of government’, which implies the application of political principles).

<sup>2</sup> A definition of ‘elite’ university is far from obvious. This is especially true concerning T&L, which itself is so difficult to quantify and compare that research becomes the de facto standard (Liu and Cheng, 2005: 133); indeed, most rankings ignore ‘teaching and do not look at all at how students are affected by their academic experience’ (Altbach, 2015: 3). Notwithstanding, some ‘elite’ characteristics include: research excellence; both public and private sources of funding; independent and explicit governance structures; high quality academic, administrative and extra-curricular facilities; highly qualified faculty; high achieving and international students; academic freedom; and, to the extent it can be factored in, quality in T&L (Altbach, 2004; Niland, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> According to William Starbuck (2005: 150-155), reflection upon the organisation dates back millennia, but thinking about the modern organisation as a power/knowledge nexus is coextensive with social changes in the mid-nineteenth century wrought by the expansion of education, occupational specialisation, the division of labour and technological innovation.

turn, the university reciprocates by marketing its prestige value as a brand to seduce the best clients (EUPRIO, 2016). Teaching thus gives way to learning as the academic ceases to be a scholarly ‘sage-on-the-stage’ teacher and assumes the role of the networking ‘guide-on-the-side’ instructor.<sup>4</sup> Many of these transformations are seen as necessary, especially in relation to global university rankings, yet one view of the purpose of critique is to excavate the contingent moments in the putatively necessary. Numerous critics, for example, focus either on the meddling by governments in university administration, or the influence of economic interests on university autonomy. Few, however, have investigated the ethical makeover of student subjectivity in the ivory tower that is fostered by advanced liberalism, which is all the more surprising given ‘*organisations are tools for shaping the world as one wishes it to be shaped*’ (Perrow, 2007: 30; italics in the original). If this begs the question of how we should conceive of the process that produces students and upholds their freedom at the same time, the aim here is to outline an ethical framework that does so, as well as takes heed of its link to the world beyond the university.

After Slavoj Žižek’s (2008: 8) injunction to mimic Lenin and occasionally withdraw from the fray in order to ‘learn, learn, learn’, we take a step back and inquire into the ethical connotations of contemporary *skholē* practices in which one is typically free from responsibility yet obliged to study (Blackshaw, 2009). Following Paul Trowler and Ali Cooper (2002), who portray T&L practices as ‘teaching and learning regimes’ (TLRs), we deploy a Foucauldian framework to understand TLRs as indicative of the ethical injunctions of advanced liberalism.<sup>5</sup> These are executed through a set of techniques that transform the student into a certain type of person, viz., what André Gorz (2010) terms a ‘self-entrepreneurial’ subject. My rationale is that TLRs not only foster a radically individualised mode of subjectivity, but a sense of achievement that is taken to be autopoietic. This reinforces the cartography of advanced liberalism’s regimes of government, or a landscape of agents as autonomous islands that are connected by virtual nets that work on a discrete, instrumental logic, which makes them extremely governable. Finally, insofar as the academic’s former role as a teacher has yet to be properly redefined other than by the stopgap facilitator role of the instructor, I conclude by suggesting that their current identity crisis can be resolved by reiterating their historic duty to uphold the Humboldtian idea of the university as a space for thought to roam free and a training ground of students as critical agents. Such a mission is inscribed in a wider resistance of advanced liberalism, which is less of an

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<sup>4</sup> I draw on – and take the liberty of amalgamating – the work of Mary Deane Sorcinelli et al. (2006), who chart a recent five-stage evolution of the academic. They earmark stage one as the age of the scholar (1950s-1960s) and stage two as that of the teacher (1960s-1970s). The next decade (1980s) was the age of the developer, who in turn gave way to the fourth stage’s learner (1990s). Finally, Sorcinelli et al. speak of the current age of the networker. It involved a paradigm shift away from the scholar-teacher ‘sage-on-the-stage’ to the network-instructor ‘guide-on-the-side’.

<sup>5</sup> By TLRs Trowler and Cooper seek to move beyond the cognitive, epistemological and reflective approaches to teaching and learning (T&L). The first leaves T&L in the hands of the individual academic; the epistemological approach assumes T&L is dependent on academic discipline; and the third approach is faculty oriented. In contrast, the TLRs approach is more holistic. For Trowler and Cooper (2002: 227-228), the ‘regime’ of T&L captures the ‘social relations and recurrent practices, the technologies that instantiate them...and the...values and attitudes that underpin them... TLRs condition...curriculum content and sequence, teaching methods and assessment tasks...[and] comprise a constellation of usually mutually-supporting components[, viz.:]...identities in interaction; power relations; codes of signification; tacit assumptions; rules of appropriateness;...[and] implicit theories of learning and of teaching’.

emancipatory act of overcoming than an ethics of becoming through care, for as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1999: 110) reminds us, ‘we cannot not want’ (or at least not as yet imagine not wanting) liberalism and its hybrids.

### **Advanced liberal times**

It is perhaps not entirely coincidental that the shift from the age of the sage-on-the-stage teacher to the present era of the guide-on-the-side instructor – or perhaps more accurately the unhappy coexistence within the university between the scholarly ‘local hero’ and the networking ‘entrepreneurial globetrotter’ (LaCapra, 1998: 32-33) – has seen concomitant extra-organisational transformations that impact upon the ethical subjectivities at the heart of TLRs. Concretely, what do they entail, especially for the university as an open system organisation embedded within an advanced liberal framework?

Amongst a plethora of changes, I simply want to highlight those with an ethical import. They derive from the symbiotic relation between corporations and academe that Stanley Aronowitz (2006: 180-181) calls the ‘university-corporate complex’. It fosters the substitution of the production of students as critical agents with the furnishing of discrete clients that embody an ethos of commodification. Students are identified as consumers of knowledge and, through a ‘programme of ego care ... and altogether *self-referential* concerns’, encouraged to appropriate it as an instrument to self-enhancement (Bauman, 2008: 122; italics in the original). By the same token, there has been an assault on critical thought by a market model of education, which emphasises the goal of education as training in vocational skills, memorisation and flexibility for the purposes of inserting the customer into a global economy of precarity and competition (Giroux, 2011: 49-60).

As an organisation opened up and infiltrated by its context, the university gives birth to ‘a distinct administrative class whose...interests are tied to the corporate order’ (Aronowitz, 2006: 191). Under advanced liberal regimes of government, a class apart manages the university along corporate lines to the detriment of collegiality (Clark, 1998). Their bottom line, which is imported from the university’s extra-organisational context, is what Bill Readings (1996: 150) calls the ‘discourse of excellence’. Adrift in a sea of entrepreneurialism, Readings contends the university has not only embraced a corporate logic, but also fallen hook, line and sinker for the managerial obsession with excellence. It acts as a smokescreen for a value vacuum at the core of the university: excellence enjoys near universal approval, yet the only purpose it justifies is the administration of the university in relation to accountability for economic efficiency (Readings, 1996: 21-33). The ethical underside to the normalisation that is a consequence of the benchmark of the discourse of excellence is the reign of ‘corporate time’, which not only side-lines the reflection that is central to critical agency, but concludes in the production of centripetal subjects (Giroux, 2006: 262-263).

Like any act of colonisation that establishes, renovates or revolutionises organisations, there is a cultural politics of justification that accompanies advanced liberalism. In its role as the organisational bridge, it impacts the university as the incitement to permanent education in the interests of regimes of government that operate on the basis of rational, albeit

uncritical, subjects. The choice is to take up the challenge from a critical angle, or cede it to the regimes of advanced liberalism with their poverty of critical credentials. It necessitates a politics of the truthfulness of these regimes, which demands a permanent critique that affirms democracy as an ongoing struggle about justice (Foucault, 1988a: 154). As Bauman (2001: 54; italics in the original) reminds us, dissent grounded in educated critical thinking is the bedrock of democracy, which is ‘an anarchic, disruptive element inside the political system; essentially, a [critical] force for *dissent* and change’. One of the more persistent thinkers who have taken up the challenge of a critical pedagogy in the name of democracy is Henry Giroux.

### **Towards a critical pedagogy**

Through his approach to education from the perspective of the Frankfurt School and cultural studies, Giroux advocates a critique of T&L. His purpose is overtly political: literally, he sees education as a means to foster citizens who are ‘critical, self-reflective, [and] knowledgeable’, hence morally able and socially willing to take their place in a participatory democracy; figuratively, insofar as they are situated at the crossover point between power and knowledge, which thrusts responsibility on them for the (re)production of civil society, Giroux (2006: 3-6) envisages a role of resistance for the academic. Thus, Giroux (2006: 4) says the academic embodies a way of thinking that ‘interrogates texts, institutions, social realities, and ideologies’ in order to discern domination at both the symbolic and organisational level. On this view, education is a contested terrain. Groups engage to have their voice heard, or struggle to introduce their vision of order. For their part, the academic sides with the dominated to shape this process. As Douglas Kellner (2001: 220) argues, Giroux’s thought offers a ‘sustained attempt to link critical pedagogy ... with developing a more democratic ... citizenry’. But what are the virtues – and vices – of such an approach, or what is wrong with more traditional as well as alternative approaches to education?

It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that, both within and beyond the academy, the dominant understanding of education is a liberal one. From primary to higher education, schooling is understood as a neutral, progressive endeavour. It equips students with the capacities and skills – and a supposed apolitical content – that foster individual development and social mobility. For disadvantaged groups, education furnishes students with political opportunities and economic resources to eventually partake in the privilege outcome of the former, individuality, or the cultivation of one’s autonomous character and mental faculties (Mill, 1993: 75-82). Giroux’s take is that the liberal vision of education is at best an illusion. As an alternative, he notes two possibilities.

On the one hand, there are the radical reproduction theorists. Inspired by the Marxist idea that a social relation of production replicates not only commodities, but also the unjust conditions of its own possibility, they view the function of education as the reproduction of domination. Education thus duplicates domination in three senses: socio-economically, through foisting knowledge and skills, which are specific to a class, gender or race, upon all and sundry, hereby reproducing docile subjects through material practices; socio-culturally, insofar as education legitimates knowledge, values and life-styles that reflect the dominant culture, which requires such deep habitual levels of cultural capital that it is well-nigh

impossible for individuals without it to overcome exclusion; and socio-politically, with education an extension of the state and its effective lackey in establishing the economic and ideological imperatives of power, whence the exercise of intellectual and moral hegemony over subordinate groups (Giroux, 2006: 7-23).

On the other hand, resistance theorists seek to build on the fundamental insight of the radical reproductive theorists, namely, there is a deep politics in education to which the liberal theorist is blind. Yet Giroux also highlights a basic lacuna in the radical reproductive theorist's overemphasis on structure, which leaves no room for either students or faculty to display agency. Radical reproductive theorists ultimately fail to provide a way out of the impasse of education as a means for domination – resistance is futile, as it must be if it is to come from the agents inside the classroom who are only familiar with domination. In the end, radical reproduction theory overemphasises how structures uphold socio-economic inequality, while it underemphasises 'how human agency ... resists' domination; in fact, for Giroux (2006: 40), there is 'a structured silence regarding how teachers, students, and others live out their daily lives ... [in the face of] dominating social practices'.

For these reasons, resistance theorists restore a 'critical notion of agency' and argue that we should theorise structure and agency 'in a dialectical manner' (Giroux, 2006: 4 and 41). In parallel, Giroux assumes the relative autonomy of educational sites and the importance of wider culture to identity formation, to the extent that agents may self-produce their own ways of learning and in so doing resist broader social or state induced forms of domination. To be sure, resistance theories suffer from several theoretical blind spots, too, notably a poor awareness of historical struggles of resistance, a lack of attention to gender and race and a poverty of ideas how "un-freedom" reproduces itself in the psyche of human beings' and prevents the oppressed from articulating their radical plurality (Giroux, 2006: 50). Notwithstanding, these theoretical innovations, which are fused with Giroux's commitment to emancipation, contribute towards his endeavour to be more precise about what constitutes resistance. Yet despite Giroux's (2006: 1) admirable desire to develop a 'critical science of education', he remains wedded to a basic dichotomy between power and knowledge. Consequently, he advocates the alliance of freedom with knowledge to resist power through a dialectical process, which situates resistance as a means to the end of a final emancipation from the clutches of domination (Giroux, 2006: 53).

Although Giroux (2006: 58-59) does not offer us an insight into how regimes of government actually impact upon the subject, other than from the accounts of domination alluded to by reproduction theorists, he wants to understand 'how power, resistance, and human agency can become central elements in the struggle for critical thinking and learning'. One way to do so would be to articulate how power and knowledge produce subjectivity in the particular context of TLRs. However, it is less a Girouxian question of understanding how 'un-freedom' reproduces itself in the mind of the subject with a view to emancipation from domination, and more a Foucauldian problematisation of how the subject is produced at the confluence of relations of power, knowledge and ethics, which implies that emancipation is a strategy of governing of advanced liberalism. To this end, we make use of Foucault's concept of governmentality, which proffers an understanding of how the subject is implicated in the production of their own subjectivity and the wider context of regimes of government.

### **Governmentality as a framework for an analysis of T&L**

For those unfamiliar with the *œuvre* of Foucault, one of his major contributions is to our understanding of power<sup>6</sup> To begin with, he rejects three aspects of the standard theory: the belief power is confined to the sovereign state; the concomitant focus on mechanisms of repression; and the idea that the relationship between power and freedom is a zero-sum game. In pursuit of an alternative, Foucault introduces the concept of governmentality. His purpose is to underline the dispersed, yet coexistent nature of power and knowledge, together with their co-constitution of ethical subjectivity.

In this respect, Foucault (2013: 244-257) sketches a productive account of power, which circulates a technical form of knowledge and enmeshes it in a matrix, in his 1970 inaugural lecture at the *Collège de France*, the aptly titled *Order of Discourse*. Later, in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault starts to talk of a dynamic symbiosis of power and knowledge and jettisons the idea of a simple ordering of knowing. Upon the realisation that knowing through seeing goes hand-in-hand with control through constraint, Foucault (1977: 184-194) highlights this reciprocal, vital notion with the examination. In this practice, hierarchical observation extracts the truth of those observed and coerces them into a normalised course of action. The exam personifies power/knowledge, or the parallel exercise of force in virtue of the extension of knowledge, and vice versa. Curiously, Foucault (1977: 23) also introduces the idea of ‘regimes of truth’. At this point, power/knowledge and regimes of truth are synonyms. They imply that mechanisms, techniques and procedures of power produce, support and authorise knowledge, which in the guise of truth lends legitimacy to the regime that gave birth to it. In other words, there is feedback loop between the regime and truth, and vice versa.

Over time, however, Foucault begins to incorporate the third element of his philosophical *œuvre*, the subject. He uses the concept of *alethurgy* both to uphold the inviolability of the marriage of power and truth and to describe truth as a practice through which it (truth) becomes manifest, hence a game that involves a participant, the *autos* or subject (Foucault, 2010: 81-88). Yet regime, especially its implication of the imposition of truth on a subject, now seems an inappropriate concept. Indeed, Foucault (2007: 103-109) speaks of his desire to free power from the shadow of domination. Eventually, he inserts it into the malleable notion of governmentality. It portrays how the body politic is steered and navigated through apparatuses of security and knowledge. Governmentality thus remains a regime of truth with the original twin components of power and knowledge – a governing via a mentality of conduct – but it now extends to the subject, who is the vehicle of its manifestation (Foucault, 2014: 81).

Notwithstanding, there is a paradox in a tripartite notion of governmentality that has the subject as its point of application – if the truth is true, as it were, why do we need power

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<sup>6</sup> My reading of Foucault, particularly the idea of governmentality as a natural transition from his earlier work on power, together with the claim that his ethical writings and their concern for freedom are a logical extension of governmentality itself – hence an overall coherence to his work that is representative of an *œuvre* – are fully elaborated in Dalgliesh (2017).

to enforce the subject's obedience (Foucault, 2014: 91-96)?<sup>7</sup> At first sight, it does seem there is a contradiction in the idea of a regime of government that must impose freedom. However, Foucault's claim is that the truth that engenders a voluntary subjectification (rather than enforces a subjection), such as that which we see in the classroom, does not have an epistemological pedigree. Rather, we constitute ourselves as if truth were blue-blooded. We freely take part in its games and submit to their injunctions on subjectivity. Yet truth's lineage is less that of the thoroughbred than the impure breed of historical, cultural, economic, social and moral factors, hence the inherent politics in any truth that is manifest as regimes of government. There is no outside perspective beyond governmentality that might correspond to truth, which those who govern could draw on to ensure unconditional, albeit willing, obedience. Instead, it is the regime of governing that demarcates the true from the false and determines that in each specific game, such as is embodied in the performance of gender or student learning under TLRs, we submit willingly in virtue of having lost sight of the politics that established the rules of the game to begin with. On this reading, the truths of T&L are nothing other than our most recent errors, which merely lends them irrefutability (Nietzsche, 1974: 265).

Governmentality is therefore a fruitful concept to understand how TLRs absorb advanced liberal regimes of government into the ethical practices of the classroom. For a start, if today's truths about T&L are only true because they have yet to be rendered false by the next TLR-on-the-block, then it seems wise to inquire into that which renders them true, namely, the priorities of advanced liberalism. Hence the focus on governmentality, which studies 'the *organized* practices [university T&L, for instance] through which we are governed and through which we govern ourselves' (Dean, 2010: 28; my emphasis). Together, these regimes of government link the macro with the micro through 'particular techniques [power], ... forms of knowledge and expertise [knowledge]' and identity positions presupposed by the regimes that 'elicit, promote, facilitate, foster and attribute various capacities, qualities and statuses [ethics]' to the subject (Dean, 2010: 38, 43-44). Secondly, we study regimes of government because their analysis is fuelled by a problematisation about the conduct of conduct, for example, that which occurs when we seek to shift students from passive recipients on banks of benches in a lecture theatre to active learners freely floating between furniture in a seminar space. Regimes of government implore us to ask both 'how "governors" (politicians, parents, the professions [for instance, academics]...) conduct themselves and how "the governed" (citizens, children, clients [for example, students]...) conduct themselves' (Dean, 2010: 38). Changes in T&L practices can therefore be mapped using the governmentality approach that calls into question how its three component parts – power, knowledge and ethics – come into existence, are maintained and transformed within and across organisations, such as the university. Lastly, the purpose is neither a global critique of all TLRs, nor a radical critique that seeks closure of those TLRs that produce domination, which would presume the control of power in virtue of knowledge. Rather, because regimes of government simply are, both as an existential condition and as the

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<sup>7</sup> Power as the antithesis of truth is the ideal under which thinkers like Giroux labour. In their view, only error or the unverifiable require coercion to be complied with. As Daniele Lorenzini (2013) highlights, truth in this lay sense is on the side of freedom; it emancipates and redeems, it does not need power to get its way.



condition of possibility for freedom, the critical task is to excavate their contingent moments. In short, if TLRs shape student ethical self-formation, then by revealing the lack of necessity in who the instructor guides – and TLRs implore – students to become, critique can open up the possibility for them to become otherwise.

We are now in a position to outline a framework that can lend understanding to how the university as an open system organisation produces a radically individualised mode of student subjectivity. To recall, in the critical pedagogies above domination is an external force that is ingrained into the student through the (at best, naïve) sage-on-the-sage. Despite their scholarly credentials, they are nothing more than a conduit for the transmission of knowledge that is imbued with the distortions of the dominant groups in society. Giroux rightfully finds this account wanting. He demands precision on how un-freedom reproduces itself in the psyche of students. However, he hedges his bets on the search for a pristine knowledge that agents deploy to resist power. Presumably Giroux's more engaged teacher would watch over the content of knowledge to ward off the infiltration of interests from beyond the university. Teachers would then transmit knowledge to students, who in turn hit the ground running as critical agents upon graduation. However, as Foucault has cogently demonstrated, to demarcate knowledge from power in the hope of emancipation is to buy into the modern fallacy of advanced liberalism, or its stock-in-trade of a primordial freedom. What the governmentality approach provides is an account of how knowledge, power and ethics operate in tandem, or how the subject is the active agent of their subjectivity within the ontological horizons of regimes of government.

### **Ethics as a framework for a critique of T&L**

To demonstrate how contemporary TLRs assign the student sole responsibility for the production of their freedom in the halls of learning, I would like to first delineate ethics from morality. In this respect, Foucault deploys a threefold distinction. He claims, firstly, that morality is usually defined as a moral code. It is formal and includes the values and rules of action issued by prescriptive agencies. Secondly, morality refers to acts. These are the actual and visible behaviour of individuals, or the extent to which their actions conform or transgress, obey or disobey, and respect or flout the values and rules embodied in the moral code. Thirdly, morality concerns the manner in which one ought to form oneself as a subject of the moral code. Foucault (1988a: 253) calls this third aspect ethics, or 'the procedure by which one obtains the constitution of a subject, or more precisely, of a subjectivity'. It is informal because it concerns the ultimately unknowable relation of the subject with themselves. Secure from the world within the skull, it bears upon how one must 'occupy oneself with oneself' and, in extreme agonistic moments, 'cross swords with oneself' by imposing conduct on oneself (Foucault, 1988b: 20; 1992: 68). The purpose is to make one's acts tally with the code.<sup>8</sup> Ethical conduct is thus indicative of one's stylisation of the relation with oneself; it can

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<sup>8</sup> Note that conduct here is not a synonym for moral agency; it can be discerned by observing the conformity of a subject's acts with the codes, which merely affirms that one's moral obligations have been satisfied and provides no idea of the relation one has established with oneself. Instead, Foucault's notion of conduct includes moral as well as non- and a-moral actions, together with embedded corporeal capacities – what Pierre Bourdieu

be observed in the intentional actions undertaken and the deliberate capacities deployed by the subject. These satisfy one's ethical obligations of a relation to oneself, which in turn is the object of moral approbation (versus conformity to the code, which is the target of approval of moral conduct and depends on the colonisation of the skull; that is, the mediation of the subject's relation with themself).

With this distinction between the code, acts and ethics, Foucault delineates ethics-oriented and code-oriented moralities. In the former, subjectivity is constituted through practices of the self, which is suited to an adult who has already mastered a body of knowledge and merely seeks moderation in the care of themself. In code-oriented moralities, in contrast, subjectivity is produced via a hermeneutics of the self. Of importance here is the fact that the interlocutor intervenes in the process of self-formation, or, following Louis Althusser (1976), interpellates the subject into existence in respect of the moral code. This is because the subject is a student rather than a master of knowledge and requires guidance in its acquisition. For Foucault (1982: 217-219; 1988a: 105), processes of self-formation depend either on practices we perform on ourselves, which makes them ethics-oriented, or on an interlocutor who guides us through the process such that they are code-oriented (see, respectively, 'Instructor Model' and 'Teacher Model' in Figure 1 below).

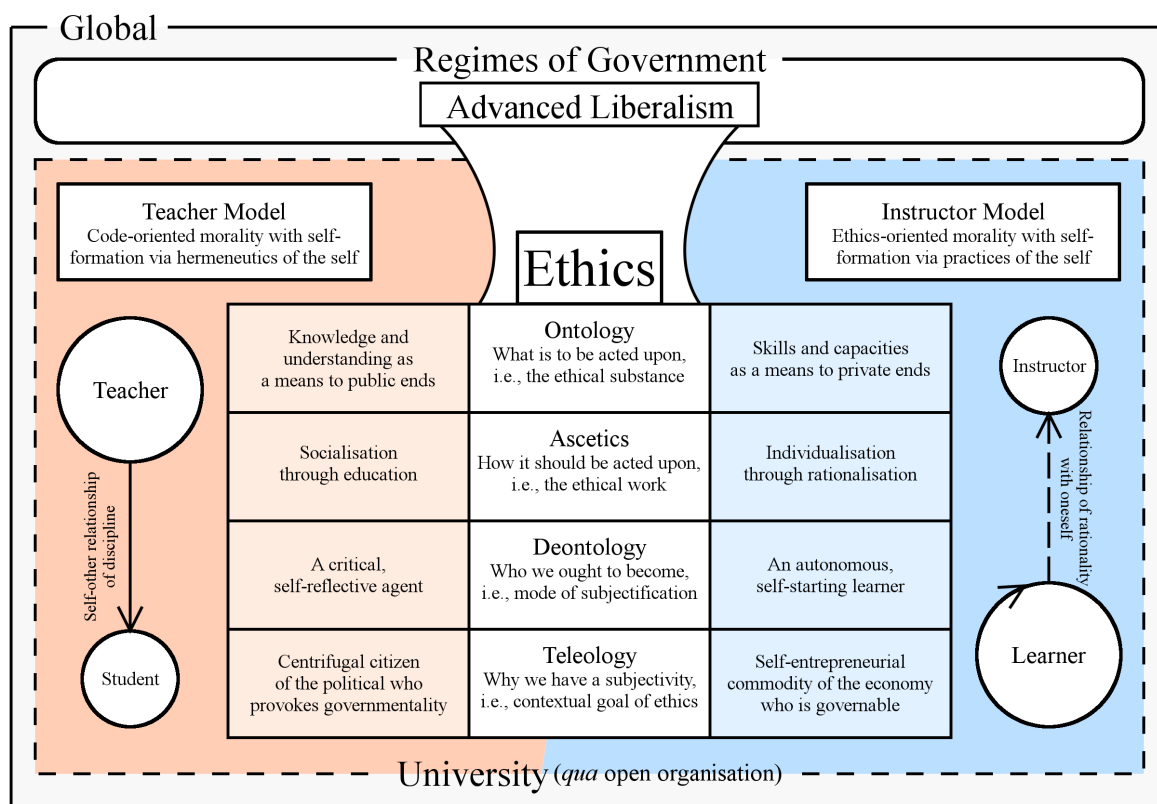
How do the practices and the hermeneutics of the self, which I would like to use to critique TLRs, enable the subject to constitute their subjectivity; that is, what are the specific techniques of the third aspect of morality, ethics? Foucault discerns four interrelated elements: the ontological, ascetic, deontological and teleological (see 'Ethics' in Figure 1 below). Each element invites one to relate to oneself through what Mitchell Dean (2010: 26-27) portrays as an interrogation: *what* part of oneself is earmarked to be acted upon morally, or the (governed) ethical substance; *how* must this substance be acted upon, such that through practices one transforms oneself into an ethical subject of one's conduct, or the (governing) ethical work; *who* must we become through undertaking such ethical work, which requires one to establish a relation to the code and acknowledge one's obligation to practice it, or the mode of subjectification that realises an ethical (governable) subject; and *why* this moulding of oneself must be performed so that ethical subjectivity can be linked to the (governmental) context of moral values and rules, or the *telos*.<sup>9</sup> In summary, these four elements define ethics as the elaboration of a way of relating to oneself that depends on the individual mastering a set of practices through which they construct themselves into a subject of ethical conduct. Let us now turn to mapping this ethical framework onto contemporary TLRs in which the guide-on-the-side instructor predominates as the student's interlocutor.

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terms our habitus that gives us a feel for daily life – such as posture, poise, positioning in space, gestures, dispositions or comportment.

<sup>9</sup> In Buddhism, for example, ontology, ascetics, deontology and teleology comprise the desires and pleasures of daily life as the ethical substance; meditation, confession and pilgrimage as components of the ethical work; disciplinary practices, moral training and the acquisition of virtue as the modes of subjectification; and liberation from suffering as the *telos* of one's conduct (Voyce, 2017: 4-5). Similarly, in Greek and Greco-Roman antiquity, the ontology was the self-indulgent pleasures; the ascetics the mastery of one's pleasures or one's disentanglement from them altogether; the deontology a question of the right usage or just practice; and the teleology the virtue of moderation (in one's use of the irrational pleasures) or the conversion to self (in one's creation of a rational soul via a turning away from pleasures) (Foucault, 1992: 32-62; 1990: 51-65).

Figure 1. Ethical practices of T&L



The ethical substance is (to state the obvious) the mind, specifically its skills and capacities as a means to the private ends of the student client. There is a stark contrast here with earlier forms of education undertaken by the sage-on-the-sage teacher, which envisaged a public-spirited mind as the endpoint of learning. Content has become almost secondary to the method of its delivery, as if the cover were more important than the book. The emphasis is on the acquisition of life skills; indeed, knowledge and understanding take a backseat, whereas a skill set is exalted as the key to success (see, respectively, the ontology of the ‘Instructor Model’ and ‘Teacher Model’ in Figure 1 above). Although we take on conservative airs in the very act of contrast here, the point is that the ontology of the purely rational mind reiterates the ethical strategy of advanced liberal regimes of government. After all, it is much easier to govern subjects who relate to their governors as rational, quantifiable beings (Foucault, 1990: 91), rather than as heteroclitic spirits who are the product of learning an esoteric body of knowledge.

The ethical work performed by the student on themselves is that of individualisation. Clients are to be rendered, and willingly render themselves, rational, which is the condition for pursuing individuality in the sense intended by Mill above. However, the deontology that produces a rational being is a strategy of regimes of government. It ensures a ‘surface of

contact between the individual and the power exercised' on them; in turn, it creates a grid of intelligibility between the government and the governed that Foucault (2008: 252-253 and 270) portrays as '*homo oeconomicus*', or a subject who 'responds systematically to [artificially induced] modifications in the variables of the environment ... [and] who is eminently governable'.<sup>10</sup> Albeit impossible to escape, we should at least ask if socialisation through education, in which the teacher acts as a filter of the grid of intelligibility, might not be the lesser of two evils (see, respectively, the ascetics of the 'Instructor Model' and 'Teacher Model' in Figure 1 above)?

To attain competence in life skills, the mode of subjectification is autonomy in learning rather than the fostering of critical thinking. Students are encouraged to be self-starters in their strategic appropriation of knowledge and to look upon their peers as members of a team, partners in a group or rivals in the grade race. As opposed to the teacher that cultivates self-reflection in the student, the instructor has become no more than a crutch in their pursuit of autonomy (see, respectively, the deontology of the 'Instructor Model' and 'Teacher Model' in Figure 1 above). Instructors may even find themselves surpassed, if not obsolete, insofar as students have consummate skills in the deployment of devices, which rivals the value of thinking that is founded upon knowledge. Form, in short, trumps content, or at least is valorised over it as a deontology. To some extent this may not be a bad thing, especially when a lack of form prevents content from being clear, as any academic can testify in relation to poor writing that stifles content. However, it is of concern when the content is no longer the property of the subject and instead becomes that of the database. In this instance, the device becomes merely the inter(sur)face of what Bernard Stiegler (2010: 67) calls the mnemotechnologies 'that systematically organize memories' (as opposed to the mnemotechniques that enable 'conscious methods of memory storage').

Finally, the *telos* of current TLRs is the self-entrepreneur. Because *homo oeconomicus* is always engaged in a process of exchange, they are nothing more than an entrepreneur of themselves – their capital defines who they are, which they truck in the economy (Foucault, 2008: 226). As Gorz (2010: 19) writes, self-entrepreneurs are a stock of socio-economic and cultural capital; they are 'continually reproduced, modernized, expanded and valorized. ... No constraints must be imposed on them from the outside; they must be their own producers, their own employers and their own sales force ... [to] ensure the viability and competitiveness of the enterprise that they are'. With such a teleology, we are a long way from a subjectivity that would be apt for democracy as an anti-institutional force. It depends less on inward focused self-entrepreneurs than the cultivation through a critical pedagogy of outward oriented centrifugal selves with a sense of connection to their social contexts (being-with-others) and the capacity to rise to the challenge of political responsibility for the other

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<sup>10</sup> *Homo oeconomicus* is a key term in advanced liberal governmentality. Foucault differentiates two modes of this figure. The first incarnation of *homo oeconomicus* is the eighteenth century liberal self-interested individual whose pursuit of their private wants produces social harmony through the convergence mechanism of the market. They must be left alone by government in the world of the market hived off from the state. *Homo oeconomicus*' second coming is due to a revision in regimes of government that reigns in the self-interested individual. In their place appears *homo oeconomicus* 2.0, or a trope that is indicative of a subject who is governable: 'From being the intangible partner of *laissez-faire*, *homo oeconomicus* now becomes the correlate of a governmentality...[that] act[s] on the environment and systematically modify its variables' (Foucault, 2008: 271).

(being-for-others) through the provoking of regimes of government (see, respectively, the teleology of the ‘Instructor Model’ and ‘Teacher Model’ in Figure 1 above).

## Conclusion

If the university is unable to extricate itself from an organisational form that acts as a conduit for advanced liberal modes of self-formation, what shape might it take? In *A Critique of Universities*, the late Páll Skúlason (2015) claims an organisation’s structure – from the nation-state to the university – is shaped by its foundational value. Dissonance arises when actors lose sight of it, or rival values are introduced into the organisation, such as those of advanced liberalism that clash with the university’s historic values of learning and knowledge creation. Skúlason (2015: 47) argues these values are best nurtured through an organisational structure where decision-making is collegial – scholars, he believes, share ‘the same basic values of free inquiry into whatever subject they seek to understand’. Similarly, Readings (1996: 159-187) speaks of the university’s core value as the ‘empty name of thought’. He asks us to struggle for a healthy sense of the emptiness of thought in order to uphold the university as an open-ended question about values. On this understanding, the university fosters a ‘community of dissensus’ to offset the tendency to produce consensus through appeal to external standards of justification, such as the advanced liberal discourse of excellence.

Turning towards the core problem of the ethics of T&L, I would like to suggest that current TLRs are caught between a rock and a hard place. If we deploy the ethical framework above, it is evident in the ambiguous pedagogical role of the academic, who finds themselves neither wanted as a scholarly sage-on-the-stage teacher, nor fully at ease as a networking guide-on-the-side instructor (other than if they embrace the role of an entrepreneurial globetrotter, though their commitment to T&L is dubious).<sup>11</sup> Similarly, we can see that for their part the student inhabits neither an ethics-oriented nor a code-oriented mode of self-formation. For his part, Foucault advocates an ethics-oriented morality as a solution to our predicament today as subjects embedded in regimes of government, with a focus on the practices of the self through which we carve out temporary spaces of liberty.<sup>12</sup> Yet knowledge is presupposed in this model, not that which is at stake in terms of its transmission through the very process of self-formation of the student. Alternatively, can a code-oriented morality in which a hermeneutics of the self is central offer a viable set of practices for T&L? Foucault (1992: 11-63) derives this model from the ethical gymnastics demanded of the trainee monk by his superior. There is an interlocutor present, the abbot, who plays a pivotal

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<sup>11</sup> As Dominick LaCapra (1998: 33) argues, the entrepreneurial globetrotter ‘is administratively adept, always in the process of putting together some new arrangement or academic deal, and is continually on the move. She or he is a highly marketable commodity, has had many grants or competitive fellowships, changes positions frequently (or at least has the opportunity to do so), spends at least as much time away from a home university as at it, and has a vita the size of an average telephone book’.

<sup>12</sup> Foucault (1988: 49 and 253-254) proposes a threefold justification for an ethics focused on practices of self-formation: historically, the sense of morality as obedience to a codified body of rules meets with incredulity in plural societies today; morally, the exploration of a normative order to which all should conform is wishful thinking in societies characterised by individualisation; and ethically, insofar as a moral experience centred on the subject who submits to a fixed, deep sense of identity is a throwback to a bygone era.

role in guiding the monk. In the end, though, this model prioritises the code over the practices of self-formation. It requires ‘submission to their [the abbot’s] advice and permanent obedience to one’s superiors’ (Foucault, 1988a: 240). In other words, a hermeneutics of the self is too claustrophobic. It assumes not only a scholarly teacher, but that they play the role of a strict disciplinarian from days of yore, who enforces conformity to the moral code on behalf of the governmentality of the political.

What is perhaps required is a mix of both the practices and hermeneutics of the self. The challenge is to strike a balance between, on the one hand, enabling the student to engage in practices of the self that produce autonomy without descending into a subjectivity akin to the self-entrepreneurial subject and, on the other hand, undergoing a subjectification in the hands of an interlocutor – the academic – who is themselves engaged at the level of knowledge production, both as a critical response to advanced liberalism’s strategies of governing and as an ethical imperative in respect of their students. Likewise, this relationship need not be modelled on domination, as was the case between the monk and abbot. Instead, the issue is not whether practices free of constraints are possible (Foucault, 1994: 294) – that is, where we escape the grasp of power through knowledge in what Giroux hails as emancipation – but to keep watch for those moments in which a relation of discipline descends into ‘nonconsensuality’ (Foucault, 1984: 379). Consensual discipline is arguably not only possible but also the only model through which a real transmission and inculcation of knowledge can take place.<sup>13</sup> To negate this is to decouple research expertise from teaching ability, which reduces the latter to a question of form over content and manoeuvres the former into a niche in time divorced from place. Similarly, it is to deny the university a role in education, which at its core is a schooling that implies a leading [*ducere*] out [*ex*], or a bringing up and a nurturing of the mind by a teacher – and not a standing by, pace the instructor.

A manifesto for consensual, critical T&L practices might therefore include a relation between the teacher and student that is based on an agonistic freedom within a framework of an ‘ethics of care’, which instils an ethos in students that precludes them from ‘privileged irresponsibility’ (Tronto, 2016). To this end, it implores the academic to care for the student’s intra- and extra-curricular life (Wood, 2016). Within the classroom, the dissemination of knowledge by the teacher and learning by the student would be grounded in an agonistic, albeit moral, relationship of ‘reciprocal incitation and struggle ... [akin to] a permanent provocation’ (Foucault, 1982: 222). To some extent (primarily Western, I would argue), it would be a question of deploying an ‘ethics of discomfort’ that destabilises who we are, yet which is a caring pedagogical practice that fosters engaged democratic citizens (Zembylas, 2016). In parallel, if we are to understand the various modalities of subjectivity that are wired to advanced liberalism, a critical and permanent calling into question of TLRs that leach off regimes of government and circumscribe who we are is necessary. And, as Achille Mbembe (2016), argues, it may well require a deliberate fragmentation of the space of the university – ‘classrooms without walls’ – to incorporate new assemblies and learn about the things that

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<sup>13</sup> Although Foucault’s (1991, 18) example of consensual discipline is an amorous erotic relationship, where to exercise power over one’s partner ‘in a sort of open strategic game, where things could be reversed’, the teacher-student relationship is a paradigm case, too, of a disciplinary relationship that is grounded in consent and norms and rules of how the teacher should transmit their knowledge to the student, who is subordinate to the teacher’s expertise, institutional power, socio-economic status and cultural prestige.

count most, viz. that which we do not as yet know, whether it is a future knowledge, or another post-colonial (past, present or future) understanding, both of which would require different ethical practices of T&L. At the very least, it would force us beyond innovation in T&L for innovation's sake, and hereby invite a critical reflection upon the empirically overdetermined field of T&L, which at present seems blind to its role as the ethical pawn of advanced liberalism.

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