

ABSTRACT

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This thesis seeks to analyze the role and responsibility of the modern American university in the moral development of their students within late-stage capitalist structures. The transformation of higher education into corporate privatized businesses and the zeitgeist of American consumerism produces the students-as-customer model (SAC-model) that leads to education being perceived as a product rather than an opportunity for personal formation and vocational knowledge. The SAC model of operation has damaged the integrity of higher education institutions as locations of genuine, transformational education and moral formation. This consumerist reorganization led to widespread moral disparity and emotivism. Where do we proceed from here? Is there hope for reengaging the university as a place of moral formation for the sake of better citizens? I also seek an answer to these secondary questions by engaging the works of philosophers Alasdair MacIntyre and Michel Foucault particularly turning towards MacIntyre's *After Virtue* and Foucault's later works which focus on the care of the self, the creating of moral systems, and the use of pleasure. The work of MacIntyre focuses upon community while the work of Foucault looks at the subject (self) as it exists within a community. The work of Foucault and MacIntyre put in conversation allow me to analyze the problem at hand and to synthesize a model of student-teacher relationships that seek to instill a practice of moral formation within the modern university.

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A DISQUIETING MORAL REALITY

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MODERN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN THE
MORAL FORMATION OF THEIR STUDENTS IN LATE-STAGE CAPITALISM AS
ANALYZED THROUGH THE WORK OF ALASDAIR MACINTYRE AND MICHEL
FOUCAULT

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INTRODUCTION

Beginnings

Throughout my time as a student at Baylor University, I encountered countless texts and articles heralding the fall, the collapse, the failure, the disintegration, of the university and higher education as a whole. There was, unanimously, an agreement that higher education has failed, in one way or another. Identity politics, political polarization, indoctrination, internal corruption, admission scandals, and crippling student debt were, and continue to be, hot topics surrounding higher education. However, I for one knew it had not failed me.

In the professors who shared a love for what they taught, who cared about their students, who were involved and concerned with the integrity and honesty of college education, I found not failure but enlightenment and genuine formation. In these inlets among the “collapse,” I found a sliver of what it meant to be an involved, ethically concerned human being in a way that was absent from my previous self. In my four years at Baylor, I found my love for higher education and planted the seeds for my hopes of joining the ranks of one day becoming a professor. I knew the formational power of higher education and wanted to explore the ways in which it could accomplish such transformation for all students. During my time as a student and a peer instructor in the Baylor Interdisciplinary Core, I witnessed expectations from my peers about higher education that became of interest to me. Students often expected certain outcomes from a class simply due to the fact that they paid for it. It did not

matter the value in learning from the mistakes of a B, when in their eyes, they had bought an A. What was even more perplexing for me was witnessing the dichotomy of in-class and out-of-class behavior. What I mean by this is that an A in ethics did not always reflect any understanding of ethical action outside of class. There remained a sort of disparity, a gap between education and application beyond the interest of mastering certain skills if they were valuable to the job market. Why was this so? It was then I learned of the student-as-consumer or student-as-customer model (the SAC model).

This model describes the ways in which many modern university students regarded their education: like a customer who had purchased a product. How had we arrived here and what were the moral implications of such a model? How deep did it run? How was it altered the role and function of the university? It was here my work began to take shape. Beginning my thesis process, I found myself confronted with countless possible points of focus for my research – what was the role of the university in creating better democratically engaged citizens? what is the university's place in the modern market as a commodity vs point of progress? – yet I kept returning to a rather all-embodying, meta-analysis of the university as a place of formation as a whole. It was in my interaction with the critique of the university as a failure that I began to analyze where it had failed, why this was, and how it may be rescued. I found myself returning again and again to two main philosophers who made sense of the problems at hand in modern society and how this impacted the role of higher education.

These two philosophers are Alasdair MacIntyre and Michel Foucault. When reading each of their respective works, I found clarity in many of the problems I had witnessed but been unable to identify or name. They deconstructed the moral problems modernity faced while also leaving room for the reader to act upon this knowledge. Further, I found that my reading of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* helped me understand MacIntyre's *After Virtue* on a deeper level. Here, I discovered the possible harmony between the work of MacIntyre and Foucault and decided to use both their work as points of analysis regarding the role and responsibility of the university in the moral formation of their students. Both made it exasperatingly clear that the moral problems of today had to be dealt with on a pluralistic, social level that required collaboration and, in some way, a sense of community. Still, in the preliminary legs of my research, my advisor Dr. McDaniel encouraged me to investigate the state of student-teacher relationships regarding contexts of moral formation, the role of the university, and the SAC model and use these points of application for my research. Finally, my scope began to narrow, and my research began.

This thesis seeks to answer this question by analyzing it through the work of both Michel Foucault and Alasdair MacIntyre. MacIntyre's philosophical work in moral theory *After Virtue* works in combination with Foucault's series on *The History of Sexuality* and a selection of lectures given at the College de France in the later stage of his career to guide my analysis. Both work to deconstruct the problem at hand and synthesize a tentative philosophical model to apply to the way of operating in the classroom between students and teachers in the hopes of relocating the responsibility

of the university in moral formation. In answering this, first I outline the history of higher education in America as well as further explore the role of the SAC model. Next, I introduce and engage MacIntyre's *After Virtue* to further analyze the problem at hand and present a model for understanding how moral formation occurs. Next, I introduce Foucault's work concerning the care of self and lay the grounds for integrating it with MacIntyre's understanding of morals and community. The final chapter outlines how MacIntyre and Foucault point to the university as a location responsible for moral formation, why their philosophical systems work in harmony, and the ways they offer a framework for student-teacher relationships that foster moral development.

The Body of Research and Limitations

Studies concerning the role of moral formation in higher education and the consequences and pervasiveness of the SAC model is numerous in scholarship with a scope outside of the United States. Specifically, studies in the UK, Africa, Australia, and Southeast Asian countries are prevalent. However, there remains little research regarding these problems in the United States. Surveys and data analyzing student perspectives of higher education as they relate to concepts of consumerism are limited in scope and not conducted frequently enough to offer up a clear image of the relationships between students and higher education. Once again, such surveys and research are conducted with far more frequency and quantity outside of the United States. In addition to a lack of empirical research, the scope of analyzing the issues facing the university was fairly narrow. Often, the critiques of higher education often pointed to the university as the source of many modern issues, such as the prevalence

of identity politics, as the source to blame for such conundrums. Rarely did these critiques, despite their work to reveal historically, philosophically, religiously, socio-politically how these realities came to pass, ever look towards larger systems of influence. Capitalism and globalization were scarcely brought into the discussion. This is not to say that these other factors have no influence on these changes nor that the spaces of higher education are entirely free of the responsibility of these evolutions. Rather it is to say there arguably remains neglect of research regarding some of the most obvious, and all-pervading systems of influence present in our society—the economic systems at hand. Additionally, the gap in the research focusing on American universities needs to be addressed since the culture of American capitalism and individualism poses a unique environment for the university.

There exist certain limitations to my research. Most notably, my investigation does remain quite theoretical in method, grounded mostly in philosophical approaches being translated into models of practice in the university. Therefore, the goal is to create a working framework that remains open enough to evolve within each space it is introduced in. As is the nature of philosophy, the application of certain ideas or notions may prove the most difficult part. Further, although this thesis seeks to establish a possible framework to apply to American Universities, the application itself will adjust to and evolve within each space respectively in accordance with the way each university functions. Yet, it is due to the fact that the writing of Foucault and MacIntyre are valuable, that an attempt to embody them can only lay the grounds for future engagement with this ongoing project. It is the broader goal that this body of

research may contribute to interdisciplinary work regarding ethics and morality in higher education, capitalism, and beyond.

A View Beyond the Scope

There is a broader project that this thesis engages, one that shares a concern with the modern state of ethics and its relationship to capitalism. Particularly, the ways in which consumerism, globalized capitalism, a culture of instant gratification, and ongoing technological developments affect ethical decision making, ethical relationships to others, and ethical self-regard. Further, America, in particular, is worthy of such analysis due to the historical and modern importance of capitalism and individualism in Americanism. Specifically, part of the American zeitgeist, is the notion of continual progress, no matter the cost. We witness this every day, this sort of unquestioned need for something new and better despite whether it is truly needed or not. In this ever-forward movement hurling towards continual progress, a question of ought versus can is not present.

We are confronted with this problem of ought and can, and it is a dangerous one. Where does morality begin and end in a late-stage capitalist market economy? Nonetheless, reintroducing the question of ought to the culture and practices of American capitalist marketplaces stands as an important task at hand. Here I return to the university and the SAC model. Reshaping or countering the SAC model in the classroom through creating communities by seeking to establish a new model of student-teacher relationships in the modern American university may serve as a reintroduction to the *ought* of the modern market. The structure and operation of the modern economic system cannot be transformed without risking global financial failure; therefore, it is the task to

rather transform the way in which individuals navigate the system in hopes of reintroducing a more coherent moral system that operates over the influence of the market, rather than as a result of the late-stage capitalist market. It is in the hopes of engaging in my research that these problems may begin to be investigated and grappled with on both practical and philosophical grounds.

Definition of Terms

It is necessary to define the terms and significant contextualizing material that will appear throughout the remainder of this thesis. The terms include late-stage capitalism, moral formation, the American university, and student-as-consumer or student-as-customer model (SAC model).

Moral Development or Moral Formation

The terms “moral development” or “moral formation”, in the context of this thesis, refer to a virtue-ethics-based definition of moral development. The habituation of specific virtues in relation to practical reasoning works to create and sustain specific moral systems. Therefore, moral development or formation does not solely concern individual moral formation. Rather, moral formation focuses on the ways in which institutions and agents contribute to morals and values on a social and individual level.¹ This understanding of moral formation borrows heavily from Alisdair MacIntyre's understanding of moral development. MacIntyre defines morality as the operation of human initiative in terms of desire, intention, and choice to participate in and organize

¹ Institutions and individuals are related to one another in regard to the sustainment of certain values, lifestyles, and actions. Thus, thriving moral systems are extensions of the modes of these relationships.

common life in a community.² The process of development itself concerns how morality and ethics are fashioned within the individual, on a social, civic, and political level, as well as how historically these moral systems are sustained and or evolve.³ The “moral project” or how the philosophical tradition has engaged the issue of morality in terms of its creation, sustainment, deconstruction, and metaphysical justifications, is deeply influential for both MacIntyre and Foucault.⁴ Both MacIntyre and Foucault’s understanding of moral formation will be explored in their relative sections and engaged in the final, synthesizing chapter.

Student-as-customer or student-as-consumer model (SAC Model)

The student-as-customer or student-as-consumer model, or “the SAC model”, is a metaphor that describes the relationship between students and educational institutions. With the SAC model and the roles of students, the relationship to educational institutions is altered from traditional orientations. Initially, “the relationship between the student and the university may be interpreted as a provider-receiver relationship, where the university is the provider of knowledge and the student is the receiver of knowledge”; however, with the introduction of the marketization of universities and the embrace of the SAC model, “the provider-receiver relationship becomes modified, where the student is the

² MacIntyre, Alasdair C., Paul Blackledge, and Neil Davidson. *Alasdair MacIntyre’s Engagement with Marxism: Selected Writings 1953-1974* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2009), 125,129.

³ MacIntyre’s exploration of how moral systems are formed, transformed, and evolve is discussed in chapter two.

⁴ Foucault’s “ethical turn”, circa 1981, features thought concerned with moral philosophical projects concerned with ethics, the self as moral subject, and pursuit of truth and freedom in a manner his previous work was not concerned with. Foucault’s ethical turn will be expounded upon in chapter three.

provider of knowledge, and the university is the receiver of knowledge.”⁵ Ultimately, the SAC model is an extension of the increased marketization of higher education institutions, and as a result, universities evolve into learner-centric environments where the university⁶ must adapt to a customer service mode of operating.

The concept of student-as-customers/consumer emerged from the work of professors of marketing at Northwestern University Philip Kolter and Sidney Levy in their article *Broadening the Concept of Marketing* (1969). Kolter and Levy analyze the transition of marketing and business models “from a narrow view of application in commercial business into the broader sense of applying to all forms of organisations, such as churches, social agencies and government agencies.”⁷ Like commercial businesses, universities have become tied up in input-output models, customer retention, and sustainment of market value. Therefore, higher education institutions must necessarily concern themselves with customer/consumer satisfaction.

Ultimately, the SAC model metaphor describes a market-logic derived role students of higher education assume and engage as a guide to the ways in which the educational experience and responsibilities of educational institutions are regarded. There is an ever-growing body of work both in support and critique of the acceptance of the SAC model

⁵ Göran Svensson and Greg Wood, “Are University Students Really Customers? When Illusion May Lead to Delusion for All!” *International Journal of Educational Management* 21, no. 1 (January 23, 2007): 22, <https://doi.org/10.1108/09513540710716795>.

⁶ Referring to the actions and decisions as governed by professors and administrators since individuals in these roles interact face-to-face with students as customers and are therefore often the point of engagement concerning the “products” the student, as customer, receives.

⁷ As cited in Linda C. Laing and Gregory K Laing, “The Student as Customer Metaphor: A Deconstruction Using Foucauldian Constructs,” *Australasian Accounting, Business and Finance Journal* 10, no. 1 (2016): 42, <https://doi.org/10.14453/aabfj.v10i1.5>.

and higher education, however, this work engages a critical view of the topic which will be further explored in the first chapter.

The American University

The scope concerning the location of higher education institutions excludes a global focus. Rather, the research engages institutions solely within the United States.⁸ The reason for this narrow scope remains clear. First, the context of late-stage capitalism and the impact of global capitalism on higher educational institutions is unique within the United States due to Americanism. The manner in which market logic, fused with a culture of Americanism, contributes to the bureaucratization and commodification of higher education institutions and the SAC model is, arguably, unique to the United States. Consumerism, industrial expansion, materialism, and individualism, although not fairly globalized, are definitive and deeply engrained aspects of American culture itself and its domestic market behavior. These characteristics are key influences on the history of economic development and the history of higher education that have contributed to the way the modern student navigates the educational space. However, this perspective does not entail the claim that higher education institutions outside of the United States do not face similar, equally dire, and complicated dilemmas.

The scope of this analysis is not only relevant to my own experience as a student in an American, higher education institution and a child of the modern notion of Americanism, but the unique circumstance of American institutions remains neglected in the body of scholarship concerning the SAC model and universities. Therefore, this scope

⁸ This excludes any portal campuses of an American institutions implemented in a global network, such as NYU Florence, Stanford South Africa, etc.

and focus should deservedly, if not necessarily, be engaged and analyzed. Scholarship and research concerning how the SAC model affects the spaces of higher learning as well as how late-stage capitalism, morality, and universities interact is prevalent in the UK and other international publications. Yet, America specifically remains unanalyzed. Therefore, it is in hopes of contributing to a larger project already at hand that the American university is explicitly engaged.

There are multiple forms of higher educational institutions therefore it is necessary to clarify what the term “American university” refers to. The primary categories of higher education institutions within the United States are as follows:

Technical Institutes and Professional Schools. Institutions that feature multiple curricula aimed at preparing a student for a career by teaching specific skills. These institutions may grant associates, bachelors, or master and Ph.D. degrees depending upon the institute. Further, many technical institutes are STEM-focused and may qualify to be considered colleges or universities but are ultimately defined by their focus on studies, training, and research.

Vocational (Trade) School. Institutions that grant certificates or diplomas upon completing the training of a certain skill required for a specific career. Programs are short, requiring 1.5 years or less to complete. Vocational schools include training programs for careers as an electrician, nursing, cosmetologist, construction manager, and pharmacy technician to name a few.

University (Public or Private). Universities are four-year institutions granting bachelor's, master's, and Ph.D. degrees. They offer a broader area of study than liberal

arts colleges but often feature their own liberal arts college on their campus. Further, universities are made up of multiple schools such as the school of business, school of social work, school of engineering, or school of arts and sciences. Many universities are research-based meaning a large part of their academic mission includes producing research and studies. Universities are often larger than liberal arts colleges and other higher education institutions featuring a large student-to-faculty ratio.

Liberal Arts College. A four-year institution that grants bachelor's degrees and/or higher degrees primarily in studies of humanities and social sciences. These institutions often feature a core curriculum that requires students to take classes across multiple disciplines for the first two years before enrolling in classes that are specific to a chosen major. Liberal arts institutions offer a "well-rounded" education for students in the hopes of producing more informed, multi-skilled professionals. Further, although these institutions may feature research focuses, they are distinct from research-based universities and often feature smaller campuses and enrollments than universities.

The "American university" includes only universities and liberal arts colleges in its definition, including both junior and community colleges. Unlike the other institutions, described, universities and colleges have a certain ethos defined by their emphasis on student experience. Although institutions like technical colleges or vocational schools may place some focus on the experiences of students and have a certain institutional image, these are secondary to an emphasis on training, professional experience, or focus on research and development of a specific discipline. Universities and liberal arts schools

are situated within certain rhetoric of community⁹ and defined by institutional identity. Further, these types of institutions often feature mission statements, statements of value, a core philosophy of education¹⁰, and emphasis on the student experience in terms of personal formation, academic growth, and contribution to society as a testament to the university. Although other types of institutions may include mission statements and values, they are often not as constitutive of their ethos and rarely guide the curriculum as they often do at universities and colleges.

Late-Stage Capitalism

Understanding the definition and function of the technical term “late-stage capitalism” establishes the broader context that this thesis engages. Late-stage capitalism or even late capitalism refers less towards formal economic models and rather describes an all-pervading cultural, social, and psychological phenomenon that is engrained in the everyday behaviors and material realities of capitalism. In other words, it refers often to absurdities and existential dread caused by the contemporary economy and the intertwined nature between powerful corporations, market behavior, and individuals. Late or late-stage capitalism appeared in Marxist critiques of capitalism in the 1930s, but the modern understanding of the terms emerged in critical theory in the Frankfurt School. Namely, Teodoro Adorno and Max Horkheimer laid the foundations for contemporary understanding of the term *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944). However,

⁹ Here, community includes appeals to a certain identity students assume as a result of attending an institution. Rhetoric includes appeals to family, emphasis on embodying school spirit through identifying students as extensions of school mascots; for example Baylor Bears, Princeton Tigers, Texas Aggies, etc. These created communities have their own ethos and code of conduct, being a member of such a community thus makes the student a representation of the institution itself.

¹⁰ Beyond mere technical training, hard skill development, and specialty of discipline.

this thesis engages American literary critic and professor at Duke University Frederic Jameson's contemporary understanding of "late-stage capitalism".

In his 1991 book, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Jameson draws from the work of Belgian Marxist, economist, and critical theorist Ernest Mandel which lay the foundations for Jameson's understanding of late-stage capitalism. It was Mandel who brought the term "late-stage capitalism" to prominence following the Frankfurt School. Mandel's *Der Spätkapitalismus*¹¹ (1972) analyses three phases of capitalist production¹², with late capitalism being the final epoch following World War II. According to Mandel, capitalism throughout the United States and United Kingdom following World War II was dominated by mass consumption of materials, the expansion of the national corporations to multinational corporations, the growth in globalization and its impacts on labor and markets, as well as the flow of capital throughout these spaces.¹³ Succinctly, late capitalism "constitutes *generalized universal industrialization* for the first time in history."¹⁴

Jameson's work mirrors Mandel's in outlining his own three phases, however, Jameson's phases focus on cultural production as it relates to global capitalism.¹⁵ Put short, it explores the all-pervading nature of market logic outside of the market domain.

¹¹ Translation from the original German is "Late Capitalism."

¹² Mandel's three phases are, respectively, 1) Intra-state market economy phase, 2) Globalizing phase, and 3) Late capitalist phase.

¹³ Frederic Jameson, *The Jameson Reader*, eds. Michel Hardt and Kathi Weeks (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000), 165-166.

¹⁴ Ernest Mandel, *Late capitalism* (London: Humanities Press, 1975), 382.

¹⁵ Jameson's three phases are: 1) Realism, 2) Modernism, and 3) Postmodernism.

Jameson's definition works both horizontally and vertically across an analytical axis of economic and cultural structures. He states that postmodern, late-stage capitalism represents a "transformation of the life world which is somehow decisive but incomparable with the older convulsions¹⁶ of modernization and industrialization, less perceptible and dramatic, somehow, but more permanent precisely because more thoroughgoing and all-pervasive."¹⁷ Defining features of Jameson's late-stage capitalism include:

the new international division of labor, a vertiginous new dynamic in international banking and the stock exchanges (including the enormous Second and Third World debt), new forms of media interrelationship (very much including transportation systems such as containerization), computers and automation, the flight of production to advanced Third World areas, along with all the more familiar social consequences, including the crisis of traditional labor, the emergence of yuppies, and gentrification on a now-global scale.¹⁸

Additionally, new forms of business¹⁹ and "the frantic economic urgency of producing fresh waves of ever more novel-seeming goods at ever greater rates of turnover" that "assigns an increasingly essential structural function and position to aesthetic innovation and experimentation" are definitive of late-stage capitalism in a postmodern era.²⁰

It is within the space of this globalized, post-industrial, postmodern epoch, that *everything* is transformed into complete commodification and consumption. Late-stage capitalism attempts to describe the zeitgeist of today in relation to capitalism being all-

¹⁶ For Jameson, both the use of "late" in "late-stage capitalism" and "post" in "postmodernity" are of importance since they establish a contrast to an older, no longer helpful, notion of modernity and capitalism.

¹⁷ Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), xxi.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, xix.

¹⁹ Multination and transnational organizations.

²⁰ Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 5.

pervading to an almost absurd degree, and how the zeitgeist of the modern world is one defined by the ever-evolving capitalist logic. Jameson concisely describes “that capitalism is an omnipresent form of existence and would say it’s a continuation of the process that was called, in the famous missing chapter of *Capital*, a ‘subsumption.’ That is, everything has been subsumed under capital to a much greater degree than ever before.”²¹ It is Jameson’s definition of late-stage capitalism as outlined in *Postmodernity, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* that provides the overarching context for this thesis.

²¹ Jameson, as quoted in Nico Baumbach, Damon R. Young, and Genevieve Yue, “Revisiting Postmodernism: An Interview with Fredric Jameson,” *Social Text* 34, no. 2 (127) (June 1, 2016): 144, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-3468026>.

CHAPTER ONE

The Modern Times – History, Capitalism, and the University in Conversation

The history of the American university is incredibly rich and complex; therefore, a succinct summary or timeline of the major transformations will inherently exclude a plethora of informative but unnecessary details, considering the focus of this work. Nonetheless, this chapter aims to establish a clear timeline that follows the major shifts – whether social, political, religious, or historical – that redefined the structure, philosophy, and purpose of the American university as an institution tracing from the early seventeenth century to the twenty-first century. Further, it is necessary to recognize that the proper role and place of the university was, and remains, defined in accordance with established notions of truth, historical significance, and differing, historically developed perspectives on the importance of higher education as a means of apprehending specific goods and knowledge. In other words, “a university is part of the general socio-economic and political fabric of a given society and era.”¹

Over the course of five eras—the Colonial Era, the Post-Colonial/Revolutionary Era, the nineteenth century, the twentieth century, and the twenty-first century—the American university undergoes numerous turns and transformations. In these transformations, cultural and political phenomena ultimately cement the philosophy and function of the university as an educational and societal institution for the formation of

¹ Sintayehu Kassaye Alemu, “The Meaning, Idea, and History of University/Higher Education in Africa: A Brief Literature review,” *Forum for International Research in Education* 4, no.3 (2016): 212.

individuals as citizens in accordance with societal standards. The establishment of the university in America began in the Colonial Era, beginning in the seventeenth century, with Harvard University, established in 1636. The Christian tradition was deeply significant to Colonial America and served as “the foundation stone of the whole intellectual structure which was brought to the New World” with Anglicans, Lutherans, and Presbyterians carrying on a long tradition of scholasticism which pedestaled certain Enlightenment ideals as the center of human knowledge.¹

Eight of the nine pre-revolutionary universities² established in the United States were institutions founded by organized Christianity. Harvard University’s founding document states that the primary goal of the university “was to advance learning and perpetuate it to posterity; dreading to leave an illiterate ministry to the churches, when our present ministers shall lie in the dust.”³ Therefore, the primary function of Colonial universities was to produce trained clergy as well as public officials, lawyers, doctors, and experts in literature. In the Colonial university, the rationalization of faith cemented the educational tradition, and to the Colonial scholars, “the university man was in direct line of succession to the original prophets and apostles. The college was a local encampment of the universal ‘militia’ Christianity.”⁴

¹ John Brubacher and Willis Rudy, *Higher Education in Transition: History of American Colleges and Universities* (Somerset, United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis Group, 1997), 6.

² The nine Colonial era colleges are: Yale University (originally Collegiate School) (1701), Harvard University (originally New College) (1636), Rutgers University (originally Queen’s College) (1766), College of William and Mary (1698), Brown University (originally College of Rhode Island) (1764), University of Pennsylvania (originally College of Philadelphia) (1740), Princeton University (originally College of New Jersey) (1746), and Dartmouth College (1769).

³ *New England’s First Fruits: in Respect, First of the Conversion of Some, Conviction of Divers, Preparation of Sundry of the Indians* (London, 1643), 23.

⁴ Brubacher and Rudy, *Higher Education in Transition*, 7.

However, beginning in the late eighteenth century, the American state university began to emerge, prompted by the influence of the European Enlightenment on American thought. Post-Colonial American society pioneered new notions of independence, republicanism, and a demand for the separation of church and state. These notions became defining features of a newly emerging Americanism and led to demands for educational institutions to be established within states to allow for the distribution of education across different regions of the country. The end of the Civil War and the beginning of the Industrial Age was met with a demand for wider access to universities and an altered curriculum influenced by utilitarian notions of improving everyday life and organizational freedom from the church.⁵ The prevalence of utilitarianism and the growing recognition of natural and social sciences disrupted the location of knowledge and authority regarding truth. For example, Darwin's work on species "helped elevate the scientists to a new position of high authority; some events that faith had formerly explained as divine intervention science [were] now treated as natural phenomena."⁶ This shift in the authority of knowledge and the onslaught of industrialization led to a society that "now needed people with great proficiencies in more and varied contemporary practical endeavors: experts in crop raising and cattle breeding, authorities in civic and mechanical engineering, captains for commercial and financial enterprises."⁷

⁵ Mark C. Ebersole, "Utilitarianism: The Distinctive Motif of American Higher Education," *The Journal of Education* 161, no. 4 (1979): 7.

⁶ Ebersole, "Utilitarianism", 7.

⁷ Ibid.

Rounding the end of the Civil War and the beginning of the Industrial Age, new technologies and sciences⁸ emerged and Millian utilitarian philosophy regarding education emphasized the growing need for practical, socially useful education and training in light of these emerging disciplines that had use outside of academia or the clergy. Mill's philosophy was that "men are men...before they are lawyers or physicians or merchants or manufacturers; and if you make them capable and sensible men, they will make themselves capable and sensible lawyers or physicians."⁹ In reflection of this, post-Colonial universities in the late eighteenth century were viewed as institutions designed to educate the common man under the structures of Millian utilitarianism. Utilitarianism, increasing industrialization, and the emergence of new sciences all contributed to American higher education emphasizing "more explicitly useful knowledge for the public good in general, and for the new professions in particular; concomitantly, since classical and liberal studies did not issue in direct preparation for the new occupations, these venerable studies became increasingly expendable within the scheme of higher learning."¹⁰ It was the nationwide industrialization beginning near the start of the Civil War until the early twentieth century that led to a boom of public universities.¹¹ The passing of The Morrill Act in 1862 under Lincoln catalyzed this boom and led to increased specialization and diversification of subjects in American universities. The purpose of The Morrill Act was to grant funds for

⁸ The most prominent emerging scientific knowledge of the time was Darwinism.

⁹ John Stuart Mill, *Inaugural Address; Delivered to the University of St. Andrews, Feb. 1st, 186*, (England: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1867), 4.

¹⁰ Ebersole, "Utilitarianism," 7.

¹¹ Public universities, at this time, were known as "land-grant colleges" and specialized in areas of engineering and agriculture.

the endowment, support, and maintenance of at least one college where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts...in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life.¹²

The Industrial Age of America led to an increase of established colleges along with an intellectual and cultural expansion and interest in both the natural and social sciences. Such newfound interests led to an increase in the demand for trained scientists. For the first time in the history of American higher education, institutions experienced direct relationships with the market and began to dictate courses of study in relation to broader economic demands. Although at this time, social and natural sciences were still guided by a pursuit of truth grounded in empiricism, specialization in these scientific topics was growing in demand in hopes of solving emerging social issues related to industry, cities, immigration, and prolonged depressions.¹³ The university faced another transformation beginning with World War I and completed its metamorphoses by 1944, one which shifted the purpose of the university away from religious, philosophical, and urban development and rather towards following government interests.

World War I marked the beginning of government interest in the university as a source of research and technological development. During the war, the government offered institutional research grants for the benefit of accessing the research, findings, and inventions that belonged to higher education institutions. This same relationship became firmly established and practiced with the onset of World War II, with private

¹² The Morrill Land-Grant Acts, Public Law 37-108, 12 Stat. 503, (1862), <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=33&page=transcript>.

¹³ Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz, "The Shaping of Higher Education: The Formative Years in the United States, 1890 to 1940," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 13, no. 1 (February 1, 1999): 39, <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.13.1.37>.

businesses now entering the system of exchange of products and research with educational institutions. It was throughout the late 1930s through 1943 that “universities became an integral part of a triad consisting of the military, industry, and institutions of higher learning” which led to the birth of a national security state.¹⁴ According to Professor of History at the University of Manitoba, Henry Heller, the national security state had the purpose of establishing a “permanent military and ideological mobilization to ensure the interests and power of the capitalist class and to ward off another economic depression. World War II had proved a boon, enabling the revival of the capitalist economy and the extension of American power worldwide.”¹⁵

Following the end of World War II, in 1944, congress passed The GI Bill which reframed higher education as a staple of the American way of life, allowing those who served to receive the benefits of university enrollment in repayment for their service. The GI Bill actively contributed to the “boom of the post-war economy and overall stability and conformity of political life.”¹⁶ From the 1941-1942 pre-GI Bill academic year to the 1943-1944 academic year of its enactment, federal funding in higher education spiked drastically from approximately \$53,000 annually to \$308,000.¹⁷ Following the enactment of the GI Bill, legislators predicted approximately seven hundred thousand veterans to participate in the bill’s benefits but were met with three times the amount of enrollees and

¹⁴ Henry Heller, *The Capitalist University: The Transformations of Higher Education in the United States, 1945-2016*, (London: Pluto Press, 2016), 27.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁷ Thomas D. Snyder, *120 Years of American Education: a Statistical Portrait*, (Washington, D.C: U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, National Center for Education Statistics, 1993), 89.

with it, unprecedented and unanticipated economic gain.¹⁸ World War II and the enactment of the GI Bill marked the beginning of the “Golden-Age”¹⁹ of the university. Despite the United States no longer engaging in major warfare, there was an increase in government funding for research that led to slow privatization of the university and an ever-growing business relationship between universities and the government. By 1950, the United States government had “funneled over \$150 million to a select group of universities for contract research. Some thirteen institutions garnered over eighty-five percent of the federal research contracts and creating the semblance of a network of national research universities that has remained dominant in securing federal research funds.”²⁰

Entering the Cold War Era, tensions between Russian and American technological advancement propelled the university into the forefront of private business and government investments for the sake of national security and economic interests. Enrollment in universities rose significantly as an intellectual challenge to the USSR’s own intellectual and scientific prowess. Particularly, Russia’s development and launch of Sputnik was a catalyst for an increase in government involvement and investment in higher education. Sputnik caused

a tremendous spark for enlarging federal investment in America’s colleges and universities on an unprecedented scale, and with tremendous implications for hastening the development of new modes of scientific research. No other Cold War event, including the Soviet attainment of the atomic bomb, so shocked and

¹⁸ Joan Straumanis, “A Dean’s-Eye View: The Golden Age of Universities on the Make,” ed. Richard M. Freeland, *Change* 24, no. 6 (1992): 63.

¹⁹ “The Golden Age” of American higher education refers to an, approximately, twenty-five-year period between 1954 and 1970.

²⁰James A. Douglass, “The Cold War, Technology, and the American University,” (paper presented at the 91st Pacifica Coast Branch of the American Historical Society, San Diego, California, August 1998), 2.

galvanized American lawmakers and the public in their joint resolve to invest in and reposition higher education. Sputnik created an urgency for further investment and introspection, heightening the sense among the public that education, and specifically the academy, provided the key ingredient for beating the Soviet's space age war machine.²¹

Higher education institutions now fulfilled a role of training grounds for American citizens, aiming at creating skilled workers needed for the Cold War economy, informing citizens on the threat of communism, and parading the social opportunities offered by American democracy.²² Investment in the hard sciences and STEM disciplines led the university to organize around the priority of these disciplines to meet research demands against the threat of war. STEM research and products soon determined an institution's value in the eyes of businesses and the government. It was here, where the modern corporate university was born, whose purpose was "primarily to mobilize the intellectual and technical resources of the universities to serve the interests of business and the armed forces, including the provision of plentiful supplies of educated managers, supervisors, professionals, teachers, and salaried workers."²³

Following the Vietnam War, colleges began paying more attention to what students and parents wanted in terms of the services and curriculum offered. Through increased critiques of the corporate university as corrupt and detrimental to the individual, and an increase in student voices in anti-war, anti-government, and pro-civil rights dialogues led to the university evolving into a far more political space. Students began demanding universities to meet certain political and social expectations which

²¹ Ibid., 5.

²² David F. Labaree, "Learning to Love the Bomb: The Cold War Brings the Best of Times to American Higher Education," in *Educational Research: Discourses of Change and Changes of Discourse*, eds. Paul Smeyers and Marc Depaepe (Dordrecht: Springer International Publishing, 2016), 101.

²³ Heller, *The Capitalist University*, 92.

created tension between university and government since campuses commonly served as grounds for Vietnam protests and anti-government rhetoric. Due to universities operating as the training ground for professionals, “the university became a legitimate focus for organizing” and students “perceived the university as deeply enmeshed with the political and economic structure through its corporate and real estate investments, government contracts, military research, and personal ties to Washington.”²⁴ Protests on campuses throughout the Vietnam Era “sought to create the moral society by changing university or government policy” and to turn a critical eye towards perspectives on “the true nature of the university and its collusion with the capitalist imperialist system.”²⁵ At a sudden increase, colleges began to welcome non-traditional students, and soon part-time, older,²⁶ and female students accounted for more than fifty percent of Vietnam Era enrollment.²⁷ Such demographics, who were previously just an afterthought, began to occupy the university space and both diversify and individualize the higher education space.

The social and political tensions that arose during the Vietnam and post-Vietnam eras prompted the reemergence of Marxism on campuses. In this reemergence, a battle originated that continues today between neoliberalism and higher education. The cries of neoliberalism became the commanding voices of how higher education should be organized in relation to neoliberal perspectives on American politics and economics. For neoliberalism,

²⁴ Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, "The 1960s and the Transformation of Campus Cultures" *History of Education Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (1986): 21, doi:10.2307/368875.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁶ Over the age of twenty-two.

²⁷ Marvin Lazerson, “The Disappointments of Success: Higher Education after World War II,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 559, no. 1 (1998): 74.

Market competition is sacred...meaning social programs are only considered valuable if they are profitable. A social program like higher education can remain politically viable (and the public can be sure it is getting its money's worth) if it can show a quantifiable return on investment. Otherwise, it will be seen as wasteful and inefficient, needing to be privatized or sacrificed to the purity of the market. Higher education, from this perspective, should be reinvented in accordance with neoliberal market logics.²⁸

As the centers of knowledge production, universities were required to become aligned with business practices and contribution to the overall market, or else face extinction. With this, “the quest for disinterested knowledge or knowledge for knowledge’s sake, including focusing on basic or theoretical science as against immediately useful or profitable knowledge, was deemed to be out of date.”²⁹ These changes forced students and faculty into the budget responsibility of “becoming self-reliant and entrepreneurial actors in the market” and thus education was less a public right and instead more an “investment made by knowledge consumers in order to eventually improve their prospects in the market.”³⁰ The dominance of neoliberal ideology led to adapting rhetorical appeals to freedom or deregulation to perform any governing or administrative action in the name of competition, utility, and efficiency.³¹ Following the prevalence of this dominating agenda, the post-secondary education market gradually became an integral part of the broader American capitalist market. From the beginning of the Vietnam Era in 1961 to 1990, the annual revenue of American higher education³²

²⁸Luke Winslow, “The Undeserving Professor: Neoliberalism and the Reinvention of Higher Education,” *Rhetoric & public affairs* 18, no. 2 (2015): 205.

²⁹ Heller, *The Capitalist University*, 184.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Winslow, “The Undeserving Professor,” 205.

³² Including both private and public institutions.

increased from approximately \$7.5 million to \$140 million. The revenues at degree-granting postsecondary institutions in the United States has since increased significantly, with revenue standing at “\$672 billion, with \$416 billion at public institutions, \$242 billion at private nonprofit institutions, and \$14 billion at private for-profit institutions” for the 2018-2019 academic year.³³ The market value of higher education in America continues to grow both domestically and abroad. The United States invests 2.6 percent of its GDP on higher education³⁴, a higher GDP spending on post-secondary education than any other nation except Chile.³⁵ In 2009, education markets represented around \$600 billion in revenue for corporate interests with over one thousand state schools being contracted out to private companies.³⁶ Globally, from 2016-2018, “the private colleges

³³ Véronique Irwin, Jijun Zhang, Xiaolei Wang, Sarah Hein, Ke Wang, Ashley Roberts, Christina York, et al, *Report on the Condition of Education 2021*, (NCES 2021-144), U.S. Department of Education, (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, May 2021), 28 <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=202114428>

³⁴ The GDP spending on post-secondary education was reported to be 2.6 percent in 2009, 2012, 2017 by multiple sources (Hussar, Zhang, Hein, Wang, et al, 2020), (OECD, 2012), (OECD, 2017). However, there are some reports that share different data such as a report by the U.S Department of Treasury stating that American higher education accounted for 3.6 percent of the GDP in 2009. Therefore, there may be inaccuracies in the data reported, however, the data presented in the paper was chosen based on source reliability as well as frequency of the reported GDP percentage. For overview see OECD, "United States", in *Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators*, (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2012), 7, <https://doi.org/10.1787/eag-2012-56-en>., U.S Department of the Treasury, *The economics of higher education: a report prepared by the Department of the Treasury with the Department of Education*, (Washington, DC: Department of the Treasury, December 2012), 7, https://www.treasury.gov/connect/blog/documents/20121212_economics%20of%20higher%20ed_vfinal.pdf f., Bill Hussar, Jijun Zhang, Sarah Hein, Ke Wang, Ashley Roberts, Jiashan Cui, Mary Smith, et al, *The Condition of Education 2020*, (NCES 2020-144), U.S. Department of Education, (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 2020), 274, <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2020144>., and OECD, “Indicator C4 What is the Total Public Spending on Education?,” in *Education at a Glance 2018: OECD Indicators*, (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2017), https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2018/indicator-c4-what-is-the-total-public-spending-on-education_eag-2018-24-en#page1.

³⁵ Hussar, Zhang, Hein, Wang, et al, *The Condition of Education 2020*, 274. And Henry Giroux, *Stealing Innocence: Corporate Culture's War on Children*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 190-191.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 85. Giroux does not disclose if these companies and corporations are domestic, international, or both.

segment held a share of 33.4 percent in the global market and 25.2 percent in the US.”³⁷ Compared to the humble beginnings of the American university, post-secondary education has become a major player in the global economy and is predicted to grow exponentially.

The increase in corporate investment and partnerships between private businesses, the government, and universities has led higher education institutions to rely upon operating as businesses to keep up with the demands of private and public interests. Under this mode of operation, “the classroom culture must now be concerned with...the values of productivity, cost-efficiency and accountability.”³⁸ The modern American university casts a grim shadow indeed. Tracing the history of the American university, it is clear the degrees of separation between the realm of business and the realm of education have reduced radically, creating a new space: the micro-market system of bureaucratic higher education institutions in reflection of the “overall financialization of the U.S. economy.”³⁹ Globalization, industry expansion, and technological developments of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have confronted the university with a clientele who grew up in a highly individualized, instant-gratification, materialistic world that places value upon advancement and monetary impact in the wider capitalist market.

³⁷ “Global Higher Education Market Size Estimates and Forecasts (Quantitative Data), By Segments, 2016-2027,” In *Higher Education Market Size, Share & COVID-19 Impact Analysis, By Component (Hardware, Solutions, and Services), By Learning Mode (Offline Learning, Online Learning), By End User (Private Colleges, Community Colleges, and State Universities), and Regional Forecast, 2020-2027*, (India: Fortune Business Insights, 2020), <https://www.fortunebusinessinsights.com/press-release/global-higher-education-market-10359>.

³⁸ Janice A. Newson, “Disrupting the ‘Student as Consumer’ Model: The New Emancipatory Project,” *International Relations* 18, no. 2 (June 1, 2004): 233, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047117804042674>.

³⁹ Heller, *The Capitalist University*, 175.

A Disquieting Relationship

The present commercialization, capitalization, and financialization of higher education inevitably reframe the relationship of higher learning institutions and the economy, but, in particular, it changes the relationship between the university and the student. The corporatization of higher education has facilitated a disquieting relationship, namely the student-as-customer or student-as-consumer model—shortened to the SAC model. Usually, both student-as-consumer and student-as-customer are accepted as one and the same in regard to the use of “SAC” and the overall understanding of the term. However, there is a stark difference between customer and consumer, and the acceptance of one or the other, as well as the inclusion of both, exemplifies different versions of how the student engages their position in relation to higher education. This section distinguishes the differences between the role of customer versus consumer, emphasizing the harms of the role of student-as-customer and over the role of student-as-consumer.

Allow me to start with a familiar, colloquial term to expand upon the SAC model. There is an utterance that guides the way in which one navigates life within capitalist structures and markets: “*The customer is always right.*” This utterance is one of power, a power that is reflected in the relationships the consumer assumes as a position of superiority with any counterpart to consumption or providers of services. “The customer is always right” may not be spoken aloud in the classroom or the offices of faculty, but the intent and implication of the utterance have been internalized and reflected in actions. Why, however, is the saying the *customer* is always right, but not the *consumer*? The student-as-consumer model accounts for the student as an agent which encounters a certain output of the market but lacks the relationship between agent, capital, and

product. A consumer does not explicitly mean holding investment or stake in a product, but rather a witness to or a user of something who is removed from the initial grasp of market behavior.

The role of the consumer operates at a level far more casual than that of the customer. The consumer is caught in the flow of market power, the customer exercises and contributes to it. Put simply, customers *buy*, and consumers *use*. The customer may be a consumer and vice versa since use and purchasing are not exclusive. Take the illustration of a mother going to the local store and purchasing a box of cereal that she takes home and gives to her child. In this case, the mother is the customer, while the child is the consumer. A customer is defined and valued regarding their potential and existing spending and contribution power to the market. The roles of customer and consumer are incredibly embedded in the everyday life of the modern American citizen. The all-pervading, inescapable nature of capitalist or market activity of everyday life constantly requires individuals to mediate between or enter the role of customer, consumer, even product, or investment at any moment. The market has become internalized in the operation of individuals on a day-to-day basis.⁴⁰ However, the student-as-customer model accurately describes the realities of modern student engagement with higher education while the student-as-consumer model falls short. Thus, for the remainder of this thesis, the term “the SAC model” accepts only the student-as-customer model.

What remains unique about the SAC model, is the manner in which students interact with educational experiences provided by the university in a way that transforms education into a product, universities into micro-markets, and faculty as the middlemen

⁴⁰ The internalization and constant operation of market behavior and market logic outside of the boundaries of the market itself remains a definitive feature of Jameson’s late-stage capitalism.

of this bureaucratic machine. The SAC model, embodying both the role of consumer and customer,⁴¹ operates within an overarching understanding of students as “autonomous choosers”. The term “autonomous chooser” comes from neoliberal perspectives on education. The notion of the student as autonomous chooser

embodies a particular conception of human nature (homo economicus or rational self-interested, utility maximizer) which assumes that all human beings not only tend to make, but also want to make perpetual consumer-style choices.⁴² Neo-liberalism’s ideology of consumer sovereignty and the fundamental human ‘faculty of choice’ suggest that we, as market egoists, are living insofar as we continuously make informed rational choices for personal optimal benefit;⁴³ this means it would be unthinkable for us not to value, or to give up our market right to choose^{44, 45}.

Under this view, the role of the student as autonomous chooser is one liberated from authoritative oversight and places the control of the learning experience in the hands of the student. However, as critical theorist of education Michael Peters remarks, the role as autonomous chooser is not pedagogically emancipatory, as this role “provides students with grounds for rights claims – their rights as consumers of a service”⁴⁶ placing the learner at the center of the educational process and separating the community of knowers

⁴¹ There exists an emphasis on the customer role embedded in the SAC model, but when referred to, it always, to some degree pertains to both the customer and consumer aspects.

⁴² James D. Marshall, *Michel Foucault: Personal Autonomy and Education* (London: Kluwer Academic, 1996) as cited in Shen Ching Min (Julia Shen), “(Re)Envisioning autonomy: Neo-liberalism, performance-based school management and the development of ideal global citizens in Taiwan,” (Master’s Thesis, University of Canterbury, 2012), 48.

⁴³ Peter Fitzsimons, “Third Way: Values for Education?,” *Theory and Research in Education* 4, no. 2 (July 2006): 151–71, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477878506064541> as cited in Min, “(Re)Envisioning autonomy,” 48.

⁴⁴ Linda J. Graham, “(Re)Visioning the Centre: Education Reform and the ‘Ideal’ Citizen of the Future,” *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 39, no. 2 (January 2007): 197–215, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.2007.00306.x> as cited in Min, “(Re)Envisioning autonomy,” 48.

⁴⁵ Min, “(Re)Envisioning autonomy,” 48.

⁴⁶ Chapter two engages Alasdair Macintyre’s own perspectives on rights claims and emotivism, further analyzing moral crises posed for universities with the SAC model.

and learners into two disconnected, incompatible pieces.⁴⁷ Although the role of the students as autonomous choosers is argued to be pedagogically beneficial, they do not share the same power, per se, as a traditional role of customer. Rather, students as located within this system,

have no basis for perceiving that they have an investment in the way the institution functions, either for themselves or for students collectively, nor that they share responsibility for the way it functions. They are encouraged to think of themselves as ‘receivers’ of a service, not as co-creators of a teaching–learning community. How then is it possible to develop and activate a reflexive consciousness among students about the role that they should play in their own learning, if they do not hold, embrace or enact a meaningful political status within institutions where they present themselves as learners?⁴⁸

The student stands in a crisis, and the only way to deal with this sense of loss as both an individual-qua-individual⁴⁹ and as removed from the creative contribution to a teaching-learning space is to hold fast to the grounds for customer satisfaction and appeals to customer rights. This is the epoch that has deteriorated the student-teacher relationship and moral formation which once rested within educational institutions. The word student no longer adheres to its assumed definition and role of learner, but instead, students have become customers. Students now arrive at higher education institutions equipped with a notion of being owed proper, measurable, return for their purchase in the form of training and knowledge that is valuable and utile to the overarching economic and social systems.

A 2015 survey⁵⁰ shows that the top three reasons students decide to go to college are to 1) improve employment opportunities, 2) to make more money, and 3) to get a

⁴⁷ Newson, “Disrupting the ‘Student as Consumer’ Model”, 230.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ As opposed to individual-as-customer.

⁵⁰ Sample size of one thousand students aged sixteen to forty.

good job, with each of these factors being “very important” and ranking above all other factors considered in the reasons to attend college.⁵¹ Entering the university with such expectations leads to students being inherently concerned with the outcomes of their academic success and may view their classes as means to the end of having more market value. However, as mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, there is little research grounded in data regarding the SAC model and student’s perspectives of their relationship with higher education. The scholarship that exists is limited by disconnected data regarding regions and years between data collection and conduction of surveys. The lack of “empirical work means that we are unable to observe the purported change in students over time and as such cannot presume that a shift is, or has, taken place, regardless of the ongoing and well-documented policy developments in the sector.”⁵² Despite these limitations, looking at these surveys chronologically reveals that student perspectives and acceptance of the SAC model continue to grow.

Compared to 28.9 percent of students that expressed a customer orientation in 2013,⁵³ a separate survey in 2017 found 47 percent of undergraduates regarded themselves as customers of universities.⁵⁴ However, all students whether directly

⁵¹Rachel Fishman, “Part 1 Deciding to Go to College,” *College Decisions Survey*, (Washington D.C: New America, May 2015), 4-5, https://static.newamerica.org/attachments/3248-deciding-to-go-to-college/CollegeDecisions_PartI.148dcab30a0e414ea2a52f0d8fb04e7b.pdf.

⁵² Simon Marginson, “Investment in the self: The government of student financing in Australia,” *Studies in Higher Education* 22, no. 2 (1997): 119-131, DOI: [10.1080/03075079712331380994](https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079712331380994) as cited in Richard Budd, Undergraduate orientations towards higher education in Germany and England: problematizing the notion of ‘student as customer,’” *High Education* 73, (January 1, 2017): 25, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.baylor.edu/10.1007/s10734-015-9977-4>.

⁵³ Daniel B Saunders, “They Do Not Buy It: Exploring the Extent to Which Entering First-Year Students View Themselves as Customers.” *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education* 25, no. 1 (January 2015): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08841241.2014.969798>.

⁵⁴ “Education, Consumer Rights and Maintaining Trust: What Students Want from Their University,” (London: Universities UK, June 2017), 5, <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2017/education-consumer-rights-maintaining-trust-web.pdf>.

embracing the SAC model or not, “were of the view that a more consumerist approach was both an inevitable feature of students’ changing relationship to their higher education and was justified through the personal costs involved in participating in higher education.”⁵⁵ Further, across the board, students perceived that they held greater authority and scope in regulating their programs and the overall function of the university. Such an attitude was justified by the transactional relationship they held with their institutions brought about by the perceived inevitability of a consumerist approach to higher education.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, those who strongly or somewhat agreed with viewing themselves as customers of higher education positioned universities as “service providers whose value and performance is largely equated with how well they conformed to the effective delivery of a service that promised to offer a positive experience and facilitate favourable future outcomes” for students.⁵⁷

Professor Paul Trout at the University of Montana asserts that “students who think of themselves as customers ... expect satisfaction regardless of effort, want knowledge served up in ‘easily digestible, bite sized chunks’ and assume that academic success, including graduation, is guaranteed” and notes that administration thus aims at avoiding student complaints, often done by lowering academic standards.⁵⁸ Passivity in the realm of learning becomes an issue under the SAC model. The student then passes the

⁵⁵ Michael Tomlinson, “Student Perceptions of Themselves as ‘Consumers’ of Higher Education,” *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 38, no. 4 (May 19, 2017): 456, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2015.1113856>.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 457.

⁵⁸ As quoted in Michael Potts, “The Consumerist Subversion of Education,” *Academic Questions* 18, no. 3 (September 2005): 54, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12129-005-1018-9>.

responsibility of their own learning on to their instructors that leads to a disinclination for classroom participation and increased pressure on faculty and staff performance in terms of customer satisfaction.⁵⁹ Students-as-customers implicitly force a teacher-as-producer role upon the educators of a university, forces the university into the position of service provider, and establishes higher education as merely an investment for gaining the proper knowledge that will result in increased individual market value.

In my preliminary work for this thesis, in conversation with my own professors here at Baylor University, many noted how there exists pressure on faculty to give students good grades, even when they may not be deserving, or else face criticism from students, their families, and even receive class surveys that may reflect poorly on their performance reviews and possibly affect their pay and standing at Baylor. Similarly, Dr. Janice Newson, professor of psychology at York University offers her own account of how the SAC model has affected the relationship between students and teachers, elaborating that in her experience, “students have insisted that the increasing cost of tuition gives them the right to determine the extent to which they participate in class – that they should not have to do more than attend the class – and some have even argued that it entitles them to receive a ‘decent’ grade.”⁶⁰ So too does Trout account a student arguing that since they are paying for school, they should be given an A, whether or not they study.⁶¹ The university’s acceptance of the SAC model as legitimate and good business practice increasingly contributes to alienation between faculty and their

⁵⁹ Dennis E. Clayson and Debra A. Haley, “Marketing Models in Education: Students as Customers, Products, or Partners,” *Marketing Education Review* 15, no. 1, (2005): 1-10, doi: 10.1080/10528008.2005.11488884

⁶⁰ Newson, “Disrupting the ‘Student as Consumer’ Model”, 231.

⁶¹ As cited in Potts, “The Consumerist Subversion of Education,” 55.

students. Further, it actively deconstructs the classroom as a space of genuine learning where moral, intellectual, and social formation intermingle to educate the individual on how to not only enter the workforce but do so well, by seeking to instill certain habits and practices which would make one a proper, ethically engaged human being.

This thesis argues that pushing against the corporate nature of higher institutions and the nature of the SAC model via reinstalling the role of the university as a location of moral formation is a possible response to the problems outlined in this chapter. However, the SAC model and corporate nature of higher educational institutions are not simple problems, nor are the solutions clear cut, easily identifiable, or easily implemented. Rather, the problems at hand are moral problems. The work of Alasdair MacIntyre supports this view and even proposes a solution to the moral problems perpetuated by increased globalized capitalism and individualism of the modern western world. In order to reengage the university as a place of moral formation, an understanding of how moral formation occurs must be established. Additionally, an analysis of how the SAC model and higher education institutions of late-stage capitalism may problematize moral formation. MacIntyre's work, *After Virtue*, serves as the initial touchstone to deconstruct and analyze the moral conundrum higher education faces. MacIntyre offers three unifying aspects of all moral systems that offer valuable insight on how the university may begin to seek moral re-engagement with its students, proper regard for its faculty, and the goal of ethically contributing to society.

CHAPTER TWO

MacIntyre's *After Virtue*

In response to the overall moral problem at hand, MacIntyre offers a solution by proposing a return to Aristotelian virtue ethics. However, he does not clearly posit where the responsibility for a new moral formation that pushes against emotivism is located. He directs the reader to how and broadly where such a moral system that embraces Aristotelianism may take root and begin the process of moral formation, i.e., communities, institutions via practices¹, narratives², and traditions³; yet where are we left

¹ Practice(s) refer to a MacIntyrian definition of the term. This concept will be expanded upon in a later section titled "The Stuff of Virtue". However, MacIntyre's definition is included here for immediate reference and clarification: "By a 'practice' I am going to mean any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved are systematically extended." MacIntyre, Alasdair C., *After Virtue a Study in Moral Theory* 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 187.

² Traditions, as used throughout this chapter, refer to the scope of MacIntyre's definition and understanding of the term. A later section will outline MacIntyre's use and definition of the term, however, an overview of the definition is included for immediate reference and clarification. Traditions refer to the historically developed practices that are continually shaped by a dialectic process in which the practices, good, virtues are continually critiqued, defended, or left to fade away. All traditions are socially embedded, and it is through the tradition an individual inherits and participates in that moral particularity forms. Another account of tradition given by MacIntyre is: "A tradition is an argument extended through time in which certain fundamental agreements are defined and redefined." See MacIntyre, Alasdair C., *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 12 and MacIntyre, Alasdair C., *After Virtue a Study in Moral Theory* 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

³ The term narratives, understood by MacIntyre, refers to a hermeneutical and descriptive tool used to make sense of an individual life. First, narrative provides historical and chronological structure to an individual life, thus deeming all human action referenceable and intelligible. Second, since narrative operates in regard to a start and an end, a life is thus viewed in the scope of from life to death. This orientation towards death, or towards an end, provides teleological structure. It is also in relation to narratives that MacIntyre asserts humans are essential story-telling creatures and live life not unlike an author writing their own story, socially intertwined with other narratives and their respective authors. A more in-depth look at narratives will occur in a later section. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 213.

when facing the world of late-stage capitalism? The final chapter of this thesis argues and proposes a model that looking to reformed relationships of teachers and students within higher educational institutions are the most logical and arguably effective “location” to implement MacIntyre’s own arguments regarding the solution to emotivism and its effect on universities and society as a whole.

How do we place within the modern American university practices of pedagogical concern that can operate properly and thrive within the current structure of a university and transform it in light of *After Virtue*? This chapter begins with a brief overview of the master thesis of *After Virtue*, followed by an engagement with the thesis of emotivism to deconstruct the problem of the capitalist university and the SAC model. Following is an outline of MacIntyre’s account of the foundational aspects of morality and moral systems (traditions, narratives, and practices). Discussion of the conclusion of *After Virtue* and the remaining tensions or problems with MacIntyre’s solution in relation to the overall topic at hand will be addressed. Last, the analysis of the remaining tension in MacIntyre’s conclusion of *After Virtue* lays the grounds for engaging Foucault’s work in the following chapter. The content of this chapter will serve as a touchstone for a later chapter that further explores *After Virtue*¹ in order to formulate a possible solution to both MacIntyre’s own project, and the problems contained within it, as well as a framework to address the problem that serves as the focus of this thesis.

¹ *After Virtue* is not the sole text engaged in the synthesis chapter, rather it is supplemented with the work of Michel Foucault that is the focus of the next chapter.

Emotivism and the Thesis of After Virtue

In the prologue, MacIntyre discloses that the “central thesis of *After Virtue* is that the Aristotelian moral tradition is the best example we possess of a tradition whose adherents are rationally entitled to a high measure of confidence in its epistemological and moral resources.”² MacIntyre forms this central thesis in response to the disquieting catastrophe concerning the modern state of morality. According to MacIntyre, modern morality rests upon fragments of a once unified and coherent framework that was corroded by the failure of philosophical pursuits to rationally ground morality during and following the Enlightenment.³ From here, systems of morality devolved into a society plagued by unending moral disagreement, manipulative social relationships, and an incoherent, personalized, unstructured, and unfulfilling account of the human life and that has lost any teleological orientation. A language that bears moral meaning such as *good*, *ought*, *justice*, or *duty* no longer exists within an intelligible context. This new state of morality, the catastrophe of the modern age, is known as emotivism. Under emotivist morality, all moral judgments are nothing more than an utterance of a personal preference, attitude, or feeling.

MacIntyre argues in modern “moral argument the apparent assertion of principles functions as a mask for expressions of personal preference” and that “it does so on grounds which require no general historical and sociological investigation....For what emotivism asserts is in central part that there are and can be *no* valid rational justification

² MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, prologue.

³ The “Enlightenment Era”, in the context of *After Virtue* refers the philosophical attempt to ground morality as presented in the work of Diderot, Hume, Kant, and Kierkegaard. See chapter “Why the Enlightenment Project Had to Fail,” in *After Virtue*, 51-61.

for any claims that objective and impersonal moral standards exist and hence that there are no such standards.”⁴ Emotivism appears to be propped up by well-established, historically valid, objective, metaphysical, and universal categories of truth when it is rather poorly propped up by its own lack of rational grounding and shared methods of judgment. Emotivism fails to be rational in that it utilizes moral language that is void of meaning since these words, this language, has been severed from a vital, impersonal, system of morality that rules over individuals and the society of which they find themselves a part. Therefore, the only means of rationalizing moral claims in the individualism of today is by seating the self as the sole judge of proper moral reasoning. Due to this, emotivism creates manipulative relationships between individuals.

Expanding upon this, Macintyre notes

Evaluative utterance can in the end have no point or use but the expression of my own feelings or attitudes and the transformation of the feelings and attitudes of others. I cannot genuinely appeal to impersonal criteria, for there are no impersonal criteria. The sole reality of distinctively moral discourse is the attempt of one will align the attitudes, feelings, preference and choices of another with its own. Others are always means, never ends.⁵

Therefore, moral utterances and acts cannot be secured by appealing to categories of truth and rationality but rather can only be secured through a non-rational appeal to emotions and feelings. Morality ceases to operate outside of mere rhetorical appeals. In the case of asserting “X is bad,” the *reason* for X being good or bad, or the injunction’s “reason-giving force” depends entirely on “the personal context of the utterance.”⁶ The appeal to the category of morality, in such a case, is nothing more than an expression of personal

⁴ Ibid., 19.

⁵ Ibid., 24.

⁶ Ibid., 9.

preference and exertion of the will to emotionally manipulate the other into agreeing with the goodness or badness of X. For MacIntyre, it is no wonder the modern world is fraught with shrill, moral disagreement and endless, seemingly unsolvable problems; the case could not be contrary. This is owed to the nonexistence of rational categories within emotivism capable of guiding individuals and society at large towards a virtuous life, proper regard and treatment of others, genuine concern for the public good, and the sustainment of a functioning democratic society.

Consequences of Emotivism – the University and the SAC model.

The SAC model exists as a consequence and extension of emotivism and threatens the livelihood of both the excellence of students and universities. There remains a specific dimension of emotivism that perpetuates the operation of the SAC model: that of rights language. MacIntyre lays out how the last attempt to secure moral systems following the Enlightenment Failure, made by Alan Gerwirth⁷, lays the grounds for this claim to rights – an emotivist dimension of the SAC model that is all too familiar. Gerwirth asserts “that anyone who holds that the prerequisites for his exercise of rational agency are necessary goods is logically committed to holding also that he has a right to these goods.”⁸ From this idea of individual rights regarding the exercise of rationality, there emerges an attitude of natural entitlement and that “others ought not to interfere with my attempts to do or have [what corresponds to my rights], whether it is for my own

⁷Alan Gerwirth’s work, *Reason and Morality* (1978) presents an analytic, neo-Kantian attempt to re-engage the categorical imperative in order to reground morality through an appeal to the exercise of reason.

⁸ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 66.

good or not...and it makes no difference what kind of good or benefit is at issue.”⁹ Here, rights are concerned with utility and individualism. This notion of natural human rights soon fuses with the notion of social utility which emerged from the growing dominance and presence of bureaucratic organizations.

Soon the individual is seen as exercising rationality to the highest degree through recognizing and acting in relation to the natural entitlement to these rights. Thus, all actions must be judged in accordance to how free or restricted individuals are in regard to these rights. To recognize these rights, and pursue them, is to function at one’s most rational, free, and human self. A new self is born – an image of humanity as the glorious, sovereign, creator of destiny, the child of the cosmos sent out to shape life according to how one wished it to be, the “achievement by the self of its proper autonomy.”¹⁰

MacIntyre critiques that it “would of course be a little odd that there should be such rights attaching to human beings simply *qua* human beings” regarding that the expression of rights did not grace historical records until near the Middle Ages and thus contains no meaning in any ancient language or culture.¹¹ Upon this claim, MacIntyre remarks that to assert that such rights exist remains no different than claiming anything at all exists – to proclaim natural human rights exist operates the same as proclaiming a mythical beast of ancient lore exists. This is so because “every attempt to give good reasons for believing that there *are* such rights has failed.”¹² MacIntyre concludes that natural or human rights are mere myth and fiction.

⁹ Ibid., 67.

¹⁰ Ibid., 60-61.

¹¹ Ibid., 69.

¹² Ibid.

Appeals to rights language are not unfamiliar to the history of America or the ethos of Americanism. Turning towards the founding documents of the United States¹³ and ideals that emerged during the revolution and early colonies; the natural, inalienable rights to life, property, and liberty are key characteristics that formed and continue to form the American identity. The legitimacy and truth of these concepts are made possible through their very resting upon rights language. America, it seems, has an affinity for the appeal to rights inherent in emotivism. The SAC model and market logic as a whole are built upon these rights claims identical to emotivism. “The customer is always right,” “I deserve an A for what I pay,” or “I better get my degree regardless of grades,” are all entitled utterances that ultimately appeal to the very same rights language ingrained in emotivism. The entitlement MacIntyre mentions is the very foundation of the SAC model and that which the university shapes itself around. The university, under the SAC model, becomes nothing more than an institution that demands students not be students, so much as customers and autonomous selves concerned only with their individual rights.

Further, in a culture of liberal individualism, community, in any form or location, “is simply an arena in which individuals each pursue their own self-chosen conception of the good life, and...institutions exist to provide that degree of order which makes such

¹³ The notion of “natural rights” appears in both The Declaration of Independence (1776) and the Constitution (1787). Notably, the Declaration outlines specific “inalienable rights”: “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness”. The idea of natural rights presented in America’s founding documents was an extension of the humanistic project of the Enlightenment. In this humanistic project, Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment writings engage scientific appeals and appeals to reason to explain the essence, laws, or nature of both the physical world and humanity. The concept of laws of nature soon became attached to human behavior, referring to God-ordained truths or qualities possessed by every human that cannot be given nor taken away. Further, the founding documents of the United States were heavily influenced by the political philosophy of English thinkers like John Locke who wrote of the natural rights of life, liberty, and property. John Locke and Lee Ward (ed.), *Two Treatises of Government* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Focus, an imprint of Hackett Publishing Company, Inc, 2016.).

self-determined activity possible.”¹⁴ This perfectly describes the experience of the university in relation to the SAC mode of navigating a higher education space. Others are merely tolerant of the other in a community or bound to it only in the overlap of interests between agents and specific, self-chosen goals that merely align in tone, but nothing similar. These students sing two different songs in the same key to which they produce harmony, however, this harmony is not brought about through shared attentiveness to musicality, but rather only comes to exist by mere circumstance and spatial relation, nothing more. There occurs no social fusion of interests beyond personal categories and there is no shared pursuit or interest in the common good. There is nothing beyond “my experience”, “what I deserve”, and regard for what gets in the way of these individual pursuits that fill the halls of the university.

MacIntyre draws attention to how emotivism not only garners manipulative relationships with other individuals¹⁵, but has also led to misconstrued, manipulative relationships with institutions, be they educational, political, or social. For the emotivist individual, “the whole concept of effectiveness is...inseparable from a mode of human existence in which the contrivance of means is in central part the manipulation of human beings into compliant patterns of behavior.”¹⁶ This general, Weberian concept of

¹⁴ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 195.

¹⁵ MacIntyre asserts early on in *After Virtue* that the modern age is Weberian – referring to Weber’s Theory of Bureaucracy. MacIntyre explains that in Weber’s “insistence that the rationality of adjusting means to ends in the most economical and efficient way is the central task of the bureaucrat and that therefore the appropriate mode of justification of his activity by the bureaucrat lies in the appeal to his (or later her) ability to deploy a body of scientific and above all social scientific knowledge, organized in terms of and understood as comprising a set of universal law like generalizations, Weber provided the key to much of the modern age” (86). Later, he adds, in response to opposition to this argument, that “in our culture we know of no organized movement towards power which is not bureaucratic and managerial in mode and we know of no justifications for authority which are not Weberian in form” (109).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*,74.

effectiveness “is bound up with equally general notions of social control exercised downwards in corporations, government agencies, trade unions and a variety of other bodies.”¹⁷ Thus, individualism must become bureaucratic individualism, and institutions must become bureaucratic institutions if they are to adequately meet the demands of effectiveness for certain ends. MacIntyre synthesizes that “the society in which we live is one in which bureaucracy and individualism are partners...and it is in the cultural climate of this bureaucratic individualism that the emotivist self is naturally at home.”¹⁸

Universities, upon accepting MacIntyre’s own critique of modernity, have become nothing more than bureaucratic institutions concerned with providing customer satisfaction for the sake of monetary gain and reputation while simultaneously embracing a fictitious ethos that it remains a space dedicated and defined by community, shared practices, and rich history and tradition of pursuit of a higher good. This shift towards the commodification of higher education “signals the commensurate loss of a student’s ability to envision success as an interdependent, rooted, and connected ideal of social, environmental, and personal flourishing”¹⁹ and instead develops a “sense that [one] can establish [their] identity without recourse to lengthy and complicated procedures or activities.”²⁰ The business model higher educational institutions now cling to and the predominance of the SAC model both perpetuate a culture of liberal individualism that

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 35.

¹⁹ Paul E. Bylsma, "The Teleological Effect of Neoliberalism on American Higher Education [Special Section]," *College Student Affairs Leadership* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2015): 4-5.

²⁰ *The Marketisation of Higher Education and the Student as Consumer*, eds. Mike Molesworth, Elizabeth Nixon, and Richard Scullion, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), 199, doi: 10.4324/9780203842829.

lacks any teleological or moral coherence outside of personal interest, materialism, gratification, and gain. The neoliberal influence on concepts of the purpose of higher education and American ideals of the good life creates

a telos defined by individual empowerment and wealth accumulation in a free and deregulated market...and the teleological implications that follow [shift] the ultimate direction of higher education from its social, communal, and democratic ideals toward a vision of success rooted in individual achievement and determined by material gains.²¹

Universities are plagued by decreasing sustainment of forms of narrative, community, or traditions within contexts of higher learning that, if sustained, could contribute to coherent moral understanding against the pressures of emotivism. A 2015 study of the mission statements of different institutions found that only 25 percent of a group of 312 universities included any mention of “the development of personal perspectives, values, and moral character.”²² In addition, fewer than 10 percent of all 312 institutions actively “encouraged students to broaden their ethical and moral responsibilities”²³ through the acquisition of “knowledge and appreciation of the ethical dimensions of humankind” or engagement with “challenging ethical, moral, and human dilemmas.”²⁴ A survey of undergraduates revealed that the ideas of “ethics” and “ethical” were defined by personal categories,²⁵ and

When invited to describe their personal ethical compass, [students of different professional disciplines] mentioned having values, referred to a rule (of life) or a

²¹ Ibid., 6-7.

²² Jack Meacham and Jerry G Gaff, “Learning Goals in Mission Statements: Implications for Educational Leadership,” *Liberal Education* 96, no. 1 (Washington D.C: Association of American Colleges and Universities, Winter 2006): 10, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ743272.pdf>.

²³ Eric L. Dey, *Developing a Moral Compass: What Is the Campus Climate for Ethics and Academic Integrity?* (Washington, D.C: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2010), 2, https://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/core_commitments/moralcompassreport.pdf.

²⁴ Meacham and Gaff, “Learning Goals in Mission Statements,” 10.

²⁵ Such a reality may indeed be an example of the consequence of emotivism.

choice to do right or wrong. Although a majority of students claimed that navigating on values such as respect, honesty and kindness was most important to them, they had difficulties explaining how these values or rules were explicitly reflected in their behaviour.²⁶

If both the institution and its patrons operate under incoherent moral systems or a lack of moral and ethical understanding²⁷, how then is the university to take up the reins in the moral formation of its students? The current state of the university is lacking in any means to move past this catastrophe. It is only in understanding the ways in which morality and virtues are formulated, identifying where such developments are lacking, and placing them within the walls of the university does there remain hope in pushing back against the morally catastrophic realities of emotivism and the SAC mode of operating.²⁸

The Stuff of Virtue

The later chapter of *After Virtue* offers a metanarrative of moral systems and virtue from which three core concepts that formulate accounts of virtues and morality emerge: practices, narratives, and traditions. By analyzing conflicting accounts of virtue

²⁶Lieke Van Stekelenburg Chris Smerecnik, Wouter Sanderse, and Doret J. De Ruyter, “‘What Do You Mean by Ethical Compass?’ Bachelor Students’ Ideas about Being a Moral Professional,” *Empirical Research in Vocational Education and Training* 12, no. 1 (October 16, 2020): 7, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40461-020-00097-6>. It is important to note that this study was conducted in Norway, therefore, it may not accurately represent American students, but it still offers a picture of westernized higher education under globalized capitalism. In this survey, one student responded that “‘ethical is of course a very flexible concept, there is no standard for it: what is ethics or what is ethically responsible and what is not? That is very personal.’” Another student expressed: “‘uh, yeah, what’s important to me.. that’s how I treat other people, too. And of course that differs per situation [...] I may deviate from my course in order to, uh, yes, then... I don’t really know how to put that into words’”.

²⁷ Such an incoherence exists due to a lack of teleological structure or understanding of the human along with a failure to facilitate proper practices and traditions. The ways in which these three parts create a unified moral structure will be outlined in the following section which explores Macintyre’s analysis of narrative, tradition, and practice.

²⁸ Both as it relates to the manner in which students regard themselves and the university, and in what ways universities shape their operations in relation to the students and wider culture of consumerism and customer satisfaction.

in the work of Homer, Aristotle, Benjamin Franklin, Jane Austen, and the New Testament, MacIntyre arrives at the conclusion that each of these accounts claim, “not only theoretical, but also an institutional hegemony.”²⁹ Therefore, all five differing accounts of the virtues depict that the virtues are manifest in distinct institutions. Therefore, what constitutes a virtue rests upon a prior account of both moral and social life. MacIntyre then establishes that virtues require three concepts: practice, narrative cohesion, and traditions. All three concepts gain meaning and function from the others in order to offer a structure for an account of virtues. Further, all three function to create morality and living a moral life coherent and intelligible. MacIntyre’s description of the development and organization of moral systems itself is complex and multilayered.

According to MacIntyre, the act of living out the virtues is what develops a thriving moral system, and virtues are developed through practices that pursue internal goods. However, the pursuit of these internal goods must be grounded in a teleological understanding of the human life. *Telos* emerges from the fusions of contexts of social traditions and narrative. These fuse together to create an understanding of cohesiveness and unity in a life, setting up a narrative form of the act of living thus allowing a teleology to operate over the practices and thus virtues of an individual in a larger moral context. Traditions, narratives, and practices are all socially located, and it is, therefore, the creation of communities within these contexts that enable moral systems to emerge and organize the way life is lived.

MacIntyre defines practice as:

Any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to,

²⁹ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 186.

and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended.³⁰

All practices also have their own history regarding the technical skills required for each practice and its practitioners. Therefore, practice involves standards of excellence, judgment, and obedience to rules in their exercise if they are to be done well. MacIntyre expands upon this, explaining that “to enter into a practice is to accept the authority of those standards and the inadequacy of [one’s] performance as judged by them. It is to subject [one’s] attitudes, choices, preferences and tastes to the standards which currently and partially define the practice.”³¹ In practices, there are two types of goods: internal and external. Internal goods are concerned with the *excellence* of practice in and of itself while external goods are concerned merely with the outcome or ends of performing an activity such as money or power. Further external goods operate in relation to a context of competition and hierarchy. MacIntyre makes an important distinction in that practices must not be confused with institutions.

Although institutions can serve as locations for practices and its history and continuation of its exercise,

Institutions are characteristically and necessarily concerned with external goods. They are involved in acquiring money and other material goods; they are structured in terms of power and status, and they distribute money, power and status as rewards. Nor could they do otherwise if they are to sustain not only themselves, but also the practices of which they are the bearers. For no practices can survive for any length of time unsustained by institutions.³²

³⁰ Ibid., 187.

³¹ Ibid., 190.

³² Ibid., 194.

Therefore, institutions hold the ability to either corrupt or create a flourishing environment for practices. The ability for a practice to retain its integrity will depend on the way in which the virtues can be and are exercised in dedication to sustaining the institutions that are the social bearers of the practice.³³ Virtue itself is tied directly to a relationship of goods and therefore the distinction between types of goods is necessary before understanding MacIntyre's definition of virtue. His initial and incomplete definition of a virtue is: "A virtue is an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods."³⁴ This definition is incomplete due to the fact that virtues are not merely related to practice, but rather require the concept of telos.

It is a narrative understanding of the human life and traditions that allow virtues and practices to operate teleologically. The idea of a narrative life may seem strange since "modernity partitions each human life into a variety of segments, each with its own norms and modes of behavior" which operate not unlike a series of unrelated, independent events.³⁵ Interestingly, humans, according to MacIntyre are ontologically story-telling animals and the intelligibility of human behavior over a lifetime is only made intelligible through an understanding of a human life as a narrative.³⁶ A narrative understanding of human life grants categories to reference intentions and actions throughout a certain history of an individual, thus making characterization and

³³ Ibid., 195.

³⁴ Ibid., 191.

³⁵ Ibid., 204.

³⁶ Ibid., 216.

intelligibility of human action possible. Further, total unity of a human life can only be conceived through a unity of a narrative of which the individual is the author and is tied up in a web of other narratives. Narratives are inherently related to a concept of time, an understanding of a past and the continual movement towards a future and are teleological in this future-facing orientation. Therefore, seeking intelligibility of the direction, future, and telos of one's life, must take the form of a quest.

A quest can only be understood in regard to what it pursues, in this case, the good of a human life. It is the quest that becomes education both to the individual as an individual and to the nature of what is pursued in relation to the challenges faced on the journey of the narrative. MacIntyre then includes a second account of the virtues as:

those dispositions which will not only sustain practices and enable us to achieve the goods internal to practices, but which will also sustain us in the relevant kind of quest for the good. by enabling us to overcome the harms, dangers, temptations and distractions which we encounter and which will furnish us with increasing self-knowledge and increasing knowledge of the good.³⁷

However, the virtues cannot be properly exercised nor the quest for the good thrive in a vacuum of individualism. Instead, they must be conceived through an understanding of social identity. The individual is born into a social context in which one fulfills certain roles, and the apprehension of what is good for one in these roles, and thus oneself, rests upon an understanding of what is *inherited*. Those characteristics that are inherited “constitute the given of my life, my moral standing point. This is in part what gives my life its own moral particularity.”³⁸ What is inherited is definitive of who one is and therefore, every individual, is the continuation and bearer of a tradition. Practices are

³⁷ Ibid., 219.

³⁸ Ibid., 254.

sustained through traditions, and all thriving traditions are sustained through a critique of the good particular to certain traditions.

In the case of an institution bearing a tradition, “its common life will be partly, but in a centrally important way, constituted by a continuous argument as to what a university is and ought to be or what good farming is or what good medicine is. Traditions, when vital, embody continuities of conflict.”³⁹ It is the exercise of relevant virtue which guides this ongoing argument regarding the goods of a tradition and which either sustain it or destroy it. Therefore, the moral formation of an individual, unity of their life under narrative, and proper use of the practices and thus the virtues all occur through the participation in the deliberation of a tradition. The final and total definition of virtue is as follows:

The virtues find their point and purpose not only in sustaining those relationships necessary if a variety of goods internal to practices are to be achieved and not only in sustaining the form of an individual life in which that individual may seek out his or her good as the good of his or her whole life, but also in sustaining those traditions which provide both practices and individual lives with their necessary historical context.⁴⁰

It is his outlining of tradition, narrative, and practices that MacIntyre thus offers the readers an understanding of how moral formation occurs, where it occurs, and how it is sustained. It is MacIntyre’s understanding of traditions, narrative, and practices that I will return to in arguing the legitimacy of universities holding responsibility in the moral formation of their students as well as a proposal of structuring the model for teacher-student relationships in the classroom in my final chapter.

³⁹ Ibid., 222.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 223.

MacIntyre and The Question at Hand

I am confronted with the question “why higher educational institutions?” when MacIntyre himself describes institutions as problematic. The answer is simple: institutions are inherently constructed by smaller communities, despite being entities in themselves, they are made up by people, by groups, and of course by practices. MacIntyre himself recognizes that practices, especially in the intertwined nature of globalized modern capitalist society, are necessarily reliant upon and sustained through institutions they are associated with: “for no practices can survive for any length of time unsustained by institutions.”⁴¹ Further, institutions are foundational parts of economic and social life, they serve as locations of power, influence, and formation. There no doubt exists a complex and problematic relationship between practices and institutions, as well as a clear tension between the institutional pursuit for external goods and the proper use of practices for internal goods. Although there is a contradictory nature between the two, institutions are foundational for the location of establishing communities and connecting those with practices in relation to one another.

Deconstructing institutions or deeming them unworthy of reestablishing morally grounded practices is problematic. In such a case, practices would become disconnected from the act of sharing and rather become dispersed, privatized, and unable to have any transformative nature or become rooted in communities. One cannot fall into the habit of the erasure of the old and creation of something completely new. Rather, seeking a location within institutions with the intent of transforming its function from the inside out is the necessary path to take. It is then clear that institutions in MacIntyre’s account are

⁴¹ Ibid., 194.

where the communities of moral formation must take root, and undoubtedly an educational institution is the best kind of institution for MacIntyre's project. From here, we must reevaluate the relationship between practices and institutions by looking to communities and the agents that constitute them. In this case, the institution is the university, the location is the classroom, and the practice is teaching in a context of community constituted by student-teacher relationships.

A Remaining Tension

Before proposing such a model, it is necessary to point out the tension in MacIntyre's own philosophy regarding moral formation in education institutions. This tension is that MacIntyre does not regard teaching as a practice. MacIntyre critiques teaching as an activity that operates as a means to achieve certain ends, stating that "all teaching is for the sake of something else and so teaching does not have its own goods."⁴² Without teaching itself being a practice, there cannot be sustained traditions nor narratives, thus leading to a disconnected community in the classroom and a simple continuation of the state of the university. This is a rather grim image. However, MacIntyre fails to account for the complexities of a practice he himself outlines in *After Virtue*. Philosopher and professor James Dunne critiques MacIntyre's perspective, since "teaching is a triadic relation between a teacher, a subject-matter, and a student" while MacIntyre's description hyper focuses solely upon the dimensions of and relationships between teacher and subject matter where "teaching is never more than a means...it has no point and purpose except for the point and purpose of the activities to which it

⁴² Alasdair MacIntyre, "The Idea of an Educated Public," in *Education and Values*, ed. Graham Haydon (London: University of London 1987): 16.

introduces students.”⁴³ In agreement with Dunne, MacIntyre in fact fails to apply his own understanding of practices to teaching, which would have removed institutions of higher education from the possibility of operating as a location where moral formation is possible.

Additionally, MacIntyre does point towards communities as counters to the ills of emotivism but does not account for the individuals which make up these communities. *After Virtue* fails to truly consider the realities of the deeply engrained individualism of the modern-day. Without an account of where the individual fits within these communities, there is no system for each individual that makes up these communities to correctly sustain narrative, tradition, or practices. Simply, MacIntyre does not ultimately return to selfhood in his conclusion of *After Virtue* and it is this neglect of the individual which threatens the effectiveness of implementing his own solutions in a university. For the solutions of *After Virtue* to function properly within the modern American university, the individual as a moral agent and an account of teaching as practice must be considered. Regarding the first, we turn to Michel Foucault and the latter will reappear in the final synthesizing chapter.

After Virtue concludes facing a diverging road to which modernity must choose a direction: Aristotelianism or Individualism, Aristotle or Nietzsche.⁴⁴ MacIntyre argues in favor of Aristotelianism as the correct choice, as the entirety of *After Virtue* has worked to demonstrate, since in the case of defending an individualistic approach to moral

⁴³ Dunne and MacIntyre as cited in James Bernard Murphy, “The Teacher as the Forlorn Hope of Modernity: MacIntyre on Education and Schooling,” *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 67, no. 264 (2013): 188.

⁴⁴ Nietzsche, in the context of the final chapter, represents an approach to morality defended by liberal individualism that MacIntyre ascribes as incredibly Nietzschean in content and approach.

destiny (or choosing Nietzsche) “we still, in spite of the efforts of three centuries of moral philosophy and one of sociology, lack any coherent rationally defensible statement of a liberal individualist point of view; and that, on the other hand, the Aristotelian tradition can be restated in a way that restores intelligibility and rationality to our moral and social attitudes and commitments.”⁴⁵ MacIntyre draws a parallel between modernity and when the Roman Empire descended into the Dark Ages, stating that modernity stands at a similar turning point and that “what matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us.”⁴⁶

Foucault problematizes MacIntyre’s sanguine take on morality and recognizes in his work on self-care that if there remains moral power in antiquity, it *can* be reactivated but it must be reactivated and synthesized within the state and structure of modernity, rather than simply bringing about a complete return to the past. MacIntyre holds a certain Victorian sensibility and trust in *things* themselves. However, his unquestioning embrace of Aristotelianism and appeal to metaphysical grounds does not fully address the possible challenges regarding the transition of western society ruled by pluralism and radical individualism to these new social and philosophical models of life. In his final chapter, MacIntyre addresses a possible critique to his support for Aristotelianism in saying that it does not serve as a proper opposition to the problems and conditions of modernity. Rather, for there to be any hope in establishing communities of moral formation, the correct intellectual opposition to liberal individualism and the condition of advanced

⁴⁵ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 259.

⁴⁶Ibid., 263.

capitalism is, rather, a version of Marxism or neo-Marxism.⁴⁷ MacIntyre responds that ultimately, Marxism or neo-Marxism arrives either at Weberian social democracy, tyranny, or Nietzsche's *Übermensch* due to certain radical individualist tendencies found in Marx's image of the free individual found in *Capital*.⁴⁸ Although MacIntyre's response to such a critique is well-formed and bolsters his concluding argument, the aspect of the critique that argues that Aristotelianism does not oppose the problems of modernity adequately should be legitimately considered. Although MacIntyre addresses critiques of moral traditions that may ultimately return to a reimagined version of the modern moral catastrophe brought about in individualism, he does not account for how exactly to deal with the modern individual as an individual who does not naturally fit into, nor would easily follow, Aristotelianism and MacIntyre's idea of communities of moral formation.

After Virtue discusses how a community sustains practices, traditions, and narratives, yet does not address the responsibility of the individual as a moral agent outside of the discussion of emotivism and the critique of modern individualism.

However, his own deconstruction of emotivism reveals how deep the roots of individualism run. The individual remains part of the tapestry of understanding moral formation. The modern moral agent needs to return to an understanding of the self qua self rather than as merely self qua community. How then is this gap to be bridged?

Foucault works in harmony with MacIntyre's notion of community by creating moral

⁴⁷ Ibid., 263. According to MacIntyre, a compelling argument in favor of Marxism or neo-Marxism will "trace a genealogy of ideas from Kant and Hegel through Marx and claim that by means of Marxism the notion of human autonomy can be rescued from its original individualist formulations and restored within the context of an appeal to a possible form of community in which alienation has been overcome, false consciousness abolished and the values of equality and fraternity realized."

⁴⁸ Ibid., 260. This is one of three critical arguments MacIntyre engages in the concluding chapter of *After Virtue*. The first critique regards the argumentative form of *After Virtue* as philosophical proof, and the second objection concerns MacIntyre's interpretation of the classical or Aristotelian tradition.

agents capable of interacting with traditions, narrative, practices on a communal and personal level. Foucault's self-care offers up an account of the individual qua individual and as a moral agent that systematically fits within Macintyre's Aristotelian community rather than opposing it. Thus, it is to Foucault which the next chapter turns.

CHAPTER THREE

Foucault's Care of the Self

The conclusion of *After Virtue* lacks a certain grounding in humanity, failing to offer an account of how the modern, emotivist individual will fit within the very communities MacIntyre offers up as a solution to emotivism. Where *After Virtue* is weak in accounting for the transition of the modern individual from emotivism into a community of proper moral formation, the work of Philosopher Michel Foucault strengthens it in his work on the care of the self. Foucault offers up an account that aims to equip the individual with the ability to sustain their own moral maxims and to engage communities and society at large both critically and ethically. For Foucault, any community can only be fully and properly participated in if each individual establishes a proper relationship to itself. This is due to the fact that, for Foucault, the role of a subject (the self or individual), is deeply political. In fact, all of Foucault's work is inherently political. By political, Foucault does not mean the realm of politics per se, that would include voting, writing legislation, etc. Instead, political or politics refers to the systems of social control that pervade and make up a certain society. Colleague and philosopher Pierre Bourdieu describes Foucault's work as a "long exploration of transgression, of going beyond social limits, always inseparably linked to knowledge and power."¹

¹ Pierre Bourdieu, as quoted in Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, translated by Betsy Wing, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 328.

Through historical, genealogical, and archaeological analysis of power, knowledge, and modes of subjectification, Foucault maps the world and makes sense of how societies are structured, organized, and sustained. It is through understanding these political structures that the individual can understand how they interact with these systems and how they may shape the individual's life and identity. This mapping of these systems is what guides the entirety of Foucault's work. Further, before explaining the details of the care of self, an overview of Foucault's body of work is necessary since his later writing operates in conjunction with the entirety of his preceding work. The body of Foucault's writing and career swings, relatively, upon three different axes,¹ each of which defines the main topic under analysis.² The first axis focuses on the domain of "recognition"³ as specific knowledge concerning "madness" as it relates to mental illness, and the organization of normative systems aimed at the institutionalization of these subjects. The second axis takes interest in the relations of rules in the forms of power. Foucault speaks on how in this era of his work, "instead of seeking the explanation in a general conception of the law, or in the evolving modes of industrial production, it seemed far wiser to look at the workings of Power... the refinement... elaboration, and

¹ Some of his work simply being extensions of certain axes or a combination of them.

² The three axes as a way of outlining Foucault's work, as well as the details of each axis is derived from an article by James Mark Shields titled "Foucault's Dandy: Constructive Selfhood in the Last Writings of Michel Foucault". For an overview see James M. Shields, "Foucault's Dandy: Constructive Selfhood in the Last Writings of Michel Foucault," (2007), 3.

³ A categorizing, identifying, measuring psychological and normative act done by an autonomous individual.

instillation...of techniques for governing individuals.”⁴ Last, the third axis seeks to explore the subject’s relation to the self and its modality.

The final axis, however, is unique in focus compared to his other dedicated areas of research and it is here where the care of the self and ethics as a whole first appear in the Foucauldian corpus. This chapter examines the final axis and lays the ground for understanding how this notion of “the care of the self” accounts for a moral agent that thrives within and sustains the communities of moral formation proposed by MacIntyre. A formulation of how and why Foucault’s own system of ethics (the care of the self) fits within MacIntyre’s understanding of moral systems and communities of formation will be explored in the final chapter of this thesis. This section aims to thoroughly outline Foucault’s notion of the care of self as a form of ethics. To arrive at such an end, this chapter begins with an overview of Foucault’s later work, followed by an overview of the working contexts that are constitutive of the care of the self. Third, a detailed outlining of Foucault’s understanding of morality, ethics, and subjectification is established and leads directly into the details and workings of the care of the self. Finally, a problematization of Foucault’s ethics regarding liberal individualism is responded to and resolved before continuing to the final, synthesizing chapter.

Holding Up the Mirror: A Turn Towards the Self

The concept of care of the self emerges in Foucault’s later work, an era of his career that has come to be called Foucault’s “ethical turn.” The care of the self is one of the main points of focus in Foucault’s later career, appearing significantly in his series

⁴ Michel Foucault, “Preface to the History of Sexuality, Volume Two,” in *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, ed. Paul Rabinow, (New York: New Press, 1997), 199.

*The History of Sexuality*⁵ and in a selection of lectures held at the Collège de France from 1981 to 1983.⁶ The work of the ethical turn is defined by an increased interest in the Foucauldian notion of the self as a subject.⁷ He became invested in exploring the means fashioning the moral agent (subject) through self-subjectification, turning away from a critical study of overarching systems of subjectification⁸ and power which dominated his earlier work.⁹ However, Foucault's turn does not lose sight of his previous work but rather, his early work necessitates a certain return to the self in order to come full circle with the Foucauldian critical project analyzing the relationships between power, knowledge, and the subject. Departing from his earlier axes of enquiry, in the era of the ethical turn the self/subject is "no longer considered as the passive product of an external system of constraint and prescriptions, but as the active agent of its own formation."¹⁰

Foucault emphasizes the *active* nature of the subject and views his later work as a means

⁵ *The History of Sexuality (L'Histoire de la sexualité)* is a four-volume series composed of the *The Will to Knowledge (La volonté de savoir)*, *The Use of Pleasure (L'usage des plaisirs)*, *The Care of the Self (Le souci de soi)*, and *Confessions of the Flesh (Les aveux de la chair)*, which was published posthumously in 2018.

⁶ Foucault presented numerous lectures at the Collège de France beginning in 1971 and continuing until his death in 1984. The selections of lectures that feature the care of the self and the focus of topics definitive of the 'ethical turn' include *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* (1982), *The Government of Self and Others* (1983), and *Subjectivity and Truth* (1981).

⁷ "Subject" refers to a person understood as something and someone formed by systems of influence. It embodies both an object which is conditioned and disciplined by systems of power and as a subject in terms of the subject as an active, self-regarding entity.

⁸ The term "subjectification" is used intermittently with "subjectivation" which both refer to the formation of the subject.

⁹ Some of Foucault's most notable work that explores the relationships between the exercise of power, use of knowledge, and the nature of subjectification and normalization include *Discipline and Punish* (1975), *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), *Madness and Civilization* (1961), and *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963).

¹⁰ Brenda Hofmeyr, "The Power Not to Be (What We Are): The Politics and Ethics of Self-Creation in Foucault," *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 3, no. 2 (2006): 217, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1740468106065493>.

of understanding the political orientation of the subject and the means by which one may come to know, interact, and change the society they occupy. This notion of political task is reminiscent of his work on *resistance*, or the process of fostering awareness of power systems and their nature of operations with the aim of locating nodes or points to counter the use of subjectivizing power. An active subject is one who takes part in this task of resistance. In his early work, resistance was one of the only activities or means of action for the subject to take, but his focus remained not on the subject as a subject but rather as an object. The majority of his work genealogically reveals and analyzes how the subject is caught up in and formed by larger systems of power, knowledge, normalization, etc.. Ultimately, the focus of Foucault's ethical turn is "essentially dedicated to the political task of reinvesting the individual with the capacity for action."¹¹ The exact reason behind the ethical turn remains widely debated and discussed, and Foucault never fully discloses a clear, consistent reason for this turn beyond interest in emerging topics relevant to his work. However, it is thought that perhaps this *new subjectivity* (the subject as an active entity) served as a final bookend to his earlier work and sought the continued exploration for solutions to the problems Foucault identified in modernity.¹² In one of his lectures, Foucault hints at the goal of his later work, accounting that

The political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state, and from the state's institutions, but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization linked to the

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor offers, what I think, to be an excellent justification for Foucault's turn, positing that perhaps in his major works, his historical and archaeological approach made Foucault believe that "he could stand nowhere, identifying with none of the epistemes or structures of power whose coming and going he impartially surveys... Perhaps Foucault was moving, before his sudden and premature death, to free his position from the paradox... linked with the impossible attempt to stand nowhere." See Charles Taylor, "Foucault on Freedom and Truth," in *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Couzens Hoy (Oxford, UK; New York, NY, USA: B. Blackwell, 1986), 98-99.

state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality that has been imposed on us for several centuries.¹³

This new form of subjectivity he highlights is the care of the self, derived from his research on antiquity and the relationship between sexuality and morality. It is in hopes of drawing from these ancient ethical practices and integrating them into a newfound subjectivity, that an appropriate response to the ethical, political, and social problems of modernity may be uncovered.

The Origins of Care of the Self – Antiquity and Beyond

As previously mentioned, the care of the self is prevalent in Foucault's work associated with the ethical turn, namely in *The Care of the Self* and *The Use of Pleasure* as well as a selection of lectures given at the Collège de France. In these, Foucault analyzes the history and genealogy of morality beginning with antiquity¹⁴ up into the late nineteenth century. It is in these studies Foucault discovers the care of the self and its importance. It may seem confusing that a history of *sexuality* serves as a genealogy of morality, however, the title itself is misleading outside of any context. Sexuality serves as the scope of his study of morality. Foucault approaches subjects as inherently desiring, and it is this desire that develops complicated relationships with the self and others. Desire may serve as a point of contemplation for the dimensions of an individual's emotions, physical pleasures, and prioritization of a hierarchy of wants and needs in a manner that constitutes one's behavior and self-regard. Foucault engages desire in the

¹³ Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (1982): 785.

¹⁴ Antiquity, in the work of Foucault, is composed of the work of the ancient Greeks and Romans, with emphasis on the Hellenistic period. He looks at a large scope of philosophical work and history that includes the works of Socrates, Plato, Seneca, Marcus Aurelius, the Stoics, the Epicureans, Aristotle, Xenophon, Plutarch, Pythagoras, the Cynics, Diogenes, Diocles, and Hippocrates.

form of *aphrodisia*¹⁵ as a point of analysis regarding moral sentiments and the realm of desire as a whole. It is through studying the philosophical, scientific, religious, and social problematization of sexuality, sexual desire, and sexual acts that allows Foucault to trace how morality takes shape in relation to it. Additionally, investigating how a subject utilizes moral practices in relation to aphrodisia reveals how ethics form a certain mode of being, *an aesthetics of existence*.¹⁶ Therefore, for Foucault, sex operates as a pretext for “illustrating how different subjects and cultures can attain a state of freedom and harmony through different, but coherent forms of self-discipline.”¹⁷ For antiquity, the care of the self is this freedom and harmony seeking self-discipline. For Foucault, the ancient notion of the care of the self is valuable for deciphering how to achieve freedom¹⁸ in the modern day.

Differing from MacIntyre’s return to Aristotelianism, for Foucault, a return to ancient practices of morality is not the key to modern problems. Rather, Foucault argues that there is something valuable to be derived from these ancient thoughts and practices. Foucault clarifies that he takes “such an interest in Antiquity...because, for a whole series of reasons, the idea of morality as obedience to a code of rules is now in the process of disappearing or has already disappeared. And this absence of morality calls for—must

¹⁵ Used here, it refers not to the ancient Greek festival celebrating the goddess Aphrodite or Venus, but rather speaks of eroticism, the sexual act, and any desire linked to sex or sexuality.

¹⁶ The aesthetics of existence is defined in a later section since it functions within multiple contexts that in defining it right now may only leave the reader with questions that are unimportant for the moment.

¹⁷ Daniel Nica, “The Aesthetics of existence and the Political in Late Foucault,” *Re-thinking the Political in Contemporary Society*, ed. Viorel Vizureanu (2015): 46.

¹⁸ The term freedom and its use are outlined in the section “Foucauldian Morality.” A detailed clarifying footnote is unnecessary early on in this chapter since the use and meaning of freedom must be explained in context with Foucault’s understanding of ethics, which occurs in the aforementioned, later section.

call for an aesthetic for existence,”¹⁹ found in the cultures of antiquity and their respective concepts of the moral life. Foucault thought that there already exist elements that could make a new mode of living possible and it was by returning to antiquity he “sought to learn from and strengthen these, not to discover or ‘invent’ others.”²⁰

Two primary practices defined ancient morality: *gnōthi seauton* (know thyself) and *epimeleia heautou* (to be concerned with oneself, to take care of oneself, to be involved in the care of the self).²¹ Foucault reveals that historically, after the ancient Greeks, the notion of *gnōthi seauton* eclipsed *epimeleia heautou* and the notion of caring for oneself was lost.²² It is a re-engagement with *epimeleia heautou* that Foucault believes holds value for the state of modern morality. In the Delphic tradition, *epimeleia heautou* referred to a general attitude, a way of being in the world, attention to the actions one takes, and the manner in which one related to others. It was concerned with pursuit of freedom from dominating power of desires, namely aphrodisia, over the individual in order to live a happier life. *Epimeleia heautou* goes beyond mere attitude or attentiveness and rather “designates a regulated occupation, a work with its methods and objectives.”²³

¹⁹ Michel Foucault “An Aesthetics of Existence,” interview by Alessandro, *Italian weekly Panora*, trans. Alan Sheridan (1984) in Michel Foucault, *Politics, philosophy, culture: interviews and other writings, 1977-1984*, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Alan Sheridan, (New York: Routledge, 1988), 49.

²⁰ Paul Rabinow, Introduction to *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, ed. Paul Rabinow, (New York: New Press, 1997), xxvii.

²¹ The Greek *epimeleia heautou* was also seen in the Latin translation *Cura sui*, translating to “self-interest” or “his interest”.

²² The philosophical prominence of “know thyself” over “care for oneself” is due particularly to the work of the Enlightenment and later where knowledge of the self (understood as a thinking subject), takes importance in foundational work in the theory of knowledge. For overview see Michel Foucault, “The Technologies of the Self,” in *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: New Press, 1997), 228.

²³ Foucault, “Hermeneutics of the Subject,” in *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, ed. Paul Rabinow, (New York: New Press, 1997), 95.

The principle *gnōthi seauton* was technical advice referring to a rule for observing consultation with an oracle, rather than an abstract aphorism concerning life or deep knowledge of one's true, inner self.²⁴ The principle of *epimeleia heautou* was "one of the main principles of cities, one of the main rules for social and personal conduct and for the art of life; "the importance of this attending has faded in the eye of modernity."²⁵ In Greek and Roman traditions, *gnōthi seauton* and *epimeleia heautou* were deeply intertwined, and "the injunction of having to know yourself was always associated with the other principle of having to take care of yourself, and it was that need to care for oneself that brought the Delphic maxim (*gnōthi seauton*) into operation....One had to occupy oneself with oneself before the Delphic principle was brought into action."²⁶ Attending to one's self, in antiquity, is what allowed one to be able to know oneself and practice self-mastery over the appetites. Through these self-disciplining acts, one became ordered in their soul and thus grew able to properly participate as a citizen of the polis. The Platonic tradition specifically reveals how attending to or caring for oneself was not merely practice for navigating life, but a form of living concerned with the formation of the soul. These different ancient practices that sought to create a certain way of living, a specific mode of being, is what interests Foucault and is, in his eyes, the foundational material of ethics and morality.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Foucault, "Technologies of the Self" in *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, ed. Paul Rabinow, (New York: New Press, 1997), 226.

²⁶ Parentheses added for clarification.

The Foucauldian Morality

Foucault's concept of *epimeleia heautou* serves as a critical aspect of the formation of morality and the ethical subject. *Epimeleia heautou* is multifaceted and understood as a *form* ethics takes, but is itself *practice*, and certain *technologies* sustain the practice.²⁷ Technologies guide the exercise of the practices that make up care of the self, and it is through this ongoing exchange between technologies and practices that ethical orientation emerges from the caring of the self. Ethics, therefore, emerge from habituated practices implemented by an individual. This "formula" of the care of the self is made intelligible under Foucault's understanding of morality, therefore, this section aims to outline the details of Foucault's ethics and the complexities contained within in order to better explicate the care of the self and its praxis.

Foucault's understanding of morality and ethics is complex and multifaceted. Unlike MacIntyre's succinct and clear-cut tripartite outline of moral systems (traditions, practices, and narrative), Foucault's understanding of morality is intertwined with his understanding of ethics, which is itself understood concerning freedom, which is only intelligible in relation to power, which ultimately arrives back at the care of self. Therefore, Foucault's entire work of the ethical turn, including the care of the self, is somewhat self-consuming, and intelligible only in context with all other components of a Foucauldian understanding of ethical existence. First, for Foucault, morality is composed of three parts: codes of behavior, acts of moral agents, and ethics.²⁸ These are the

²⁷ The details of technologies, ethics, and practices are explained in later subsections of the current section.

²⁸ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 29. Elaborating upon this quote, both liberty and freedom hold the same meaning when used by Foucault.

building blocks of all morality since they are the reoccurring factors that have historically constituted moral systems, as revealed in his study of antiquity. Out of these three categories of morality, Foucault's focus turns towards ethics because it serves as the point where codes of behavior and acts of moral agents meet as the formation of the subject.

For Foucault, both morality and ethics are the practice of liberty, specifically the liberty of the self. He discusses in an interview that "liberty is the ontological condition of ethics. But ethics is the deliberate form assumed by liberty."²⁹ Therefore, ethics or ethical practice is the form freedom or liberty takes once the subject engages with their own freedom or liberty as an ongoing, articulated practice. This engagement of one's freedom transforms into ethical conduct when it is prompted by one's relation to truths, knowledge, and logic through deliberate and discursive practice. One may on philosophical grounds beg the question if it is warranted for freedom to be both the foundation and the end of ethics. Foucault answers that it is possible since there is no final form for ethics nor freedom, but rather they are created through active, continuous ways of being and practices.

Freedom or liberty is understood in the context of power. Foucault focuses heavily on power throughout his work, but an explicit definition of power remains difficult to produce and can only be understood in the context of his work. Broadly, power functions as a lens in which Foucault maps reality. Power is a deindividualized, all-pervading mechanism that acts upon and through every individual via institutions and social relationships.³⁰ It operates as a means of normalization, discipline, and

²⁹ Foucault, "The Ethic of Care," 4.

³⁰ For overview on power, see Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 1st American ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).

categorization of everyday life, often operating undetected yet effectively. Freedom and liberty are thus the state of exercising one's own power against other forms of power through a process of self-creation. Foucault's morality and ethics thrive in a state of freedom, but also perpetuate freedom. It is under systems of power that the individual experiences *subjectification* in a negative sense. Subjectification, negatively, is process and condition where the subject is turned into an object to be acted upon, through, and within forms of power which they have no leverage in. Therefore, freedom is the active condition of being both aware of these systems of power and using this awareness to exercise their positive forms of power to shape themselves against the outside forces of subjectification. Self-subjectification, as opposed to subjectification, is the practice of freedom, the freedom to participate in forms of self-creation. The sustainment of freedom from forms of domination, whether internal or external, requires a knowledge of the subject and the subject's place or role in existing relationships of power. This knowledge emerges from subjectification on the self, by the self, or rather through the attention and care of the subject.

Self-subjectification thus leads to the subject understanding themselves through wrestling with questions of who they wish to become. This question goes far beyond concerns of what job one would like to hold or other material conditions, but similar to the character concern in virtue ethics engages certain confronting questions like: “what the subject must be, to what condition he is subject, what status he must have, what position he must occupy in reality or in the imaginary, in order to become a legitimate

subject of this or that type of knowledge.”³¹ The subject becomes intelligible only through the process of self-subjectification and it is self-care, as ethics, that develops this. Along with freedom and ethics, subjectification, whether done to the self by the self or not, is tied to the notion of truth, or rather games of truth.³² The use of the word game may be misleading, what Foucault means by a *game* is “a set of rules by which truth is produced....It is a set of procedures that lead to a certain result, which, on the basis of its principles and rules of procedure, may be considered valid or invalid, winning or losing.”³³ Games of truth are concerned with questions of who, how, or in what manner certain truths become produced.

Participation in changing or creating games of truth as a product of self-formation occurs through *ascetic* practices,³⁴ exercises of the self as subject on the self as object in an attempt to transform the self and pursue a state of freedom. Rather it is through exercising and engaging in care of the self that one becomes involved in the games of truth and truth-telling. In caring for oneself, it is through

³¹ Michel Foucault, “Foucault”, in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984*, ed. J. Faubion, (New York: The New Press, 1998), 459–63 as quoted by Diane Skinner, “Foucault, Subjectivity and Ethics: Towards a Self-Forming Subject,” *Organization* 20, no. 6 (November 1, 2013):908-909, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508412460419>.

³² Foucault’s previous work focuses on *regimes of truth* rather than *games of truth*. What Foucault means by regimes of truth is a society’s “general politics.” Regimes of truth are “the types of discourse [society] harbors and causes to function as true, the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true from false statements, the way in which each is sanctioned, the techniques and procedures which are valorised for obtaining truth, [and]the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.” Therefore, “truth” is “a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and functioning of statements” linked “by a circular relation to systems of power which produce it and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which redirect it.” Games of truth always occur within regimes of truth, but the opposite is not the case. For overview, see Michel Foucault, “The Political Function of the Intellectual,” *Politique Hebdo* no. 247 (Paris: 1976): 13.

³³ Foucault, “The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom,” in *The Final Foucault*, eds. James Bernauer and David Rasmussen, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1987), 5.

³⁴ Original French is *travail ethique*, but Foucault refers to ascetics in connection with the ancient Greek *askesis*, which will be explored in a following paragraph.

expressing truths about what [one does] or think[s] ('speaking true'), 'I' constitutes a certain relation to [the self]. The form of subjectivity that comes into being depends on the games of truth that are operative in, through, and around 'me'. Every form of subjectivity is a historical ontogenic process, in which the human being becomes equipped with truths.³⁵

When the subject becomes involved in games of truth, they are also involved in ongoing ethical practices, and it is the fusion of these two ongoing practices that one cares for themselves and comes to gain knowledge of themselves. The relationship between freedom, power, truth, and the self are all intimately tied and constitute Foucault's notion of ethics. Self-care is the node where power, truth, subjectification, and freedom meet in the form of ethics. However, ethics itself is located within systems of morality. Ethics is a sub-set of morality as a whole and contains within it its own fourfold schema.³⁶ Foucault understands ethics itself as an *aesthetics of existence*, an ongoing activity of self-creation in which one's life is to be viewed as a work of art. The notion of an aesthetics of existence is derived from Foucault's own study of the nature of ancient morality, specifically Roman and Hellenistic period understandings of morality, and describes it as "a way of life whose moral value did not depend either on one's being in conformity with a code of behavior, or on an effort of purification, but on certain formal principles in the use of pleasures, in the way one distributed them, in the limits one observed, in the hierarchy one respected."³⁷ Foucauldian four-fold schema of ethics encompasses the self-practices and aspects of an aesthetic of existence.

³⁵ Marli Huijer, "The Aesthetics of Existence in the Work of Michel Foucault," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 25, no. 2 (March 1, 1999): 67-68, <https://doi.org/10.1177/019145379902500204>.

³⁶ The series on *History of Sexuality* operates as works offering a genealogy of ethics, and in structuring this genealogy is where he outlines the four-fold schema of ethics and subjectification, which are one and the same since subjectification is the process of fashioning an ethical agent and thus an ethical way of being.

³⁷ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure*, 89.

The four parts of Foucault's ethics fall into the following respective categories: 1) Ethical Substance, 2) Mode of Subjectification (*mode d'assujettissement*) 3) Elaboration of ethical work (*travail éthique*) and 4) Mode of Being or Telos (*téléologie*).³⁸ For Foucault, this four-fold schema is further classified as 1) Ethical substance as ontology, 2) Mode of Subjectification as deontology, 3) Elaboration of ethical work as ascetic (*askesis*) or pragmatic technologies of the self, and, finally, 4) Telos and Mode of Being as teleology. These dimensions of ethics express themselves, are given life, through the care of the self. Despite the care of the self being derived from antiquity, Foucault works to draw from the ancient practice and redefine it, to a degree, as understood within a modern system of ethics.³⁹ Ultimately, the care of the self, in both the ancient sense and recontextualized in modernity, is knowledge of the self, but is also "the knowledge of a certain number of rules of conduct or of principles which are at the same time truths and regulations. To care for self is to fit oneself out with these truths. This is where ethics is linked to the game of truth" and thus the manner in which one fits themselves within the ongoing task of living an aesthetic and liberated existence.⁴⁰

Care of the self, done properly, is the systematic embodiment of ethical activity in order to produce an ethical subject. It is the point where truth, freedom, ethics collide through the process of self-subjectification. Ultimately for Foucault, a proper relationship for the self allows the subject to become active and aware of their reality. Without a relationship to the self, formulated through self-formation (subjectification), the wider

³⁸ Ibid., 25-32.

³⁹ Therefore, Foucault dissects these ancient practices within his understanding of relations of power, the practice of freedom, and games of truth since all forms of ethics are inherently caught up in these systems.

⁴⁰ Foucault, "The Ethics of the Concern" in *The Final Foucault*, 5.

world is unintelligible to the subject, and they are left without access to critically engage it. Through the care of the self, the subject becomes prepared and fit to be politically active. Foucault's project works to map the world around us and is always politically related, meaning it involves relations of power and regimes of truth/knowledge. Here lies the value of the care of self as located within MacIntyre's communities. When the subject decides to engage in the practices of caring for themselves, it enables one to critically engage MacIntyre's notions of traditions, narrative, and practices. Since the care of the self involves ongoing attention to the wider systems of formation present in the subject's life and their value to them, the individual can then begin to make sense of and properly participate in and contribute to or sustain such systems, in this case, the three components of morality in MacIntyre's communities.

However, it must be noted that Foucault's care of the self, and ethics as a whole, is not a moral imperative in the Kantian sense, but rather a "historical imperative that formulates ethical existence as a task, as a relation to the future."⁴¹ As explained earlier, Foucault does propose that a return to antiquity is the key to modern problems; in addition, he is not saying that the sole way to establish a new mode of being is through care of the self. Foucault seeks to discover the value of adopting care for the self in the context of modernity, but it is not his philosophical task to establish a universal, prescriptive, and normative account of morality. Therefore, the care of the self becomes flexible and understanding of the state of the modern, emotivist individual. The process in which the subject becomes equipped to critically engage with wider systems at hand (power, knowledge, tradition, practices, etc.) is through methodologically participating in

⁴¹William McNeill, *The Time of Life Heidegger and Êthos*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006, 71.

the ethical practices of the care of the self: 1) Ethical Substance, 2) Mode of Subjectification, 3) Elaboration of ethical work, and 4) Mode of Being or Telos.

First, the ethical substance concerns individual moral conduct directly related to the ordering of and struggle against pleasures, desires, and actions. In locating a specific aspect that one scrutinizes, problematizes, or seeks to observe, the self can relate to “the crucial aspects of the practice of fidelity to the strict observance of interdictions and obligations in the very acts one accomplishes.”⁴² Simply put, ethical substance is something related to the individual that one chooses to engage in order to measure and challenge one’s moral formation. It is “the material for analysis and manipulation” of one’s own ethical behavior.⁴³ In the *History of Sexuality*, aphrosidia is the ethical substance Foucault analyses. Through understanding how a subject relates to, problematizes, or observes their relationship to ethical substance, in this case aphrodisia, the manner in which one manages their behavior becomes apprehensible and contributes to the proper development of the other parts of Foucault’s ethics.

Second, comes the mode of subjectification which Foucault describes as “the way in which the individual establishes his relation to [moral rules, truths, and convictions] and recognizes himself as obliged to put it into practice.”⁴⁴ The mode of subjectification formulates the rules of conduct relating to the ethical substance, the manner in which one complies with these rules, and develops the degree to which the subject regards their acts as ethically valuable. Through the mode of subjectification, the

⁴² Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure*, 26.

⁴³ Gordon Ewart Carkner, “A Critical Examination of Michel Foucault’s Concept of Moral Self-Constitution in Dialogue with Charles Taylor,” (Wales: Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, 2006), 54.

⁴⁴ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure*, 27.

subject can engage the ethical substance appropriately, shaping the self in relation to the chosen area of scrutiny. Further, the mode of subjectification works to develop an ability to measure moral obligations to laws⁴⁵ and bring to light questions of value and moral direction, such as “Why should I live x way as opposed to another?” Importantly, the process of asking these questions

involves the subject’s relation to truth; it refers to one’s moral positioning, a certain attitude, or one’s stylization of self...Moral authority and accountability, in this case, tends to be self-referential. It is therefore imperative that one think about that form, develop the techniques that will help to transform it, and that one reflect upon the ends, the *teloi*, to which one will direct them.⁴⁶

Together, the mode of subjectification and the ethical substance are the first steps to begin a relationship of the subject to the subject in pursuit of aesthetic existence.

Third, ethical work concerns *technologies of the self* or *ascesis*.⁴⁷ These are made up of the different pragmatic activities done to the self by the self in order to transform the ethical subject. Subjects who participate in these technologies or practices “effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.”⁴⁸ Therefore, technologies of the self or ascetic practices can be almost anything used by the

⁴⁵ Of any form, whether created by the subject or an external, socially created and perpetuated law.

⁴⁶ Carkner, “A Critical Examination,” 54.

⁴⁷ Derived from the Greek *askesis*, meaning a certain willingness to struggle with oneself and continually exercise self-mastery and training. In ancient Greece, it consisted of the strict training of the body, mind, and soul. Additionally, *ascesis* does not entail the practice of asceticism, in a traditional understanding.

⁴⁸ Michel Foucault, ‘Technologies of the Self’, in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, eds. Foucault, Michel, Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 18.

subject to achieve these ends, such as reading a book, exercising, fasting, listening to music, etc. They are ultimately any activity that is involved in the shaping of the subject's thoughts, actions, and desires through a form of self-mastery, self-discipline, or self-denial. Due to this, technologies and ascetic practices give Foucault's framework for self-formation and ethics incredible usefulness and applicability. They involve the subject in looking at their own behaviors and desires, the tools they use to legislate them, and the cultural contexts involved. Last, telos, or mode of being, is constituted by the trajectory of the self as ethical subject. For Foucault, freedom is, to a large degree, the teleological orientation of ethics. This is because the self, as participating in an ongoing project of self-creation and an aesthetic existence, are inherently engaged in the pursuit of freedom as a subject. Rather, the practice of care of the self, done properly, automatically assumes the pursuit of ethics and freedom/liberty is the ontological condition and end of ethics. Freedom thus "is not a state for which we strive, it is a condition of our striving."⁴⁹

These four aspects of ethics foster attention and knowledge of the subject, and the enactment of self-forming activities that ultimately constitute self-care as a unified practice. The care of the self is thus both the product and substance of ethical practice. It is important to see the manner in which morality, ethics, self-care, the four-fold schema, power, and freedom are intertwined and contribute to each other, even overlapping the understanding and pursuit of the larger project of aesthetic existence. It becomes clear that, for Foucault, the self-fashioning of the subject is a complex, ongoing project in which the subject is strategically engaged with itself and begins to care for the self in what Foucault sees as the utmost significant way. The state of the relationship of the self-

⁴⁹ Timothy O'Learly, *Foucault and the Art of Ethics*, 159 as quoted in in Kenneth Wain, "Chapter 11: Foucault: The Ethics of Self-Creation and the Future of Education," *Counterpoints* 292 (2007), 165.

to-the-self determines the relationships between the self and others as well as the self and the world. Additionally, Foucault admits that practices of self-care are not invented by individuals but, rather, “are patterns that he finds in his culture and which are proposed, suggested and imposed on him by his culture, his society, and his social group.”⁵⁰ Therefore, ethical activity, in the form of self-care, works to develop a methodology and ongoing project that is philosophically important, applicable and works to sustain ethical subjects no matter the social or historical context.

Self-care: An Enlightening Practice or a Path to Narcissism?

As addressed with MacIntyre’s work, Foucault’s care of the self is not spotless and there remain a few questions that must be addressed regarding the possible dangers, per se, of embracing Foucault’s framework. There are two reoccurring questions in regard to this issue: 1) How does the care of the self-avoid a deeper dive into liberal individualism? And 2) Does this care of the self necessarily lead to an antagonistic view of the other? Foucault says no and understands that the notion of self-orientated care is difficult to view in positive terms. Part of his project of the ethical turn is to reintegrate the positive notion of care of the self found in ancient culture and the practice of morality. In the *Care of the Self* and *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault traces how the modern, negative view of self-care as narcissistic or even opposed to a moral orientation towards the other, is one that emerged from the Christian tradition. Notably, the prominence of Greco-Roman Christianity changed the notion of caring for the self away from the Delphic understanding and viewed it rather as a form of egoism. Foucault describes how at a certain point “being concerned with oneself was readily denounced as

⁵⁰ Foucault, “The Ethics of the Concern” in *The Final Foucault*, 11.

a form of self-love, a form of selfishness or self-interest in contradiction with the interest to be shown in others or the self-sacrifice required” to treat others morally.⁵¹

The influence of Christianity still dominates modern understanding, so many may hold the assumption that attention oriented towards to focused on the self in wrong and socially harmful. Therefore, without properly engaging Foucault’s work, it is simple for the contemporary western reader to accuse the care of self as practice that merely habituates selfishness.⁵² Such equivalency would be incorrect to assert. Naturally, it is just as simple to wonder if this seemingly hyper-focused attention to the self may be a circular path that arrives once again at the starting point of liberal individualism or even a Nietzschean morality.⁵³ Both of these are critiqued and seen as problematic by MacIntyre, and if the care of the self arrives back at either of these points, it begs the question of how Foucault’s ethics may fit within MacIntyre’s own system. Foucault explicitly states that the care of the self is socially located, and is “not an exercise in solitude, but a true social practice. The care of the self – or the attention devoted to the care that others should take of themselves – appears then as an intensification of social relations.”⁵⁴ Nietzsche’s immoralism and will to power, on the other hand, does not arrive

⁵¹ Michel Foucault, “The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom” in *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984* eds. Paul Rabinow, and James D. Faubion (New York: New Press, 1997), 284.

⁵² There is irony in the extreme self-focus interred in every consumerism and individualism of American life that is acceptable, yet in a different context, attention to the self is inherently negative.

⁵³ The ethical work of subjectivation Foucault outlines is discussed as being inspired by, if not similar to, Nietzsche’s notion of self-creation, liberty, and immoralism in the form of *will to power* found throughout his body of work, specifically in *Will to Power*. The degree to which Foucault’s own body of work agrees, disagrees, or problematizes/is problematized by Nietzsche’s own work is debated in philosophical scholarship. However, the question to be wrestled with is the fact that MacIntyre takes issue with the Nietzschean form of morality and ethics. Daniel Nica, “The Aesthetics of Existence,” 49.

⁵⁴ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Care of the Self*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 51,53.

back at concern for the other. Although his ethics are also concerned with a certain artistic approach to self-formation, Foucault's ethics (as care of the self) is explicitly grounded in Ancient Greek notions rather than a more modern understanding of the self and self-regard.

The very aim of Foucault's self-care is a positive transformation of the subject in order to behave ethically, consistently, and sustain a system of self-knowledge and ethical formation. Thus, it is safe to conclude that if one arrives at narcissistic self-absorption or a disconnection from the larger social context at hand, they are exercising Foucault's self-care incorrectly. Rather, the very work of caring for the self is necessarily directed towards and related to the other and the danger of having an antagonistic orientation towards others emerges as a failure to care for the self. In the work of Foucault, non-ethical or immoral regard for the other manifests in the form of the use of power in the form of domination over other subjects. Dominating power is often an extension of institutions and it is through their perpetuation of certain regimes of truth, regimes of power, and normalizing work that subjects are disciplined, defined, organized, and normalized. It is thus important to note that power as a meta-structure is not inherently negative, rather the use of power *against the freedom* of subjects and towards domination is a natural extension of society that may perpetuate negative consequences. As outlined earlier, freedom of the subject is directly related to power, specifically the *proper* use of power for self-formation and thus freedom in the world as a subject. Therefore, "the one who cared for himself correctly found himself, by that very fact, in a measure to behave correctly in relation to others and for others."⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Foucault, "The Ethics of the Concern" in *The Final Foucault*, 7.

Ultimately, a non-presence of self-knowledge and care leaves the subject vulnerable to the negative forces of power and the improper use of power by the subject. In an interview, Foucault responds to concerns about self-care enabling egoism or disregard for the other, clarifying that

The risk of dominating others and exercising tyrannical power over them arises precisely only when one has not taken care of the self and has become the slave of one's desires. But if you take proper care of yourself, that is, if you know ontologically what you are, if you know what you are capable of, if you know what it means for you to be a citizen of a city... if you know what things you should and should not fear, if you know what you can reasonably hope for and, on the other hand, what things should not matter to you....if you know all this, you cannot abuse your power over others.⁵⁶

Therefore, the practice of self-care actively guards against the improper use of power and thus against the development of egotistic self-love and antagonistic regard for the other.

The Foucauldian self, in regarding itself, automatically regards others. To claim that Foucault's care of the self lays the grounds for a neoliberal image of the individual or arrives at Nietzsche's immoralism fails to read Foucault closely and mistakes an influence from the work of his predecessors as an embrace of their philosophical systems.

Executed correctly and consistently, the care of the self thus makes the subject as a moral agent both self-aware and concerned with others. Such an orientation proves helpful when dealing with the prevalence of the SAC model and emotivism in the realm of higher education since it works against two systems that are ultimately completely self-absorbed, antagonistic to things that do not fulfill personal desires, and leads away from categories of ethical decision making. It is the transformational and reflective nature

⁵⁶ Foucault, "The Ethics of the Concern" in *The Essential Works of Foucault*, 288.

of the care of the self that hold potential, within the context of MacIntyre's communities, to transform the emotivist individual's mode of operating from the inside out. The ways in which the care of the self fits within and works through MacIntyre's communities, as well as an exploration of what the care of the self may practically look like in higher education, serves as a point of focus for the next, and final chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Meeting of the Waters: MacIntyre and Foucault Introducing the Space of Moral Formation in the University

At last, we are met with a point of culmination. It is in this final chapter that the work of Alasdair MacIntyre and Michel Foucault come together with the goal of producing a tentative, philosophical model for student-teacher relationships in the hopes of transforming the modern state of higher education. This final chapter features a few points of focus. First, it seeks to clearly establish the ways in which Foucault's care of the self supports the work of MacIntyre and the outcomes of this synthesis. Next, drawing from both of their works, an answer to the question regarding the university's role in the moral formation of their students is presented. Then, it is argued that a possible vision for this responsibility is found in the harmonious joining of the community of MacIntyre¹ and the self of Foucault's care of the self. Last comes a possible model for higher education located in student-teacher relationships as a way of applying the work of MacIntyre and Foucault explored in this thesis.

MacIntyre: The Tension of the Solution

MacIntyre's solution of a form of community that fosters the development of virtues through the systematic engagement with narrative, tradition, and practice is most appropriate as a response to the moral conundrum facing the prevalence of the SAC

¹ As structured around the three parts of morality: narrative, tradition, and practice.

model and the decline of the role of moral formation in the walls of higher education. However, there are prevalent gaps in his conclusion that must be dealt with before applying his form of community to higher education institutions. The first prevalent issue in his conclusion is that he fails to offer an account for the individual's moral responsibility for sustaining the three parts of morality and second, he does not confront the difficulties of the modern individual in regard to adjusting a community grounded in Aristotelianism. The present state of morality is simply not equipped to dive completely into MacIntyre's solution of Aristotelianism and community. To do so would be pulling a rug out from underneath modernity and MacIntyre's project would either fail to be sustained or the modern self would not be capable of thriving within an entirely new environment so heavily focused on community. It makes a large jump from deeply rooted individualism to a society composed of communities, distanced from the modern sense of self-interest. MacIntyre himself reveals in *After Virtue* truly how disconnected and dispersed the social life of modernity stands. A solution to emotivism grounded in communities of moral formation certainly holds potential but lacks specific steps on how to enable the individual to fit within these communities.

As previously mentioned, MacIntyre has a certain Victorian sensibility and even naive trust in the ability to arrive at Aristotelianism but does not grapple with the responsibility for moral sustainment within the individual, particularly the moral challenges the modern individual may face in transition towards the framework he advocates for. He addresses that the self (individual) becomes intelligible by understanding their place within society in connection with communities that foster

tradition, practices, and narrative,¹ but he does not analyze whether the modern emotivist individual stands capable of engaging them in the first place. Arguably, unless the individual has means of transitioning into these communities and properly interacting with them through an ethical imperative of responsibility placed upon themselves, there will not be an integration of individuals into communities nor sustainment of them.

Enter Foucault: The Individual Accounted For

The Foucauldian notion of care of the self provides three important philosophical foundations in connection with MacIntyre. First, care of the self places responsibility on the individual for the sustainment of ethics, internally, in a way MacIntyre neglects. The care of self fits within the model of self-focus prevalent in the modern individual while holding the possibility to transform the emotivist regard of the self into a pro-social and ethical one. Further, it does so without falling into narcissism and actively guarding against the problems of emotivism.² Last, the praxis of the care of the self fits within MacIntyre's communities of moral formation in a way that encourages continuous critical and philosophical engagement with existing narrative, traditions, and practices in a way that is true to both Foucault's and MacIntyre's projects.

First, the structure of the care of the self is focused on the individual, but not in a selfish manner. However, the inclination of the modern individual may easily transition into a system that is framed in such a way since the orientation of focusing on the self is so deeply rooted in the daily mode of operating for the modern, emotivist individual. For

¹ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 205.

² Regarding both Nietzschean concepts of the self and ethics along with the liberal individualist, as explained in the previous chapter.

students in the SAC model, beginning to engage in the practices of the care of self may seem like a mere continuation of seeking the best outcomes in their education,³ yet in the integration of Foucault's system, the focus on the self as a customer will instead rather begin to turn into a contemplation of the role of the subject as a student, as a citizen, and as individual outside of the market demands. Although the care of the self cannot be forced and is ultimately left up to the will of each individual, the engagement within a classroom guided by MacIntyre's traditions, narrative, and practices aim at developing an environment that rewards and encourages the practices of the care of the self. One of the benefits of self-care is that it places certain moral responsibility upon the individual to sustain their own virtues and interact with communities in a way that promotes moral coherence even if the individual finds themselves outside, removed from, or in between different communities in a way MacIntyre does not address. Such an individual is one best fit for entering MacIntyre's communities.

For Foucault, the subject only becomes intelligible and capable of pursuing freedom if it engages and works to know and understand the world around them. The same is true in the opposite direction. MacIntyre shares a similar viewpoint that the life of an individual becomes intelligible through understanding one's location within social history. This understand emerges from analyzing the long and complex set of developments that create the unique situatedness of one's life and grappling with whether one's life and virtues are unified and evaluable, or conflicting, foundationless, and unintelligible.⁴ Therefore, the care of the self holds the most potential for flourishing

³ From a business perspective.

⁴ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 205.

when placed within an environment that focuses on the historical and social systems that create the world that subject occupies – as is the goal of MacIntyre’s communities. For Foucault, subjects are harmed when they are not involved in a form of self-construction, for without it, they are left vulnerable to non-positive, imprisoning power systems. In the act of self-formation, the Foucauldian subject necessarily analyzes the forms of power active in the broader social, political, education web they occupy.⁵ Through this engagement with the larger social makeup, the individual is simultaneously contributing to their own self-formation and sustainment of ethics. To identify the ethical substance, to form a mode of subjectivation, to develop technologies, and to work towards freedom as telos, the subject must not remain socially isolated nor politically stagnant. Rather, the subject must be active within the community they find themselves a part of. Subjects must confront their nature as *politikon zoon*,⁶ and work towards freedom through connection with community and the traditions, practices, and the other individuals that weave it together.

Through this, it is the hope that the subject may come to understand that accepting and acting under the SAC model is an example of the self being ruled by desires,⁷ that fosters a non-ethical orientation and mode of being without freedom for the subject. If Foucault is right, to remain in this space will only prove to make the subject unhappy, removed from any actual say in the course of their life, and ultimately remain in an

⁵ MacIntyre’s traditions and practices, as they exist in institutions, qualify as points of enacting power or where forms of power are developed and socially spread. Therefore, the caring self will naturally reflect on the presence, of lack thereof, of these aspects in regard to individual identity and purpose.

⁶ *Politikon zoon* is a Greek term often used by Aristotle to refer to the nature of humans as political animals.

⁷ Desires of capital gain, or self-interest, of lack of regard for others.

ongoing cycle of subjectivation by the systems of power at play, in this case, the market demands of global capitalism. Thus, the subject concerned with the care of the self is someone who can both interact with the community and sustain themselves in between communities.

For Foucault, the subject only becomes intelligible and capable of pursuing freedom if it engages and works to know and understand the world around them. MacIntyre shares a similar viewpoint in that the self only becomes intelligible if it understanding it is located within social history, a long and complex set of developments, and if their life and virtues are unifiable and evaluable as a whole.⁸ Therefore, the care of the self holds the most potential for flourishing when placed within an environment that focuses on the historical and social systems that create the world that a subject occupies. Similarly, MacIntyre's communities flourish only if the members within it place salience on understanding the historical and social contexts in order to arrive at a better understanding of telos and the good life. The individual who properly exercises Foucault's care of the self constitutes is an individual who holds both the potential and capability for morally interacting with MacIntyre's communities. Further, they are capable of sustaining their own moral categories between communities without falling back into personalized, socially disconnected, emotivist notions of moral conduct.

An Answer to the Question at Hand

The answer to the question is multifaceted since there are numerous dimensions worthy of discussion. First, as to whether or not there is a responsibility of the university in the moral formation of their students, the answer is a resounding yes. Clearly, there is a

⁸ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 205.

need for responsibility to be taken in the moral formation of individuals as they face the modern moral crises on both MacIntyre's and Foucault's accounts. And although neither explicitly state the location of this responsibility, beyond the self in the case of Foucault and communities in the case of MacIntyre, higher educational institutions arguably offer the most appropriate space that holds the highest potential for fostering the praxis of both Foucault's and MacIntyre's work. The university continues to offer the space and time for students to develop themselves in countless ways. It continues to serve as a place where individuals, hopefully, become well prepared to enter the workplace and society as now properly equipped citizens, workers, and individuals. Therefore, there remains no time or place better for implementing systems of moral formation.

As explored in chapter two, MacIntyre observes that "no practices can survive for any length of time unsustained by institutions"⁹ as they serve as the social bearers of practices and virtues. Therefore, an institution poses the best location for establishing practices and serving as a location for the sustainment and fostering of traditions and narrative. It is thus higher education institutions that are the appropriate institutions to establish MacIntyre's moral communities.¹⁰ The institutions of higher education, through their very mode of operation, continue to offer up a possible space where moral formation may be revitalized. A principal reason for this is that the university is already engaged in a sort of tradition of being a location of formation; despite losing sight of its beginnings through the interruptions of increased corporatization and bureaucratization, there are still strands of what the university was and can become once more. In entering

⁹ Ibid., 194.

¹⁰ Narrative, practices, traditions are all included within the term of MacIntyre's community.

the practice of learning, even under the challenges placed by the SAC model, one enters a form of traditions through the particular discipline and material one engages in. In the acts of teaching and learning in a classroom, a student engages a rich disciplinary history and becomes involved in the process of either continuing or bettering the tradition of a discipline. Whether one studies engineering, British literature, biology, or modern European history, each and every student must enter into and grapple with these traditions, no matter how strong the emotivist or liberal individualist tendencies may be.

The SAC model, individualism, consumerism, etc. certainly may temper the degree to which a student genuinely engages traditions, practices, narrative and self-care, but the ties to tradition and practices cannot be severed entirely as long as an educational space made up of individuals exists. Along with the historical engagement, the learning space of universities are automatically future-orientated, involved in contemplating the future developments of a certain discipline, the ability to perform certain tasks after learning a skill, or the career one may be pursuing. This orientation challenges the students to think about the trajectory of their own life and career. This contemplation of trajectory automatically involves a student in the effort of a narrative understanding of their own life and thus the telos of their existence. It is this future-oriented aspect of the act of learning that establishes a space for fostering a teleological understanding of life. The issue at hand is that many of these points of engagement such as critical consideration of the traditions of a discipline or the emphasis on a teleological understanding of a life have become tempered and are repeatedly kept dormant by the prevalence of the SAC model. Therefore, structuring a framework for engaging moral and ethical systems in higher education, from the work of MacIntyre and Foucault, holds

potential for reviving and reshaping the role and responsibility of the university in the moral development of their students.

For MacIntyre, all formation of the virtues begins with practices, therefore, it is appropriate to identify what practice the community and its individuals engage in and share. In the context of higher education, this practice is teaching.

The Practice of the University

Returning to the issue of teaching as a practice and the assertion that it remains a practice, against MacIntyre's own claims, accepts Dunne's argument that "teaching is a triadic relation between a teacher, a subject-matter, and a student"; therefore, the process of teaching is inherently communal and engaged, in one way or another, with a form of traditions and practices. MacIntyre's claim that teaching is not a practice has been widely contested in philosophical and higher education scholarship circles.¹¹ Although MacIntyre originally says that teaching is merely a means to a certain end and lacks a purpose for the activities it introduces to students, he fails to account for the relational aspect of teaching, as viewed from Dunne's perspective. Through this triadic nature of teaching, teachers and students are automatically engaged in the sharing of a certain interest and goal related to the topic of study. They are also engaged and situated in the creation of community, tradition, and narrative understanding through the engagement with the study of a certain discipline between both practitioners and learners.

MacIntyre remarks that "to enter into a practice is to enter into a relationship not only with its contemporary practitioners but also with those who have preceded us in the practice, particularly those whose achievements extended the reach of the practice to its

¹¹ Dunne, 2003; Fitzmaurice, 2010; MacIntyre & Dunne, 2002; Noddings, 2003.

present point.”¹² This is precisely the situation of the contemporary university classroom. In learning about a certain discipline, one is naturally caught up in recognizing its history of practitioners, listening to the modern practitioners,¹³ and the goal of achieving, in some form, an understanding of a certain skill or subject material. Further, MacIntyre relates that in order for practices to be sustained, the apprentices, or those learning the excellence of the practice, must submit themselves to a practitioner. Structurally, the classroom is set up in such a manner. The classroom of a university is inherently relational with the teacher and students creating a form of community.¹⁴ Part of why so many issues between educators and students arise with the modern state of education is that this rational structure cannot be completely removed, even though they are interrupted by the SAC model and the university's modern way of operating. MacIntyre's examination of emotivism and the preliminary analysis of the SAC model reveal that the modern individual is oriented towards a non-pro-social way of navigating the world at large. Rather, liberal individualism guides the way in which many members of western society engage all social, political, economic, and educational aspects of their lifetime.

Part of why the university is the appropriate space to place MacIntyre's and Foucault's work in an application is that the classroom structurally causes tension against this orientation and challenges it. There already exists within a classroom an orientation towards a practitioner-apprentice structure concerned and involved in the shared activity

¹² MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 194.

¹³ The role the educator takes.

¹⁴ “Community” is not understood in MacIntyrian terms.

of teaching, learning, and mastering a certain topic at hand, which MacIntyre outlines as appropriate for the sustainment of practices. Across all realms of discipline,

whether we are painters or physicists or quarterbacks or indeed just lovers of good painting or first-rate experiments or a well-thrown pass – that its goods can only be achieved by subordinating ourselves within the practice in our relationship to other practitioners. We have to learn to recognize what is due to whom...and we have to listen carefully to what we are told about our own inadequacies and to reply with the same carefulness for the facts.¹⁵

The practice of learning is inherently involved in this learning of “to what is due to whom.” The process of understanding is pursued through submitting oneself as student to the judgment of excellence made by teachers as the contemporary practitioner, engaging disciplinary traditions, and participating in the argument, contemplation, and debate concerning the value of these traditions between peers and teachers as a community engaged in a single project. Teaching, therefore, can indeed remain a practice upon MacIntyre’s own grounds. It is “a complex form of socially established co-operating human activity” with goods that are internal to it.¹⁶ Additionally, it has standards of excellence and practices of critique that seek the improvement and analysis of the practice, and thus tradition(s), at hand. Engagement with practice allows “human powers to achieve excellence... [which] are systematically extended.”¹⁷ And last, the excellence of teaching has a “double reference” that is realized in the achievement of students and the excellence of completing work within the classroom.¹⁸ Therefore, it is through the

¹⁵ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 191.

¹⁶ Alasdair MacIntyre and John. Dunne, “Alasdair MacIntyre on Education: In Dialogue with Joseph Dunne,” *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 36, no. 1, (2002): 7.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

shared practice of teaching, as understood as a triadic, socially complex activity that may operate as the point of focus for restructuring and transforming student-teacher relationships in the modern university. The practice of teaching can also work towards reestablishing the responsibility of the American university in the moral formation of their students.

A Not so Disquieting Relationship

The community for both MacIntyre's and Foucault's work to be applied in higher education rests upon the state of the student-teacher relationships of the university. The pedagogical application of their work to this relationship will inevitably vary from institution to institution and the specific manner in which they are applied is worth investigation but must be left for another time. In applying the understanding of MacIntyre's narrative, traditions, and practices to the shared activity of teaching in a way that fosters the practices of care of the self, the relationships of students and teachers will become aligned in what they aim at. It is this shared activity that fosters community, relationality, cares for others, and a focus away from the self, in a manner that may serve as an environment for fostering the virtues. In participating in teaching, and learning, and the practices and traditions of a discipline, all members of the classroom come to trust the teacher as a practitioner, to engage themselves as not merely customers, but selves entering a long tradition of practice and as subjects aimed at contemplating the trajectory for their life beyond concern for monetary gain. Here, in this space where students and teachers meet to share in the practice of teaching, there is hope for countering emotivist morality and the SAC model. This is not to say that a framework constructed from the work of MacIntyre and Foucault stands as the only possible solution for the moral

catastrophe at hand, but rather that they offer up one of the most philosophically sound frameworks that recognizes the state of modernity and offers enough flexibility to be applied to American universities.

The answer to the question of this thesis remains clear: under late-stage capitalism, there is a need for the university to take up responsibility in the moral formation of their students for the sake not only of the integrity of the university and the individuals it produces, but for the sake of guarding against another Dark Age¹⁹ that may be brought about by the state of modern morality under emotivism. The responsibility can be taken up by reforming the student-teacher relationships of the university through participating in the practice of teaching. Through teaching, MacIntyre's traditions and narrative fuse together and begin to form a community of moral formation. These communities of the classroom may work towards fostering a Foucauldian notion of care of the self which not only places responsibility upon individual subjects for ethical sustainment of their own character, but also develops the type of community members that will contribute to and foster the development of traditions, narratives, and practices necessary for proper moral formation. It is in hopes of these newfound communities and relationships that the student produced shall leave the university, not in a condition unengaged and disconnected from social and personal moral engagement, but rather as an individual equipped to ethically engage the modern world in a manner that counters emotivist modes of operating under the system of globalized capitalism. The hope for such a conclusion lays in the hands of the modern university; the question now remains whether, in the face of modernity, such a task will be taken up.

¹⁹ As MacIntyre refers to in his final chapter of *After Virtue*.

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