Part I

Pursuing Pleasure: Reflections from Antiquity
Chapter One  Aestheticising Existence: Foucault’s Proposal

Foucault’s Proposal

In general, the manifest form of ethics means a code of conduct, a set of rules and prescriptions that are binding on practicing individuals, groups and communities. Aesthetics, in contrast, is the domain of principles, rules and values meant for creating, responding and understanding art rather than living a life. Although there have been many attempts to define, theorise and understand art, most of these faced strong pressures to articulate their relationship with issues related to morality. For instance, Kant quite famously stated that beauty is the symbol of morality (Kant _Critique_ 178). And by this he did not mean that moral and aesthetic reflections, and judgements derived from them, are one with each other, but that they are structurally and formally analogous to each other, in that both of them strive to adopt a universalistic standpoint by negating the sensuous aspect of the cognition.¹ What is important to note here is not the salience or the viability of Kant’s observations, but the pressure evident here to link beauty, an aesthetic category, and morality. There are no immediately discernible relations between judging that something is morally good and finding the same thing beautiful.

Let us try our hand on a proposal which, drawing on a broad-based agreement that aesthetics and ethics have a lot in common, rather tendentiously, commits itself to the idea that ethics must be aestheticised. Vague as it is, one implication is at least boldly evident here, that what we need is a new ethics which is modelled upon aesthetics. Michel Foucault, more than anybody else, spent a great deal of his later career trying to make this recommendation in as forceful a way as possible. In one of his last interviews, he says:

_The main principles of our ethics have been related at a certain moment to an aesthetics of existence... For centuries we have been convinced that between our ethics, our personal ethics, our everyday life, and the great political, economic structures there were analytical relations and that we couldn’t change anything, for instance, in our sex life or our family life, without ruining_
our economy, our democracy, and so on. I think we have to get rid of this idea of an analytical relationship between ethics and other social economic and political structures. (*The Foucault Reader*, 350)

Then he adds, “we have to create ourselves as a work of art.” There is much in these words which is not amenable to quick construal outside the fold of concerns and issues that kept Foucault preoccupied. As it is, Foucault’s entire life work revolves around a few central preoccupations—sexuality, knowledge and power, truth, self, rules, and ethics. There is always an unresolved ambiguity about Foucault’s intellectual postures, whether to treat him as a historian or a philosopher. However, Foucault’s work, to take a positive view of the matter, is doubly qualified to be called both history and philosophy. Although it is a complementary view, there are certain problems. The history part of his work is presented to be too cosily joining hands with philosophy. On the one hand, Foucault is writing intellectual histories; and on the other hand, there is a meta-stance always at work, scathingly vigilant in fact, unearthing the hidden handiwork of some invisible design that constitutes the status of ideas, representations, and knowledge in history. What he writes is history but understood in a qualified sense, as a history of thought as it took shape under the influence of its complex enabling conditions. As a result, the task becomes much more complex, and there is no way any such historian could actually escape the ambit of pure thought into only considering empirical matters, as most historians do. In addition, he is one such philosopher who kept changing his methods of investigation, not just issues, from time to time. Initially he began as a structuralist, but later he devised a very innovative method of historical investigation called ‘archaeology’, only to further embrace another one called ‘genealogy’. Unfortunately, we have no category as yet that can accommodate Foucault. The problems surface when we, as readers, commentators, critics, and sympathisers of Foucault, begin to engage with his work. For instance, in his second volume of the *History of Sexuality, The Use of Pleasures*, Foucault poses a problem,
namely the problematization of pleasures, desires and sexual behaviour in Greek antiquity in relation to a certain view of art of living, that is couched quite formidably in certain facts of history (14-24). The history part, then, quite frequently gets intercepted by these larger issues with substantive investments in what Foucault calls the history of thought. It is no doubt a mark of great innovation that Foucault quite commendably trades between conceptual stringency and the historical facts. However, at the end, it appears that he fails to mark a line that divides his concerns from those of history. The connections he notices between different phenomena in history tendentiously bear traces of his larger thrusts and pushes, as though there is more of him in the history he writes than the history itself. This is perhaps the cost one has to pay for being so innovative. But this is not to undervalue the sheer breadth and vigour of his theoretical work. However, these same methods, as we come see a moment later, prevent him from understanding the real import of ethics.

Coming back to the extract, what is clear from these words is that Foucault is resisting the dominant view of the patterns and relations that organize the production and structuring of power, governed by a political rationality, in spaces where private and public spheres overlap. And in the domain of human action, the site of beliefs and desires, he proposes the possibility of being ethical that circumvents the designs of state power and political rationality. In sum, he is advocating for a personal ethics. Let us now make an attempt to make sense of this recommendation. David Hume, in the third book of his *Treatise on Human Nature*, divided virtues into two kinds: natural and artificial. The virtues which we cultivate and labour to understand, such as justice, fidelity, chastity, and keeping a contract, which are meant to keep a social scheme intact, are artificial because no one inherits them right from the birth. Notions of equitability and justice need complex forms of understanding, calculation and appraisal and they are attainable only after a steady effort to
acquire them. And all artificial virtues are supposed to take different forms under different conditions. As opposed to these, benevolence, courage, prudence, compassion, gratitude, friendship, fidelity, charity, beneficence, clemency, equity, prudence, temperance, frugality, industry, courage, ambition, pride, modesty, self-assertiveness, good sense, wit and humour are natural since they feature in a person, invariant across cultures, as part of a package unique to him/her as a natural being. Foucault would say that one need not model an ethics along the lines of artificial virtues, for they would require an unchanging governing matrix of relations between these virtues and the institutions that enable these virtues to be realized at all. Nor does he advocate that an ethics be fashioned purely out of natural virtues. This matrix, Foucault believes, sets up a normative machinery with its own productive and regulative aspects of power. Clearly, one needs to work out alternatives to this by severing the links between this matrix and our aspirations to be ethical beings. Such a severance would naturally leave a lot of scope for ethics to be turned into a personal affair, in that natural virtues will have a much greater role to play; however, this need not mean that the values based on artificial virtues will be disbanded, nor that those values which contribute to the well functioning of society will be dispensed with. What then reigns paramount is moral fashioning at the individual level, in line with a way of making the individual's affective aspect take charge of shaping his/her ethics. This analogy with Hume does not mirror Foucault's position entirely. Hume is invoked only to put things in a perspective that shares the temper of the modern ethical thought. In other words, Foucault is only urging us to address this aspect of ethics, that is to resituate ethical conduct in the domain of affect and its conditioning rather than in the domain of rules and duties and the institutions whose job is to keep these normative structures intact.
It then follows that ethics is an independent enterprise and one must not waste even a single effort in preventing it from collapsing into a moral regime that political, juridical and religious orders together give rise to. I do not think one needs to give in to the entire corpus of ideas and assumptions set up by Foucault to understand the thrust of this particular claim, that a personal morality be fashioned outside the institutional circuit a society is enveloped with. It is intelligible on its own merit. Besides, Foucault also recommends that “we have to create ourselves as a work of art”. This is an arresting claim in itself. This claim undoubtedly has a strange kind of appeal; for, anyone who is sensitive to the spell cast by works of art, and anybody with an exalted sense of art and its relationship with life, would find in this claim something like what Keats discovered when he first began to read Chapman’s Homer. The idea is to bring art as close to life as possible, not by way of assimilating it into life, but by making aesthetics serve as a model for living ethically. One suggestion would be to seek a connection between personal morality and creating oneself as a work of art. There are at least two ways of addressing this issue. Firstly, independent of Foucault’s concerns, one could investigate if anything about aesthetics would help us understand ethics. Secondly, one could critically examine the trajectory Foucault followed to make a recommendation of this kind. Though these are apparently two different ways of working around the same problem, they are very closely related to each other. Unless Foucault had some broad conception of aesthetics implicit in his work he would not come up with as radical a suggestion as to state that ethics should be aestheticised. We shall now begin to examine the general outlines of aesthetics, in terms of its basic principles and contours, with a view to appraise if its resources can help ethics set its home aright. Subsequently, we shall examine the trajectory that led Foucault to put forth this suggestion. Finally, we shall examine Foucault’s proposal in the light of what we have gathered about the relationship between ethics and aesthetics.
Aestheticising ethics

In the 1950s Stuart Hampshire published an article called "Logic and Appreciation" to mainly argue that "aesthetic judgements are not comparable in purpose with moral judgements, and that there are no problems of aesthetics comparable with the problems of ethics" (Hampshire, 162). His starting point is that there is such kind of a thing called a value judgement which is the genus for forms of judgement we later distinguish as aesthetic and ethical. The main thrust of his argument comes from his particularly perceptive insight that in the sphere of ethics the movement of thought is from particular to general, to frame generalisable principles from the examples of particular instances; while in aesthetics any such move amounts to travelling in the wrong direction. The basic contrast he builds up is between a moralist and a spectator-critic; and how each in his/her capacity employs different means, like the former using moral arguments, generalisable principles and judgements while the latter using perceptual judgements, to make out a case of their own. Foucault would no doubt forthwith advocate the abolition of ethics construed thus in favour of aesthetics, and he would add that the particulars can very well take care of themselves. But Hampshire would resist only to declare that "everyone needs a morality to make exclusions in conduct; but neither an artist nor a critical spectator unavoidably needs an aesthetic" (Hampshire 165).

This dispensability of the aesthetic, not used in a pejorative sense, is only one side of the problem. But, more urgently, the menace Hampshire’s arguments pose to the position we are trying to push for is of a very serious nature. If we go with Hampshire, then we are simply left with something, a science or a practice perhaps, which broadly tries to understand the nature of conduct, and thereby formulate principles, or at least intuitions, which will guide human action. Then all attempts to bridge ethics with aesthetics will mean
only a superficial similarity that both of them are evaluative, therefore normative, as opposed to being descriptive discourses, let alone any talk of aestheticising ethics. Is there any hope left? Or can we prove Hampshire wrong?

Doing moral philosophy is not like doing science, nor metaphysics—its hoary progenitor. This is not to deny that one needs to get one’s ontology right before setting out for a resolution of any issue related to certain fundamental aspects of morality. In any event, doing moral philosophy does not involve strong refutations as metaphysics or sciences do; that is, one could get the picture of reality wrong because one had employed an inaccurate concept, or an imprecise metaphor sometimes. However, such errors of vision and conceptualization do not generally mar thinking about morality in that, two rival accounts of morality do not entail a strict refutation of each other. Precise refutations could take place only when there is a basic disagreement over what kind of entities or things populate reality. On the contrary, between two rival versions of morality, for instance, the areas of emphasis differ; or, one would find two different orderings of the conceptual hierarchy. Varying models of moral thinking spring from divergence of opinion and emphasis on what is considered basic rather than due to an erroneous vision. The question is not whether to prove Hampshire right or wrong, but to notice where his framework stops. And if we could help it, we should stretch its boundaries.

To sum up the discussion so far: beginning with Foucault’s call ‘to create one’s life as a work of art’, we have examined his claim in the most charitable light. The idea is to look for a means which would enable some sort of a liaison to take place between ethics and aesthetics. Apart from reinforcing the general assumption that ethics and aesthetics take up the same genus, namely, that they belong in the value sphere and therefore are normative
domains, no further headway is made. The apparent contrast in this debate is between life
and art, and how, in the course of dealing with them, we rework our assumptions about
what is real and what is unreal. But the difficulty lies in capturing the moment when this
contrast is at its sharpest point. One lives a life, but one does not live art. In contrast, one
*makes* art, and it is not fanciful to assume that one could *make* one’s life. Thus, what is
common between art and life, and that is when we could perhaps talk about freedom in art
and life in comparable terms, is that both of them admit the idea of *making* in different
proportions, and also allow different degrees of effort and imagination involved in such
acts of making. Then the idea of making, *poieisis*, is the bridge between art and life. Living
a life towards the goal of happiness and fulfilment could very well entail *making* choices
and decisions, responsibly, whose ultimate objective is to live according to one’s ideas and
purposes. This is much like *making* a work of art in accordance with one’s own ideas,
wishes, objectives and vision. In a sense, the idea of freedom must correspond to the idea
of *making*, wherever it is employed. Thinking about morality need not be rigorously
squared to some model of practical rationality that would justify the means employed to
realize certain ends—political, moral, social and aesthetic—which sustain relations among
themselves as it happens in a matrix.\textsuperscript{10} Therefore, the analogy of the freedom an artist
enjoys while indulging in creative acts could help one imagine or vicariously experience
the freedom that he/she might want to enjoy as a moral agent.

The artist’s capacity to *make* is in someway rooted in the understanding of reality he/she
has developed over a period of time. In a sense the impetus to create is as much governed
by laws of understanding relative to a person, which in turn remain aligned with the
universal principles of understanding. The idea of freedom implicit in the idea of ‘creating
oneself as a work of art’, accompanied with an unreserved antipathy towards whatever the
factor be that scuttles it, is anchored in a certain order of understanding of oneself and an ability to manage one’s moral ends. Thus for anyone indulging in the creation of art, involving a certain order of execution in so far as to deliver something as a work of art, the decisions and choices he/she makes are not arbitrary, nor of course rudely conditioned by some crass form of determinism or overdetermination. Parallely, those who are free enough to create their life have their strategies, choices and decisions rooted in the manner in which they construe the world around them; in the way in which the general principles of understanding enable them to transform their sense of life, as they view and understand it. This transformation need not be of the kind that could be specified in advance, for the details of ones life need not fit into a patterning already evolved, and there begins one’s tryst with ethics which does not take the form of either a covenant or an instance of rule-following. This does not mean that one has no scope to think in terms of ends, both public and personal. As it seems, the personal ends are crucial and they determine the trajectory of a self-transformation one would want to follow. Then what about public ends, referred to in the name of a commonweal? At least for Foucault, any such reference amounts to a re-importation of ethics construed as an enterprise which works only in the interests of the commonweal.

In summary, in this section it has been argued that there is a sense in which the notion of freedom can be assimilated to the idea of making, applicable both in art and life. This helps us appreciate better the claim that one could create oneself as a work of art, thus enabling us to appraise the initial thrust that ethics can be aestheticised. It should be recalled that in the previous section, working our way from the side of aesthetics, we ended on a negative note. In contrast, we are now better placed. Thus, we are in a better position to see which way the boundaries of Hampshire’s framework stretch.
Foucault’s Ways

So far we have tried to interpret the position entailed in Foucault’s statement as a position that does not let ethics lapse into an idiosyncratic practice that is beyond the pale of reason and clarification. Foucault is proposing to initiate a practice of doing ethics, harking back to the ancient Greeks and Romans, perhaps intending to escape the menace of consequentialists, utilitarians, kantians and other rigorists. Foucault is urging us to do something quite radical; to recast the terms of moral discourse along the lines of a personal ethics that does not subordinate itself to any normative pressure, but is still conceivable as a personal end one could regulate; an ethics of the telos, the moral ends viewed as both final and intermediary, as pleasures or happiness. Then, a moral agent’s calling is to pursue and manage his/her ends, conceived as the pleasures of life. The idea is clear; that one needs an ethics on the analogy of aesthetics, and Foucault maintains that managing one’s practical activity in pursuit of pleasure corresponds to an aesthetics of existence. Interestingly, Foucault maintains that to understand the sense in which the term pleasure is used, we need to attend to how it was understood in all of its relevant contexts, like experiences related to sex, food, appreciation, beauty, cosmetics and so forth.

It is time we take a brief look at what Foucault gathered from his investigations pertaining to Greco-Roman Antiquity. In the Use of Pleasures, he writes:

We could say that classical antiquity’s moral reflection concerning the pleasures was not directed toward a codification of acts, nor toward a hermeneutics of the subject, but toward a stylization of attitudes and an aesthetics of existence. ... sexual moderation was an exercise of freedom that took form in self-mastery; and the latter was shown in the manner in which the subject behaved, in the self-restraint he displayed in his virile activity, in the way he related himself in the relationship he had with others. It was this attitude—much more than the acts one committed or the desires one concealed—that made one liable to value judgements. A moral value that was also an aesthetic value and a truth value since it was by aiming at the satisfaction of real needs, by respecting the true hierarchy of the human being ... (92-93).

This is how, in sum, Foucault interprets the ethical reflections of the ancient world, which is, in fact, much at variance from other interpretations. On the face of it, Foucault’s
primary interest is to document and understand attitudes towards sexuality in antiquity. This in some way resembles archaeology, his earlier method. How did the Greeks and the Romans understand sexuality? Where could one find evidences for their attitudes and understanding? Foucault suggests that their dietary manuals, philosophical tracts, medicinal treatises, literary texts and a whole lot of scribal and textual material produced during those times could help one get a glimpse of different practices and their explanations related to sexuality and its morality. As is expected of Foucault, it is a study that combines scholarship with speculative advances. It attempts to provide a panoramic view of the period, as a whole, that is not restricted to how only one single discipline, say philosophy or medicine, would view or understand sexuality. For instance, it is now widely recognised that ancient Greek philosophy devoted a major portion of its effort to thinking about pleasure (Gosling and Taylor). And this pleasure, of which we shall have the entire thesis to investigate, is something that cuts across ethics and ontology. Almost all major figures did talk about it. Foucault also recognises it to be a principal thematic in Greek philosophy, but, of course quite innovatively, situates it in the wider cultural context of medicine, dietetics, economics and erotics. His starting point is not to raise it as an issue in ethics or physiology, but to identify a cultural context where it is ‘problematised’ (that is the word he uses) from moral, conceptual, sexual and economic points of view. By ‘problematising’ he means a speculative and an empirical context, simultaneously moral and sexual, that occasions pleasure as an issue to come to terms with. Each inquiry sets out to deal with it, but it invariably has implications for other modes of inquiry as well. Therefore, if pleasure is understood to have a moral angle, such an angle is made to bear upon it by how it is understood in an erotic context. For example, moderation must be observed relentlessly for a life to be lived well.\textsuperscript{14} Thus, even sexual acts, and the pursuit of sexual pleasure, must be subject to moderation. This moderation stands for the moral angle of the sexual activity. In
methodological terms this approach does not attribute precedence to any one kind of formal inquiry, but tries to locate its object across the points where different axiomatics come to intersect, negate or coalesce. Obviously the advantages seem to outrun the habitual conservatism of sticking to just one mode of inquiry or understanding.

For Foucault, seeking pleasure is a form of ‘subjectivisation’ (92), a way of viewing oneself as the subject upon whom a certain activity, pleasure here, is being acted upon. Apart from acting to choose, we simultaneously offer ourselves as sites of activities which result from our actions. The person who experiences pleasure, either through sex, music or food, is someone who is a chooser, but also someone who becomes the object of the activity that results from this choice. In other words, at a certain moment, of enjoying or taking pleasure, the enjoying person becomes a subject and an object simultaneously. The important point of this description is to highlight the fact that the emphasis on pleasure, as Foucault interprets his texts, is an indication of a struggle waged within oneself to balance off internal pressures of desire with the external demands of moderation. As Foucault seems to understand, there are no rules or strictures here, but only an emphasis on practice, prudence and wisdom. What he did, by doing a bit of redeployment, was to say that these acts of subjectivisation—exercising moderation or practicing self-mastery—reveal more fundamental aspects of ancient ethics like an ‘aesthetics of existence’ and ‘stylization of self’. This is perhaps reason enough to observe that moral value could slip into aesthetic value, as one indulges in acts of self-stylisation. According to Foucault, ethics was a matter of concern for the Greeks only along these lines. Maintaining the same interpretive thrust, he went on to look at the Hellenistic period only to extend these theses much more radically.
The ethical and the aesthetic appear for Foucault to be values constantly in a barter because, at the level at which we are urged to fix values in general, moral or aesthetic—of right conduct, emotions and attitudes—he sees a greater role for the internal, the so called 'subjective' activity of personal exercising moderation. The more one could minimise values being stamped from above, from external sources, the better is the scope for ethics to be an enterprise that is deeply responsive to the personal dimension. All the talk of pleasure is to work one's way to the claim that ethics is a personal affair. Therefore, aestheticising ethics, for Foucault, would entail connecting the contingent, the subjective and the amorphous domain of personality with a suitable ideal of pleasure as an end. However, in restricting the purview of pleasure to being a form of 'subjectivisation', Foucault misses the point that in ancient Greek ethics, by and large, the ethical significance of pleasure was accounted for in terms of its relative value among the other constituents of the soul—desire, reason, intelligence—in general which together contribute to living a good life. Besides, at least as far as his History of Sexuality volumes are concerned, he does not elaborate on what makes 'subjectivisation' correspond to forms of self-constitution as psychic economy.

Foucault stops merely by hinting at self-mastery, that is with the fact of observing self-restraint, and with self-relation and relating to others in the course of ethical activity. He bypasses the greater fact about ethics that it has a dimension that neither archaeology nor genealogy could fully explain and justify. It is that the basis of ethics, at least as far the ancient views are concerned, is the manner in which we understand the role of well-being and human flourishing. Sometimes Foucault's strengths are his weaknesses too. More pertinently, as Detel notes, his discussions of Aristotle's ethics are seriously marred by a total lack of either interest or mention about its eudaimonistic dimension. Ethics can be
characterized, indisputably, as a form of the art of living, and this only amounts to broadening the scope of thinking about ethics in general. However, characterizing ethics thus should not foreclose the more basic fact about ethics that it is a teleological inquiry, assimilated into the practice of living.

This is roughly the trajectory which led Foucault to propose a way in which ethics could be aestheticised. In this entire discussion there is no talk of aesthetics, nor art, nor a work of art. Foucault’s position has a charm of its own, which survives even after we prove him mistaken on historical or argumentative grounds. This is because of the kind of emphasis he laid on the subjective aspect of ethics in the name of pleasure. And it reverberates across a range of art movements which have brought the question of the relationship between art and life into a much sharper focus, like the 19th century aestheticism and its decadent accompanists. This is one of the reasons why this thesis begins with an examination of this proposal. Apart from sharing, in general, certain presumptions and purviews about art and its relationship with individuals, there is nothing in particular in Foucault’s work to suggest that he is making any systematic effort to make aesthetics illumine the practice of ethics. More importantly, Foucault’s observations to the effect that ethics must be aestheticised were a consequence to how he interprets the idea of pleasure, in terms of embedding them in the larger contexts of the Greco-Roman culture. This, in short, amounts to saying that the pursuit of ‘pleasure’ is what inspires Foucault to make such claims as ‘stylisation of ethics’ and ‘aesthetics of existence’. The key to these ideas lies in how pleasure was understood, not as mere feeling or a sensation, but as something that is embedded in the description of personality, and also as something whose sense is conjointly shared by many discursive contexts like sexuality, dietetics and medicine. Though Foucault chose to look at pleasure from other angles, its implications for ethics and
aesthetics flow from how its place in the larger picture of personality is understood. This thesis is an attempt in this direction.

We began with an attempt to interpret the relationship that Foucault saw between ethics and aesthetics, quite unlike how Hampshire interpreted it, but on a scale of description that admits mutual illumination. Whether one concurs with Foucault or not, it is now clear that his proposal hinges on how we choose to interpret the idea of pleasure in the life of an individual. One perhaps has reasons to suspect if pleasure is something resourceful enough to accomplish this task. As it were, the objective of this thesis is to dispel this suspicion by way of studying Plato's *Philebus* against the background of themes and issues worked out in this chapter.

END NOTES

1 This is a summary formulation of Kant's complex proposal. Since the mention of Kant is only to preface the ensuing discussion, I shall not deal with this proposal in any detail. However, a short extract from the *Critique of Judgement* would meet our scholarly requirements, as supportive of the generalization I made. Kant writes, "the beautiful is the symbol of the morally good, and only in this light (a point of view natural to everyone, and one which everyone demands from others as a duty) does it give pleasure with an attendant claim to the agreement of everyone else, whereupon the mind becomes conscious of a certain ennoblement and elevation above mere sensibility to pleasure from impressions of the senses, and also appraises the worth of others on the score of a like maxim of their judgement" (180). Paul Guyer's "The Ethical Value of the Aesthetic: Kant, Alison and Santayana" makes a fair and scholarly assessment of the ethical implications of Kantian aesthetics, as Kant viewed them. For a view that Kant presupposed a "moral image of the world", as a backdrop to aesthetic judgement, one could consult Dieter Henrich (1992).

2 I refer the reader to Ian Hacking's review essay in the *New York Review of Books* for a fair view on the value, scope and innovativeness of Foucault's methods.

3 However such an idea could appear paradoxical, for it is germane to the idea of ethics that its dimensions, some of them at least, transcend the limits of the personal, the individual and the private. As actors in different capacities, our actions acquire value or disvalue only by being embedded in a system of rules, prescriptions, proscriptions, and concessions. The context need not be explicitly moral, but it has to be social involving persons and institutions. Thus, there is never an instance where one escapes the normativity of codes or a set of rules. However, in spite of participating in the reality that comes with rules and prescriptions, there is still a chance for someone to exceed the limits of those rules, and carve out a reality of one's own that shares his/her very personal code, exclusively meant for him/her alone. In any case, sometimes these personal codes could come into a direct clash with the already existing public or objective ones; while sometimes they may co-exist perfectly.

4 There are other proposals and insights nearly equivalent to this, from Kierkegaard and Nietzsche; more recently, Alexander Nehamas, following Nietzsche, appealed to aestheticize one's life (Nehamas, *Nietzsche*). At any rate, one cannot turn a blind eye to how much Foucault himself owed to Nietzsche.

5 In an interview Nelson Goodman summarily, but quite illuminatingly, reviewed the relationship between art and science thus: "When a scientist first relates heat to motion, or the tides to the moon, our world-views are
drastically altered. And when we leave an exhibit of the works of an important painter, the world we step into is not the one we left when we went in; we see everything in terms of these works. That illumination from science and illumination from art are thus akin has been obscured only by the absurd misconception of art as a mere entertainment" (Of Mind, 192) This is the kind of "spell" I was referring to, the change that works of art can engender in how we view the world around. In chapter four we shall come back to this issue while discussing Goodman's view on the relation between the cognitive and the aesthetic aspects of our experience.

6 It is here apposite to mention Eddy Zamach's "Thirteen Ways of Looking at the Ethics-Aesthetics Parallelism", which critically engages with Hampshire's proposals. The objective is to find out fallacies in Hampshire's multiple arguments, and prove that they are inconclusive. In any case, that is not our aim.

7 A short note on what we mean by aesthetics is important here. There is something very peculiar about the nature of art, as we inherit it, and as it is practiced now, which is characteristically modern. If Arthur C. Danto is right, art is what it is because its practitioners know how to pick objects which can become art, of course with a serious intention of creating art, sometimes from the most unusual, almost considered to be art-unworthy places of the world. This is to make art objects blatantly bear on their appearances, most visibly, the stance that the purpose of being called art is not to align with the rest of the reality. It is something that is there, to be contemplated, to be viewed with utter disinterestedness and to be meditated upon. This extreme emphasis on the subjective aspect of the engagement with art is what distinguishes the situation of art in modern times. Artworks appear as objects apparently disengaged from their surroundings, though still admitting very complex kind of relationships with the world that embeds them. This account holds good for the general analytic patterning that sets art and its viewer (aesthete/connoisseur) in a certain relational scheme. This scheme decides in advance on a number of issues ranging over the questions pertaining to the value of art and the competence required to understand works of art. Likewise, the development of aesthetics, roughly in the last two hundred years or so, did a great service of clarifying the schematic relationship between art and the aesthete and, in due course, evolved varied and highly nuanced models of aesthetic perception and reception. Finally, philosophical aesthetics is as much an apologist enterprise for art after the 18th century as positivism is for a certain view of science. And the core of this enterprise is to defend the view that the availability art to acts of understanding presupposes certain forms of attention which foster something called an aesthetic attitude.

8 These observations must be read in the context of a profound rethinking that is happening in understanding moral concepts. Cora Diamond's "Losing Your Concepts" addresses some of these issues and she refers to the most sustained efforts made so far—Alasdaire Macintyre's and Stanley Cavell's—in understanding, explaining and pointing out the defects of the moral vocabulary the Western world inherited.

9 The term 'charitable' should not be taken to mean purely in dictionary terms. It is used as a term of art with the intention of maximizing the truth and rationality that govern the ideas broached by Foucault. The objective is to interpret Foucault's claims with the aim of preserving the maximum amount of their truth.

10 It is hoped that this matrix would function in such a manner as to further the basic interests of a society. I have in mind an entire host of theories, from the early modern contractarianism to the latter day consequentialism, which broadly aim to do moral philosophy in this manner. Most of these theories view the possibility of moral philosophy only in terms of bridging private means with public ends, in the interests of a commonweal.

11 I am aware of Foucault's scepticism regarding the project of philosophy per se given his views on the relationship between knowledge and power. In fact, these views have a greater role in the shaping the methodological aspects of Foucault's work, which we briefly glossed upon earlier in the chapter. I am also aware that Foucault would not be quite in sympathy with my attempts to interpret his claims. As already stated, Foucault brought out a very important dimension of the ancient ethics, namely that this is not some conceptual exploration alone, but a process that corresponds to self-formation and self-shaping and this needs to be addressed and understood in the right spirit. My view is not to take Foucault's line completely, but to admit a role for systematic thinking, whether one calls it philosophy or reason or moral psychology.

12 The idea of doing ethics is analyzed predominantly as a reinvention of life in line with a personal morality that remains free from the intervention of anything that remains outside its sphere, be it state, judiciary, religion or community. This could happen by way of managing final ends—pleasure and happiness—through
a rational activity comprising of deliberation and free choice of actions. This is in fact how Foucault viewed ethics in the ancient world and christened “aesthetics of existence”.

13 For sometime now G. E. M. Anscombe, Iris Murdoch, Bernard Williams, Martha Nussbaum, Alasdair Macintyre, and John McDowell, most notably, have been working to propose instructive alternatives to the dominant conceptions of moral theory. Besides, they also have drawn from Greek antiquity in providing their revisionary accounts. However, they engaged with the ancient Greeks, mainly with Aristotle, only selectively such that a better appraisal could be provided of those aspects of morality, like virtue, which stand largely neglected in modern moral philosophy. However, none of them would be prepared to straightaway advocate a complete incorporation of ethical thinking into a practice of preoccupation with oneself, with a view to admit unprecedented liberties in setting up a personal morality. In fact, their effort is to work out a way of addressing ethical questions whose primary aim is to make it feasible for moral reflection—the deliberative process—to speak on behalf of the individual definitely, taking into account his/her moral resources as a person, so that an extended space for debate and dialogue is made available outside the fold of institutions that shape and regulate the normative requirements of what it is to be ethical.

14 It is a well established fact that the theme of the relationship between moderation and the good life was played by many, including Plato and Aristotle, in many variations. Julia Annas’ The Morality of Happiness is a good historical exploration of these issues.

15 Foucault is drawing on Pierre Hadot’s work, now available as Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault, in interpreting the ancient ethical views as ‘spiritual exercises’ involving an art of living.

16 Terence Irwin’s Plato’s Ethics follows an approach along these lines, of course only to interpret Plato’s ethical work. Julia Annas’ The Morality of Happiness is more of an historical treatment of the entire stretch of Greek moral philosophy, but with an emphasis on how ethics was understood as an equitable view of the different elements of personality.

17 One distinct feature of ancient philosophy is that in it the nature of the soul, or personality, is understood as a conglomerate of different quasi-independent parts which are capable of working in effective coordination. Thus, understanding the function of a person requires that we understand how these parts of the soul function in mutual coordination in different situations. Ferrari’s article “The Three-Part Soul” is a good analysis of Plato’s account of the psychic economy. Sarah Broadie’s Ethics with Aristotle is the detailed attempt so far on various aspects of ethics in Aristotle, including his tri-partite view of psychology.

18 Bernard Williams interprets the Socratic and the Aristotelian ethical views along these lines in his Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy.

19 Wolfgang Detel’s is one book which offers a thorough scholarly review of Foucault’s moral concerns in ancient philosophy, with a larger view of their liaison with sexuality and sexual activities, from the point of view of classical philosophy.

20 Oscar Wilde’s “The Decay of Lying” and Walter Pater’s Marius the Epicurean are symptomatic of dealing with issues centred around aesthetising ethics.

21 It is appropriate here to mention the contribution of John Dewey’s Art as Experience since it is an attempt, made quite early on, to understand art from a broad epistemological perspective, thereby bringing art into the fold of concerns centered around knowledge. What is remarkable is the approach towards art sought by Dewey, not the details about which one may disagree; this approach does not restrict the art or the aesthetic to narrow construals of sense, emotion, reason or imagination, but as something that plays an important role in the constitution of ethics. My invocation of the category aesthetic is much like Dewey’s in that I intend to locate it in relation to concerns which are germane to a proper description of individuals and personalities.