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(Re)Constructing the Ethical Self:
Self-Help Literature as a Contemporary Project of
Moral Regulation

by

Heidi Marie Rimke, B.A. Hons

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements of the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
August 28, 1997

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and Research Acceptance of the Thesis

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in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for
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Thesis Supervisor

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*Dedicated to my Son, Kevin
and
to the Memory of my Father,
Theodor B. Rimke (1933–1995).*

Abstract

This thesis explores contemporary self-help literature as a project of moral regulation which incites a governance of the self by the self. Drawing upon the work of Michel Foucault, his followers, and recent scholarship in moral regulation studies, it argues that self-help can be conceived as a programme of moral and ethical self-reformation intrinsically linked with the governmental rationalities and technologies of power in advanced liberal societies. It argues that the moral and intellectual leadership and authority of popular psychology has been key in governing the constitution of self-constituting human beings by providing a technology of the self. By utilizing this framework, the thesis seeks to show how self-help projects, as a discourse of liberation and disciplinization, form part of a general strategy of enrolling modern subjects to understand and act upon themselves through a regulated freedom and in the name of their personal truths.

Acknowledgements

Every thesis has several unseen and unsung contributors - some participate directly in its creation, others indirectly. So it is with this one.

My deepest thanks are extended to my supervisor, Professor Alan Hunt, for his remarkable patience, thoughtful guidance, insightful criticisms and helpful suggestions. I am grateful for his relentless support, believing in this project and being an integral part in its fruition. He has taught me more than he'll ever know.

I would also like to thank Professor Bruce Curtis. His advice and support also played a significant part in the formation and completion of this project.

An eternal thanks to an incredible circle of colleagues and friends I am fortunate to know: Valerie 'Cal' de Courville Nicol, Joseph Hermer, John Hollingsworth, Trevor Purvis, and Wade Deisman, especially, for his valuable comments and suggestions on the final draft. Their humour, support, advice, encouragement, comfort, understanding and 'reality checks' kept me going to the very end and without which I would never have resurfaced.

I owe a special thanks to my undergraduate professor, Barry Edginton, for introducing me to the challenging world of social theory, and for always believing in me, right from the beginning.

A silver-lined thanks to all those individuals who have, for a long time, predicted my demise rather than accomplishment. Your incredulity gave me, in part, the fortitude and conviction to press on.

I would also like to thank:

My birth and spiritual mother, Wendy MacKenzie, and my kindred spirit, Helen Krahm, for being the best possible friends a person could have. I love you both tremendously; and

Professor Craig McKie for his contagious mirth and kindness.

Bradley Cunningham for being there in ways nobody else could and in the best ways he knew how.

And last but not least, thanks to my son Kevin Dandurand Rimke, who, unbeknownst to him, is the real reason why I embarked on such a journey. His extraordinary love, patience, understanding and endurance through our lengthy, and very trying, geographical separation gave me the inspiration to complete this project - you have made it all worthwhile.

For each of you, there is no adequate way to say thanks.

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Chapter One:

Introduction: Critically Reading Self-Help Literature

Men [sic] must necessarily be the active agents of their own well-being and well-doing; and that, however much the wise and the good may owe to others, they themselves must in the very nature of things be their own best helpers.

-Samuel Smiles 1859

If psychology is one of the guilds most responsible for determining the proper way of being human, then psychology wields a significant amount of power, especially in our era, in which the moral authority of most religious and philosophical institutions has been called into question. By unknowingly propping up the hegemony of individualism...psychology is preventing individuals from having the ability to see into how political structures impact the individual (Cushman 1996:336).

Modernity has been described as an era that has become preoccupied with the self (Giddens 1991; Lasch 1978, 1984, Lash and Friedman 1992; Taylor 1989). This preoccupation is reflected in the extensive proliferation of contemporary self-help books which are characterized by questions that were unparalleled in premodern times: 'How can I better myself?' or 'What can I do to feel in charge of myself?' Self-help literature, in modern society, constitutes a particularly significant and complex field of power/knowledge relations implicated in modern projects of the self. These texts centre

on the care of the self (Foucault 1986) and attempt to inform and act on subjects by shaping moral and ethical subjectivities through power-laden processes of regulation and governmentality (Valverde 1996) and ethical self-formation and re-formation (Dean 1995).

Self-help literature can be understood as one of several ways in which governmental techniques and practices are connected to the formation, development and assemblage of human capacities. Self-help texts not only expose readers to a wide range of governmental techniques, powers and practices of disciplinization that seek to direct the everyday life-conduct of social subjects, but perhaps more significantly, these discourses provide the means and forms for subjects to govern themselves.

Self-Help: A Modern Project of the Self

The self-help genre has achieved a spectacular prominence in late modernity.¹ Self-help texts are an enduring, highly fashionable, non-fiction genre, especially within the last twenty-five years (Lichterhan 1992:421). While numerous studies have focused on the nature and role of self-help organizations in contemporary society (Katz 1993; Katz and

¹. It has been estimated, for example, that there are close to one million self-help groups in North America alone with at least 15 million members and continue to grow in more than 100 countries (Katz 1993; Powell 1994).

Bender 1976, 1990; Katz et al 1992; Lieberman et al 1979; Powell 1987, 1990, 1994; Romeder 1982), few have paid systematic attention to the increasing popularity of 'practical' self-help manuals and texts. Arguably, the steady rise in the consumption of life-conduct manuals and advice literature has formed the backbone of contemporary self-help movements.

Since the advent of mass production and consumption of publications, self-help has become one of the more popular and profuse projects pursued by those seeking to shape a life uniquely satisfying and unfettered. The contemporary preoccupation with self-liberation and self-enlightenment is quite consistent with the political rationalities of advanced liberal democracies. Indeed, the objectification of subjects in liberal democratic states should be understood as conditioned by various practices of governmental and ethical self-formation (Dean 1994:148).

Self-help (in its various forms and guises) is the product of and response to a transformation, still occurring, in contemporary society and culture. This transformation has generally entailed wide-spread acceptance of a particular psychotherapeutic ethos, which I call 'liberationist psychology', which is intimately linked with the governance of the self by the self and by others. The significance of this liberationist discourse rooted in popular psychology is twofold: on the one hand, it has supplanted older notions of

morality and ethics in the meaning and organization of social relations; on the other hand it tends to advocate a fundamentally anti-institutional orientation. The net effect of liberationist psychology can be viewed as a concrete social event concerned with attempts at codifying and inscribing 'new' moralities of the self which are in direct alignment with the mentalities of government in liberal democratic regimes.

An indictment of traditional values and practices and their negative consequences on social subjects, in this context, can also be understood as an attempt to shape new moral and ethical subjectivities while simultaneously reinforcing and reproducing extant power relations and knowledge regimes. Adherents of self-help projects are offered novel ways of conceiving, talking about, and acting upon the problems they encounter in their lives. Self-help discourses help organize subjects and subjectivities by providing explanations for one's own actions, actions which may otherwise be found mystifying and unsettling. The self-help canon offers individuals information which provides a means of making sense of itself and one's life experiences presented by the moral and intellectual authorities of self-help experts.

An operational definition of self-help is required here. First, as a project pursued by modern selves, it is voluntary, based on choice, autonomy and freedom; and second, it requires some external form of textual authority, whether that

authority is based on the expert knowledge of a professional or the experiential expertise of a self-proclaimed specialist. Self-help can thus be narrowly defined as a voluntary enterprise and undertaking which is contingent upon seeking external modes of authority and assistance in attempting to alter, reform or transform the self, or some 'intrinsic' aspect of it. Also, self-help embodies the individual's independent and innermost attempt to change itself. In this process, the self becomes an object of knowledge and an object of governance not simply under the distant gaze of an expert but, perhaps more importantly, under the gaze of the self. Reading self-help literature assumes the form of a 'personal' project which embodies the individual's attempt to change on *its own* rather than in the therapist's office or in a self-help group, for example. Self-help can thus be conceived as "a common-sense approach" to change the self (Prochaska et al 1994:63).

A casual stroll through the self-improvement section of any bookstore readily attests to the huge market for self-help consumerism in the late twentieth-century.² There are hundreds of self-help books available for purchase today with booksleeves promising success and claiming to help thousands or to help everyone. The authors of self-help literature

². Undoubtedly, the relatively low cost of these books, their relevance to everyday problems, their accessibility and general availability, are also factors in their remarkable popularity.

promise that simply by reading self-help literature those in quest for 'the better self' will be helped. For example, Joyce Brothers (1978:1) claims that "[a] self-help book can make all the difference." Similarly Melody Beattie (1990:241) states that "[r]ecoverey books are books that change people's lives...[t]hey are treasures."

The Triumph of the Therapeutic

As modern subjects, we have at our disposal an immense vocabulary for speaking about the psychological interior – that concealed domain of which the structure and process of self are traditionally held to be constituents. Individuals speak with ease and confidence about their thoughts, memories, beliefs, emotions, and the like. In self-help literature especially, modern selves are proffered a full and extended mapping of the inner region of the self including methods needed to order morally this inner region. Self-help advisors are external agents acting on subjects, further inducing, eliciting and stimulating 'ethical self-formation' based on therapeutic ontologies and sundry forms of expert knowledge.

Convinced that we should understand our selves in psychological terms of adjustment, fulfilment, good relationships, self-actualization, personal growth, and so forth, we have 'voluntarily' tied ourselves to the knowledge that experts profess and to their promises to assist us in

personal quests for self-change that we "freely" undertake (Rose 1996:77). For instance, we generally accept the psyche or the soul, and the mind as normal elements in everyday life. It is a particular modern mentality that all human problems are viewed, to some degree, as psychological problems and that, in some cases, with enough reading, guidance, determination and industriousness individuals can finally get it right. Our era's preoccupation with mental and emotional hygiene encourages individuals to think of all forms of excessive and non-normative behaviour as disease or addiction or psychological in origin and effect. The popularity of psychological discourses generally, and of recovery texts and spiritually-oriented books specifically, presents the permeation of a deeply held belief that psychology in one way or another can make one happy.

The immense popularity of psychology in modern society has been amply documented. Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swindler and Tipton's (1985) "therapeutic attitude"; Sennett's (1978) *Fall of Public Man*; Boyer's (1975) "psychological man"; Lear's (1983) "therapeutic ethos"; Bourdieu's (1979) "cult of personal health"; Lasch's (1979) "therapeutic ethic" and (1984) "psychic survival" all, in some way, echo Berger's (1966) conviction that Western societies pose significant practical problems for the self. And according to Rieff's *The Triumph of the Therapeutic* (1966) this phenomenon constitutes no less than a cultural revolution, in which self supplants

society as the priority of the contemporary moral order.³

This popularization of psychology has been key in "inventing our selves" (Rose 1996). The self-help literary genre presents individual 'development' and 'personal growth' as a moral and ethical decision and 'natural' undertaking embraced by well-meaning citizens. One engages in self-help not because one has to; one does so because one wants to.⁴

Discourses on self-help are presented and circulated through a multitude of cultural agents: television news journals, talk-shows, supermarket tabloids, billboards, non-governmental organization advertisements, television

³. Modernity has been described by many as a period suffused by selfism, self-worship, hyperindividualism, narcissism and self-centredness (Bella et al 1985; Kaminer 1992; Lasch 1979, 1984; Rieff 1966; Vitz 1994). Lasch, for example, writes

After the political turmoil of the sixties, Americans have retreated to purely personal preoccupations. Having no hope of improving their lives *in any of the ways that matter*, people have convinced themselves that what matters is psychic self-improvement: getting in touch with their feelings, eating health food...jogging, learning how to "relate"...(1979:29: emphasis added).

In one sense these positions echo religion's long-standing prohibitions against selfishness and self-love, in which pride is considered a cardinal sin. However, while these positions and criticisms may be grounded in convincingly sound arguments, I argue more widely for the need to understand, rather than criticize the immense popularity of self-help technologies in order to make sense of the modern workings of power, moral governance and self-reformation in contemporary cultural practices.

⁴. The obvious exception are those instances in which individuals convicted of criminal charges, such as alcohol-related assaults, for example, may be ordered to attend "anger-management courses" or AA meetings as a condition of a probationary sentence.

commercials, newspaper stories and the like.⁵ Even the most impartial bystander is bombarded with modern doctrines and discourses on the 'healthy' and 'well-adjusted' self.

We have become a society endlessly engaged in reflexive strategies of self-regulation wherein the experts claim to know what is best for individuals and offer the secret recipes to achieve the 'good life', the better self. The underlying proposal is this: We can become who we *truly* are and achieve the good self, with training, practice and techniques that self-help advisers teach us. In contemporary culture, self-help books propose to help individuals find out about themselves, to teach effective ways of being 'for our own good.'

Structure of the Arguments

What I intend to do in this thesis is to bring together an array of popular self-help texts, where a plethora of discussions on the self flourishes, and recent social theories to examine the governance and constitution of self-constituting selves as a contemporary project of moral regulation. In order to understand more fully how self-help

⁵. This emphasizes the central role of cultural institutions generating ever more avenues of information and communication. Mass communications media have accustomed us to discourses which claim to mirror social reality - and encourage each individual to recognize and confirm him or herself in the obviousness of this common sense (Melucci 1989:13).

psychology books dominate, rather than liberate, the subject of modernity, I will rely, primarily, on a Foucauldian perspective. This theoretical approach helps explain how self-help literature can be conceived as a project of moral regulation which "work[s] at a level of on-going subjugation at the level of those continuous and uninterrupted processes which subject our bodies, govern our gestures, dictate our behaviours" (Foucault 1980:97). This perspective and approach does not seek to reveal falsity but to describe the constitution of truths. "It does not ask Why? but How?" (Rose 1996:80; cf. Foucault 1982:216-7; Hunt 1995:9-11; Valverde 1996:358).⁶

By situating an examination of self within the context of self-help literature we can begin to understand how self-help movements have become a contemporary project of moral/ethical regulation and governance inciting and stimulating ethical self-formation through programmes of government. Such an analysis can also help us address an important set of questions that Foucault has presented to us: "How are we constituted as subjects of our own knowledge? How are we constituted as subjects who exercise or submit to power relations? How are we constituted as moral subjects of our own

⁶. Valverde notes that with an emphasis on the *how* of ruling, a Foucauldian analysis "brackets" traditional theoretical questions about the causes and functions of rule, and thus, lays to rest "the old and unfruitful division of labour between social researchers describing the 'how' and the theorists explaining the 'why'" (1996:358).

actions?" (Foucault 1984:49). I attempt to answer these questions in the pages that follow. An examination of the self-help genre can help elucidate those processes and practices that encourage one modern form of ethical self-reformation.

Following Foucault (1986), the literature I will be referring to is composed for the most part of "prescriptive" texts whose main object and subject is the modern self. As practical guides that aim at governing the conduct of individuals through their personal truths, these texts are designed as a form of practice exercised on the self by the self. Self-help texts have been written and circulated

for the purpose of offering rules, opinions and advice on how to behave as one should: 'practical' texts, which are themselves objects of a 'practice' in that they were designed to be read, learned, reflected upon, and tested out, and they were intended to constitute the eventual framework of everyday conduct (Foucault 1986:12-13).⁷

Practical guides to living are one type of cultural material which, to some degree, constitute social processes and practices of the self. However, this should not be taken to mean that self-help books are just works 'about' social processes. Rather they can be conceived as materials which, in some part, constitute such processes (Giddens 1991:2).

⁷. Although Foucault is not referring to self-help books, here, I have adapted his discussion on "practical guides" for the purposes of my present argument.

The texts I have examined do not neatly fit into a 'logical' schema. They but have been selected, rather, on the basis of a heterogenous corpus of texts that loosely announce, in their titles or on the booksleeves, that they deal with 'fundamental' or essential aspects of the self within the sub-genres of codependency, psycho-spiritualism and the broader, more generic field of popular psychological literature. Simply stated, my selection process was both random and yet discriminating in the sense that, for purposes of temporal and spatial constraints, my random choices were confined to three leading 'types' of contemporary self-help texts. My rationale for these choices was also based on examining those texts that are widely available and accessible to the general public; as 'best-sellers' found in standard bookstores.

A survey of the aforementioned types of texts can demonstrate how certain concepts of the good self function in this historical conjuncture, not from a position located outside history, but rather within it. This position allows something new to be thought, and as Foucault announced, "to learn to what extent the effort to think one's own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently" (1986a:9).⁸ Studying some problematizations of the self, as a constructed psychological subject, requires

⁸. Foucault writes, "[t]here is always something ludicrous in philosophical discourse, when it tries from the outside, to dictate to others, to tell them where their truth is and how to find it, or when it works up a case against them in the language of naive positivity" (1986:9).

that we examine those modes of subjectivization "through which being offers itself to be, necessarily, thought - and the practices on the basis of which these problematizations are formed" (1986a:11).

I have chosen not to focus on specific treatment books or specific 'how-to' books⁹. Neither does my examination focus on 'life crises' management texts such as those written for persons dealing with the trauma and difficulties of natural disasters, death, divorce, terminal illness and the like. The primary resources for my research are a number of popular self-help psychology books that can be divided into three main (and tenuous) classifications: codependency recovery manuals, psycho-spiritual texts and the 'generic' self-help book.¹⁰ My mode of analysis in focusing on the contents of these self-help tracts (as a heterogenous, contradictory, yet unifying

⁹. Charles Long's text *How to Survive Without a Salary: Learning How to Live A Conserver Lifestyle* (1986) would be a typical example of generic "how-to" books that emphasize particular activities and/or projects, which may entail discussions of "the good self." Yet they do not exemplify self-help texts' explicit preoccupation with ethical self-improvement in the same sense I am concerned with here.

¹⁰. The texts I have chosen to examine are considerably diverse, and thus, do not comprise a homogenous corpus; they are classifiable under a wide range of subject areas, all of which are directly related to reconstructing/refashioning the self. Book sleeves' identifications include: ethics/inspiration (Schlessinger 1997), self-help/psychology (Dyer 1976; Harris 1973; Knaus 1994; Leonard 1991; McMahon 1992; Prochaska, Norcross, and DiClemente 1994; Zonnya 1995;) recovery (Beattie 1987, 1990) psychology/ethics (Peck 1993) nonfiction (Dyer 1995), psychology (Young and Klosko 1993), wellness and recovery (Beattie 1989), self-help/business (Covey 1989), and self-help/psychology/family (Bradshaw 1996).

whole) is primarily grounded in the spirit of discourse analysis and textual exegesis of the discourses and messages presented within the self-help text all of which can be likened to a "tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture" (Barthes 1977:146). I will argue that these textual forms of governance whose main aim is self-reformation, can be understood as acting as moral and ethical subjectivizing and regulating agents (as external advisors) of those in search of self-enlightenment and self-betterment.

My aim is not to summarize each text separately, but rather to 'tease out' certain implications, assumptions, paradoxes, contradictions, metaphors, etc. and to construct and present these 'findings' as they work to introduce and reinforce moral discourses through the governance of the self by the self. My reading can be understood as creating a particular 'story' about self-help literature rather than an objective and scientific analysis simply because "there is no such thing as an innocent reading" (Althusser 1970:14).

Furthermore, I do not seek to evaluate the 'effectiveness' or 'actual consequences' of popular self-help literature nor am I interested in offering any 'better' alternatives. Instead, I choose to focus on those features of the written self-help genre as a project of moral and ethical governance of self-reconstruction. Thus, this thesis is not concerned with examining psychological motivations and

intentions of self-help readerships¹¹ that may cause individuals to identify with self-help groups and band together as a social and cultural 'movement.' I refrain from posing these sorts of questions because to simply ask about the self that reads these books in many ways fails to ask about and illuminate the social and political horizon in which these types of books are a possibility in the first place.

This thesis does not propose to examine the collective behaviour or mass psychology of self-help consumers. Nor do I cast self-help texts as 'wrong' or 'bad'.¹² Rather, I aim to present my reading of these texts as a dynamic representation of what has generally come to be accepted as normal and natural conceptions of the good self, and the *means* of acquiring the good self through self-reliant methods as particularly 'praiseworthy' and meritorious.

I argue that we can take the above questions and investigate them in a particular field that offers important examples of a contemporary project of moral/ethical regulation in order to better understand what are seemingly benign

¹¹. For a qualitative study on self-help readership that examines and discusses the ways in which readers interpret and make use of self-help psychology books see Lichterman (1992) and for a feminist analysis of women who read these texts see Simonds (1991).

¹². Foucault sums up this position nicely when he writes: "My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to hyper- and pessimistic activism" (Foucault 1984a:343).

incitations to achieving the good, psychologically healthy self. I intend to interpret this literature as a decisively significant documentation of the modern self that we have come to see as ourselves.

The principal aim of this thesis is to demonstrate how self-help texts, as a popular cultural discourse, can provide a concrete example of how certain problematics of human being are formulated and how representational discourses of self-governance can be understood as both morally and ethically regulating the modern psychological subject. Many of these problematics arise from modernist discourses rooted in political rationalities which centre on the individual, the autonomous and freely choosing agent of liberal democratic regimes. Furthermore, through an examination of these 'discourses of liberation' we will come to a better understanding of how subjects are incited, directed, and instructed to nurture and manage their individual potential in the most suitable and productive ways for a certain moral and social order. Thus, what I hope to achieve with this thesis is a conceptual and empirical contribution in the area of moral regulation studies and the sociology of governance.

In short, I discuss and examine how self-help books portray selfhood, how conceptualizations of mutable and (re)constructible selves as well as discoverable 'cores' are represented and how self-help literature's depiction of the moral and ethical self reflects and fortifies a contemporary

project of moral regulation.

The Sociology of Governance: Moral Regulation

An important objective of this thesis is its attempt to move beyond both the 'dominant ideology' thesis which problematizes norms and morality in terms of class relations, and 'socialization theory' which understands morality and human behaviour as the product of internalized norms learned in and from primary and secondary agents of socialization. Valverde and Weir (1988:31) note that both of these accounts suffer from a common failure to explain the means through which norms are produced and the multiple sites across which they are implemented. Also, both theories are criticized for attributing a non-conflictual homogeneity to regulatory practices and discourses. The rejection of the comforting chimera that there can and must necessarily be one grand narrative under which all relations of domination can be subsumed, is replaced by an emphasis on the 'micro-level' as a site of social governance and regulation which elucidates the immediate complexity of the power-knowledge nexus. The extension of political concerns moving well beyond "the holy trinity" of class, race and gender, and the focus on consumption, and not only production have all become important in recent social theory (Best and Kellner 1991).

Several contemporary theorists have provided alternative

explanatory schemes that depart in fundamental ways from theories of socialization and the dominant ideology thesis. The theoretical framework I have chosen to situate this project within is the "sociology of governance," (cf. Hunt and Wickham 1994; Hunt 1996b) which underscores new and innovative approaches to examining modes of regulation in contemporary society. These theorizations which signal a type of "paradigm shift" (Hunt 1993:305) provide a (more or less) common emphasis on Foucauldian themes, concepts and methods that interrogate the sites and practices, processes and relations that "control, restrain, limit and direct" (Hunt 1993:183) social movement.

Also, much of my work draws on Nikolas Rose's (1990; 1995; 1996) examination of the processes through which the regulative ideal of the self has been invented and shaped through the reigning authority of the "psy" complex. These theoretical influences, and principally the work of Michel Foucault, serves as a larger framework with which my analysis of the moral and ethical regulation of the subject as it is presented in popular self-help literature is situated.¹³

¹³. My account of Foucault is grounded in an emphasis on the dimensions of Nietzsche's thought. Many of Foucault's ideas about the self-constituting subject are derived from Nietzsche's work. As Foucault himself stated "I am simply Nietzschean". He attempted to understand "on a number of points, and to the extent that it is possible, with the aid of Nietzsche's texts - but also with anti-Nietzschean theses (which are nevertheless Nietzschean!) - what can be done in this or that domain" (1988b:251). Nietzsche, whose philosophical writings were so influential on Foucault's thought, is the one who initially problematized truth as intrinsically intertwined with relations of power and the multiplicity of force

The concept of "governance" provides a tool for interrogating the practices and sites of what Foucault called the micro-physics of power in his notion of "governmentality" (cf. Foucault 1988, 1979) "where political power is exercised through a multitude of agencies and techniques" (Hermer and Hunt 1995:4). Several thinkers (cf. Curtis 1995; Hunt 1996, Hunt and Wickham 1994; Miller and Rose 1994; Rose 1986, 1989, 1990, 1993, 1995, 1996; Rose and Miller 1992; Gordon 1991, 1996; Dean 1991, 1994; Valverde 1996) have employed this theoretical apparatus or "Foucauldian tool-kit" (Gordon 1996:253) to examine a wide variety of social fields of governance which attempt to "qualify, measure, appraise and hierarchise" in the name of social refining (Foucault 1978:144).

Foucault (1988a) lists four major types of technologies: 1) technologies of production, 2) technologies of sign systems, 3) technologies of power, and 4) technologies of the self. It is the latter two technologies that are particularly significant for this thesis. The self-help text is one of many technologies of power which attempt to determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination; acts of objectivization. Foucault (1988a:18) defines the practical reason of the "technology of the self" as a process that

relations at the origin of 'self-evident' and taken-for-granted meanings and representations in our experiences as social beings.

permits individuals *to 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 a way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality (Foucault 1988a:19; emphasis added).

It is the contact between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self that Foucault refers to as "governmentality". This concept draws attention to the interaction between oneself and others and particularly to how the individual acts upon itself through technologies of individual domination (Foucault 1988a:19). These technologies constitute a crucial element associated with the production of governable domains such as the self.

Contemporary projects of moral regulation assume different forms and operate in and through a variety of social fields. Moral regulation, as a theoretical concept applied to help explain particular constituting/constraining discourses, has a double meaning: it identifies both a form of governance that serves to regulate and shape subjects and subjectivities *through* moralizing/normalizing and naturalized discourses and it also identifies attempts to re-fashion, that is, re-construct the already inscribed moral understanding and knowledge of modern, free and autonomous subjects.

Studies in moral regulation have been loosely described as scholarly projects engaged with the analyses of post-religious forms of moral and ethical regulatory practices

(Valverde 1994). As a plurality of social analyses, studies in moral regulation are contributed by a group of scholars concerned with, among other things, the promotion, encouragement, configuration and regulation of human conduct in advanced 'liberal' societies. It can be viewed as a critical and profound concern with moralities which become codified and inscribed within and modified by social relations and processes of rule in contemporary culture and society.

As an area of social and political thought, studies in Moral Regulation as outlined and presented by various scholars (See Corrigan 1990; Corrigan and Sayer 1985; Curtis 1988; Dean 1991, 1994; Dehli 1994; Hunt and Hermer 1996; Hunt 1995a, 1995b, 1996a; Valverde 1990, 1993, 1994, 1996; Valverde and Weir 1988) represent a prolific new approach to exploring both historical and contemporary issues in social governance.

Moral regulation should not be conceived as synonymous with state formation.¹⁴ Furthermore, as Hunt (1995:16) notes, it is important to avoid a polarization between state projects of moral reform and non-state social purity movements. Processes of self-governance are not necessarily located within state relations but circulate through a variety of social and cultural locales that are heterogenous and

¹⁴. Contentions on the significance of state relations in the sociology of governance literature has been an area fraught with disagreement, and one I am not prepared to enter at this time nor will attempt to resolve within the confines of this project. For a detailed account of the issues and debate see especially Curtis 1995a, 1995b; Rose and Miller 1992, 1995; Dean 1994; Corrigan 1994.

polymorphous in nature. The tendency to conceive moral regulation as a component of the state, as seen in the ground-breaking work of Corrigan and Sayer (1985) and Corrigan (1990), as a cultural form is restrictive and problematic. For example, as Dean (1994) argues, this approach ignores the multiplicity of non-state agencies and authorities involved in the governing of life-conduct of subjects in advanced liberal democracies.

If this [statement] is accepted, then there would be reason to examine the activities and consequences of other agencies and authorities in regard to the formation of identities. Not to do so would be at odds with Durkheim who stresses the importance of 'secondary organs' and 'special groups,' as well as 'social currents' unconnected to the state, in the networks of social governance (Dean 1994:153).

Corrigan (1990) conceives the force of moral regulation as the reproduction of particular forms of expressions that attempt to anchor normal representations of experience. Thus, the means of moral regulation are precisely expressive forms and norms. "Moral regulation...concerns forms and contexts, determining thus the realization of utterance, display, gesture, indication, action - in a phrase, *proper forms of expression*" (Corrigan 1992:109; emphasis in original). Moral regulation is above all a governmentalizing project of normalization and naturalization based upon the premises of a specific social order (Corrigan 1990; Corrigan and Sayer 1985;

Dean 1994; Valverde 1994). Valverde (1991) sees moral regulation as the formation of certain ethical subjectivities inscribed in the modern subject. According to Kari Dehli

Such an approach...suggests ways of exploring the complexity and contradictions of...relations and forms...beyond those more public events and domains that have received attention from sociologists (1994:211).

Moral regulatory efforts cannot be found in one-single location. These projects and programmes repudiate "totality by focusing on the social construction of the plurality and radical particularity of social life. It denies unity, emphasizing instead the micro-constituents of social life " (Hunt 1990:518). This vision of governance through moral discourses is both pluralist and unified in its activities and fields of power; it aims at totality through a series of specificities - universal and local, homogenous and heterogenous, concentrated and dispersed. Moral regulation operates in and through multiple sites articulating unity and dispersion in its concentration and points of focus, which are also heterogenous and contradictory.

Important features of moral regulation as a mode of social governance require some discussion here. First and foremost, moral regulation consists of 'attempts'; it is comprised of a series of applications and/or interventions that may either fail or succeed, gaining some degree of social acceptance or falling into disrepute (e.g. social codes,

rules, legislation, advertising, sexual norms, etc.). It is positive and productive (i.e. educative, pro-active, informative, etc.). This mode of regulation is not only 'negative' and purely prohibitory but also 'positive' in character so far as it may romanticise and/or applaud certain forms of expression over others. These mechanisms and processes provide subjects with particular visions of how people ought to live, act, speak, think, feel - shaping, moulding social subjectivities.

Moral regulation also provides *prescriptions* based on truth claims as a means to achieve certain desired ends and various types of change (i.e. advice, remedies, solutions, cures, scientific discoveries, etc.). It can also be understood as a type of signifying discourse that tends to act in unison with other contemporaneous discourses (i.e. medical, risk, psychological, spiritual, health, technological etc.) in complementary and contradictory ways that sustain and reproduce forms of moral authority and leadership. These significations are nearly always involved in more complex and multi-faceted processes of truth-making that eventually succeed in inserting themselves into everyday discourses and are exercised by various social agents and mediums (both human and non-human social actants¹⁵) (eg. political activists from

¹⁵. Self-help books can be viewed as nonhuman social actants in three distinct senses: 1) they regulate human relations; 2) they reproduce social knowledge; and 3) they create a certain relation of the self to the self. Latour (1988:299) suggests that in order to understand what a nonhuman social actant *does* "simply imagine

the Left or the Right, scientists, volunteers, canvassers, doctors, warning labels, bumper stickers, etc.). Attempts at morally regulating the populace typically, but not always, involve targeting certain segments of the population, that are conceived of as needing to be saved, protected, healed, reformed, helped, educated, and the like (i.e., sexually active teenagers, the homeless, immigrants, addicts, single mothers, prostitutes, loiterers, etc.). These attempts to govern certain populations serve to act as a wider "moral example," in the Durkheimian sense, for the rest of populace. Finally, projects of moral regulation tend to rely on always-already established power-knowledge regimes for legitimation and social authority (i.e. 'psy' disciplines, science, law, medicine, technology, tradition, etc.).

The above outlined dimensions that generally characterize morally-oriented regulatory projects may seem to run the risk of applying to everything and therefore explaining nothing. However, it must be noted that moral regulation occurs within and through *specific projects*: in social reform campaigns and movements that aim at the reformation of human subjects and/or some prevailing social condition and practice. This should not be viewed as an overarching conspiratorial scheme used to manipulate the masses.

Different types of contemporary moral regulation projects

what other humans or nonhumans would have to do were this character not present."

rely on diverse forms of self-subjectification consistent and compatible with notions of choice and freedom, the fundamental tenets and political rationalities of advanced liberal democracies. In other words, just as social and moral reform movements seek to apply programmatic methods for achieving and maintaining 'the good society', projects of self-reformation, such as those advocated in the self-help literature, present the methods and techniques needed in the search for attaining and securing 'the good self'. As a particular domain consisting of both moral regulation and "governmentality", the subject of self-help has become a possible object for rational management, as achievable through a systematic government of subjectivity (Rose 1986).

The self-help literary genre, in its simplest sense, can be viewed as an escape and buffer against "the cold skeleton hands of rational orders" and "the banality of everyday routine" (Weber 1957:347). At the same time, it is a set of signifying practices, "...an order of things that rewards, punishes, educates, and betters" (Nietzsche 1968:21) in the name of self-enlightenment and individual betterment rooted in the dicta and ideals of Enlightenment humanism.

Organization of the Thesis

Chapter 2 is divided into two main sections: first, an emphasis is placed directly upon categorizing the self-help texts chosen for this thesis, and the rationale for their

selection. The second portion attempts to develop a Foucauldian orientation through a discussion of the subject, discourse and power in order to provide a general framework for the remaining chapters.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of 'codependency,' 'psychospiritualism,' and 'generic' strands of popular psychology as a type of contemporary moral panic generated by particular self-help experts and their notions of what constitutes the Good Self.

Chapter 4 concerns itself with viewing and understanding self-help literature as a form of moral reform/ethical governance and thus examines and provides specific examples of its most distinctive and compelling features and content as a moral discourse.

Chapter 5 documents particularly common techniques and practices of the self offered by self-help treatises, as a technology of power. The chief focus is placed upon empirical documentations and demonstrations of advice and truth claims situated in the self-help literature.

Chapter 6 will be concerned with presenting an overall theoretical discussion on techniques of the self, to expound upon the examples presented in the previous chapter, as a mode of governing and constituting practices of self-constitution.

Chapter 7 suggests that an account of the popularity and power of self-help techniques as a 'rationality of self-government' might be more readily located and understood in

the sociocultural and political context of "governmentality" as a mode of advanced liberal rule.

Conclusion

While self-help projects may appear to be constituted by atomized self-interested subjects, they can, in no way be considered private or individual. In the "triumph of the therapeutic," the project to bind the individual back to the social world culminates in the abandonment of that "world" in favour of an almost exclusive focus on the private. These projects thus appear to be attempts to resolve private dilemmas having little to do with the public sphere or social horizon in which they are presented. Thus, self-help appears to only have significance for individuals. Individualized potentialities for governing the self become themselves objects of regulation through the personal and private life of individuals acting on their capacity to act and reflect as a form of self-determination, individual freedom and personal choice.

Self-help literature can be understood as institutionalizing anonymous and impersonal power relations in contemporary society subsequently rendering them invisible and non-negotiable due to the moral and intellectual leadership of the "psy" complex. At the same time, it cultivates the

illusion that the subject can escape from the constraints and regulations of certain social relationships.

Examining popular self-help literature can help us understand what Foucault (1979:194) has described as "the productivity of power" wherein the complex nature of power is not only negative or repressive but also positive in character in which subjects' ethical subjectivities are shaped, moulded, constrained and regulated. It can also assist us in attempting to understand self-help literature as embodying two central and oppositional narratives of modernity: the "discourse of liberation" and the "discourse of disciplinization" (Wagner 1994:5). As Rose and Miller have pointed out, power is not only constraining but also constitutive in its effects; "it is not so much a matter of imposing constraints upon citizens as of 'making up' citizens capable of bearing a kind of regulated freedom" (1992:174).

Modern power relations both constitute and are constituted by regimes of truth where moral discourses can be viewed as naturalizing and ontologizing the effects of power relations. Thus, the discursive production of 'the self-helping subject' can be conceived as an effect of discourse naturalizing itself and thereby rendering the effects of power - selves - as natural objects in a (pre)discursive world. The multiplication of self-identified identities and psychologically guided truths suggests the stabilization and development of a highly self-reflexive therapeutic culture,

centred on a discourse of personal needs, self-realization and self-fulfilment. This widespread modern phenomenon has been made possible, to a large extent, by the hegemonic multivocalities of diverse psychological authorities.

Increasingly, in the twentieth-century, popular psychology has participated in the development of moral regulatory practices which operate not by controlling the subject but by inciting self-control; not by annulling subjectivity but by producing it, shaping it and designing it. This has helped produce and reproduce, selves, individuals, citizens committed to a personal identity, a moral responsibility and an ethical self-accountability necessary for a certain social order.

The psychologistic governance of individualization is increasingly governed not by negating subjectivity, but by seeking to forge 'new and improved' subjects/subjectivities, self-understanding and personal fulfilment. This calls for a recognition of the extent to which self-help psychology books represent the experience of normal selves, dictating standards of 'improved' human being as a particularly significant domain of self-regulatory practices. What follows then, is an attempt to articulate and respond to, rather than mask, the multitude of power relations embedded within self-help discourses through which the subject in self-help books is constituted by practices of individualization through which they are governed, and which provide the means and ends, the techniques

and goals through which subjects govern themselves.

Chapter Two:

Self-Help Discourses and the Subject

A normalizing society is a technology of power centred on life...[making] an essentially normalizing power acceptable (Foucault 1988b:162).

The Western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational or cognitive universe, a dynamic centre of awareness, emotion, judgement and action, organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively against other such wholes and against a social and natural background is, however incorrigible it may seem to us, a rather peculiar idea within the context of world cultures (Geertz 1979:229).

...in the name of psychological science we seek fulfilment (Foucault 1984a:349).

Introduction

This chapter aims to demonstrate how self-help texts attempt to normalize individuals through increasingly self-sufficient means, and how psychological discourses, specifically, "attempt to turn individuals into meaningful subjects and docile objects" (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982:xxvii). The first section of this chapter provides a general overview of the self-help literature. The primary aim of this overview is to classify and categorize different types and sub-genres of self-help literature. In this context I define and consider the three main strands of self-help which constitute my

primary analytic focus: codependency, psycho-spiritual, and generic self-help texts.

The second half of this chapter presents a Foucauldian-informed discussion on "the subject" in order to locate the relations between self-help literature, the subject, power and discourse in advanced liberal regimes. A primary emphasis will be placed on challenging the orthodox and commonsensical presuppositions about the normal, natural, transhistorical, ontologized subject presented in popular discourses. Later in this chapter, as well as in subsequent chapters, I indicate why a Foucauldian approach is particularly well suited for an understanding of self-help literature as a set of moralizing/normalizing discourses that constitute conceptualized forms of the modern subject in which the healthy, good self becomes the substance of those forms.

The Self-Help Genre: Constructing Demarcations

Rather than selecting any one particular 'type' of self-help book, such as New Age Psychology manuals for example, I will examine a wider selection of those texts which belong to the broad range of self-help psychology literature.¹⁶ I have

¹⁶. For a complete catalogue of the primary sources examined and explored in this thesis see Appendix A.

selected codependency, psycho-spiritual and generic texts to inform this examination of self-help texts as a contemporary project of moral regulation. By focusing on these different forms of self-help literature, I do not suggest that they can go proxy for the entire genre, but rather, I am arguing that we can examine the selected categories as a contemporary moral discourse: one that offers the readers, often inadvertently, a particular understanding of the project of achieving the good self.¹⁷ Read in this fashion, the claims of the texts about the 'self', and how it can be 'helped' can be critically interpreted as a contemporary project of moral regulation centred on ethical self-formation and self-reformation.

My reasons for this selection is threefold: 1) an examination of an assortment of self-help texts provides a more proficient method in attending to and detecting the similarities within the genre; 2) because it is virtually impossible to address in a rigorous fashion a field as unwieldy, amorphous, and shifting as the whole self-help field, accordingly, I narrowed my selection down to a manageable survey; and 3) each of the selected sub-genres speak to moral dimensions of popular psychology whose elucidation can tell us much about current understandings of the Good and Essential Self. For example, the codependency literature deals with the moral dilemma of 'addiction,' which has become a prevalent expression of moral living in

¹⁷. Chapter 4 provides discussions on the Good Self.

contemporary society. Similarly, psycho-spiritualism concerns itself with the divinity of the soul and a higher power as the source of absolute moral codes and ethical action. Also, the generic texts, through discourses of normalization and standardization, offer implicit conceptions of who and what constitutes a good self.

A brief outline defining the main characteristics of codependency, psycho-spiritual and generic self-help texts is in order here. The body of literature referred to as codependency recovery manuals generally describes and advances a treatment regime for the 'national epidemic' of the 'disease' of codependency as addiction. Codependence, it is held, is a 'disease' of relationship(s). Those who suffer this 'illness' are afflicted with such low 'self-esteem' that they repeatedly enter into relationships in which they take on the role of 'caretaker.' Because they know no other way of securing their 'self-worth' they continue to focus on caring for the needs of others, which only worsens their 'disease.' To 'recover,' codependents must learn to take care of themselves before others, to love themselves, so that they are no longer dependent on others for their sense of 'self-worth.' Bradshaw (1988; 1996), Beattie (1987; 1989; 1990), and Schaef (1986; 1987) provide emblematic texts of this 12-Step oriented recovery programme.

Codependency, the origins of which are discussed at greater length in Chapter 3, emerged out of the AA twelve-step

sub-culture. These 'steps' provide a simple formula for living and promise that if 'believers' follow the steps faithfully, they will achieve dramatic results and improvements in their life. As a consistent extension of Alcoholics Anonymous's philosophy for guide to 'recovery,' Codependents Anonymous (CoDA) provides a similar model¹⁸, however, one that does not necessarily focus on an addiction to alcohol or other drugs: such addictive substances need not figure in the lives of codependents at all.

The psycho-spiritual types of self-help books I have examined are those authored by Dyer (1995), Peck (1978), and Moore (1992).¹⁹ These texts tend to advance the centrality of various human struggles with the self as the key to a rewarding life and meaningful existence. For example, Peck writes: "it is in this whole process of meeting and solving problems that life has its meaning...It is only because of problems that we grow mentally and spiritually" (1978:16).

¹⁸. As Jeffers jubilantly proclaims:

At last there is a 12-step program that benefits us all! You may never have had reason to attend any of the Twelve step programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)...*But everyone in our society, including you and I, has reason to attend one of the newer Twelve-Step programs - Co-Dependents Anonymous (CODA)!* (1992:137; emphasis added).

See Appendix Q for The Twelve Steps of Codependents Anonymous.

¹⁹. Other texts I have examined, which do not fall into this category, also emphasize the need for religious experiences, spiritual growth and awareness in achieving the Good Self, especially those I have classified as codependency recovery manuals. Some "generic" texts also address spirituality (See Harris 1973; Jeffers 1992, 1996; Leonard 1991; Zonnya 1995).

These texts provide readers with a certain cosmological perspective in which the universe is presented as essentially moral, just and ordered. As such, all that happens to individuals is for the best or, at least can provide a 'lesson' and be put to good use. Thus, according to these self-help books, faith in something divine 'out there' is a prerequisite for a healthy self making happiness and salvation procurable for everyone. Psycho-spiritual writers justify their reliance on psychology by stressing repeatedly that psychology is a spiritual 'tool' to assist individuals in the interminable and unavoidable pains of living. The enunciations found in psycho-spiritual self-help literature proceed from the basic assumption that spiritual growth and awareness are the best remedies for psychological difficulties.

Generic strands of self-help texts, here, are those books which emphasize the need for gaining control over one's self through scientific, rational, and/or emotionally oriented understandings of self-change. These texts tend to be more solution-oriented and mechanistic in their approaches and techniques offered. Unlike codependency manuals, which view the belief in self-control as symptomatic of disease, generic texts make rhetorical concessions to the ideals of determination and self-control. Exemplary of this sub-genre are those books written by Bentley (1989), Covey (1987), Knaus (1994), McMahon (1992), Prochaska et al (1984), Young and Klosko (1994), and Zonnya (1985).

Generic self-help texts concern themselves with ecumenical, and thus widely applicable, problematizations of the self rather than focusing on specific problematizations, such as codependency, for example. Nor do they emphasize the centrality of spiritual growth and divine powers outside of the self. Rather, they tend to place greater value in personal control and self-reliance.

The wide applicability of generic texts serve two significant functions: first, they are able to reach a wider and more diverse audience and second, they typically deal with a multitudinous array of problems which go unmentioned in the other sub-genres, such as bad habits, self-defeating thoughts, high stress levels, achieving personal or professional goals, and the like. These texts imply that problems can be removed and solved simply by applying proper technical expertise and self-knowledge. This is in stark contrast to recovery manuals which assume no 'cure' and only treatment for codependency. Similarly, psycho-spiritual texts do not offer stage-based models for change or psychological science to defend their advice, methods and techniques in the same rigid or mechanistic format like generic texts tend to do. Thus, those books found in the psycho-spiritual tradition offer their readers a 'cosmological' understanding of the self, whereas generic texts are more rationalistic and goal-oriented encouraging a type of 'positive-thinking' approach to the self. Generic texts advocate a more instrumental 'means-to an-

end' strategy while the other two sub-genres highlight the need for esteeming the means and lessons contained within the struggles of self.

While I have attempted to provide a categorization of these texts, it is important to realize that I am more interested in establishing what these books have in common rather than constructing their differences. On the whole, contradictions exists within each sub-genre as much as they do between each genre. Thus, my aim here is to document significant similarities located within each group of texts most of which can be further conceptuaized as a unifying, universalizing, yet inconsistent set of discourses centering on the self. For example, notions of personal growth and the essential core self are generally mobilized as a rationale for the innate goodness of the self in the large majority of the texts considered in each category. Self-help treatises are in fact comprised of many psychologies which may draw "on the essential tenets of many diverse theories of psychotherapy" (Prochaska et al 1994:14).

In several ways, these texts share similar convictions and moral incitations while providing different approaches and understandings about achieving the good self. These are some of the main focuses of Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Rather than demarcating hard and fast dividing lines between these different sub-genres, I have chosen to examine their problematizations as a whole, while also recognizing their

sometimes stark or subtle variations. In order to avoid becoming entangled in another methodological debate, I will construct my arguments substantively and by example.

Throughout this discussion, I will take for granted a distinction made by Kaminer (1992) regarding the various self-help books available to the contemporary consumer. She distinguishes between

practical (how to do your own taxes) books and personal (how to be happy) books. Of course, sometimes the practical and personal converge: Saving money on taxes may make you a happy person. A diet book may offer practical advice on how to eat, while reinforcing cultural ideals of slimness and promising to boost your self-esteem. But if some books are purely personal or purely practical, some are clearly more personal (1992:5).

It is the powerful emphasis on individual, personal or spiritual development that connects the self-help ideals I engage with in this thesis.

As a body of literature, the texts under examination offer their readers a particular understanding of what constitutes the good self. Read in this manner, the claims of each text have a common subject matter - the (typically) troubled self. However, among the authors there is no unity of views, and each makes different assumptions about the individual and the social world, each seeks to achieve different goals through a variety of means, thus providing the possibility of different life stories, and as such, requires

and helps create different selves. This literature acts as a discourse of liberation or narrative of emancipation by helping individuals rescue the self from one's family influence, the past, a dysfunctional society, and especially, from one's own destructive thought patterns and habits.

Depending on the type of psychological, medical, or spiritual tradition the author situates him/herself within, the techniques deployed and proffered, and the problems and aspects of the self which are to be analyzed, tend to refer the reader back to childhood and parental relationships, or attribute the subject's current malaise to some key factor such as the inability to trust oneself, or express anger effectively, the prevalence of alcohol abuse in the family, childhood abuse, and the like. Whatever approach is deployed in self-help texts, the aim is health, happiness or fulfilment achieved by the realization, confrontation and/or removal of these central problems.

Despite the assorted representations and prescriptions for being, self-help psychologies do share similar unifying views as a set of diverse and/or conflicting discourses, which will be examined in more detail in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. As one of the many heterogeneous authorities on 'the self' this body of literature can be understood as an external agent composed of a plurality of moral and ethical discourses aimed at ethical self-reformation. Indeed, the heterogeneity of the self-help literature is what makes it so powerful: it offers

something for everyone.

Although the list of competing self-help books is vast, my general interpretation is that this extensive list is indicative of the multiple attempts within popular psychology to construct and regulate modern notions of good selves. Each self-help model has been presented in a context where progress and self-enlightenment is an *a priori* given. This means that the representation of objective and rational developments can account for the normal and the abnormal, the good and the bad, and right from wrong, and provide remedial measures for transforming the latter into the former. Each proposes some form of coherent and developmental strategies for 'curing' or 'solving' particular human deficits, and as such, are in competition with one another. Each text claims to move human beings toward some 'greater good' in terms of what we are as individuals. These universal claims to truth compete in their assertions of a successful restoration and/or correction of the individual.

Against a conceptualization of self-help literature as a monolithic, structurally homologized unity, I suggest that it should be conceived of as a polysemetic discursive regime; a set of signifying practices that have both material manifestations and implications within prevailing domains of signification. This means that self-help literature aids in the production, organization, dissemination, and implementation of truths about the social world which manifest

in concrete effects, actions, and consequences through which the "the human subject is placed in relations of production and signification" (Foucault 1982:209).

Self-help books are as heterogenous in conception as they are diverse in their strategies and techniques offering a smorgasbord of options for the reader. For example, *Your Sacred Self: Making the Decision to be Free* (Dyer 1995) promises to teach us how, step by step, to tap into the power of our 'higher selves' so that we discard a sense of ourselves as "sinful and inferior" and attain an acceptance of ourselves as "divine." The best selling *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (Covey 1989) claims to teach the Seven Habits that will help individuals develop the "right Character Ethic" - to those who "lack primary greatness or goodness in their character." *I'm OK - You're OK* (Harris 1973) claims to demonstrate that "you are, in fact, OK" and promises to reveal how to achieve this new sense of OKness, to establish self-control and self-direction, and to discover "the reality of a freedom of choice" rather than "playing destructive games" with one's self.

These self-help proposals and prescriptions suggest that subjects can 'discover' the open, fluid and self-reflexive component of their 'real' and 'true' selves. Hamstra provides a "practical, down-to-earth, reasonable guide for personal exploration...[and] rediscovering the good person within" (1996:vii). He asserts that what individuals will learn in *Why*

Good People Do Bad Things, among other things, includes "[w]hat morality is all about, and why it doesn't have to be a suffocating list of do's and don't's." This lesson is aimed at exorcising "psychological demons" and helping the subject to use morality with "reason" and to "enrich your life and feel better about yourself" (Hamstra 1996:ix). The reader is told that when one learns that "compromising integrity and honesty," results in relinquishing "liberties such as self-determination, choice and expression" one is seriously "neglecting" one's essential responsibilities as a "good person" (Hamstra 1996:11).

The benefits of "helping the self," we are told, can help in "maximizing opportunities" (Covey 1989:93), achieving "Immediate Success" (Zonnya 1995:xxi), "good health, positive attitudes, friendships, love, happiness, prosperity, peace, joy, faith and a sense of inner fulfilment" (Zonnya 1996:30), and "to make our lives more manageable and rewarding" (Hamstra 1996:19). Some authors even "tackle the paradox of helping people change who don't intend to change" (Prochaska et al 1994:41). For example, their model of self change presumably "can benefit individuals in any stage of their problematic behaviour, from those who don't want to change to those who have spent years hoping to change...someday" (1994:15).

In order to walk "a healthier and more responsible path" than before (1996:59) and to "introduce more and more moments of exquisiteness in your life and more joy, peace, and

abundance" consult Jeffers' self-help text, *End the Struggle and Dance with Life*. This text focuses on helping the reader to begin "releasing the darkness and embracing the light" (1996:15) because, essentially, "[w]e are free to enjoy the best that life has to offer" (Jeffers 1996:9). Moore claims to provide a "self-help manual" that offers a guiding "philosophy of soulful living techniques for dealing with everyday problems" (1992:xii). This "program for bringing soul back to life" (1992:xiv) will result in "fulfilling work, rewarding relationships, personal power, and relief from symptoms" - which are "all gifts from the soul" (1992:xiii).

Paradoxically, the author of *The Portable Therapist*, Susanna McMahon, states that the solutions to one's life problems cannot be found by reading a self-help book and offers instead "the help and encouragement toward life enhancement" (1992:xiii). Nonetheless, she offers her readers "wise and inspiring" answers to eighty-three of the most popular questions asked by individuals in therapy. These questions McMahon addresses include: Who am I? What am I missing? Why can't I fall in love with the "right" person?

Other self-help authors and experts make similar claims about providing simple solutions to complex problems, yet there doesn't appear to be any shortage of popular 'fix-it-yourself' self-help books. Paradoxically, some authors claim to provide no "quick fix" or "easy way to achieve quality of life" (Covey 1989:35, 62) or quick or easy answers (Bentley

1988:16). Leonard claims that "the quick-fix, fast-temporary relief, bottom-line mentality doesn't work in the long run, and is eventually destructive to the individual and society" (1991:xii). Moore parallels these convictions by stating: "No one can tell you how to live your life. No one knows the secrets of the heart sufficiently to tell others about them authoritatively" (Moore 1992:xiii).

These books, while directed towards individuals who choose to embark on self-reformation solitarily, also contain assorted cautionary notes in which the subject is directed and advised to seek out professional help and/or the support of one of many self-help groups and communities in the event of psychological difficulties (Bentley 1988; Young and Klosko 1994; Jeffers 1996; Beattie 1987, 1990). For example Young and Klosko (1994:13) emphasize that "many lifetraps", such as Mistrust and Abuse, "take a long time to change and should be approached with the help of a therapist or support group." The reader is told by Jeffers: "If you feel you can't react to some situation in your life with strength...do attend the twelve-step program called Co-Dependents Anonymous. The Higher principles you will learn there will be invaluable to your life - and to the lives of those you are trying to control" (Jeffers 1996:60).

The tendency for self-help authors to promote psychotherapy and self-help groups is not surprising. After all, the majority of these professionals are considered

experts precisely because of their expertise rooted in the "psy" complex (Rose 1990; 1996). "Bibliotherapy", the prescription of reading materials as part of the psychotherapeutic treatment regime, relies heavily on self-help literature. The majority of psychologists prescribe reading self-help books to their clients "and approximately 70 percent of those clients report being 'really helped' by them" (Prochaska et al 1994:63). Bibliotherapies thus also constitute a significant axis of regulation within the therapeutic culture.

"Although psychotherapy can provide an excellent environment for change, there are fewer differences between therapy-changers and self-changers than was once believed...In fact, it can be argued that all change is self-change, and that therapy is simply professionally coached self-change". The basic proposition is this: "help can come from within, from nonprofessionals or from a book such as this one" and what is key "is always to use the right strategy at the right time" (Prochaska et al 1994:17). Where knowledge is derived from, then, is less significant than the individual's desire and determination to apply that knowledge. Often, however, the reader is warned, one's failure with self-change "is due to a lack of guidance" (Prochaska et al 1994:17).

These commonly referred to "self-help psychology books" form the central focus of this thesis as it examines the way that practices promoted by these texts are implicated in the

moral and ethical (re)production of self within neo-liberal modes of governance. Self-help texts represent the notion that professionals "acting at a distance"²⁰ (Rose and Miller 1992) can help the individual understand and correct the self. Popular self-help psychologies can be understood as offering a particular moral trajectory; one that has been marked by an intense concern with the extensive worth of the human psyche or soul.

Struggling with self has become a key cultural theme in modern life.

There seems to be a persistent impulse among Americans to worry about whether they are what they should be, whether they have the sort of personal traits, abilities, skills, social manners or inner strengths they should have. The sense of ambiguity does not stem from individual lack of adjustment to social life, but is an inherent part of the culture and its systems of meaning (Hewitt 1989:38).

Experts on the self seem to be inclined to translate all of human life into a myriad of dysfunctions, addictions, disorders, pathologies, conditions or destructive behaviours that require attention and treatment by individual sufferers. By authoritatively defining human normality and social efficiency such self-help experts are increasingly dictating standards of contemporary morality; they offer techniques, strategies and truths to achieve the good life, indeed the

²⁰. Rose and Miller (1992) and Rose (1990; 1996) derive this concept from Latour's (1986) analysis of technologies which makes possible "action at a distance."

good self. Consequently, popular self-help projects have attempted to affect all areas of social life: how to live, how to work, how to love and how to behave in various spatial and temporal settings. In self-help books, subjects are cast as damaged and injured commodities, as potential consumers of unique and presumably preferable selves, but also as redeemable from within. We are told that only we can truly rescue and help ourselves.

The advent of self-help literature can be traced back to the Puritan goal of acquiring Christian goodness (Simonds 1992:140). Indeed, self-help texts often contain an unspoken but clear salvational tone. If only one could learn to trust oneself or 'a higher power' one could become assertive, expressive, loving, or confident and thus one's mental or emotional troubles would be over. Indeed, the basis of individuals' inner self has provided the rationale for many central social institutions. Some varieties of religion, for example, have long been devoted to educating, purifying and redeeming the soul and saving individuals from ruin.

Self-help literature entails a great deal more than a campaign against 'immoralities' (translated into health discourses, e.g. addictions, diseases, disorders) which are also regulated moralities. In particular, it invents new moralities in order to enhance certain types of human life. Popular self-help literature acts to establish social perception and behaviour, what human beings may come to

consider as morally and ethically right, in short, how they think about what is 'normal,' 'good,' and 'real'. These discourses signify a type of "semantic inflation" that "has resulted in the transformation of ordinary behaviours of ordinary persons into the extraordinary awe-inspiring symptoms of mental diseases" (Szasz 1978:194). However, although the position assumed in this thesis is one that unapologetically concerns itself with the increasing power of the "psy" complex, it is simultaneously cognizant that we must be cautious not to fall back on what Dean has referred to as "a revamped version of that old sociological faithful, social control" (1994:147) presupposes that the "psy" professionals and self-help specialists were invented at the behest of some all-powerful authority or in the service of a general and conscious conspiratorial decision to control deviants and manipulate subjects. The "psy effect" should not be identified with a particular 'cause', but rather, delineated by the descriptions and prescriptions through which human being is rendered intelligible and practicable in the multiplicity of "ethical scenarios" that permeate human existence (Rose 1996:194). As such, the self-help literary genre provides a particularly fertile field for examining contemporary projects of moral regulation aimed at ethical self-reformation.

The Subject in/of Discourse

Madness and Civilization (1967) announces the significance of the subject. This text also presents a discussion of power in terms of relations of forces operating at the level of social and cultural practices, rather than as something potentially possessable, totally repressive and exercised from a top-down location. We are also introduced to the construction of the subject through those things presumed to have no history - the Self, Truth, the Soul. Most importantly, in the current context, Foucault develops an account of the historical constitution of the modern individual by means of various modes of regulation such as confinement practices and the treatment of the mentally ill.

Foucault went on to develop the idea of the subject further, particularly in the three volumes of the *History of Sexuality* (1986; 1990a; 1990b). In this context, the subject can be seen as located at the core of Foucault's social histories. His aim, he said, was "to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects" (1982:208). "Thus it is not power, but the subject, which is the general theme" of Foucault's research (Foucault 1982: 208-9).

The view of the subject that currently dominates discussion in self-help literature is one preoccupied with personal accountability and responsibility. Social agents are perceived as fundamentally homogenous, monolithic, transparent and self-interested. Moreover, subjects in self-help

literature are represented as universal and autonomous – the given and ultimate being 'posited by nature.' In self-help discourses the self is seen as largely autonomous and malleable and normal human beings as possessing rational reasoning powers, conscious intentions, and powerful emotions. Thus, the subject is seen as a self-responsible, necessarily reflective being with the autonomy needed for those attributes; a being who acts positively in the cause of its own normalization or self-realization. The subject has to be skilled in its own subjection, in organizing and sustaining some stable operative unity among the multitudinous, divergent effects and practices that produce it.

However, Foucault refutes any intellectual tradition which takes for granted that human subjects are responsible and autonomous social agents. In *Discipline and Punish* (1979), for example, he shows how panoptic practices create *subjects who become responsible for their own subjection*. Popular discourses, such as self-help, therefore, should not be understood as sovereign forces externally acting upon subjects in which subjects are passive vessels structured purely by social determinations.

What I mean can be better understood by recalling Foucault's claim that modern forms of power operate by structuring the possible field of action of others (Foucault 1982:221). First, modern forms of power constitute individual subjects that are capable of self-constitution. Power, says

Foucault, structures the possible field of action of others and the modern form of pastoral power (Foucault 1981b; 1982) does so in ways that make individuals into subjects: "subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his [sic] own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge" (Foucault 1982:212). Second, these forms of power and knowledge sustain and reproduce a myriad of techniques of the self that come to be accepted as normal and natural in the everyday lives of human beings. Foucault claims

in thinking of the mechanisms of power, I am thinking of its capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, their learning processes and their everyday lives (Foucault 1980:39).

Thus power must be considered in relation to its workings in various social and cultural practices and "truth-making" processes that aim, in some way, at the level of the everyday, to construct certain presuppositions, characteristics, properties, and so forth, about the subject as a metaphysical *a priori*. Power then, must be seen as both a normalizing and a generative force.

The point can be illustrated in reference to the self-help literature. One of the main objectives encouraged and prescribed by self-help literature is based on the assumption that 'the truth' can assist the individual subject's attempt to 'discover' a 'real,' 'core' or 'true' inner self. This

illuminates the need to identify and examine certain forms of power exercised in practices, techniques and relations of the self to the self. Foucault writes: "[P]ower, as an autonomous question, does not interest me...I am not developing a theory of power. I am working on the history...of the way reflexivity of self upon self is established, and the discourse of truth that is linked to it" (Foucault 1988a:39).

Notions of the subject in self-help literature display the complex networks between the workings of power and the processes of subjectivization that become entangled in the everyday lives of individuals. Foucault discusses the significance of power and discourse and how its application in the mundane activities of everyday life

categorizes the individual, marks him [sic] by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. *It is a form of power which makes individual subjects.* (Foucault 1982:212; emphasis added).

As experts located in social positions which legitimize the dissemination of certain claims to Truth about the human subject, popular self-help gurus deploy power not simply in moral effects but also in their authority to exalt some knowledges and experiences while disqualifying others. This, among other things, excludes a great deal that might be relevant to readers, and encourages subjects to make self-evaluating judgements on the scripted or tailored accounts

that are provided by disciplinary discourses.

Furthermore, by virtue of the authors' expert knowledge, as with other areas of regulatory power which, usually, employ 'experts' to label human being in its variety of forms, attempt to motivate the self-disciplined subject to conform to particular sets of codes and norms, codes aimed at the conduct of conduct. As Foucault says, relations of power require the production of discourses which involve an ensemble of rules according to which the true and false are separated and which have specific effects of power attached to them (Foucault 1980:131-3).

In *Power/Knowledge*, Foucault (1980:94) omits the state as a critical site in the nonrepressive, nonsovereign, or 'productive', microphysical and capillary forces of power. He goes on to claim that it is precisely when we set aside the problem of the state that the "study of the techniques and tactics of domination can be explained by those attempting to understand the complex problem of power" (1980:102). He sees disciplinary power as a pervasive mode of social governance particularly in the constitution of social subjects.

Disciplinary institutions and discourses generate obedient, fragmented and disciplined subjects who can be seen as both subjects and objects of regulation and in which subjects are constituted across a number of power relations which are both exerted over and by individuals (Foucault 1988a:39). Although no one group or elite may have set out to

establish a more "regulated society" (Hunt and Hermer 1996) this has been the wide-effect of a series of practices, e.g., the training of troops, the punishment of criminals, the control of diseases, the organization of factories, the education of children, and the like.

The character of self-help, as a corollary form of disciplinary power, is masked by the invitation to subjects as necessarily assuming full responsibility for their acts and intentions. This constitutes a regime of power and knowledge in which individuals take responsibility for exercising a governance over themselves. Self-help tracts' claim that 'positive' individual change can be secured by means of a rational, wilful and purposeful human agency is suspect because this approach assumes the possibility of situating opposition outside the workings of power relations and networks. The subject, then is inseparable from power. "Power relations change, shape and produce the very reality" we experience or desire (Jacques 1991:332).

We must cease, for once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him [sic] belong to this production (Foucault 1979:194).

But self-help cannot naively or simply be assumed only to enact a positive, productive function. I would like to suggest

that the hypothesis of productive power is compatible with "the repressive hypothesis." Unless power has a univocal essence, a singular meaning and mode of action, then it is impossible to sustain the idea that power is only or primarily productive and not also repressive. Foucault's later adoption of the hypothesis of productive power does not invalidate repressive relations entirely: on the contrary, the two exist in a continual interweaving and entanglement (Caputo 1993:246).

Foucault's insightful realization that power should be conceptualized as an inherent property of social relations rather than as a product or property possessed by individuals or institutions eschews a Leviathan-like top-down account of sovereignty and power for a more localized account of capillary and relational dimensions of power as a strategic relation in society. Power relations must be seen as dispersed and heterogenous (Foucault 1979:27).

Power emerges through the techniques and goals of a variety of institutions and practices. For Foucault, the emergence of disciplinary power can be traced to the way human beings have been organized and ordered in armies, the school, hospitals, prisons and the workplace in which a diverse set of strategies and mechanisms constitute the human subject.²¹ The pinnacle of regulatory power's achievement is a self that

²¹. In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault asks, "Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals which all resemble prisons?" (1979:228).

seeks constantly to regulate, order and organize itself - self-governance. "Such a power has to qualify, measure, appraise, and hierarchize, rather than display itself in its murderous splendour" (Foucault 1979:144). As a social discourse, self-help serves to provide standards for psychological health, normality and morality and thus forms and informs modern templates for the organization and regulation of the self through self-subjectification and individualization.

The turn towards 'the private' and 'personal' self can be seen as a mode of governance that obscures the horizon of social relations of domination because the public world and its therapeutic ethos as a set of practices is contingent upon the subject turning back on itself in the name of personal and psychological well-being outlined by the "psy" complex. The constitution of the subject involves being subject to someone else, in this case to the 'experts' and authors, and that of being tied to one's own self-knowledge. The self is constructed through the discourse of what one says about oneself (self-making) and what is said about one. Thus, individuals who *subordinate and subject themselves* to the self-help literature reveal that "the problem for the subject or for the individual soul is to turn its gaze upon itself" (Foucault 1988a:5).

Hunt and Wickham (1994:29) provide a condensed version of Foucault's conceptualization of the subject.

First, he is at pains to insist that subjects are not simply the result of external social forces, but rather actively engaged in their own production: we produce ourselves as 'selves' or identities. His second extension uses a significant feature of the word 'subject'; it has two senses, people are both subjects (self-conscious beings), but they are also 'subjected' (power acts to produce 'subjection'). As he puts it: 'An immense labour to which the West has submitted generations in order to produce...men's subjection: *their constitution as subjects* in both senses of the word' (Foucault quoted in Hunt and Wickham 1994:29; emphasis added).

It is possible, then, to take the triple-play on the meaning of "subjection" in this context quite seriously: a *subjectivity* is produced in and by discourse as the self is *subjected* to discourse and engages in practices of *self-subjectification* in the pursuit of self-help projects. One might say that the subject exists because of the relationship with the self that comes into being in our culture (Jambet 1992:238-9).

Foucauldian-informed analyses are thus required to examine the notions of the self, the individual, and the soul which all rest upon the idea of the subject. Clearly, the subject serves a number of purposes in Foucault's histories and examinations. One such purpose is that "subject" paradoxically expresses the way in which human beings have become objects of rational, professional and scientific inquiry. Psychology, medicine and other social science disciplines have provided powerful understandings of the human self which has produced conceptions of what is healthy,

normal, and functional as well as what is unhealthy, abnormal and dysfunctional. So while notions of "the subject" remain fundamental in attempting to understand the micro-constitutive power relations of the individual, an analysis of the modern self requires an inquiry into the activities of self-constitution embedded in discursive practices.

The objectivization of the subject occurs through a multitude of what Foucault calls "dividing practices" (1982:208). Classification and categorization of the dysfunctional and abnormal establishes divisions between the normal and pathological, the good and the bad, all of which implicates the modern self-helping subject within a set of moralizing/normalizing and standardizing assumptions. These assumptions are reflected in the aims of the self-help literature which attempt not only to judge, determine and present the truths of 'problems with living', but to uncover the reasons for these problems and the best possible means to reform and reconstruct the interiority of the self-changing seeker. "The modern individual - objectified, analyzed and fixed - is a historical achievement" (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982:159).

At another level, Foucault's conception of the subject is not merely at the level of an object: human beings are also viewed as having desires, wants, and projects - as opposed simply to being the object of another's desires, wants and projects. We are subjects who possess subjectivities. This

means, however, that our subjectivities should not be conceived as biologically necessary, naturally essential or ontologically ordered. Being a subject is not a transcendental given; subjects have a genealogy or a history. Human beings become subjects within a larger set of social and cultural practices and discourses (Foucault 1986; 1990a; 1990b).

At a third level, Foucault uses the term subject to denote our liability or amenability to being subjugated. Subjects are not only social constructions that naturally fit whatever codes and criteria are imposed on them. Becoming a subject entails its own form of self-enslavement and self-subjectivization. Falling outside the range of acceptable and proper human expressions induces social pressure to conform, standardize and normalize one's self. These failures, it appears, seem to legitimize further forms of social governance. This continual possibility of failing to behave normally and naturally leads to a self that perpetually engages in self-examination, self-discipline and self-regulation; indeed, a self that may engage in reading self-help literature as a means of re-aligning itself to normalized/moralized and naturalized/psychologized understandings of the subject.

Self-help discourses extol the self-governing subject *par excellence* through both totalizing and individualizing practices. In the modern era, individuals are subjected to a type of self "surveillance which would be both global and

individualizing" (Foucault 1980:147). The subject of self-help is a product literally filled with discourses and relations of power.

Self-help literature is globalizing in the sense that it brings all aspects of "the subject's" life under a particular expert gaze and prods the reader to examine, scrutinize, and identify one's beliefs, thoughts, actions, morals, and desires which can *help* one's self move closer towards 'the normal,' 'the healthy,' 'the real' and so on. Foucault describes our present situation as one in which we are rendered 'normal' and docile through constant observation, threat of exclusion and incitement to self-discipline (Foucault 1977:227).

The mechanisms of discipline, regulation and surveillance first mould the self as a certain type of subject and then inscribe various unifying conceptions of health, morality, ethics, and normality toward which the 'good' self is encouraged to strive. Thus, individuals come to govern themselves (and others) through the production of knowledge *by constituting themselves as subjects capable of self-governance* within the context of any number of social forms, not simply self-help projects. Disciplinary power is individualizing because it focuses on the various ways in which we actually carry out (or can potentially fall short of) the processes, practices, and techniques aimed at governing oneself and is always already understood in relation to prevailing governing standards of normality.

The processes that have been under discussion are accomplished through what Foucault refers to as discourse. However, in order to expand upon Foucault's idea of discourse, I adopt Valverde's (1991b:10-11) usage of the term which modifies Foucault's definition such that the conceptualization refers "not only to language as separate from the real world but rather to organized sets of signifying practices that often cross...between `reality' and `language'."²² This means that discourse is essentially about meaning both in its linguistic and non-linguistic forms. For Laclau and Mouffe, a discourse is "constituted as an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a centre" (1985:112).

Discourses are sets of meanings which constitute governable objects, and a discourse then, is a "representational practice" (Woolgar 1988:93). They are "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault 1972:49). Discourses and practices should be treated as if they were the same thing, because "material practices," such as speaking or writing, are always invested with meaning.

Just as perversion and madness are products of struggles and discourses of production, domination and subjugation, so

²². This position moves beyond and avoids the old and unproductive dichotomization between idealism and materialism which assumes that a divide and point of origin can be made between the experienced/perceived/interpreted world and its concrete reality.

too are 'dysfunctionalism' and 'addiction.' These significations and representations are apprehended and appropriated by our cultural institutions and circulated through various modes of communication within the social realms. "Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power" (Foucault 1980:131). The production of addicted, diseased, dysfunctional or psychologically unbalanced individuals should be understood as a consequence and result of discourse; discourses create and organize their own subjects (Foucault 1972:40). However, Foucault was not satisfied with merely attributing a strange force to discourse and came to see that he had been talking about was power in its multifarious guises, relational forces and capillary forms.

Each society has its regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth: that is, a type of discourse which it accepts and functions as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each one is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault 1980:131).

Self-help psychologisms have implicitly assumed that the human subject, the object of governance, is a natural entity with attributes and capacities that psychologically-based inquiries can locate and demonstrate. Within the self-help

literature

human beings are addressed, represented, and acted upon *as if they were selves* of a particular type: suffused with an individualized subjectivity, motivated by anxieties and aspirations concerning their self-fulfilment, committed to finding their true identities and maximizing their authentic expression in their life-style (Rose 1996:169-70; emphasis in original).

The multiplicity of values and beliefs and the homogenizing representations of selfhood in self-help literature serve to normalize and naturalize modern subjects. Similarly, the criterion of 'goodness' and 'rightness' of the experiential self is laid out in certain standards to which those engaging in projects of self-help are encouraged to adhere in order to improve the self. Thus, the monolithic prescriptions of the healthy, normal self serve to standardize human beings by discounting difference and by emphasizing universal sameness.

Conclusion

One of the cultural myths self-help literature perpetuates is the notion of a universalized, metaphysical subject when, in fact,

there is no sovereign, founding subject, a universal form of subject to be found everywhere...on the contrary,...the subject is constituted through practices of subjection, or, in a more autonomous way, through practices of liberation, of liberty...on the basis of a number

of rules, styles, inventions to be found in the cultural environment (Foucault 1988a:18).

Thus, social processes, cultural forces and psychologized universal constructs all serve to constitute the modern subject as the form of which the self is the substance. Following Foucault, this chapter has repudiated an *a priori* theory of the subject and, instead, embarked on an examination of how the subject comes to be constituted by games of truth and practices of power (Foucault 1988a:10).

The subject in search of recovery, self-realization or self-enlightenment is thus a product of the power-knowledge relation not the source of it. The subject is construed through multifarious matrixes formed by the interplay between knowledge and power. The modern subject can be understood as a product of power, specifically, a product of mundane techniques of the self. Self-help literature is constituted by a field of diverse power relations. It is not simply an external relation 'taking place' between already constituted subjects, but rather, is part in parcel of the re-constitution of those subjects themselves. The subject, then, must be conceived in radically anti-essentialist terms.²³

A Foucauldian framework and analysis helps reveal the

²³. Foucault's conceptualization of power in terms of discursive and nondiscursive practices presents an account of the constitution of modern individuality without making essentialist claims about human nature, as Nietzsche tended to do.

more subtle and innocuous ways in which power functions in modern society. It can help us understand how popular psychology as a modern government of subjectivity is also connected to modes of power that coincide with the popularity of self-help projects. Seeking help with one's self is one way in which human conduct has come to be governed through different forms of truth espoused by various experts in the field of popular psychology. Self-help, in the form of popular literature, attempts to achieve the "unification of life conduct around a single model of appropriate subjectivity." As an objective of particular programmes and strategies each author presents a particular way of being and not a general unifying characteristic of human cultures (Rose 1996:28).

Subjects are not simply objects removed from discourse or politics; since their inception they have always been political and strategic. If subjects have an air of neutrality and indifference with regard to their form and content and thus seem to be 'purely' formal (there exists no Archimedean standpoint of objectivity), the epitome of rational abstraction, it is precisely because these discourses have already been occupied and used, and has already been the focus of past processes. These procedures are directly related to classifications such as good/bad, healthy/sick, normal/abnormal, right/wrong, functional/dysfunctional which are all obvious targets in examining contemporary projects of moral regulation.

A Foucauldian-based analysis rejects the notion that the above designations and significations are stable, absolute and natural, instead treating them as historical and cultural productions. This entails a type of contestation aimed at resisting entrenched essences and natures as simple givens traversing the same meaning across time and space, which self-help authors are so fond of propagating. These normalizing categories and demarcations are not self-evident or ontologically concrete, they only become so through complex and variegated processes and numerous "networks of truth-making" (Ward 1996) . Therefore, a Foucauldian approach helps us in understanding how the power of self-help in the form of an organizing discourse can function within and through other socially structured discourses on the self serving to reinforce and reproduce the ontologization of subjects.

Self-help literature can be considered an organized discourse by virtue of its sets of signifying practices that seek to codify, calculate, supervise and maximize the functioning of individual subjects. Modern power disguises itself by presenting truths and is legitimated in the name of truth. The power of self-help literature, by presenting truths on human being, is insidious because its concealed but productive intercession in everyday life is obscured by narratives of emancipation, discourses of liberation, and the largely accepted moral and intellectual leadership and authority of the "psy" complex.

Chapter Three:

Entrepreneurs of the Good Self: An Overview of Codependency, Psycho-Spiritualism, and Generic Self-help Texts

The spirit of self-help is the root of all genuine growth in the individual; and, exhibited in the lives of many, it constitutes the true source of national vigour and strength. Help from without is often enfeebling in its effects, but help from within invariably invigorates (Smiles 1859:35).

Self-growth is tender; it's holy ground. There's no greater investment (Covey 1989:62).

...religion and morality are a much better whip to keep people in submission than even the club and the gun.

- Emma Goldman

Introduction

In this chapter I would like to examine certain crucial themes and presuppositions that emerge from contemporary 'codependency,' and 'psycho-spiritual' self-help texts advocated by a group of entrepreneurs concerned with, among other things, the re-formation of pathologized selves. This discussion is particularly concerned with examining the rise of 'codependency' as a discourse of reform and liberation, including the more spiritually-oriented approaches to ethical self-reformation. In this chapter I will be concerned with

three main objectives: first, to present one of the latest and most popularized domains of ethical self-governance - 'codependency', second, to demonstrate the championing of some moral discourses on disease and addiction, and third, to show how certain advocates of self help act as spiritual 'saviours' of troubled souls and dysfunctional selves.

Self-help reading, as a contemporary phenomenon is not a 'movement' in the traditional political sense; it is not a revolt against the repressive state, nor does it comprise the moral regulation of social practices embodied in state formation and processes of governmental rule. Rather, it is an insurrection against one's own self, an inner state of non-well-being or the interior life of a 'diseased', 'dysfunctional' or 'disorderly' psyche.

The term 'recovery movement' must be used carefully, and it generally has not been. Kaminer's (1992) critique of codependency repeatedly refers to "the recovery movement" in ways that artificially group new twelve-step programs with established groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous. The self-help genre cannot be conceived as the formation of an autonomously organized movement because its collective representations of the self and normative prescriptions display striking contradictions and ambivalences with respect to the legitimate forms of existence appropriate for modern society. In this context, Room's (1993) examination of the potential ways of approaching AA as a social movement has shown that AA deviates

and differs from traditional models within social movement perspectives. For example, while it can (and has been) framed as a religious movement, it also departs from organized religious cults on several grounds. Self-help, seen from a social movements perspective, also fails to fit neatly into the usual descriptive categories provided by social scientific categorization (Katz 1993).

Self-help, particularly the 'recovering-one's-true-self-from addiction' type, is concerned with reconstructing the self in order to instill and then validate a pristine state of selfhood which has been lost, destroyed or wounded due to a 'dysfunctional family' and a repressive and antiquated socio-cultural order.²⁴ This approach to reforming the self can be understood as a type of psychologically-based activity intent on the restoration of an unique and 'real' self, the lost inner child, who lives deep inside each and every one of us waiting to be discovered, nurtured and loved. Once loved by the adult self, according to the self-help codependency advocates, the child within²⁵, the true, pristine and innocent self will emerge with the proper techniques leading one to

²⁴. Codependency is clearly part, and an increasingly influential part, of contemporary efforts to locate and reconstruct alternatives to "traditional" forms of identity.

²⁵. The "inner child" hypothesis is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

obtain success, tranquillity and happiness.²⁶

The Codependency Craze

'Recovery', initially referred primarily, if not exclusively, to 'alcoholics' suffering from an 'incurable disease' requiring management, rehabilitation, reformation, and treatment through the Twelve-Step program of Alcoholics Anonymous. But today, recovery refers to a variety of behaviours colonizing and objectivizing an increasing expansion of individuals. One addiction that has more recently been 'discovered' and 'identified' has been described as a disease which compels one to control others and neglect the self, the newly invented disease of the modern era - 'codependency.'

Since the mid 1980's, 'co-dependency' has become an increasingly significant and peculiar socio-cultural phenomenon. Prior to the eighties, neither Co-Dependents Anonymous (CoDA) nor the category of co-dependence existed. One of the first indications of 'the codependency panic' was the remarkable success of Melody Beattie, an alcohol and chemical-addiction counsellor and recovering alcoholic.

²⁶. Several books dealing exclusively with "the inner child" are available on the self-help market. See for example, Bruce Davis (1985), Claudia Black (1989), Charles Whitfield (1987), and Jeremiah Abrahms (1990).

Beattie's *Co-dependent No More*, first published in 1987, went on to spend almost three years (154 weeks) among *Publisher Weekly's* top ten best-selling trade paperbacks, eventually selling well over 2 million copies. During that title's extended run, two more of Beattie's self-help books also reached the status of best-selling books. Her 1990 reader, *The Language of Letting Go* spent ten weeks on the best-sellers lists alongside *Codependent No More* and *Beyond Codependency and Getting Better All the Time*, the 1989 sequel to her first book, was a best seller for twenty-three weeks, going on to register sales of over half a million copies.

Similarly, the substantial sales of titles by Anne Wilson Schaef also attested to the rising popularity of codependency-oriented self-help texts. Schaef's *Co-Dependence: Misunderstood - Mistreated* sold over 300,000 copies. John Bradshaw, a former candidate for religious ministry and a recovering alcoholic active in the addiction treatment industry, has been one of the most prominent moral entrepreneurs of the 'codependency craze.' As a leading founder and forceful advocate of codependency recovery, Bradshaw's success is due, in part, to his multimedia approach²⁷ in the dissemination and circulation of his work and ideas. As of 1989, *Bradshaw On: The Family*, the first of a series of self-help books he wrote, sold 40,000 copies per

²⁷. Each of Bradshaw's books has been the basis for a Public Broadcast System (PBS) miniseries.

month. By 1992 both this title and *Healing the Shame that Binds You* each sold over 800,000 copies. His third self-help tract, *Homecoming: Reclaiming and Championing Your Inner Child* went on to spend all of 1991 on *Publisher's Weekly* best-selling non-fiction hardcover list.²⁸ Since its publication in 1988, *Bradshaw On: the Family* had sold more than 1,250,000 copies and 250,000 people had attended his lectures and workshops (Bradshaw 1996:xii).

This incomplete catalogue of the retail end of self-help recovery/codependency texts underscores codependency's rapid incorporation into contemporary culture and popular psychology. Yet, for the experts on codependency, defining what exactly codependency is proves elusive.

A Brief History of Codependency

Co-dependency appeared peripherally on the treatment scene in the late seventies (Beattie 1987:33; Whitfield 1987:28) and has proven to be one of the most generalized, psychologized problematizations of the modern self. The constructed conceptualization of codependency offered by various self-help authors is the by-product of various intersecting and complementary discourses rooted in religious

²⁸. Sales figures are derived from Kaminer (1992).

and spiritual revivalism²⁹, the medical concept of disease and epidemic, the psychoanalytic tradition and the recovery-from-addiction field of alcoholism.³⁰ Presented and appropriated as the modern disorder of self, codependency is the inverse formulation of the 'narcissistic ego disorder' because this 'condition' results in an extensive and unhealthy focus on the other rather than where the experts claim one's attention needs to be - on the self. This is diametrically opposed to the ideological imperatives and aims of Alcoholics Anonymous. Ideologically, Room (1993) claims, AA can be viewed as a response to the growing pervasiveness of egoistic individualism as the leading disorder of modernity while simultaneously (and paradoxically) promoting an individualist approach to recovery.

The term 'codependency' is to some extent the progeny of an older concept that originated among those associated with

²⁹. Bradshaw admits in his preface to the revised edition of *Bradshaw On: the Family* that his "evangelical zeal" had "the bold stamp of youthful passion and idealism" and his first edition was emblematic of a "devotee of a salvational religion" (1996:xi).

³⁰. Blumberg (1977) provides an outline of AA's ideology as originating from various medical, psychological and religious sources. For example, the public confessions ("telling experiences"), conversion and concern to help others was characteristic of evangelistic church meetings in the nineteenth century. The religious influence of Rev. Shoemaker and the Oxford Group helped shape AA's idea of self-examination, acknowledgement of character defects, restitution for harm done to others and working with others. Another component that shaped AA ideology was the claim made by Carl Jung: that the only likely way to be cured of the disease was through a radical religious experience. This latter notion was further strengthened and legitimated by William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1928).

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), that is, 'co-alcoholism.' According to its original application, it was assumed that the spouses and children of 'alcoholics' developed psychological problems as the result of living with and loving a person suffering from alcohol addiction. These sufferers were termed 'co-alcoholics' afflicted with the problem of 'co-alcoholism' (Kurtz 1979; Whitfield 1987).³¹

In the mid-1980's, 'co-alcoholism' underwent a terminological transformation. As part of a wide sweeping acceleration in the number of addiction-treatment facilities, addiction counsellors began to use the term 'chemical dependency' to refer to a wide range of addictions, including alcoholism, which those facilities attempted to remedy and treat. The term 'codependent' came to signify those individuals who were in some sort of close and/or intimate relationship with a chemical-dependent person, and supplanted the older notion of the co-alcoholic. The change in terminology was accompanied by a fundamental transformation in the meanings of both the concepts of codependency and addiction. These new meanings began to evolve and emerge in the writings of a core group of codependency advocates.

The codependency reformers' redefinition involved three changes from the original concept of co-alcoholism. The first

³¹. This inception also led to the creation of other self-help groups such as Al-Anon and Ala-Teen, which were designed to provide alcoholics' loved ones with the same type of fellowship and social support systems that AA had made available to its members.

is the claim that codependency is itself an addiction, actually, a disease, in and of itself rather than caused by having an intimate relationship with an addict. Schaef declares that "we are beginning to recognize that co-dependence is a disease in its own right. It fits the disease concept in that it has an *onset...*, a *definable course* (the person continues to deteriorate mentally, physically, psychologically, and spiritually), and untreated, has a *predictable outcome* (death)" (1986:6; emphasis in original).

The imagery of a progressive and fatal condition has long been a hallmark of the medical disease model of addiction (or "disease concept"). The medical model of disease holds that alcoholics suffer from some type of physiological malfunction that makes it impossible for them to exercise control over alcohol consumption.³² Schaef, and other similar advocates, argue that codependency is not caused by close relations with an addict but is itself a 'disease'; indeed, it is viewed as an addiction just like alcoholism.

Secondly, the redefinition of codependency also included reversing the causal relationship between codependency and addiction: codependency, the advocates assert, is the *cause* of addiction rather than the by-product of a close relationship with an addict, as was earlier thought. This newly formed

³². Blumberg (1977) discusses the inception of viewing alcoholism as an allergy-based medical condition prior to the current acceptance of the medical model of disease to explain and understand the behaviour of "alcoholics."

conception arose from the reformers' shared conviction that the essence of all addictions is an "unhealthy dependence" upon any "pathological relationship" with persons, activities or substances. Those who exhibit any 'over-reliance' and dependence upon any 'external factor' are viewed as suffering from codependency.

The third claim proffered by the codependency experts is that this condition is also caused by repressive and oppressive socialization practices, grounded in contemporary society as a whole. These traditional practices, they contend, emerge from archaic cultural beliefs and values about authority and rules, child-rearing practices, and conventional standards of etiquette and protocol. These 'social demands' all entail the reliance upon things that exist outside of oneself forms the essence and etiology of codependency.

Codependency defined in this broad sense, argues against the typical interpretation of popular psychology as being individualistic in its effects. Codependency, while individualistic in the sense that its effects are individuals' pathological dependencies outside themselves, can further be conceived as 'a social disease' because its condition is always relational. The 'common thread' of codependency "involves our responses and reactions to people around us...our relationships with other people, whether they are alcoholics, gamblers, sex addicts, overeaters, or normal people. Codependency involves the effects these people have on

us and how we, in turn, try to affect them" (Beattie 1987:30).

Beattie defines a codependent as a person

who has let another person's behaviour affect him or her, and who is obsessed with controlling that person's behaviour (Beattie 1987:36; emphasis in original).

Another activist, Sandra Smalley, has defined co-dependency as "a pattern of learned behaviours, feelings and beliefs that make life painful." This pattern is found in a person who is "human-relationship dependent [and who] focuses her life/his life around an addictive agent...It is a dependence upon people and things outside the self, along with the neglect of the self to the point of having little self-identity" (Smalley cited in Schaef 1986: 6, 14-15).³³ Codependency experts often pathologize dependency (Beattie 1987:53), which is interesting in light of the traditional tendency to view dependency as a natural and/or socially prescribed trait and/or role of feminine behaviour.³⁴

"In desperation (or perhaps enlightenment), some therapists have proclaimed: 'Codependency is *anything*, and *everyone* is codependent'" (Beattie 1987:33; emphasis in

³³. Schaef does not offer or cite a specific reference to Smalley's work and notes only that Smalley "conducts numerous workshops on co-dependence" (1986:14).

³⁴. Some critics have focused exclusively on providing a feminist challenge and analysis of popular self-help literature and the notion of "codependency". See especially Simonds (1992) and Babcock and McKay (1995).

original). From the codependency standpoint practically every facet of existence is capable of becoming an addiction or disease. In fact, Schaef (1987:18) contends that "an addiction is anything we are not willing to give up," an opinion that could be supported by the following partial list of newly invented identities based on an ever-growing index of addictions: sex addicts, eating addicts, shopping addicts, love addicts, work addicts, gambling addicts, and the like.³⁵ These statements have led Kaminer to note that the all-encompassing definition of co-dependency as "bad and anyone can have it...makes this disease look more like a marketing device" (1992:10).

However, in spite of Kaminer's poignant appraisal which views codependency as a powerfully strategic marketing device, its implications for the modern self are more profound and far-reaching than merely a profit-oriented commercialization of disease. The above remarks by codependency reformers stress the wide applicability of this 'new' disease. The self-help codependency literature claims that its potential audience is virtually *anyone*. This is also evident in the advocates' estimates of the prevalence of codependency in modern society. For example, the '96 percent' figure is commonly cited as the "infection rate" of codependency

³⁵. Beattie (1990:240) includes a number of self-help groups which include: Cocaine Anonymous, Debtors Anonymous, Drugs Anonymous, Marijuana Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Parents Anonymous, Pill Addicts Anonymous, Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, and Smokers Anonymous.

(Weinhold and Weinhold 1989:xvii), the number of codependents in Western society (Schaefer 1986:14), or the number of people who come from dysfunctional families (Bradshaw 1996).

These far-reaching claims contain an engaging and provocative indication for attempting to understand a contemporary project of moral regulation for several reasons. First, assertions that virtually an entire society suffers from psychological deficits need not (and perhaps cannot) be taken seriously as a diagnosis of individual problems; second, such claims should be understood as a wholesale critique of a culture in which a 'new morality' is offered to the "conscience collective."

Beattie claims that co-dependency "is similar to pneumonia or picking up a destructive bad habit. Once you've got it, you've got it" (Beattie 1987:20). Although Beattie provides dramatic examples and personal stories of individuals inflicted with this new social disease, she is quick to point out that "codependency doesn't necessarily have to be so intense. And it doesn't always involve experiences with deeply troubled people" (1987:29). In fact, she goes on to state that "[b]y their nature, codependents are benevolent - concerned about and responsive to the needs of the world"³⁶ (Beattie 1988:37). Bradshaw (1996:88) defines co-dependency as "a dis-

³⁶. Beattie goes so far as to state that if one is reading her book *Codependent No More* to help someone other than oneself, chances are that person is probably codependent too (1987:53).

ease of self-esteem" due to growing up in a dysfunctional family. The end result is "deselfment", a denial of self, the effect of a loss of solid self-esteem and the development of a false self (Bradshaw 1996:xviii).

Kaminer raises a particularly salient point when she writes that the putative message of codependency literature – that individuals are responsible for themselves and should not spend their lives pleasing others – is undermined by the medium in which it is conveyed. "Merely buying a self-help book is an act of dependence" (1992:164–5).

Addictive Selves in an Addictive Society

A great deal of the self-help literature conveys the idea that one's 'disorder' is the consequence of growing up in a dysfunctional family, or more specifically, due to "toxic parents/parenting". The growing belief that all individual suffering results in some type of addiction, and the idea that addiction is disease, places a substantial number of modern individuals in a marginalized category. "Addiction has become our national lifestyle – or deathstyle. It is a deathstyle based on the relinquishment of self as a worthwhile being to a self who must achieve and perform or use something outside of self in order to be lovable and happy" (Bradshaw 1996:7). Another reformer states that "when we talk about addiction, we are talking about civilization as we know it" (Schaefer

1986:67).

Ken Keyes (1980:5) describes the symptoms of an addiction:

1. It creates tension in your body;
2. It makes you experience separating emotions such as resentment, anger, and fear instead of unifying emotions which give you experience of acceptance, love, and joy;
3. Your mind tells you things must be different in order for you to enjoy life in the here and now;
4. Your mind makes you think there is something important to win or lose in the situation;
5. You feel that you have a 'problem' in your life - instead of experiencing life as an enjoyable 'game' to be played.

Jeffers claims that "all addictions are functions of the LOWER SELF" (1996:22; emphasis in original). Her description of the Lower Self states that:

1. The Lower Self is part of us that has been badly educated to think that the only way to survive is to be numb to the feelings of others.
2. The Lower Self is the part of us that absorbs the teachings of our society and, as a result, is caught in the treadmill of more-better-best.
3. The Lower Self has heard all the admonitions and believes that the world is out to get us.
4. The Lower Self acts as a frightened parent who does not trust in our ability to handle all the threats in our life.
5. The Lower Self has no vision and does not understand that all situations in our life, good and bad, can be used as a teaching for our highest good.

In stark contrast, the Higher Self:

1. is the dwelling place of all good things such as love, power, creativity, joy, satisfaction, and abundance;
2. knows we have the strength to handle anything that can ever happen to us.
3. doesn't see the outside world as a threat to our lives; it sees it as a place to learn and grow and contribute.
4. has great vision and can guide us to where we need to go with our lives.
5. knows that all situations, good or bad, can be used as a teaching for our highest good (Jeffers 1996:22-3).

Jeffers invites the reader to 'scan the events' of his or her life in order to identify Lower Self moments from Higher Self moments. Jeffers emphatically states that "If you can't find any of these Higher Self moments as you scan the events in your life, NOT TO WORRY! As you regularly use the tools provided here, such moments will begin to appear" (1996:23; emphasis in original). "The prison of the Lower Self", she asserts, is what prevents individuals "from exploring paths that lead to self-fulfilment." As a means to be 'released' from the addiction to control and "to rise above the addictive demands of the Lower Self" Jeffers recommends that the reader "personalize the suggestions" she offers in one's search for the "truly powerful level of the Higher Self" (1996:24-5).

While one can even be "addicted to knowing it all" or a "workshop addict" (Jeffers 1996:64, 83), "workaholism" and

"perfectionism" are the two main "addictions" Jeffers discusses.³⁷ She claims that "[s]ince addictions of any kind are the product of the Lower Self, they create struggle" and "take away" personal peace. According to Jeffers' version, addictions are 'escapes' which allow individuals

to turn the other way so that we don't have to come face to face with our inner pain, or our intense sense of emptiness, or our lack of self-worth, or our need for an identity, or our drivenness for more-better-best, or our inability to have meaningful relationships, or our fear of not having enough or being enough (Jeffers 1996:47; emphasis in original).

Jeffers' prescribed 'cure' for any addiction is "to pull ourselves out of the quagmire of the Lower Self and find the peace within our Higher Self." She also claims that "an effective way of dealing with a multitude of addictions is to attend one of the twelve step programs, all of which are based on Spiritual principles" (Jeffers 1996:47).

Bradshaw's (1988) definition of addiction rests upon whether or not particular behaviours are "strategies of defense against...[the emotional] pain of toxic³⁸ shame." For

³⁷. See pages 44-54 in particular.

³⁸. Bradshaw's usage of the term "toxic" to describe dysfunctional parenting and self-deprecation appears to be derived from an earlier self-help text, *Be the Person You Were Meant to Be* (1973) by Jerry Greenwald. For example, Greenwald describes "the natural self" as instinctively moving toward growth, health and self-fulfilment and that "toxic" behaviours obstructs tapping into one's "resources and potentials" (1973:12).

example, if certain behaviours are such strategies

they are mood-altering and become addictive. These behaviours include perfectionism, striving for power and control, rage, arrogance, criticism and blame, judgementalness and moralizing, contempt, patronization, caretaking and helping, envy, people-pleasing and being nice (1988:88).

In Schaeff's opinion:

An addiction to food or chemicals is often called an ingestive addiction. A process addiction is an addiction (by individuals, groups, even societies) to a way (or the process) of acquiring the addictive substance. The function of an addiction is to keep us out of touch with ourselves (our feelings, morality, awareness - our living process). An addiction, in short, is anything we feel we have to lie about (Schaeff 1986:24).

If addiction is grounded in dishonesty, then addiction is pervasive, at least as Schaeff defines dishonesty:

To be out of touch with your feelings and unable to articulate what you feel and think is dishonest. To distrust your perceptions and therefore be unwilling to communicate them is dishonest. Impression management is dishonest (1986:59).

The above kinds of assertions and claims to truth have prompted social critics such as Peele (1989) and Kaminer (1992) to critically declare that we have become a society "addicted to addiction."

Structural Dysfunctionalism: The Family

The family, in self-help literature, is typically viewed as the cause and origin of the dysfunctional or maladjusted adult. Relying heavily on family systems theory, some self-help authors claim that the primary reason for dysfunctional living is the individual's development in relation or reaction to his/her family of origin (Kaminer 1992:12-4). Character, personality and identity are formed by family relationships. Bad parenting, it is assumed, is the source of individual troubles and unhappiness. In *I'm OK - You're OK*, for example, there is no uncertainty that the Parent (a unisex ego state) is seen as the major cause of our psychic troubles. The Child is described as vulnerable, innocent, good and happy.

Bradshaw claims that shame is at the heart of "our wounds," a kind of "living-death", a type of "self-murder" that destroys self-esteem (1996:2). The shame-based inner core of subjects is believed to be the result of dysfunctional family rules and patterns which are transmitted inter-generationally. Toxic shame, according to Bradshaw

fuels a compulsive/addictive lifestyle...and compulsivity is the black plague of our time. We want more money, more sex, more food, more booze, more drugs, more adrenaline rush, more entertainment, more possessions, more ecstasy (1996:5).

It is these 'compulsivities' that "cover up a lost city - a place deep inside of us where a child hides in the ruins"

(Bradshaw 1996:5).

Bradshaw argues that the parenting rules in our society translate into "psychological abandonment" of children resulting in the family failing to deliver virtuous people (1996:xvi). Abandonment, in this sense, creates a "shame-based inner core" and as a result "the experiencing of the self is painful. To compensate, one develops a *false self* in order to survive" (1996:48). Mellody et al announce in capital letters that "WE CODEPENDENTS ARE SET UP TO ABUSE OUR CHILDREN AGAINST OUR WILL" (1989:105). Utilizing a morally loaded word such as 'abuse,' we would assume that a parent would be held culpable for victimizing a child. But the literature is adamant that this is not the case: the 'abusive' parent is not a 'perpetrator,' but is rather a fellow 'victim.'

Codependency theorists draw heavily on family systems theory to explain where and how an individual's unhappiness and dysfunctional behaviour originates (Kaminer 1992:12-14). Consider the following passages offered by Mellody, Miller and Miller. All "dysfunctional...family systems create children who become codependent adults" (1989:4), and those adults cannot help but become the parents of codependents.

As an adult the person continues to feel too vulnerable and also operates with nonexistent or damaged boundaries. This adult cannot properly protect himself or herself in relationships, nor prevent himself or herself from being offensive to others (1989:81-2).

And, of course, the solution to this problem is for the parent to 'recover':

...it is clear that we [codependents] are almost guaranteed to be unable to parent our own children in a functional and supportive manner *until we face our own codependence* and move into recovery from it (1989:106; emphasis in original).

There are two main perspectives that family systems approaches provide with opposite ontological assumptions. The first view focuses upon the damage done to the family by the sick, abnormal, dysfunctional or addicted member. The alternative perspective emphasizes the damage done by the family and other social institutions to the individual. Thus, whereas in the first perspective of family systems theory, the sick individual throws the system out of balance, in the second version, the system makes the individual sick and/or dysfunctional.

The second approach of family systems theory shares and contributes to codependency's critical stance on traditional institutions. This view resonates greatly with the liberationist approach of humanistic psychology, a discourse most associated with Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow. Liberationist psychology assumes that culture is inordinately repressive and that human nature is innately positive, giving, kind, gentle and loving. Rogers claims that "the basic nature of the human being, when functioning freely, is constructive and trustworthy" (1961:194). The principal source of human

suffering, for Rogers, is the social and cultural order that requires and creates the 'defensively-organized' person. Denouncing this cultural imposition, Rogers complains that

the Protestant Christian tradition...has permeated our culture with a concept that man is basically sinful, and only by something approaching a miracle can this sinful nature be negated (1961:91).

Also disturbing for Rogers is the collusion of competing psychologies in this negative conceptualization of human nature. For example,

Freud and his followers have presented convincing arguments that...man's basic and unconscious nature...is primarily made up of instincts which would, if permitted expression, result in incest, murder, and other crimes (1961:91).

Opposing this understanding of human nature and culture, Rogers views life as a 'process' in which the individual is free and encouraged to express and explore all emotions: "I like to think of [this process] as a 'pure culture'" in which "the individual...is coming to be what he is" (1961:111-113; emphasis in original). Key to psychological health, then, for Rogers, is individual liberation from repressive cultural effects.

The main objective of liberationist psychology is to strive for personal growth as the means to locate and discover one's essential 'core' self.

One of the most revolutionary concepts to grow...is the growing recognition that the innermost core of man's [sic] nature, the deepest layers of his personality, the base of his 'animal nature,' is positive in nature - is basically socialized, forward moving, rational and realistic (Rogers 1961:91).

Self-help theorists uniformly espouse liberation psychology's version of human nature. According to Bradshaw "...all of us are born with a deep and profound sense of worth. We are precious, rare, unique and innocent" (Bradshaw 1996:49).

Psycho-Spiritualism and Healing the Soul

Some self-help books are more religious, while others tend to be more secular in content. A good example of the psycho-religious strand of self-help texts are those written by Scott Peck (1978; 1983). His visions of the healthy self are inextricably bound up with Christian ideals and psycho-spiritual issues of selfhood.³⁹

Authors writing in the 'psycho-spiritualist' vein situate human potential and well-being within a religious or spiritual framework, promising to help readers achieve a healthy sense of self with the assistance of a 'divine' or 'higher' power. As New Age Spiritual philosophies have become more popular in recent years, neo-religious ideas have increasingly appeared

³⁹. In *People of the Lie* (1983), Peck devotes his entire discussion to the subject and problem of "human evil."

and been woven into self-help messages (e.g. Beattie 1987, 1989, 1990; Bradshaw 1996; Dyer 1995; Jeffers 1996; Peck 1978; Moore 1992; Zonnya 1995). Hence, one self-help author concludes that "psychology is incomplete if it doesn't include spirituality and art in a fully integrative way" (Moore 1992:xix). However, according to Moore, the psycho-spiritual approach to self-reconstruction is "not tied to any particular religious tradition" (Moore 1992:xv). He claims that his book contains both psychological and spiritual guidance. "A spiritual life of some kind is absolutely necessary for psychological 'health'" (1992:xii).⁴⁰ And again he states: "Psychology and spirituality need to be seen as one" (Moore 1992:xv).

The rise of a modern social gospel was based on a shift from the Protestant ethos of salvation to a therapeutic ethos stressing self-realization (Lears 1983). The success and expansion of consumer culture required more than a national apparatus of mass marketing and production; it also needed a favourable moral climate (Lears 1983:4). By the late nineteenth-century, this modern historical development was no longer rooted in communal or religious frameworks. The modern quest for health increasingly became a secularized self-referential project rooted in peculiarly modern emotional

⁴⁰. Professing to be following in the footsteps of Carl Jung, "one of our most recent doctors of the soul," Moore accepts the claim that "every psychological problem is ultimately a matter of religion" (1992:xii).

needs in search of a renewed sense of selfhood (Lears 1983:4).

Prior to the mid-1800's, both the state of and knowledge about the soul remained the exclusive domain of theologians and philosophers. By mid-century, scientific models, which were initially applied to understanding physical nature, soon began to be applied to human nature marking a significant strategy in moral reform movements of the self. Indeed, psychology became 'the science of the soul.' Even at this beginning point, the foundations for a moral psychology manifested itself. Thus, the genesis of the moral regulation of subjects in mental health discourses involved the "professionalization and growing authority of medicine and science linking medical and moral standards" (Lears 1983).

Discussions on the soul, however, still occupy a fundamental role in the regulation of human beings as seen in several self-help texts. Rather than a wholesale promotion of scientific psychology, some texts on the self draw on the mystical notion of the soul as the essence and blue print of the self. "The idea of the soul persists because it maintains public order...When life seems parlous and a Western society is about to fall apart, there is great talk of reviving the soul in its various manifestations, and if not the soul, then the values of family" (Hacking 1995:216). Moore's popular *Care of the Soul* subscribes to the notion that the core of human being is the soul and that the soul holds the answers to all questions of the power of the self.

The power of the soul...is...like a great reservoir, or, in traditional imagery, like the force of water in a fast-rushing river⁴¹. It is natural, not manipulated, and stems from an unknown source. Our role with this kind of power is to be an attentive observer noticing how the soul wants to thrust itself into life (Moore 1992:119).

"No Spiritual Pain, No Moral Gain"

Moore's (1992) "care of the soul" self-help approach offers a fundamentally different way of regarding daily life and the quest for happiness in so far as his emphasis is not mechanistically, or solution-oriented at all. Similar to Peck's vision of the healthy self as necessarily embracing the painful and difficult life events as prime opportunities for personal and spiritual growth, Moore claims that the care of the soul is not so much concerned with 'fixing' a central flaw as with attending to the small details of everyday life rather than problem-solving methods. "Its goal is not to make life problem-free, but to give ordinary life the depth and value that come with soulfulness...In the care of the soul, we ourselves have both the task and the pleasure of organizing and shaping our lives for the good of the soul" (1992:4). To restore the soul, one must "make spirituality a more serious

⁴¹. Water represents both the symbolic and physical acts of purifying, cleansing and truth (Valverde 1991b). For example those bent on stamping out alcohol consumption in nineteenth century social purity movements also advocated the consumption of "pure" milk and "clear" country water. Moore uses a similar metaphorical approach in his discussions of the individual soul. "[I]ndividuality rises out of the soul as water rises out of the depths of the earth" (Moore 1992:121).

part of everyday life" (Moore 1992:xv).

"It isn't about curing, fixing, changing, adjusting, or making healthy, and it isn't about some idea of perfection or even improvement. It doesn't look to the future for an ideal, trouble-free existence" (Moore 1992:xv). Moore, keeping in line with the Neo-Judaeo-Christian tradition of embracing rather than avoiding pain and suffering as the necessary means of producing virtuous and healthy selves, claims that the answers lie not in 'the salvational wish' but in examining and deeply respecting what is actually there rather than what one wishes is there. "By trying to avoid human mistakes and failures, we move beyond the reach of the soul" (Moore 1992:9).

For Moore, "a major difference between care and cure is that cure implies the end of trouble" (1992:18). To abdicate the "illusion of a problem-free life" and "appreciate the mystery of human suffering" also means renouncing the "shallow therapeutic manipulations aimed at restoring normality" (Moore 1992:19-20). Moore pronounces that "we cannot solve our 'emotional' problems until we grasp this mystery that honouring the divine...is part of the basic care that as human beings we have to bring to life" (1992:xvii).⁴²

Care of the soul begins with *observance* of how the

⁴². According to one spiritually oriented self-help expert, even pets are capable of spiritual growth (Peck 1978:5).

soul manifests itself and how it operates. We can't care for the soul unless we are familiar with its ways (Moore 1992:5; emphasis added).⁴³

By observing the ways in which the soul manifests itself, Moore claims that individuals become "enriched rather than impoverished...When you regard the soul with an open mind, you begin to find the messages that lie within the illness, the corrections that can be found in remorse and other uncomfortable feelings, and the necessary changes requested by depression and anxiety" (Moore 1992:6). "Honouring symptoms as a voice of the soul" entails observing first of all, "listening and looking closely at what is being revealed in the suffering" (1992:10). Thus, in Moore's conception of the care of the soul, there is an implicit trust that nature heals and that much can be accomplished by 'not-doing' because the basic intention to heal can get in the way of seeing (1992:10, 12). Zonnya informs the reader that "[y]ou must be willing to take risks, look inside yourself, succeed and fail, and most of all, to grow regardless of the pain! You must fully understand and accept that with 'gain', there can be 'pain!'" (Zonnya 1995:xv).

Conflict is also viewed as a creative source that perhaps should not ever be healed because pain can be redeemable and

⁴³. "Observance" is a term derived from religion which refers not only to "watch out for" but also to keep and honour, as in the observance of a holiday (Holy-day) or a religious law. Moore states, in "[o]bserving the soul, we keep an eye on its sheep, on whatever is wandering and grazing - the latest addiction, a striking dream, or a troubling mood" (1992:5).

become the source of much 'wisdom' and transformation (Moore 1992:15, 27). Thus, there appears to be a divide between those texts that advocate a 'cure model' and those which advance a 'pro-internal conflict model.' The tendency to favour internal struggle over remedial cures signifies the belief that internal disorders can provide a path to much wisdom and self-understanding, thus they must necessarily be embraced by the sufferer. Therefore, in these cases, self-help texts provide the reader with a form of comfort through inspirational messages that claim emotional pain can be a meaningful and instructive spiritual teacher. Jeffers offers this type of conviction: "Using our worst times for Spiritual expansion takes us out of the realm of victim (a horribly powerless place to be!) and puts us in the realm of creator of our own experience of life. How powerful!" (Jeffers 1996:42).⁴⁴

The formula followed is an old one: add soul, spirit, a Higher Power and God to misery and suffering and individuals have the means to turn themselves into soulful, spiritual and

⁴⁴. Ascribing victim status to one's self is fervently cautioned against (Beattie 1987, 1989, 1990 Jeffers 1996). Taking responsibility for one's self means we should "quit blaming ourselves and being victimized" (Beattie 1987:124). "A victim is someone who suffers - voluntarily or not - pain or harm inflicted by self or others. This is what we used to believe we were [those in recovery]. This is what we're not" (Beattie 1990:228). Similarly, in referring to the benefits of joining one of the many self-help groups available, Jeffers also warns the reader that "if the group fosters a victim mentality, run the other way! You want a group that fosters a loving and powerful approach to living" (Jeffers 1996:60). Some self-help experts (Herman 1992; Schaefer 1986) repeatedly refer to their readers as victims, however, the large majority of them do not.

virtuous individuals. The relief from suffering is supposedly gained by relocating the misery of daily life from the material toward the spiritual. Rosen (1975) describes the recent modern popular psychology phenomenon as 'psychobabble' claiming that a unilateral focus on 'the individual' results in an egocentric worldview. This results, he argues, in a faulty assumption and erroneous reassurance that people can control every aspect of their lives and destinies.

Conclusion

Meaning and seriousness, in the self-help literature, can not only be thought of as a transcendental realm of universality but also, as the radically immanent truth within the realm of one's self. Acquiring mastery is strongly encouraged and is claimed to be found in the practices of the self. Human lives are to be viewed as a quest for meaning and an 'inner journey' whose purpose and design are to discover 'who we really are', and therefore become wiser, and thus by implication, better individuals. By following a 'therapeutically' or 'spiritually' guided quest the individual can come to learn right from wrong on the basis of her/his 'inner feelings' and 'personal power.' Morally regulating the self becomes a matter of governing those feelings skilfully enough so that the goal of achieving the good self and the good life becomes a matter of technical expertise, with less

concern of universal codes of morality.

If the key web of interlocution is to be understood as the subject's 'inner/real/true self'⁴⁵, then it is clear that technologies of self-help can induce an inner dialogue prompting the subject to pursue a better, more fulfilling and rewarding life. The subject is edified and instructed to engage him or herself in a variety of exercises or techniques in order to 'know' and 'care' for oneself. In these processes, the reader is encouraged to eschew all possible relations, beliefs, practices, etc., that might force itself into the indignities of codependency, the clutches of the Lower Self, and neglecting the true self or the child within. Readers are advised not to set aside one's pursuit of 'feeling good about itself' or 'being what it is' in favour of some conditions or frameworks imposed from outside its own personal narrative.

The emergence of codependency demonstrates a strikingly similar relationship between the repressive and productive aspects of power/knowledge. Relying upon ACoA's portrait of the alcoholic family, the codependency theorists have provided a radical critique of the monolithic model of the nuclear family. The critique portrays the traditional family (and other traditional institutions, i.e. religious and legal systems) as practioners of violence, abuse and repression in

⁴⁵. Sociologists themselves have fallen prey to this modernist tendency. For example, Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical model of front stage/back stage behaviour assumes that a "true" self can be located and positioned against the performance of social roles.

the service of a particular social order. These discourses have served as a springboard into alternative forms of 'better and healthier' identity constructions of the self. Self-help, then is in one sense a proponent of productive power. The codependency literature offers a new and better life story, one in which codependents can seek out 'their true selves' rather than deny the 'very ones that they are' in the service of repressive cultural norms.

The moral lesson in self-help texts is quite clear: psychical and/or spiritual poverty results from a lack of self-governance and moral and ethical relaxation. Operating on a terrain which claims that a deeper commitment to personal and private needs will provide the path to liberation and self-realization, self-help literature at the same time announces the rewards of self-regulation, and exhorts subjects to sculpt a meaningful life without questioning the horizon of socially produced conditions of existence through inner-directed rules of self-conduct.

Chapter Four:

Self-Help Literature as a Contemporary Moral Discourse

...how greatly the character may be strengthened and supported by the cultivation of good habits (Smiles 1859:365).

The moral is...that ethics in actions are everything to being a human being, a good human being (Schlessinger 1997:55).

In a society with so many inducements to self-interest, self-realization seems a notable and worthy end. The least valuable competitive position is to be self-defeating. The therapeutic cannot conceive of an action that is not self-serving, however it may be disguised or transformed...*The self, improved, is the ultimate concern of moral culture* (Rieff 1966:61-2; my emphasis).

...and the truth will make you free (John 8:32 RSV cited in Beattie 1990:85).

Introduction

What is under discussion, in many contemporary self-help texts, is not simply the means of achieving 'mental or emotional health' but also the best ways to live. In spite of the overwhelming emphasis on 'health' and 'illness', I argue that self-help dicta and tenets also need to be understood as discourses that utilize and privilege particular understandings of 'the good,' 'the right,' and 'the proper' when it comes to representations of the self. While much of the literature contains 'scientific' and 'medical' claims,

which can be understood as 'bolstering' self-help advice, I argue that these expert statements also serve as (however inadvertent) veneers which obscure the moral claims that comprise the 'messages' offered in these particular texts.

The objective of this chapter is to produce a critical reading and interpretation of self-help texts as being best understood as constituting a 'moral narrative space' in which the reader is guided toward, directed at, suggested to and oriented by the presentation of the good self – the type of person one should aspire to be.

Inscribing New Moralities

On one level, much of the self-help literature doesn't appear to be a morally regulating discourse in the sense that they incite the reader to focus on 'what is best for itself.' Indeed, there are numerous examples of an 'anti-institutional morality' in many of the texts I have examined. For instance, Beattie (1987) and Jeffers (1996) both advise the reader to omit "shoulds" and "should nots" from one's vocabulary. Paradoxically, however, the exhortation to omit, can also be interpreted as a "should."

Jeffers recommends that the reader relinquish the language of "shoulds" and "shouldn'ts" from his or her operative vocabulary. She argues that these terms are indicative of needing to conform rather than following one's

heart and instincts about "the way life is best lived for who we are as human beings" (1996:62). The reader is prompted to engage in an exercise of writing "down as many shoulds and shouldn'ts you can think of that have become a chore instead of a joy. Now cross them off your list one at a time. For example, you don't have to make your bed every day...unless you *want* to. You don't have to have a clean car...unless you *want* to" (1996:62-3). Jeffers' conviction is that

Shoulds that come from the Lower Self fragment our lives. They make us worry. They make us do too much, think too much, plan too much. These shoulds pull us apart and make us lose our centre. Remember from a Higher Self perspective, our enjoyment and contribution to life come from following our own heart, and everyone's heart is different. Simply ask your Higher Self what is right for you to do relative to your particular purpose here on earth and listen for the response. This is being your own person. This is being the best you can be (Jeffers 1996:63).

In this case, the author is at pains to emphasize that the goal of self-reformation is to become an autonomous, independent, freely choosing person that needs to recognize the repressive and authoritarian structures in social and cultural institutions that have deformed one's 'real/true self.' While this anti-institutional morality should not be seen to imply that there are no rules for self-reconstruction present in self-help texts, it does suggest that these rules are increasingly found in the *rapport a soi*, that is, in the

relation of the self to the self⁴⁶. That is, self-knowledge, self-understanding and self-confidence can be gained from 'listening' to one's inner self, which becomes the primary catalyst and basis for engaging in strategies of self-change or ethical self-reformation. This fundamental tenet, however, should not be understood as an absence of moral codes *tout court* but rather as an alternative set of codes, a 'new morality', so to speak, that attempts to nullify authoritarian formulas rooted in traditional approaches to cultural practices of the self. In fact, as alluded to earlier there is no shortage of moral commandments in the self-help literature. For example, Beattie states, "it's okay to change the rules" and that "if we're working at recovery, we have an internal moral code that will send us signals when its violated" (1989:107).

On the other hand, some authors are more explicit in their usage of moral discourse as both the *reason to change* oneself (as a moral and ethical being) and the *means to change* oneself *for the better* (as a moral guide and/or template). To elucidate the analysis in this case, it is helpful to consider the following passages.

Without morality, we are no more than termites seeking survival and gratification at every moment and at all costs. With morality we transcend instinct and simple equations of learned response

⁴⁶. This key understanding, derived from Foucault's discussion on ethics, is more fully elaborated and examined in Chapter 6.

(Schlessinger 1997:4).

Pride, dignity, emotional health, maturity and accomplishments are results of your courageous journey. Morals and values remind you about useless and dangerous detours that threaten your journey. Heed them (Schlessinger 1997:37).

As will be shown subsequently, these statements make implicit and explicit declarations about the kind of person one 'should' be, or, perhaps more accurately, the type of person one should *aspire* to be or is incited to be. These moral and ethical codes of conduct and being legitimize, normalize and romanticize certain ways of being while marginalizing and pathologizing all others.

While some self-help texts contain anti-institutional arguments, others rely heavily on traditional conceptions of morality, society, social relations, and the like. Popular tropes like 'getting back to the basics' and 'traditional values' are mobilized by several authors in their pronouncements of what constitutes morality, society and the self.

Traditional values imply the following: there are going to be exciting temptations toward which we feel drawn; we then use time-honoured rules of conduct, including everything from etiquette to morality, to get us through the moment without acquiescing to it, because we know that ultimately it is likely not in our best interest to succumb (Schlessinger 1997:19).

When the moral climate becomes overwhelmingly selective, permissive, and relativistic, moral

habits fall by the wayside. The social aspects of human interactions suffer (drugs, violence, teen sex, non- and extramarital babies, etc.) and personal satisfaction declines (innumerable therapies for unhappiness, substance abuse, you name it) (Schlessinger 1997:27-8).

There is a dire lack of true virtue and morality. Traditional values like strong families, intimate and committed marriages, responsible parenting, discipline, honesty, moral virtue and character, commitment, perseverance, hard work, love of God and country, true friendships, and respect of the elderly seem to be slipping away from modern life (Bradshaw 1996:267).

Yet at other moments, some authors imply that 'being good' is a matter of choice, a personal preference of sorts. For instance consider the following statements. "[G]oodness is dependent on appetite,...a truly moral person *wants* to be good. Virtuous people seek goodness for its own sake" (Bradshaw 1996:268; emphasis added). Similarly, "people in our moral universe are good because they want to be good" (Hamstra 1996:24). The 'personal-growth' tradition and the ideas that one creates only one's circumstances and that responsibility to others and the self can only grow out of self-love implicitly and explicitly insinuates how good selves should live.

Representations of the self in this literature describe an entity conceived and acted upon as a united centre of certain personal powers: one who is knowledgeable, who feels, who thinks, who remembers, judges and acts. This concept of the individual is presented as the primary reality and

ontological base and centre of interpretation. The self, which is conceived of as possessing an inner reservoir of power that can be tapped into, carries an intense accountability, responsibility, and obligation which are translated into reactions, choice, and decisions engaged in and demonstrated by the self.

Another manner in which self-help discourses can be understood as morally regulating ethical reformation is through the injunctions of ethical self-formation: the means by which individuals are instructed, guided, advised and recommended to understand and improve their relation to their selves rather than external factors. "Your inner peace has nothing to do with the dramas of your life" (Jeffers 1996:25). This mode of moral regulation seeks to govern subjects in terms of their 'personal' truths, universal truths, the laws of human nature and notions of "inner strength, inner power, inner love" (Jeffers 1996:48). In fact, one author asserts that self-help becomes an obligation to one's self: "to love yourself, to be true to yourself, to recognize your own worth and goodness" (McMahon 1992:xiv). According to Schlessinger, the "reward for doing right is mostly an internal phenomenon: self-respect, dignity, integrity, and self-esteem" (1997:97).

"Have A Love Affair With Yourself"

The notion of self-love stands out as a dominant theme in

contemporary self-help literature which neatly captures the prescribed ethic of the *rapport a soi*. Consider the following passages, which emphasize the importance of the relation of self to self:

Taking an interest in the soul is a way of loving it. The ultimate cure, as many ancient and modern psychologies of depth have asserted, comes from love and not from logic. [Understanding isn't enough and] doesn't take us very far in this work, but love, expressed in patient and careful attention, draws the soul in from its dispersions and fascinations...cure is also love (Moore 1992:14).

Feelings of accomplishment and satisfaction do not come from striving to be perfect. They do come from the process of using our inner power, beauty, and love in a creative, expansive, positive and loving way (Jeffers 1996:54; emphasis in original).

We can cherish ourselves and our lives. We can nurture ourselves and love ourselves. We can accept our wonderful selves, with all our faults, foibles, strong points, weak points, feelings, thoughts, and everything else. It's the best thing we've got going for us. It's who we are, and who we were meant to be. And it's not a mistake. We are the greatest thing that will ever happen to us. Believe it. It makes life much easier (Beattie 1987:123).

Melodie Beattie, devotes an entire chapter in *Codependent No More* (1987:119-127) to the necessity for those with 'low self-esteem' to 'have a love affair' with themselves advising the readers to learn 'the art of loving oneself.' For example:

To honour the self is to be in love with our own life, in love with our possibilities of growth and

experiencing joy, in love with the process of discovery and exploring our distinctively human potentialities...Thus we can begin to see that to honour the self is to practice *selfishness* in the highest, noblest, and least understood sense of that word. And this I shall argue, requires enormous independence, courage and integrity (Branden quoted in Beattie 1987:126; emphasis in original).

The love of self which was once viewed as a pathological egoism or narcissism is no longer discouraged by experts on the self but rather actively promoted and deemed necessary for a healthy self to emerge and prosper. Self-love is distinguished from self-absorption and becomes an absolute prerequisite for healthy and normal relations to the self and others. It is in this sense that ethical self-formation is morally regulated by self-help discourses. Indeed, Foucault views the importance of morality as primary in ethical self-constitution and frames the issue of self-constitution in the context of morality. He identifies three types of moral "self-activity": codes of behaviour, forms of subjectivization or "the forming of oneself as an ethical subject", and last, the heart of the issue, self-constitution (Poster 1993:77). Foucault's discussion emphasizes the link between various techniques and practices of ethical formation as intimately bound up with moral prescriptions, rules and codes:

the way in which individuals are urged to constitute themselves as subjects of moral conduct would be concerned with the models proposed for

setting up and developing relations with the self, for self-reflection, self-knowledge, self-examination, for the decipherment of the self by oneself, for the transformations that one seeks to accomplish with oneself as object (Foucault 1986a:31).

One of the primary problematics of the self that needs to be addressed and reformed, according to the experts, is our relationship to our self. This is particularly so for those suffering from 'codependency', according to some self-help experts. "We don't merely dislike ourselves, we hate ourselves" or so we are told (Beattie 1987:119; Rubin and Rubin 1975; Branden 1983). So, while we

may boast of our accomplishments...underneath the trappings lies a dungeon where we secretly and incessantly punish and torture ourselves...our worst beatings go on privately, inside our minds (Beattie 1987:120).

We are told that codependents enter into antagonistic relationships with themselves (Beattie 1987; Rubin and Rubin 1975). The paramount responsibility of the individual seeking self-improvement is the lesson that in order to be 'healthy' one needs to stop abusing the self and to learn how to love one's self. Self-love has also been referred to as self-respect and self-esteem by popular self-help authors.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Ward (1996) provides an interesting account on how the concept of self-esteem slowly came to dominate discussions on the self in the twentieth century. He argues that this process of

Thus, the path to health, happiness, and wisdom can only be achieved through an ethical self-transformation. The *rappport a soi* needs to be loving, trusting, compassionate and committed. For example, in order to establish a strong and healthy relationship with one's Highest Self, the reader is told that every morning when contemplating the rest of the day, ask the Higher Self three questions: "Where would you have me go? What would you have me do? What would you have me say, and to whom?" (Jeffers 1996:82).

The basis of these questions, according to Jeffers is to develop "a sense of trust that your inner wisdom and power will come forth" ...and "[a]s the day progresses, listen to any inner messages that you were given" from "your intuitive mind" (1996:82). "Remember that our minds, when governed by the Lower Self, aren't capable of imagining the grand possibilities that there are for us. Therefore, it is important that we learn to tune in to a part of us that has much greater vision, the Higher Self" (Jeffers 1996:84).

"truth-making" or "objectification" can be seen as an on-going process involving the mobilization of human and non-human actants and the construction of an encompassing network of truth. Examining a variety of advocates who claim the necessity for individuals to possess high self-esteem, Ward discusses how this notion became retranslated and attached to self-help manuals and how this linkage allowed the concept to become a "matter of fact" known to all.

Inner Strength and Personal Power

Another significant feature of this approach to the self is that it squarely situates the self as the sole master and centre of one's life experience. External forces are perceived to be secondary to the self. For example, one's "inability to let go and enjoy life has nothing to do with *out there*. It has to do with what is going on *inside*. We are awakening to the fact that when things are not all right in our external world, something is not all right with our being" (Jeffers 1996:21; emphasis in original).⁴⁸

Personal power is generally viewed as an inherent property of being and site of all self-control and movement (Covey 1987; Peck 1978; Jeffers 1996; Beattie 1989). What sociologists have referred to as 'agency,' the self-help advocates term 'personal power'; the ability to act, will oneself and produce change of all sorts. Beattie informs us that in "recovery...we find our personal power. We come to do the possible - live our lives" (1989:28). This discussion assumes that 'power' is a thing located in one's self and capable of being possessed by individuals. This zero-sum conceptualization of power means, for the experts, that the more power we 'have,' the stronger we are. Conversely, to give up too much power is to lose one's force, to become weak, resulting in others having too much power 'over' oneself.

⁴⁸. This "inability to let go" is also classified as an "addiction" to control (Jeffers 1996:21).

Healthy selves, according to self-help authors, are thus aware that power resides within the self, and can be harnessed and exercised only to the extent that the individual acknowledges its presence.

For Peck, discussing the oppressive forces in society, such as "racism, sexism, [and] the military-industrial complex", is childish because these "types" of reflections avert the 'true' source of humanity's problems, which, according to his formulations, are rooted in the psyche of individual selves. While he does concede that "there are indeed oppressive forces at work within the world" he claims that we have "the freedom to choose every step of the way the manner in which we are going to respond to and deal with these forces." Rather than lament our lack of political and social power, we are told to recognize, accept and exult in our "immense personal power" (1978:43). This means, in self-help rhetoric, that all mastery is contained within the individual and that we have the power to control our actions, reactions and experience in the world. Quoting Eleanor Roosevelt, Covey states: "No one can hurt you without your consent" (1989:72).

Jeffers similarly claims that the true joy in life comes from "*something wondrous within*" one's being (1996:8; emphasis in original). Accordingly, there is a place "within each and everyone of us that is the source of the Divine qualities such as love, caring, intuition, strength, appreciation, joy, bliss, and gratitude" which she designates as the "HIGHER

SELF" (1996:9; emphasis in original). The HIGHER SELF is the Spiritual part of who we are and "holds wisdom beyond our wildest dreams that can lead to exactly where we need to go for our highest good - if we listen" (Jeffers 1996:41).

The power of the soul, which is referred to as 'personal power' by other self-experts, begins with knowing one's special, unique and essential self. However, "the general rule is that soul appears in the gaps and holes of experience...[and] has no room in which to present itself if we continually fill all gaps with bogus activities" (Moore 1992:120-2). Thus, by purifying one's behaviour, as Dyer (1995) recommends, one can realize that the self is a miraculous entity filled with divine and sacred powers.

"In spite of its archetypal, universal contents, for each individual, the soul is highly idiosyncratic" (Moore 1992:121). The key to understanding the 'special mix' that makes up the soul is getting to know one's essential inner self.

There is nothing neutral about the soul. It is the seat and source of life. Either we respond to what the soul presents in its fantasies and desires, or we suffer from this neglect of ourselves. The power of the soul can hurl a person into ecstasy or into depression. It can be creative or destructive, gentle or aggressive. Power incubates within the soul and then makes its influential move into life as the expression of soul. *If there is no soulfulness, then there is no true power, and if there is no power, then there can be no true soulfulness.* (Moore 1992:129; emphasis added).

Desperately Seeking the Real Me: The Child Within

The 'inner child' or 'the child within' has become a popular concept deployed by the recovery movement advocates, psycho-spiritualists and generic self-help authors alike.⁴⁹ This term "refers to the fact that regardless of our age, we each have a young child within us with all the feelings, fears, complexities, simplicities, and needs we had when we were that age." The goal of the subject is to "learn how to recognize, listen to, and nurture" that part of the self (Beattie 1990:222; emphasis added).

This intrapsychical individual is conceived of as injured and damaged by childhood events resulting in the malfunctioning unconsciousness or psyche of the adult self. In part, the 'child within' is a Jungian conceptualization of the soul or the psyche as both the temporal and spatial location of the inner child. This is demonstrated by the following statements made by various self-help authors: "We all carry within us an eternal child" (Abrahms 1990:1). "A mature person updates the magical child within himself [sic]" (Bradshaw 1996:48); and the aim of healthy living is "to value the

⁴⁹. The principles and basis for self-help proponents' mobilization of the inner child theory was likely obtained from an earlier self-help book called *I'm OK - You're OK* (1973) by Thomas A. Harris which was an offshoot from Berne's (1964) *Games People Play*.

adventurous child in every one of us" (Bentley 1988:202).⁵⁰

The leitmotif of the divine child is common to many religions. For example, Christmas is a celebration of the Jesus Child as an infant and divinity permeating the human realm, suggesting not only the childhood of God but also the divinity of childhood more generally. Moore (1992:49) cites Jung as being inspired by mythological stories of heroes' childhoods in which he came to describe the child of the soul, the archetypal child, as everything that is abandoned, exposed, vulnerable, and yet divinely powerful. Some self-help texts present the 'inner child' or 'the child within' as a figure of spontaneity and creativity.

The rejection of this intrapsychical child, it is maintained, is another way of rejecting the self "and certainly not to care for the soul" (Moore 1992:51). Conceptualizing adult problems as rooted in childhood is important in soul-work Moore argues because "going back to childhood keeps us in touch with that divinely powerful child and its fertile inferiority. Remember, soul appears most

⁵⁰. In an essay written on the current prevalence of the codependency theme in self-help literature, Rieff conceives a connection between the atomistic thinking of "inner child seekers" and the "militant" radical academics "whose facetious cant of deconstructionism and Third World apologetics" is based on "the politics of victimhood." Although he fails to provide an explanation for linking certain academics with the advocates of recovery and self-help, he does criticize self-help books for their inability to describe realistic social problems. According to Rieff, selfhood as a social problem is completely self-indulgent (1991:50, 51).

easily in those places where we feel most inferior" (1992:51).

The transcendent function of the archetypal child is a move towards the soul "because the child is the face of the soul, and whatever aspect of the soul we neglect, becomes a source of suffering...If we were really to care for that child, we would have to face our own lower natures - our indomitable emotions, our insane desires, and the vast range of our incapacity" (Moore 1992:53). Childhood "sketches a more complete picture of the self, of the whole man [sic] in his pure individuality, than adulthood" (Jung quoted in Moore 1992:53). Indeed, it is assumed that "We care for the soul by acknowledging the place of eternal childhood, seeing its advantages to be virtuous and its inadequacies to be the conduits of soulful sensitivity" (Moore 1992:54).

In the literature, "the child" (also referred to as the inner self, the divine child, the true self, the Higher Self, Deepest Self, Inner Core, etc.) signifies the view of human nature as innately benevolent. Whichever term is deployed by the authors, the meaning is fixed: the child always refers to what Charles Whitfield, a major proponent of "inner child theory," describes as "the part of us that is ultimately alive, energetic, creative, fulfilled. This is our Real Self - who we really are" (1989:9). This hypothesis proposes the child as the paradigmatic self, and, in so doing, puts forth a depoliticized, asocial understanding of selfhood.

Zelizer (1985) convincingly documents the progressive

notion of childhood as innocent and authentic, demonstrating that as children's economic value has decreased over the last seventy-five years, their emotional value has increased enormously. The result has been a change in children's social and cultural status resulting in a 'sacrilization' of childhood experience and a proliferation of symbols reflecting that change in status.⁵¹

The metaphor of the child signifies, reflects and performs an anthropological operation by situating human experience within binary oppositions that serve to divide the social world through opposite connotations that impart their respective meanings. Within this framework of 'meaning,' boundaries are charted between normality and abnormality, the real self and the false self, the dysfunctional person and the recovering person, thus ultimately providing a template for social practices by creating, introducing and abetting the concretization of these truths. Just as other types of binary oppositions, such as the sacred and profane, and the pure and the polluted, are mutually constituting as an overarching schema, in self-help, beliefs and practices are either functional or dysfunctional, healthy or unhealthy, depending upon the treatment of and impact on 'the child within.' The

⁵¹. See also Aries (1962) for an examination of broad historical variations in the concept of the child. Another critical account of the purity of childhood, especially "the children's rights movement," is provided by Kitzinger (1990) who examines the proliferation of contemporary discourses that serve to "replace old myths with new facts" on notions of childhood innocence and vulnerability.

experts claim that mainstream culture, by way of socialization, manufactures and constructs false selves, codependents, Lower Selves, and people 'with behavioral problems.' Liberationist psychology, on the other hand, fosters individuation, self-enlightenment, and self-realization, all of which engender the true self, the self-actualized, ethical individual.

Generally, self-help projects entail both an effort to search for and revive the lost 'true' self. This is a remedy for what Bradshaw refers to as 'deselfment', wherein individuals, raised in dysfunctional families, develop 'a false self'. The delineation of temporal boundaries and shifts is significant within the subject's search for examining, deciphering and understanding the self. The past sets the course for the experience of present. One's sense of self is thus sculpted by powerful experiences in one's past. Only by acknowledging and working through these subterranean or forgotten memories can the self free itself from its inner pain and effectively deal with the problems of the present. One of the techniques of self-help, therefore, might be likened to an art of memory. A variety of methods for retrieving and healing inner wounds in past memories are encouraged and outlined, particularly with the inner child thesis. This displays a historical standpoint in which the development and understanding of the individual self is related through a confrontation with the past and the present.

"From our past and present experiences, we can choose to become self-motivated students dedicated to the study and discovery of our true individual selves" (Zonnya 1995:7).

The Necessity of "CHARACTER" and "CONSCIENCE"

Discussions on the necessity of 'character' and 'conscience' also occupy a fundamental axis of subjectification and normalization as a particularly obvious moral regulatory dimension of these texts. Schlessinger, radio talk-show therapist and author of *How Could You Do That*, is particularly concerned with the cultivation of character and conscience. Indeed, her declarative notion "to be fully human" and "to benefit maximally from the life experience, one must get back to the 3 C's: Character, Courage and Conscience" forms the basis of her moral pronouncements and preventative approach to difficulties with the self (1997:5). She claims that the problems people want to solve, resolve or avoid need to be approached along polarized lines of right and wrong and that the paramount aim of her book is to show the reader how adhering to the 3 C's can prevent personal and interpersonal problems and dilemmas (Schlessinger 1997:4-6).

The path to solid, supportive, healthy relationships, self-respect, and a quality of life starts with the usually painful decision to do the right thing. This is the book to get you on that path, and to keep you focused on those goals (Schlessinger 1997:2).

According to Schlessinger, conscience is the subject's capacity to judge her/himself in moral terms and conform to a set of standards and values that one has made a part of their inner being (Schlessinger 1997:15). Conscience, she declares, is

something we impose on ourselves in order to become complete human beings. There is seemingly no biological benefit to acting with conscience, if there were, only moral individuals would survive and procreate. Sadly, we know that's not true. The benefit of conscience is that you won't suffer guilt (private) or shame (public), and that by your own self-imposed definition, you are a moral human, a special kind of animal who takes unique pride in elevating him/herself above the termites (1997:17-18).

Thus, the reader is told: "You have conscience when you most often compel *yourself to do what is right for its own sake*" (Schlessinger 1997:6; emphasis added). Similarly, Bradshaw claims that "Humankind is constituted precisely as human by virtue of our ability to reason, exercise free will, develop moral conscience, be creative and live by rules of law" (1996:xii).

Contrary to the arguments offered by Rose (1995; 1996) and Valverde (1988; 1991b; 1993: 1996), character and ethics are not only characteristic of nineteenth century social reform movements; in fact, the Victorian notions of character and virtue very much forms and informs the contemporary conceptualizations of the self in popular self-help

discourses. This suggests that the study of 'character-formation' in contemporary moral regulatory discourses should not be confined only to questions concerning the self and the subject in socio-historical analyses (e.g. Victorian society) but must extend to 'empirical' investigations of social governance in contemporary society. The language of character, 'the all-importance of ethical behaviour,' and the necessity to reform 'morally bankrupt people' into virtuous ones are clearly enunciated themes in a variety of the late twentieth-century self-help texts examined here.⁵²

Indeed, a pervasive message asserted by several self-help authors emphasize the necessity of "restoring character to its rightful place in our lives." The urgency of this need for 'character' is expressed in the following passages taken from Bradshaw, Covey and Schlessinger, respectively.

dittohead codependents are not the virtuous people of character that we need for the new age of deep democracy (Bradshaw 1996:xvi).

The Character Ethic is based on the fundamental idea that there are *principles* that govern human effectiveness - natural laws in the human dimension that are just as real, just as unchanging and

⁵². During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, character became an object of scientific investigation by various social purity and moral reform movements. Social concern for the "degenerate," "immoral" and "sullied" character was expressed by physicians, social purity reformers, philanthropists and social scientists who increasingly viewed the internal constitution of the individual as key to human health, order, identity and reformation (Livesay 1831, 1838; Northrop 1896; Valverde 1991b).

unarguably 'there' as laws such as gravity are in the physical dimension (Covey 1989:32).

A quality life requires the constant exercise of character, courage and conscience (Schlessinger 1997:22).

Hamstra, in a similar vein, provides the reader with some definitions of 'character' and the necessity for 'doing the right thing.' For example, he claims that character is our

"moral personality." It's intimately related to our psychological personality, but it also includes the moral values we hold and apply...the personal virtues...such as self-discipline, courage, integrity, tolerance, and so forth...[meaning that]...*good character is the side of our personality that is concerned with doing the right thing* (Hamstra 1996:68; emphasis in original).

Character lies at the heart of our moral being, our moral personality...Character includes all the personal virtues we might aspire to - self-discipline, courage, integrity, and so forth - as well as the universal principles and values that we choose to place into action. Character fuels our ability to make moral decisions, walk the line, and avoid pitfalls (Hamstra 1996:182).

The necessity of exhibiting and cultivating a virtuous character is considered an obligatory programme in popular psychology. Beattie's *Codependent's Guide to the Twelve Steps* provides an adaptational model of Alcoholic's Anonymous' renowned '12 Steps.' For example, Step Four of Codependent's Anonymous is: "Made a Searching and Fearless Moral Inventory of Ourselves" in which the reader is required to "look for the rights and the wrongs we have done" (1990:60-4). This step

provides the basis for Step Six: "Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character" (1990:100).⁵³

Discipline as Moral and Ethical Virtue

Self-help can also be understood as a form of 'moral education' in self-discipline and self-regulation. In fact, the notion and practice of discipline become an essential cornerstone in projects of ethical self-reformation and living the good life. "Discipline is the basic set of tools we require to solve life's problems. Without discipline we can solve nothing. With only some discipline we can solve only some problems. With total discipline we can solve all problems" (Peck 1978:15-16). "Indeed, all self-discipline is teaching ourselves to do the unnatural" (Peck 1978:53).

For Peck, this discipline necessarily entails enduring the pain and suffering required in achieving mental and spiritual health. Discipline, in Peck's view, is a basic set of tools he refers to as "techniques of suffering".⁵⁴ As a set

⁵³. See Appendix Q for the Twelve Steps of Codependents Anonymous.

⁵⁴. According to Peck there are four techniques of suffering: delaying of gratification, acceptance of responsibility, dedication to truth, and balancing (1978:18). "Delaying gratification is a process of scheduling the pain and pleasure of life...It is the only decent way to live" (Peck 1978:19). Here again, we see "the family" as primarily responsible for the production of healthy, virtuous adults. For instance, Peck claims that the failure to develop the capacity to delay gratification "clearly point[s] to

of tools, discipline provides the "means by which we experience the pain of problems in such a way to work them through and solve them successfully...When we teach ourselves and our children discipline, we are teaching them and ourselves how to suffer and also how to grow" (Peck 1978:17-18). The anti-utilitarian assumption here is that good people, and more specifically, good parents, will confront rather than avoid pain, contributing to a building sense of self-worth for themselves and their children. "This feeling of being valuable is a cornerstone of self-discipline because when one considers oneself valuable one will take care of oneself in all ways that are necessary. Self-discipline is self-caring" (Peck 1978:24).⁵⁵

Bradshaw also discusses the paramount value of discipline. A "revised notion of discipline should include a primary emphasis on developing a sense of responsibility...on the ancient virtues of temperance, justice, fortitude and prudence" (Bradshaw 1996:279).

the quality of parenting as the determinant" (1978:20). For example, "If a child sees his parent day in and day out behaving with self-discipline, restraint, dignity and a capacity to order their own lives, then the child will come to feel in the deepest fibres of his being that this is the way to live" (Peck 1978:21-22).

⁵⁵. Indeed, one Christian doctrine of Original Sin teaches that human life is wounded in essence and suffering is natural and necessary for the spirit.

Social Restoration and Self-Reformation

As moral entrepreneurs, self-help advocates do not solely concern themselves with the problems of individuals: they often take a strong interest in critiquing society as 'responsible' for many modern disorders of the self. Further, claiming that social problems are the cause of individual problems, the program for advocating widespread moral and social change, also serves as a tactic and imperative for governing the self and others.

Ward (1996:2) notes the idea that low self-esteem is not only assumed to be a central cause in a variety of psychologically identified problems but that it is also seen as an important contributing factor to a multitude of other social problems such as teenage pregnancy, suicide, firestarting and homicide. Such a view, which emphasizes the importance of 'healthy' selves in producing and maintaining a 'healthy' society, has led some authorities to make the claim that healing and improving the self will improve our society as a whole. It is an almost universal claim made by self-help experts. "The problems of the world...essentially are the problems of individuals. If individuals can change, the course of the world can change" too (Harris 1973:17-18).

Consider for example the following claims made in some popular self-help books. "Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of

individual victims" (Herman 1992:1). Similarly, Bradshaw argues "functional families are absolutely essential if we are to heal our societal wounds" (1996:vii) and asserts that "part of the remedy lies in identifying the roots of the crisis in the families that our society creates and the society created by our families" (1996:ix).

A transformation of our dysfunctional society and its "poisonous pedagogy," Bradshaw proclaims, must begin with the reformation of individuals and families. Nineteenth-century moral reformers professed a similar conviction: social and moral reform would be the inevitable result of individual reform and conversion. "You have to work on yourself before you can work on the world...you have only to recover and the world recovers with you" (Kaminer 1992:94-95).

Bradshaw's 'working thesis' is significant in this context because he makes an explicit equation between the purification and remediation of social ills associated with the addicted society and a project which allows people to locate their true selves which are thwarted by the "addicted society" (1996:viii). More precisely, Bradshaw's working "thesis is that there is a crisis in society today that is reflected in our families, a crisis in which we are cut off from our true selves" (1996:ix). Similarly, another self-help author states that the "solution to individual and global problems is to overcome the spiritual deficit" in society (Dyer 1995). Moore also pronounces that if "we do not claim

the soul's power on our own behalf, we become its victims." For example, if there is "crime in our streets, it is due, to the viewpoint of the soul, not just to poverty and difficult living conditions, but to the failure of the soul and its spirits to unveil themselves" (Moore 1992:135).

Intrinsic to the modernist assumption of self-liberation and teleological unfolding toward a preferred state of existence is the idea that when individuals change 'for the better', so too will the social world inhabited by individuals. This demonstrates a double movement, a dialectical logic that the self and society are mutually constituting and affect each other in a complementary way.

The blue-print of the well-ordered society thus rests upon the conviction that progress needs to occur at the level of the individual as well as of society. This assumes that a good/healthy society needs to be comprised of 'good'/'healthy' individuals. Some of the philosophies in self-books mandate individual reformation as a social and political imperative while simultaneously negating the social and political contexts and conditions that are responsible for its rationales. Thus a well-governed society is assumed to be necessarily comprised of healthy, functional, and self-governing individuals - the types of ethical selves we are all encouraged, in one way or another, to be. Binding the self back to the social world by locating meaning in the self instantiates the idea that morality is a matter of psychology:

the therapist is to be the guide to human well-being, and well-being is assumed to be key in achieving a just and morally ordered society.

Conclusion

Overall, the positions maintained in self-help literature portray clear moral overtones and a predominantly essentialist vision of human nature. The popularizers whose self-help books number in sales in the millions assume the essential goodness of the self. This positive conception of human nature may account for a great deal of these books' popularity. This complete 'goodness' of the natural self is presented as an inherent essence of human being whereas "badness" is seen as imposed by external forces in one's life (Dyer 1976). This means that "the *essence* of you remains acceptable even when you make a series of mistakes" (Knaus 1994:12; emphasis added). As Foucault (1980) has suggested, modern power configurations implant a human nature or natural order into the person and then persuade the individual to confess this implanted human nature.

It appears that self-help discourses are governed by certain rules in the types of statements made possible. True statements in liberationist psychology must either explicitly refer to or be implicitly guided by the notions that 1) the

individual is essentially positive and good, 2) this individual, moreover, possesses a 'true self' sequestered behind the unnatural defenses born of repressive cultural and social authorities, and 3) emotional and/or spiritual experience and expression are the best means of access to the naturalistic and moral realm of the real and true self. Selves are morally regulated and govern themselves through their personal truths and emotional experience because "in our society the main field of morality, that part of ourselves which is most relevant for morality, is our feelings" (Foucault 1982:238).

Chapter Five:

Self-Help Technologies: Examining Techniques of the Self

[A]ll good self-change must...[begin] with a journey of self-discovery (Knaus 1994:3).

The best way to use *The 90 Second Therapist* may be the way you drink a glass of orange juice or take a vitamin at breakfast (Bentley 1988:viii).

The key to the technology of the self is the belief that one can, with the help of experts, tell the truth about oneself (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982:175).

It is not enough to say that the subject is constituted in a symbolic system. It is not just in the play of symbols that the subject is constituted. *It is constituted in real practices - historically analyzable practices. There is a technology of the constitution of the self which cuts across symbolic systems while using them* (Foucault 1982:250; emphasis added).

Introduction

In this chapter I excavate and highlight some of the advice and instructions provided for users of self help books. The major emphasis is placed on examining and documenting the techniques provided for harnessing, discovering, knowing, caring, recovering, changing, probing, exploring and improving the self.

All self-help texts revolve around the question: Who are we? in which the shaping and reshaping of human subjectivities

are targeted. That is, as a mode of governing subjectivities, an apparatus of regulation, self-help dicta and programs bring into existence or expound upon a variety of techniques of the self through which human beings come to understand and act upon themselves in the 'best' ways and in the name of their personal truths.

Here issues of techniques enter directly. If we accept that self-governance is central to refashioning the self, then we must take account of what Foucault terms "technologies of the self": namely, the instrumental means and practices of self-action. As an example of how human beings have been made the subject of diverse 'techniques of the self,' self-help technologies demonstrate one of the many ways in which individuals undertake the practical organization of their conduct and experience of themselves in the world.

Self-help texts are intended to be utilized for their functional advice enabling individuals to question their everyday conduct, and thought processes concerning the self. The technologies presented in various self-help texts are concerned with the ways in which one should undertake the practical organization of one's conduct in the daily business of living, in relation to the kind of person one should be and the kind of life one should lead.

Technologies of the self, which "can be found in all cultures in different forms..., do not require the same material apparatus as the production of objects; therefore

they are often invisible techniques" (Foucault 1984a:369). This invisibility is an important factor when considering the ethics and effects of self-help in late modernity. Foucault wrote: "From the idea that the self is not given to us, I think that there is only one practical consequence: we create ourselves as a work of art" (1984a:350-351). The perspective and approach employed in this chapter examines the variegated practices and constraining/constituting self-help techniques and practices whose chief focus is on the subject's "relation of self to self", the *rapport a soi* (Foucault 1986a).

While some of the texts are more *technical* in their approach, the vast majority rely upon and contain various sorts of techniques, tactics, strategies and the like. As we will be shown, it is these techniques which aim at regulating the self-reconstructing subject with the assistance and advice of psychological self-help technicians. In each case however, we can understand 'the technology of the self-help book' as equipping the reader with a series of techniques ostensibly utilized for purposes of self-decipherment, self-realization and self-knowledge: as the means of achieving self-reformation. These techniques and practices form the primary focus of the discussion in this chapter. A more theoretical excursus is developed in Chapter 6.

Self-Help Texts as Practical Guides of Conduct

It has been suggested that in order to examine critically 'the self,' we should direct our enquiries to the domain of practical texts that offer rules and advice on how to conduct oneself (Foucault 1986, 1990b; cf. Rose 1995, 1996). Although self-governance is not solely text-based - for self-regulation involves any number of forms - this thesis is specifically concerned with books that call for a reformation and transformation of the self through the care of the self. Thus, self-help texts can be understood as a particular concrete and material cultural object which aim to help individual selves learn new techniques to be practised upon one's self.

Rose (1995) argues that it is not the texts that are conventionally thought of as 'central' (philosophy texts) that are of prime significance to understanding the government of conduct but rather, those that have been placed on the margins: child-rearing manuals, books of dream interpretation, programmes of sanitary reformers, and the like. This is because, from the perspective of the analytic of governance, it is in the everyday conduct of the self that our understandings of ourselves have emerged, in the more mundane techniques and technologies of everyday life where subjects are constructed as responsible, culpable, and self-regulating entities.

Following Rose (1996:26) the definition of technologies here refers to "any assembly structured by a practical

rationality governed by a more or less conscious goal..., technologies that take modes of being human as their object." Self-help technologies are "a hybrid assemblage" of knowledge, information, techniques, objects, instruments, systems of classification, strategies and aims configured by the assumptions, presuppositions, and objectives that undergird them. "Human technologies produce and enframe humans as certain kinds of being whose existence is simultaneously capacitated and governed by their organization" within the technological field of self-help literature (Rose 1996:27).

As a domain of practical texts that offer rules, opinions and advice on how to conduct oneself these texts are intended to be utilized as a functional device enabling individuals to question their everyday conduct (Rose 1996:297). These texts represent

a domain of 'concern' for the self: certain ways of worrying about oneself, being troubled about oneself...linked to the dissemination of certain practices of 'care' for the self, looking after oneself, being careful about oneself, making oneself the subject of techniques of solicitude and attention (Rose 1996:297).

Rose (1995:300) contends that an examination of the self should not be posed in terms of ideas, but of technologies: the intellectual and practical instruments and devices that seek to direct, guide and shape particular ways of 'being human.' Texts of self-help claim to provide the methods and

techniques of understanding the essential constitution of one's 'inner self.'

I interpret Rose as suggesting that the discourses of the self and personhood in advanced liberal regimes are not merely theoretical, 'ideological' or 'idealist' constructs or an Hegelian *Zeitgeist* but rather, sets of technologies and techniques that encourage certain *ways of life and living* over and beyond others. Therefore self-help texts, as a form of moral regulation, encourage some practices while discouraging others (Corrigan and Sayer 1985).

Foucault has shown how these methods are ancient techniques of self-fashioning that have, over many centuries, shaped how we view 'the mind.' Our common-sensical understandings of the psyche or the soul have been stylized by the techniques that have been devised to probe its secrets, to engage in a multiplicity of practices that will reveal the truth about who we are and the reasons why we may experience problems. Self-help, from a historical perspective, is one of the latest additions to a long and erratic history of concerns surrounding the care of the self.

Self-help texts operate as practical guides on ethics and ethical self-formation, offering advice and opinions as to how people seeking self-improvement might conduct themselves. This ethical self-formation is related to the specific techniques that human beings use to understand themselves to obtain a particular practical end. These texts function as a practical

ethics, as Foucault has observed, because they "enable individuals to question their own conduct, to watch over and give shape to it, and to shape themselves as ethical subjects" (1990b:13). In essence, what is occurring in this instance is the turning of the subject back on it's self as both a problem to combatted and as a potential paradise to be realized.

Self-Help Technicians:
Professional and Experiential Knowledges

As one of the many heterogenous authorities that have come to problematize human conduct self-help experts develop and present various techniques aimed at the re-formation of the self. These self-help technicians, in some way or another, claim expertise and specialized knowledge of techniques, practices, strategies, tactics and theories that can help an individual successfully achieve self-change and self-improvement. William Knaus, author of *Change Your Life Now* (1994), claims to provide the reader with a blue-print for change - a Five Point Program - full of methods, techniques and strategies for successful inner change.

Other self-change experts claim a predictable path of self-alteration which moves through 'identifiable stages.' For instance, "Successful self-changing individuals follow a powerful and, perhaps most important, controllable and predictable course" (Prochaska et al 1994:15). A stage-based process of changing problematic behaviour is offered as "a

scientific approach to self-change" where "the key to success is the appropriately timed use of a variety of coping skills" (1994:15). *Changing For Good*⁵⁶ provides the reader with "a structure you can use to *stimulate, guide, reflect upon and evaluate your progress*" (1994:15; emphasis added). Identifying themselves as clinical psychologists, university professors, research collaborators, and 'self-change enthusiasts', Prochaska, Norcross and DiClemente (1994) provide a battery of self-help techniques based on a 'revolutionary' six-stage program for over-coming bad habits and implementing permanent and positive personal change.

Prochaska et al claim their "research is geared toward discovering how people can become *free* from their problems" which means taking action to "*solve*" the problem, not simply "improving" it. How do they claim "a problem behaviour" can be considered solved? "[B]y attaining the criteria that health professionals agree place you at zero or minimum risk from the particular behaviour" (Prochaska et al 1994:66; emphasis in original). The purpose of self-reformation is to "[a]im for full freedom from" one's problem (1994:67).⁵⁷ Thus, it is important to remember that these technical practices of the

⁵⁶. The double meaning of this title can be interpreted in two separate yet significant ways. First, it may refer to changing one's self permanently, that is, *for good*, and second, it may also point to the understanding of changing "*for the better*."

⁵⁷. This "action criteria for fifteen of the most important and most prevalent problems" (Prochaska et al 1994:67) is included in Appendix B.

self are always practised under the actual or imagined authority of some system of truth and of some authoritative individual or expert (Rose 1996:29).

Self-help experts seemingly need to draw on the significance of the layperson's knowledge and experience as being a legitimate, if not, primary and valuable source of information. For example Prochaska et al (1994:16) claim that "the vast majority of people who change never visit a mental health professional or participate in an organized program." Thus rather than base their book on academic theory or expert opinion Prochaska et al "gathered and evaluated data from thousands" of successful self-changers who coped with their difficulties themselves and developed their own strategies "based on hard experience...rather than on academic theory or 'expert opinion'" (Prochaska et al 1994:16). Hamstra similarly claims not to write "in an academic manner" yet his observations, nonetheless, "are drawn from important research in psychology, moral development and ethics" (1996:vii). Further on in his book he states that he remains to be a 'logical, 'scientific' psychologist' (Hamstra 1996:20).

Self-help authors establish their 'reliability and expertise' in two main ways, and usually a combination of both: they present themselves as well-educated, practised, and even scientifically competent professionals and/or "as authorities who are especially enriched by personal experience" and knowledge.

Many begin their books by telling about the personal and/or professional circumstances which led them to begin writing. These introductory self-revelations are meant to draw readers into a relationship of sorts with the author. They are meant to elicit trust as well as an interest in both the topic and the discussant. It is as if the author were letting the reader in on his or her secrets (Simonds 1992:120).

'Experiential knowledge' refers to truth acquired from personal experience as opposed to, for example, academic or professional knowledge. The assumption here is that knowledge derived from personal experience is equatable to or superior to 'academic theory.' The involvement of 'psy' professionals, and quasi-professionals⁵⁸ who have engaged in research and personal experience (Bentley 1988; Hamstra 1996; Jeffers 1996), in the market of self-help books is considerable, yet some authors do not possess professional credentials and have no reservations admitting their 'non-expert' status (Beattie 1987:37). On the other hand, 'experiential expertise' (Borkman 1976) is a form of knowledge that denotes the degree to which an individual has obtained experiential knowledge and is able to apply it competently and skilfully to the said problem (e.g. Beattie 1987, 1898, 1990, Zonnya 1995; Schlessinger 1997). This type of knowledge, when possessed by an individual presents him or her as a role model and a source of hope, since he or she "has already made it" (Toch 1965:82) or is in

⁵⁸. Quasi-professionals are defined here as those who speak as experts but do not possess academic credentials/professional merits.

the continual process of having "made it better." This 'I did it - and so can you' mentality functions as a form of proof for the reader which is supposed to encourage the subject to have faith in the truth claims propounded by a particular expert.

Some self-help therapists have claimed expertise specifically because of their own 'experience as a victim' status. One popular book of the recovery movement which argues against academic credentials in favour of 'experiential' victimization is Anne Wilson Schaef's *Beyond Therapy, Beyond Science* (1992). Some experts thus claim that victim status is itself the primary criterion which qualifies them as proficient 'psy' professionals.

'Professional expertise' or 'professional knowledge' is undoubtedly the most widely accepted source of Truth claims in modern society. 'Serious speech acts'⁵⁹ are generally limited to those individuals who have met the requirements of a specialized education and formal training in a discipline who possess appropriate credentials and skills (Borkman 1976:447). Some authors do not expose their real lives in any way thus presenting an almost textbook-like tone in a manner that seeks and commands respect. This in turn, makes their work sound scholarly, clinical and genuinely authoritative (Simonds 1992:120). The use of professional language helps maintain the

⁵⁹. These "serious speech acts" refers to those things said by experts when they speak as experts (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982:xxiv).

expert status of the self-help author.

However, while the reputation of the author making a truth claim can be seen as a key element in its subsequent absorption into the activities of others it is not enough for a concept to be simply advanced by a famous and well-respected knowledge producer; a successful concept must enrol enough allies so that it can spread and become stronger (Fuchs and Ward 1994; Ward 1996). This can be seen in one group of writers' attempt to legitimate their particular formula for self-reformation. For example, Prochaska et al claim that at the time of writing their self-help book, their model was being utilized by the National Institutes for Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse, the National Cancer Institute, the Centres for Disease Control and other organizations. In Great Britain, the National Health Service "is training its employees to use this model to help smokers, drinkers, and drug abusers to quit, and to help people to improve poor eating habits" (1994:57-8).

The majority of self-help authors claim to possess both experiential expertise and professional knowledge thus, "professional advice givers are also *personal* experts" (Simonds 1992:122; emphasis in original). The tendency for self-help authors to include themselves in personable ways provides an informal authorial voice lending itself to address readers familiarly advancing a confessional-type of disclosure about their own personal lives. 'Confessional' authors reiterate this process by 1) explaining how they initially

came to realize they had a problem and 2) how seemingly miraculously (and with hard 'work') they were able to overcome their particular problem(s). "[T]hey show how their wonder and excitement over their own improvement has impelled them to help others going through the same problems." This strategy presents the self-help authors as 'natural advocates' for others with the same problem, people who are less qualified to combat their problems on their own (Simonds 1992:121).

An interesting and peculiar aspect of self-help literature is some authors' claim that human beings already pre-possess the knowledge of how to live better lives; they just require a reminder or reawakening of what they already know. For example, Harris (1973:24) claims to provide "the answer to the question of why people do not live as good as *they know how already*." Arguing along the same lines, another self-help author states that mastery "as an idea...*has always been with us* - its just that we need to be reminded" (Leonard 1991:xiv). Even Covey's Seven Habits "are *already deep within us*, in our conscience and our common-sense" (1989:44).⁶⁰

Techniques, Technologies, Tactics

The subject in self-help is viewed as possessing particular properties or characteristics, and can self-identify these properties, etc., with techniques and practices

⁶⁰. This paragraph contains my emphases.

provided by the self-help experts. This conceptualization makes individuals amenable to being classified and categorized. Readers are encouraged to engage in a variety of required self-administered exercises, inventories, sentence completions, assessments, checklists, questionnaires, rating-scales and the like. Even "[s]oul work requires both much reflection and hard work" (Moore 1992:119).

In *Reinventing Your Life* Young and Klosko provide a questionnaire and scoring key (see Appendix C) aimed at helping individuals identify and determine which 'lifetraps(s)' apply to their life (1994:14-5). These 'devices' or 'diagnostic tools' assist the subject at an initial stage. Additional questionnaires allow for the identification of specific scores with respect to certain lifetraps (see Appendices D, E, and F) so subjects may determine, for example, their defectiveness, failure or fear of abandonment score (1994:61, 209, 241). Similarly, every chapter in each of Beattie's (1987; 1989; 1990) self-help tracts concludes with an activity in the form of questions the reader is to think about and answer. Yet another self-help book provides "homework assignments to keep track" of one's progress (Young and Klosko 1994:10).

These 'devices' are best understood as an example of the government of individualization and formation of governable objects/subjects. That is, the 'good self' is constructed as an object of self-knowledge at the intersection of diverse

discourses and problematizations. It is through these practices and techniques of the self that the individual is fashioned and reformed.

The Oracle at Delphi: "Know Thyself"

Technologies of the self take the form of a variety of techniques that aim primarily at modifying the conduct of one's relationship to oneself. The epistemological subject attempts to 'know one's self', despotically (self-mastery) (Valverde 1996) and to care for oneself through a hermeneutics of the self. These maxims, tropes and dicta are embodied in particular technical practices, confessionals, twelve-step programs, visualization techniques, journal writing, self-administered questionnaires, and the like.

The basic tenet pronounced by most self-help authors is analogous to the following assertion: "Without knowledge of our strengths, weaknesses, and other aspects of our personality, we're doomed to repeat our mistakes...we're likely to become unwittingly entangled in circular, self-defeating process[es]" (Hamstra 1996:200).

Self-knowledge requires an ongoing inventory of your feelings, behaviours and relationship patterns...You can't change anything unless it's brought to your awareness...[and] with persistence, you may be rewarded with an enlightening glimpse of the consistent threads running through your personality and character (Hamstra 1996:201;

emphasis added).⁶¹

According to Moore (1992:xvii) "[d]ropping the salvational fantasy frees us up to the possibility of self-knowledge and self-acceptance, which are the very foundation of the soul." Another group of authors similarly assert that: "The first step in fostering intentional change is to become conscious of the self-defeating defenses that get in our way. *Knowledge is power*" (Prochaska et al 1994:89; emphasis added). The work that one carries out on oneself is based primarily on the significance of self-knowledge that seemingly does not appear to be based on external social classifications (i.e. class, gender, race, age, sexual orientation, etc.) but rather the psychological 'make-up' or inner properties of human being.

Several defenses which 'prevent people from seeing their problem' are identified by certain authors. These 'defenses' that 'serve to distract us from the difficult and uncomfortable task of self-analysis' include: denial⁶² and minimization, rationalization, projection and displacement, internalization and intellectualization (Prochaska et al 1994:82-6). The reader is further told that it really "isn't

⁶¹. See Appendix G for a "self-image self-inventory" supplied by Zonnya. "If you have more than four 'No's,' your self-image needs help" (1995:76).

⁶². "Denial" has long been considered "symptomatic" of an individual suffering from the "disease" of alcoholism similar to the older notion of the "denial of sin."

necessary to be defensive and resist people who want to change you...[because]...[a]llthough you may like yourself and your lifestyle, you may have a sneaking suspicion that in fact you would be better off changing" (1994:104). They warn the reader that it is of utmost importance not to "let your defenses turn faults into virtues and problems into preferences" (1994:119).

If an individual is particularly resistant to change, Prochaska et al (1994:124-5) advise the subject to "[m]ake a written list of the statements...[used to] justify" problem behaviour. If this proves unsuccessful in raising an urge to change then the reader is encouraged to examine all "the reinforcements" that have been gained by one's "acts of indulgence in consumptive behaviour."

First, there is pleasure - *mmm, mmm, good!* Then, there is often a very real reduction of stress; letting go of ego controls can feel like a break from the hassles of everyday life. Also, indulging a vice can feel naughty but nice. And finally, there comes a feeling of freedom in doing what you want to do - and to hell with the consequences! (Prochaska et al 1994:126; emphasis in original).

'Consciousness-raising,' once a popular catch term used by the women's movement as a formula to combat sexism women experienced in their personal and professional lives, has become one of the popular phrases appropriated by the self-help genre. As Freud once said, the goal of psychoanalysis is 'to make the unconscious conscious', to raise one's level of awareness in order to make intelligent and rational decisions

concerning one's self and one's problem. Prochaska et al discuss the necessity of consciousness-raising as a technique of self-knowledge. For example,

Consciousness raising is not, however, limited to uncovering hidden thoughts and feelings. *Any increased knowledge about yourself* or the nature of your problem, regardless of the source, raises your consciousness (Prochaska et al 1994:27; emphasis added).

Consciousness raising techniques that can help one 'fix' oneself include: 1) Asking the right question, 2) Defining your goals, and 3) Collecting the right data (Prochaska et al 1994:120-4). All of these techniques, they argue are crucial for the subject to monitor its problem and measure and track its progress (1994:122).⁶³ As a regulatory apparatus based upon the governance of the self, technologies of the self tend to employ an 'etiological model' as a method of self-knowledge and self-understanding. Self-help texts persuade and advise the reader to look for the causes of their problems so that they are able to effectively fix, cure or deal with their particular affliction, condition, situation, and/or distressor.

The authors claim that the objective of these 'conscious-raising techniques' is to avoid reinforcing one's destructive

⁶³. Prochaska et al additionally advise the reader that bad habits such as "swearing, spitting and nail biting" should also be monitored (1994:123-4).

behaviours, to develop a greater awareness of one's problem behaviour (or addiction), to gain insight into how one's thinking and feeling processes serve to maintain the problem or addiction and to develop 'a personal conviction of the value of change.' These techniques of the self focus on increased information, awareness, and self-motivation.

Through various techniques of self-appraisal readers are instructed to pay perspicacious attention to particulars: detailing and recording the specificities of one's inner self and that "a thorough self-assessment is important for accuracy" (Prochaska et al 1994:64). The examination and recording of one's inner thoughts, feelings, etc., are methods of "insight" into what one's "problems are" and how they can be remedied or effaced most effectively because "its helpful to look at yourself" (Hamstra 1996:70).⁶⁴ Zonnya states: "To know if you are existing or living, you will want to take a personal self-inventory" (see Appendix H) in different areas of one's life: family, financial, physical, spiritual, mental⁶⁵ and social⁶⁶. But she consoles the reader by reassuring that "[w]hen you take your personal inventory, do not be overwhelmed by all of the problems that you identify."

⁶⁴. Bradshaw claims he needed to discover, through self-examination, his own "moral education" which demonstrated glaring character defects and holes in his conscience (1996:268).

⁶⁵. See Appendix I for Zonnya's "Mental Balance Self-Inventory."

⁶⁶. See Appendix J for Zonnya's "Social Balance Self-Inventory."

Instead, the subject should be "encouraged" to know that they "do not have as many problems to solve as...decisions to make" (Zonnya 1996:11, 158-9, 204-5).

Other self-help experts advocate similar advice to self-scrutinize⁶⁷ and claim that "the process of constant self-examination and contemplation is essential for ultimate survival" (Peck 1978:52). For each stage of change, Prochaska et al (1994) provide the reader with brief self-assessments. They claim that

[t]hese checkpoints are powerful tools for *information* and *self-correction* [and] emphatically recommend that you take these self-assessments, and take them seriously. *Be honest and realistic*. You must engage in these processes to move forward; *if you mislead yourself, you will impede your progress* (Prochaska et al 1994:92; emphasis added).

"Techniques without awareness," we are told, "don't have any chance to make a real impact on inner selves, and so have little lasting effect" (Prochaska et al 1994:115). "Awareness," however, the reader is told, may not require "pondering study or intense psychoanalysis"; "it may require no more than a few weeks of *honest self-appraisal*, using the...familiar technique of consciousness-raising." In addition, it can also be "helpful to use a *little self-*

⁶⁷. Covey (1989:52) informs the reader that a complimentary self-scoring Seven Habits Personal Feedback Profile to help evaluate her/his current level of effectiveness can be obtained by calling a 1-800 number.

administered scare – the time-honoured tradition of catharsis, or emotional arousal (Prochaska et al 1994:115; emphasis added).

Self-examination is presented as the primary challenge of positive change and personal growth, goals only good selves strive towards. Consider this assertion:

Evil has no desire for self-examination, change, or growth. In fact, those are all seen as threats to the determined idealized version of the self. To maintain that inner and external guise evil types will do anything, without motivation to be good or do right. Evil is never self-critical, only other-critical, and does not have or admit to any guilt (Schlessinger 1997:59).

Jeffers asserts that "[i]f you look long and hard enough, you realize that all your negative emotions – including anger, blame, guilt, low self-esteem, and fear – signal that you are stuck in the clutches of your Lower Self and you need to extricate yourself so that you can reconnect with your Spiritual 'Home,' as your Higher Self" (Jeffers 1996:65; emphasis in original). "When you dwell in this magical place, you will learn all you ever need to know about ending the struggle and dancing with life" (Jeffers 1996:71).

Self-regulation also requires a careful examination of one's 'moralistic attitudes' because morality, as Moore argues, can act as an effective shield against the soul, protecting individuals from its complexities. For example,

There is nothing more revealing, and maybe nothing more healing, then to reconsider our moralistic attitudes, and find how much soul has been hidden behind its doors. People seem to be afraid that if they reflect on their moral principles they might lose their ethical sensitivity altogether. But that is a defensive approach to morality. As we deal with the soul's complexity, morality can deepen and drop its simplicity, becoming at the same time both more demanding and more flexible (Moore 1992:17).

Thus, according to this account, morality is part and parcel of understanding the intricacies of one's soul where meticulous and observant self-examination is essential to gain a deeper understanding of one's self.

Self-reevaluation or 'taking stock' is a type of emotional and cognitive appraisal of your problem and your self offered by the authors of *Changing for Good*. "Self-reevaluation will reveal to you, once and for all, that your *essential* values are in fact in conflict with your problem behaviours" (Prochaska et al 1994:129). Techniques for self-reevaluation consist of: thinking before you act, creating a new self-image, and making a decision.

Self-reevaluation is a common technique propounded by self-help experts which, as a process, can help the subject reappraise the problem(s) and assess "the kind of person you might be once you have conquered" the problem (Prochaska et al 1994:29). Self-reevaluation, they claim, is based on both rational and emotional questions people ask themselves and the result is "that you come not only to believe but truly feel that life would be significantly better without the problem."

Example questions are offered to the reader: "How do I perceive myself as a gambler, a drinker, or a sedentary person? How do I see myself if I change my behaviour?" (Prochaska et al 1994:29).

Self-questioning appears to be a primary mode of self-examination advanced by the self-help experts. By offering the reader 'questions' to ask itself, the reader is enroled to imagine the better person he or she could finally be, through creating its own goals. The apparent conviction that "everything ha[s] to be told" in other words, translates into a "nearly infinite task of telling" (Foucault 1984d:303, 304).

To Tell the Whole Truth...

The edict to 'confess' the truth of one's self becomes an integral practice for self-diagnosis/classification and self-analysis; it is a paramount activity in self-reformation. One first needs to exercise honesty with one's self in order to decipher what one's problems are and only then is one potentially able to initiate self-change. This means of acquiring one's own 'personal truth' is transformed into a program of action exercised on the self by the self. The normalizing and regulatory mechanisms of self-discipline are further set in place by techniques based on self-monitoring and self-surveillance according to the prescriptions and norms

of truth presented in each respective text.⁶⁸ The subject studies his or her conduct and 'inner self' in order that the relationship with self is one (or can become one) based on truth and honour and not "self-deception" (Covey 1989:37).

For Peck, a life of total dedication to the truth is a life of total honesty. "It means a continuous and never-ending process of self-monitoring to assure that our communications - not only the words that we say but how we say them - invariably reflect as accurately as humanly possible the truth or reality as we know it" (1978:56)⁶⁹. Peck goes on to state that

[w]e lie, of course, not only to others but also to ourselves. I frequently refer to psychotherapy as the 'truth game' or the 'honesty game' because its business is among other things to help patients confront such lies. One of the roots of mental illness is invariably an interlocking system of lies we have been told and lies we tell ourselves. These roots can be uncovered and excised only in an atmosphere of honesty (Peck 1978:58).

Dreyfus and Rabinow neatly describe the 'hermeneutic' function of truth and honesty in deciphering the self. They state:

⁶⁸. Beattie (1987:202-3) provides a checklist so that the reader "suffering" from codependency can monitor her/his progression of the disease. See Appendix K.

⁶⁹. According to Peck, if our lives are to be "healthy" we must have a "dedication to the truth...For truth is reality. That which is false is unreal" (Peck 1978:44).

the conviction that truth can be discovered through the self-examination of consciousness and the confession of one's thoughts and acts appears so natural, so compelling, indeed so self-evident, that it is unreasonable to posit that such self-examination is a central component in the strategy of power. This unseemliness rests on our attachment to the repressive hypothesis; if the truth is inherently opposed to power, then its uncovering would surely lead us on the path of liberation (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982:175).

The subject's 'truthfulness' and 'self-honesty' are also important in regard to questions directed at ascertaining whether certain behaviours 'really' are problems. Behaviours, it is asserted, should be identified as a "problem or a preference," where the reader is instructed to "answer the following three questions *truthfully*" in order to determine "the distinction between problem behaviours and life-style choices" (Prochaska et al 1994:77; emphasis added): "Do you discuss your behaviour pattern?", "Are you well informed about your behaviour?", "Are you willing to take responsibility for the consequences of your behaviour?" Prochaska et al conclude by stating "If you can *honestly* say that you are not defensive, but well-informed, aware of the consequences of and responsible for the long-term effects of your behaviour, then *perhaps* it is a preference. If, however - *like most of us*, you answered no to one or more of the questions, you are probably" actively resisting your "problem behaviour" (Prochaska et al 1994:77-9; emphasis added).

Self-assessment scales (see Appendix L), questionnaires (see Appendices C, D, E, and F) and surveys (see Appendix M

and Appendix N) are meant to be scored in such a way that the 'good' person will/must present her or himself honestly. Furthermore, the conjecture here is that the 'originary' truth of the self and/or one's family can be uncovered and revealed with the proper techniques and strategies of decipherment. It is assumed that the self has its own dark hidden secrets that must be brought to the surface in the form of certain confessional practices and examination techniques.

Intimately related to the necessity of truth and honour is commitment. "Once you choose to change, you accept responsibility for changing. This responsibility is the burden of *commitment*, sometimes called 'self-liberation.' It is an acknowledgement that you are the only one who is able to respond, speak and act for yourself" (Prochaska et al 1994:29; emphasis added).

The first step of commitment is private, telling yourself you are choosing to change. The second step involves going public - announcing to others that you have made a firm decision to change. This amounts to a self-applied pressure to stick with your program, because if you do not succeed in changing, you may feel ashamed or guilty in front of those with whom you have shared your decision. You may prefer to keep your commitment private, so others won't know if you fail. Although this protects you from embarrassment, it also weakens your will; *public commitments are much more powerful than private ones* (Prochaska et al 1994:29-30; emphasis added).

Healing Images: Visualization Techniques

Visualization techniques are also popular in the self-help literature. For example, Jeffers advises the reader to:

Close your eyes. Relax your body. In your mind's eye, see the person you are trying to control or change standing in front of you. Imagine an umbilical cord holding the two of you together so that when one moves, the other has to move. Feel the discomfort, the pain, and sense of imprisonment this attachment creates...

Now, in your mind's eye, see yourself picking up huge scissors and cutting the cord. Feel the instant relief, freedom, and peace this allows. Take a deep breath and notice how you've set *both of you* free. Move around and notice the other person is not forced to move with you. And notice that when the other person moves, you are free to stand on your own, tall and whole (Jeffers 1996:60-1; emphasis in original).

The reader is instructed to "[r]epeat this powerful visualization every time you are tempted to run someone else's life. Or if you are allowing someone to run yours, which is the flip side of the same coin" (Jeffers 1996:61). This technique is designed to assist the subject with the "ultimate in loving - caring, but not controlling" (Jeffers 1996:61). This type of 'unconditional love' means "standing back and trusting those we love to follow their own path, *despite the outcome*, without our judgement, righteousness, and anger...Being a crutch or a critic doesn't serve anyone" (Jeffers 1996:61). Almost magically, "when you cut the cord, you are free to live in the realm of the Higher Self where

your happiness is dependent only on the realization that you are a powerful and loving person who has much to give this world" (Jeffers 1996:61).

Another visualization technique intended to help the reader 'release' the 'addiction' to control is to provide them with 'a very healing image' and encourages them "to repeat it slowly into a tape recorder and listen to it with" one's "eyes closed." She describes the "releasing" and "healing" scene to be visualized as follows:

Imagine yourself standing at the edge of a beautiful flowing river in the middle of a rich green valley. You're curious as to where the river is flowing. You decide that its time to find out. A sturdy-looking rowboat sits at the side of this wonderful flowing river. How handy! You climb right in and notice there aren't any oars. Feeling a sense of safety and adventure, you know that you don't need any oars, that you are going to let the boat take you where it wants to go...Knowing you have no control over where its going, you say to yourself "I let go and allow the river to carry me to new adventures. I trust that I am safe" (Jeffers 1996:79-80).

The notion of learning 'to simply trust' is particularly significant in Jeffers' self-help program. She asserts that "one needs to work on trusting that there are reasons for all that is happening on this earth and to each and everyone of us." Fundamentally, understanding the reasons is irrelevant because "*[w]hen trust is there, explanations are unnecessary...* So when your Lower Self asks 'Why?' just say to it: **I don't know, but I trust its all happening perfectly.**

It's all part of the Grand Design" (Jeffers 1996:80-1; emphasis in original). Docility and complicity are thus, actively encouraged. One is admonished to be concerned solely with one's self and to simply 'accept' things as they are, without question.

"I AM Good Enough!!"

Self-affirmations constitute another popular technique of the self promoted by self-help authors. Consider the following passage offered by Jeffers (1996). When

the self-destructive pattern...of not [being] good enough comes creeping in from the voice of [y]our Lower Self, simply drown it out with

I am good enough.
I am good enough.
I am good enough.
I am good enough.
I am good enough.⁷⁰

Say it over again and again, until your enoughness seeps into the deepest recesses of your being (Jeffers 1996:53; emphasis in original).

Apparently, the act of verbally repeating self-approving affirmations are believed to help individuals improve not only the *rapport a soi*, but also the essence of one's being where

⁷⁰. Jeffers is quick to inform the reader that it is important to "[u]nderstand that the realization that you are good enough and that the results of your efforts are good enough is not an excuse to be sloppy or uncaring" (1996:53; emphasis in original).

"[c]onstant repetition of these affirmations is important" (Jeffers 1996:67; emphasis in original). Affirmations are also a favourite technique offered by Beattie (1987; 1989; 1990). Zonnya, too, provides the reader with several different types of "positive statement" affirmations that will "inspire, encourage and motivate" the reader to commit to living "a more beautiful lifestyle" (1995:35, 162, 207).⁷¹

Paradoxically, however, Zonnya proclaims that the reader "cannot settle for what" one is, when one "can become so much 'more, better, greater'": if one is already "healthy", one can become healthier; if one already lives the good life, one can live a better life. Admonishing philosophical and religious teachings for insisting that "wanting more is wrong," Zonnya draws on "research" that shows human beings only use "8% - 10%" of their potential, which "should be against the law!" (1995:xvii).⁷² Thus, rather than encouraging the reader to accept itself unconditionally through self-affirming statements, such as Jeffers and Beattie do, Zonnya promotes a vision of 'infinite progress' based on continual self-improvement which can also be understood as 'not being good enough.'

⁷¹. See Appendix O for examples of written self-affirmations provided by Zonnya.

⁷². Zonnya does not offer any references to substantiate this "research."

Reducing Temptations: Controlling the Environment

Environmental control is a popular self-help technique to be harnessed by the subject seeking to reform her or himself. Rather than seeking to control or modify inner reactions of the self, as is usually prescribed, the subject is encouraged to alter and restructure the external environment in order to curb forces of 'temptation' so that 'bad influences' are minimized, thereby preventing lapses and relapses. External factors can include anything from other people to particular objects and substances. This, it is argued, will reduce the probability of problem-causing events wherein the problem is viewed as existing outside the individual rather than as a constituent characteristic of the individual her or himself. For example "[e]nvironment-control techniques can be as simple as removing narcotics or alcohol from your house" (Prochaska 1994:30).⁷³

Managing one's environment and personal relationships is a crucial step to achieving 'healthy living.' Zonnya claims that "little thinkers become big stinkers" so "[h]ang around people like yourself who are choosing to turn yo-yo living into balanced living. [This] dedication and commitment to being a self-motivated student is essential" (1996:7). Thus the reader is encouraged to 'avoid' threats and temptations, basically, to keep itself 'on the right path.' Valverde notes,

⁷³. See Appendix P for an "Environmental Control Self-Assessment" activity provided by Prochaska et al (1994:190).

adults often compel themselves to re-form, to rebuild habits, by engaging in self-despotism, "(e.g. throwing away all cigarettes or alcohol in the house so as not to 'tempt' that part of self that is despotically ruled by the 'higher' self)" that, they "hope, will result in the permanent transformation of desire, so that eventually the lower self will not even want to drink and smoke" (1996:362).

Emotional Arousal Techniques

Prochaska et al (1994) offer a series of "emotional arousal techniques" which can "serve as a *cleansing* function" for one's particular problem behaviour. The first arousal technique offered to the reader is "going to the movies." This tactic is supposed to "be a wonderful way to arouse your emotions as you decide to change." For example, "a film like 'Clean and Sober' portrays the denial, relapse, and recovery cycles typical among cocaine addicts" (1994:115-17; emphasis added).

"Making your own propaganda" is another technique suggested by these self-help authors. "[T]o get your adrenaline flowing...[create] your own scenario, one that arouses your *disgust, disappointment, and distress*" (1994:117; emphasis added). Prochaska et al go on to provide several examples of what the reader may choose to try, including the following:

If you have a problem with alcohol, have a friend videotape you after you have been drinking. Nothing is more effective in capturing the slurred speech, and the semicoherent conversations drinkers exhibit. Such a video invalidates the denial that people with alcohol problems so often demonstrate. Watch the video the morning after; a hangover will increase your emotional distress about your drinking (1994:117).

The other "emotional arousal technique" recommended to the reader is to "use your imagination to make your own 'mental movie'." This technique is the opposite of relaxation; "the objective is to create negative images that will sensitize you to the dangers and drawbacks of your problem behaviour." For instance,

Construct a scene in which people who know you well are confronting you about how your constant need to control alienates them. Some are angry that you always have to have your way. Others resent your stubbornness and your sense that you're always right...Feel yourself getting defensive, and rationalize about the virtue of being so responsible (Prochaska et al 1994:119).

All of these 'techniques' are supposed to create feelings of repulsion toward the subject's particular problem behaviour. Viewing these behaviours in a film, a personal videotape or in the mind are considered to act as a catalyst for self-change. Once an individual 'gets in touch' with the problematic behaviour on a rational-emotive or 'emotional level' it is assumed that greater steps of self-determination will lead the subject towards self-reformation.

Conclusion

Self-help texts offer and comprise a series of practices and techniques that are meant to guide and govern individual human conduct through projects and techniques of the self. Individuals who subscribe to and attempt to follow those rules are engaged in a practice of self-disclosure, but this confessional technique is not that of disclosing a self *sui generis*. Rather, it is in the process of self-disclosure, that one engages in the construction of the self. Agency, or the capacity for choice and understanding, is already postulated in the modern subject that is meant to be explained by the construction.

The classical phrase *techne*, is relevant to the modern description of the care of the self. Plato used the expression *techne tou biou* which means "the craft of life" (Foucault 1990b). Thus, *techne* refers not just to mechanical skills and instruments but to all types of artful managing and careful shaping of the self wherein reading and writing is itself a way of caring for the self.

This demonstrates the inner subjective tasks promoted by self-help technologies and techniques of the self; by fostering projects based on reforming and reconstructing ethical subjectivities, self-help texts do not simply aim at controlling, or even governing the subject so much as providing the tactics, strategies and techniques for the subject to exercise a multitude of practices aimed at

governing and regulating one's self. Furthermore, these techniques in part work to constitute the self, to invent oneself in process of 'discovering' 'who one really is.'

According to self-help discourse, the self is not accessible through unexamined lived experiences. However, when consciousness is raised one is able to access self-truths which become marked by a clarity of/through knowledge. These self-help techniques imply that the 'meaning' of the self is something to be discovered and understood in terms of psychological self-knowledge and psychological processes of self-expressions. Moreover, since these processes instantiate the conception that reality is the result of spiritual practices or psychological self-enlightenment, any failures or tragedies in one's life ultimately become the individual's sole responsibility.

Self-help can be understood as a particular technology of ethical self-(re)formation in advanced liberal society already based on the presupposition of an essential human form that is at the same time capable of initiating change. As a field of force relations, self-help texts form and attempt to inform subjects by bringing them to define themselves in certain ways. "Techniques of self" in so far that they are applied by individuals as a means of transforming their life and self into those of a more autonomous happiness (Foucault 1988a:18) rely both on broader narratives about the necessity of knowing oneself as well as caring for oneself. This is a pervasive

conviction which postulates that self-knowledge will inescapably provide a better self and a better life.

Self-help texts provide the knowledge and strategies that are designed to move the subject to some preferred state of living. The importance of achieving certain ends through self-help sanctioned means cannot be understated. The techniques that self-help mobilize to uncover the underlying structure of a person's "psyche" are invested with the same commitment to truth and "grand narrative of progress" that marks the modernist project (Gergen 1991).

Individuals, rather than discovering their real selves, actually create and constitute their selves by the very practices and techniques prescribed for knowing and uncovering. Here, self-knowledge is not, as is commonly assumed, simply a product of truths discovered through an in-depth probing of the inner recesses of the psyche or soul. Rather, as the following chapter corroborates, the self is a project and product of the hermeneutics of the self, and is a mastery of discourse - a "knowing how" rather than a "knowing that."

Chapter Six:

Governing the Domain of the Self

It may be of comparatively little consequence how a man [sic] is governed from without, whilst everything depends upon how he governs himself from within (Smiles 1859:36).

...the individual has become an object of knowledge, both to himself [sic] and to others, an object who tells the truth about himself in order to know himself and be known, an object who learns to effect changes on himself. These are the techniques which are tied to... discourse[s] in the technologies of the self (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982:174-5).

The subject constitutes himself [sic] in an active fashion, by the practices of the self, but these practices are nevertheless not something that the individual invents by himself. They are patterns that he finds in his culture and which are proposed, suggested and imposed on him by his culture, his society, his social group (Foucault 1988a:11)

If one wants to analyze...the subject in Western civilization, one has to take into account, not only the techniques of domination, but also the techniques of the self. One has to show the interaction between these types of techniques (Foucault 1981a:5).

Introduction

This chapter concerns itself with the domain of self-governing practices offered by self-help texts as a somewhat mundane yet significant cultural field of moral regulation

which can be understood as 'making up' or 'inventing' selves through a governance of self-constitution. I will attempt to develop a theoretical understanding of what 'the self' entails by examining how certain self-help formulations, techniques, and practices serve to constitute the self which formed the primary subject matter presented in Chapter 6. I will also discuss how problematizations⁷⁴ associated with achieving the good self encourage, direct, instruct and enlighten individuals through strategies of their own self-rule and self-constituting practices.

First, I briefly present and outline previous modes of thought which have cast a serious doubt on essentialist versions of selfhood and use this sketch as a backdrop to introduce Foucauldian-informed thematics of the self, which inform and orient the remainder of the chapter. Examining the constitution of the self-constituting individual will also entail discussing separate, yet interrelated, relays or linkages which are key to ethical self-formation: 1) knowing the self, 2) care of the self, and 3) how we create ourselves through practices and techniques of the self.

⁷⁴. Problematizations examine "the set of discursive or non-discursive practices that make something enter into the play of true and false, and constitutes it as an object for thought (whether under the form of moral reflection, scientific knowledge, political analysis, etc.)" (Foucault 1989:296).

Anti-Essentialist Approaches to the Self

Selves are socially constituted through a plethora of discourses - biological, medical, psychological, moral. These ideas, signifying practices, and institutionalized truths have a number of effects and consequences. Problematizing selves and making any essentialist claims which could be studied through an objective science are anti-thetical. Social constructionism - the view that selves are designed and formulated through scientific and other authorial discourses - calls into question the truth claims made by expert knowledge systems. Rose argues that a critical examination of

the 'self' should focus directly upon the practices within which, in our own times and in the past, human beings have been *made up as subjects*: the presuppositions about human beings that have underpinned them, the languages, techniques, procedures and forms of judgement through which human beings have come to understand and act upon themselves as 'selves' of a certain type (1996:296; emphasis in original).

Social constructionist views of the person have certainly advanced the arguments that 'selves' are a result of socially constructed knowledges. This perspective has amplified the earlier ideas of Mead (1934), arguing that selves, persons, psychological characteristics, including the very idea of individual psychological traits, are social and historical constructions, not naturally occurring categories, objects or events. Constructionism casts doubts on the inevitability of the modern notion of the self, particularly in contemporary

psychology (Cushman 1990; Gergen 1991; Harre 1986; Shotter and Gergen 1994).

Similarly, Critical Theory, originating in the Frankfurt School tradition, has located the Western conception of the self as the consequence of advanced capitalist ideology. These theorists have posited the possibility that the psychological subject is a bourgeois development that serves ideological purposes contributing to social reproduction rather than to better the human condition (Adorno 1967, 1974; Horkheimer 1972; Horkheimer and Adorno 1972; Marcuse 1966).

Marcel Mauss (1985) also provides a useful and critical account of the historical development of the category of the person. He argues that forms of personhood are contingent at any given moment on the social and historical contexts of its formation. Thus, just as 'the person' does not have in its genesis some unrefined psychological and biological essence that is the inevitable outcome of being human, so too is 'the self' a product of identifiable, if not discontinuous historical events.

Contemporary Foucauldian theorizations on liberal practices of the self has constituted a significant advance in contemporary social theory (Dean 1994, 1995; Hindess 1993; Rose 1990, 1993, 1995, 1996; Valverde 1996). Social theorists working in this tradition have specified the general characteristics of liberal modes of governance, including the involvement of the subjects of rule as active participants in

their own governance. However, much Foucauldian-inspired work on moral and ethical governance has thus far seriously underestimated the ability of quite despotic forms of rule, especially rule over the self, to coexist alongside highly refined liberal practices (Valverde 1996:365).

Valverde (1996) highlights the need to examine techniques of ethical governance such as those found in individual projects to acquire "virtuous" habits. This general point will be used to show self-help literature can be understood as a particular technology of moral/ethical regulation that actively encourages an increased governance over the self. I will also focus on elaborating these accounts to provide an understanding of how self-governance manifests itself through self-help technologies and practices of the self found in contemporary self-help literature.

The self, conceived as a socio-cultural and socio-historical product, as all of the challengers to the Cartesian view in one way or another indicate, must necessarily belong to its particular time and place. In this sense, to 'fit' means to fit the particular political rationality or governmentality of the current 'regulation society'. Changing conceptions and practices of the self, then, are somewhat equivalent to a Kuhnian paradigm shift: they come about in a process that is paralleled by shifts in the underlying social and cultural domains that have produced them, even as they reproduce the underlying culture and social realm.

The technologies of the self operating within the self-help genre stress a set of practices which, to a large degree, attempt to produce a citizenry intent on regulating themselves. As an apparatus of normalization, self-help discourses and their authorities on the self rely on technologies of power/knowledge and the belief that individuals will care for themselves in psychological terms. Engaging oneself in the project of self-help does not simply entail self-governance, however. It is also "a deliberate extension of your care for yourself" (Bentley 1988:196).

"Become Your Own Therapist"⁷⁵

Self-help texts promulgate the notion that in order to experience relief from one's problems and 'reclaim one's life' one first needs to understand that they are shaped by personal past events. This temporal determination assumes that for every current problem an individual has there is an explanation in one's past continuing to affect the way the individual thinks, feels, acts and lives in the present. Authors thus declare that with 'the right' information, individuals are capable of becoming their own best therapist through the notion of the human being as "homo psychologicus"; individuals with self-consciousness become "pseudo-experts" on

⁷⁵. Quote derived from McMahon's *The Portable Therapist* (1992:xxi).

their own selves (Foucault 1987:87).

Popular psychology in 'do-it-yourself' treatment books attempt to teach people to help themselves and promises to help subjects become an expert in some aspect of their own self. As one self-help author states: "You learn the tricks of the trade from someone who knows them well" (Bentley 1988:196). These manuals and guides aspire to assist subjects in arriving at their own diagnosis and treatment in which the reader is told to "let yourself become the 90-second therapist" (Bentley 1988). Self-help, thus, takes on a distinctive meaning in contemporary society; to a large extent it becomes synonymous with self-therapy. For example, Bentley writes

The theme throughout this book is that you can be your own therapist...This is not at all the exclusive property of professionals...But in this world where we leave so much up to the experts, it is a tempting fallacy to think that the real therapists are the professionals. In fact, nothing could be less true. As intelligent human beings, we are called by nature to be the primary therapists for our own lives (Bentley 1988:193-4).

Thus, self-help literature is a moral enterprise, aimed at 'helping people help themselves' with the wisdom of professional/expert knowledge. The individual becomes both the subject and object of its own knowledge, with the help of the expert 'acting at a distance' relying on the subject to take on the role of both 'patient' and 'therapist/analyst.' As a

series of self-disciplinary practices, self-help reading occurs in the absence of covert external hierarchical surveillance. The subject becomes the authority over her/himself.

Techniques of self operate not so much by way of negative prohibition but, more characteristically, by way of positive, productive applications; it is through these applications that the self produces and reconstructs itself. Disciplinary powers are brought to bear on the individual as a subject through various modes of application that promote self-reflection and self-correction by inculcating notions of responsibility and accountability and inciting subjects to act on themselves. However, whatever self the self is pursuing, we must remember that its material expression is always-already within the boundaries and significations of meanings supplied by culture and society (Wagner 1981).

Governing and Constituting Self-Constitution

Self-help techniques can be understood as an apparatus of self-governance through which external 'psy' authorities are able to prescribe ever more avenues for individual self-management and practices of the self. Foucault's late work on the technologies of the self and ethics focuses on the way in which the individual is encouraged actively to participate in these 'policing' practices of oneself. This incitation to

self-govern can be ascertained in the self-help literature in that the techniques, tactics, and technologies can be understood as devices for enhancing and expanding the capacities for individual subjects to assert power over their own conduct.

Self-help texts seek to provide the means to gain knowledge about ourselves through which we are governed, and Foucault's work helps explain how complex networks of power and practices can shape our knowledge of ourselves. Thus, the self should not be conceived as a transhistorical object, but rather as only one way in which human beings have been advised to understand and relate to themselves (Hadot 1992; Rose 1990, 1995, 1996). Rejecting the common assumption of the transcendental subject which, *a priori*, possesses identical features and parameters throughout history, Foucault (1979: 1980) posits the self as developing within a plethora of practices and technologies by which the human subject is formed.

Deleuzes's conceptualization of Foucault's notion of the self involves the 'folding' back of exterior relations of power and governance to create an 'interiority' that can act on itself. The concept of the fold suggests

a way in which we might think of an internality being brought into existence in the human being without postulating any prior interiority, and thus without binding ourselves to a particular version of the law of this interiority whose history we are seeking to diagnose or disturb (Rose 1996:37).

The languages, techniques, exhortations, and knowledge in self-help literature "introduce deep foldings into the body, the inside of the outside as an operation of the outside" (Rose 1996:188). These ethical techniques must be understood

in the sense in which *the relation to oneself* assumes an independent status. It is as if the relations of an outside folded back upon themselves to create a doubling, to allow a relation to oneself to emerge, and to constitute an inside which is hollowed out and develops in its own unique dimension (Deleuze 1988:100; emphasis in original).

This also entails a recognition that the self is constituted as an independent self-governing entity, a free subject, that can act on itself through "practices of the self" (Dean 1994:157; cf. Rose 1996). These practices in which the self acts on itself, in the pursuit of self-cultivation through self-knowledge and care of the self are most fully addressed in Foucault's *The Use of Pleasure* (1986a) and *The Care of the Self* (1990b). Jambet notes that "this is one of the major lessons of Foucault's work: that ontology is susceptible to history. It should be stated that there is a multiplicity in the doctrines of being but, more radically, that being *constitutes itself*" (1992:238; emphasis in original). Similarly, Hacking argues that Foucault "wants to know how the subjects themselves are constituted...It is a Foucauldian thesis that every way that I can consider myself as a person

and an agent is something that has been constituted within a web of historical acts" (1986:36).

In his text on the history of manners, Elias (1978) outlines some of the mechanisms by which persons have been induced to be self-regulators as part of society's "civilizing process." He argues that contemporary social regulation operates by constructing a "socially patterned constellation of habits," through which it is possible to cultivate the socially required control over the behaviour of individuals. By emphasizing self-government, the constraining of individual selves

is enforced less and less by direct physical force. It is cultivated in the individual from an early age of habitual self-restraint by the structure of social life, by the pressure of social institutions in general, and by certain executive organs of society (above all, the family) in particular. Thereby the *social commands and prohibitions become increasingly a part of the self* (1978:188; emphasis added).

Latour has pointed out that in order for an object or domain to be governable one not only needs the terms to speak and think about it, one also needs to be able to assess its conditions (1986:6). This means that in the domain of the self, one needs knowledge or information about the self for purposes of calculation, assessment and self-governance. Information can take numerous forms: writing activities, charts, questionnaires, sentence completions, surveys and so

forth. It enables features of the self that are accorded relevance to be represented in a calculable form. As Chapter 5 demonstrated, self-help texts provide the reader with a vast array of devices and techniques by which their own human capacities can be turned into information about their selves.

The capacity of certain forms of thought render problems intelligible through inquisition, recordings, documentations, scrutinization or calculation. These practical technical devices transform self-regulatory practices into truth-making processes of the self. By providing subjects systematic and coherent ways in which to visualize, assess and diagnose their behaviour, experiences, emotions, memories, and the like, calculative practices are translated into action upon the objects (subjects) of calculation. The self-help genre invents forms of self-evaluation by providing the vocabulary, information and techniques for self-analysis and this knowledge is applied to self-governing ends. The outcomes of these calculative practices inform the decisions one makes about one's problematic behaviour. Thus, practices of calculation are integral to the project of knowing and caring for the self.

The reader of self-help texts is advised constantly to monitor and regulate itself. To correspond with and relate to others, the subject "must have become not only calculating but calculable, regular even to his [sic] own perception" (Nietzsche 1989:58). The subject of self-help has been

constructed and presented as a calculable and uniform entity, capable of being held responsible for its own social conduct and experience in the world. Indeed, this is the subject of social discipline; the subject as the effect of external and internalized pressures and/or agents in order to be a suitable and acceptable member of modern society. The self is thus created or realized through proposed means aimed at self-discovery and self-mastery, a process presented and represented in a variety of progressions, depending on the particular text(s) the individual is consulting.

As discussed in Chapter 2, power is not a structural force, rather, it is part and parcel of human practices and is intimately linked with the constitution of the self. This linkage occurs in the sense that one learns how to appraise and urge oneself and how to behave: one must not look, act or talk like the marginalized or abnormal. The demarcations between normal and abnormal, healthy and sick, responsible and delinquent are all social constructions instantly located in these texts.

Ethical Practices and the *Rapport A Soi*

Foucault's notion of the *rapport a soi* is what characterizes ethical practices. The contrast between morals and ethics is "one between a set of principles or codes, on

the one hand, and practices of self-formation and regulation, on the other" (Dean 1994:147). The self-help genre can be understood as a series of moral rules of conduct that attempt to shape 'the ethical self.' It is 'moral' because it concerns itself with the binary oppositions of good/bad, right/wrong in its *judgements*. Ethical self-formation concerns the practices, techniques and discourses of the governance of the self by the self; the means by which individuals seek to know, decipher and act upon themselves (Dean 1994:156). Thus, the *rapport a soi* is a reflexive relation in which the historically and culturally conditioned truth about the self is constituted. Although none of the self-help experts explicitly deploy the term 'ethics,' as I have suggested in Chapters 4 and 5, Foucault's notion of the *rapport a soi* is precisely what these authors refer to when they encourage the reader to take care of and love itself.

What Foucault's notion of the *rapport a soi* conveys is what we take ourselves to be in the practices by means of which we constitute ourselves as moral agents. In the three volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1990a; 1986; 1990b) examines how the relationship of the self to the self as a sexual being exemplifies various historically conditioned truths about the self. It is in these works that Foucault demonstrates that the relationship we have to ourselves as ethical beings is instrumental in the constitution of the self.

What Foucault means by ethics is "the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself, *rapport a soi*, which...[he calls] ethics, and which determines how the individual is supposed to constitute himself [sic] as a moral subject of his own actions" (Foucault 1982:238). Moral codes have a significant role to play in governmental-ethical self-(re)formation. The multitude of activities the subject undertakes "constitute[s] himself [sic] as a moral subject acting with reference to the prescriptive elements that constitute the code" (Foucault 1986:33). It is the *rapport a soi* that creates the interior of the subject, the inner life-world of the self, the processes that render thinking and self-reflection possible and necessary for self-change (Dean 1994:156).

The self is thus not a passive entity structured by external influences but rather "an intensification of the relation to oneself by which one constituted oneself as the subject of one's acts" (Foucault 1990b:41). As Foucault recognized

The task of testing oneself, examining oneself, monitoring oneself in clearly defined exercises, makes the questions of truth – the truth concerning what one is, what one does, and what one is capable of doing – central to the formation of the ethical subject. Lastly, the end result of this elaboration is still and always defined by the rule of the individual over himself [sic] (Foucault 1990b:68).

It is assumed that through educating the self, techniques

implemented in everyday practices can re-train and re-habituate subjects' relationship to themselves by engaging them in a system of reflexive responsibilities. According to self-help advice, working on one's self with the aid of practices and techniques, the individual will then possess the knowledge to transform its experience and relations to others, in a better, more positive light.

To 'work on our selves' reforms morally and lends order to life, an order which is equated with virtue. Virtue, here, no longer resides solely in the essence of the individual, but in the will to change, the desire to improve oneself through difficult and painful grief work⁷⁶, by examining the naturally imperfect interiority of the inner self. 'Inner work' reveals character flaws and removes inner disorder. It is a form of moral ordering aimed at reconstructing the interiority of the self. Thus, working on the self is as much an issue of morality as it is one concerned with psychological and spiritual well-being.

Knowing and Caring For the Self

For Foucault, the practice of knowing oneself as a direct way to constitute the self appears to dominate Western

⁷⁶. This is a popular term used by codependency authors which alludes to "emotional pain, like anger, guilt, hurt." It refers to a chief goal in recovery: "to feel any emotional pain we have and be done with it" (Beattie 1990:226).

history.⁷⁷ Modern self-help texts seem inclined to give priority to the problem of knowing the self before addressing how to care for one's self: "In the modern world, knowledge of oneself constitutes the fundamental principle" (Foucault 1988a:22).

According to Foucault, both knowing and caring constitute the self. In relation to the reconstruction of the self in self-help literature, the advice, dicta and techniques appear to assist in the discovery of the 'real' self when in fact what is occurring is the construction of the self through acts of constituting.⁷⁸ The idea of knowing oneself entails a kind of self-fashioning based upon a conception of what is best. Knowledge about the self derived from self-help techniques is assumed to be a matter of discovering what one is and then caring for oneself.

One cannot care for self without knowledge. The care for self is of course knowledge of self – that is the Socratic-Platonic aspect – but it 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 one's self out with these truths. That is where

⁷⁷. The exception to this prevalence occurs during the Hellenistic and Roman periods when, according to Foucault (1990b), the idea of the care of the self obtained a degree of priority over and perhaps independence of the practice of knowing oneself. Although Platonists and Christians emphasized knowledge of the self, Epicureans and Stoicists stressed caring for the self.

⁷⁸. The difference between knowing and caring for oneself should not be taken as a definitive difference between discovering and inventing the self; it is rather, a difference in how the self is allegedly constituted.

ethics is linked to the game of truth (Foucault 1988a:5).

Games of truth are concerned with the practices of self-formation of the subject which Foucault calls "ascetical practice" which is "an exercise of self upon self by which one tries to work out, to transform oneself and to attain a certain mode of being" (Foucault 1988a:2). In discussing care for the self, Foucault discusses an art, a style, a form of cultivation, a kind of work, and a way of being. These "arts of existence", these "techniques of the self" were assimilated into the exercise of priestly power in early Christianity, and later, into educative, medical and psychological practices (Foucault 1986a:11).

While the knowledge of oneself begins with a schema, template or truth with which to measure one's 'progress,' the care of the self entails a more aesthetic criteria. The movement from knowledge to care has "more to do with the manner in which the individual needed to form himself [sic] an ethical subject" (1990b:67). Self-knowledge, then, is not solely a matter concerned with the details of the self in everyday life - it is also a concern with governing one's self through rules. Knowing oneself entails a kind of rule-governed conduct found in the self-help traditions that advance the care of the self. The project of improving oneself is based upon knowing oneself which is intimately connected to the search for the 'good life.' In the self-help tradition

"examination of self, judgement, and discipline show the way to self-knowledge by superimposing truth about self through memory, that is by memorizing the rules" (Foucault 1988a:43). Self-help practices contribute to the constitution of selves through the imposition of a truth or template. Self-help techniques are exemplary of processes where the subject is incited to constantly measure, judge and regulate her or his behaviour against a set of normalizing/moralizing set of social norms, values and beliefs. This demonstrates that "ideals and norms are always 'practical'; the point is to analyze the practices in which those norms actually figure, and which determine particular kinds of experience" (Rajchman 1985:79). Indeed, the task at hand is to determine whether and in what respects given concepts and practices can be viewed as creating, inventing, or making up people (cf. Hacking 1986; Rose 1995; Ward 1996).

A primary axis of subjectification and objectification is one that attempts to implant new "mentalities" or "intellectual techniques" (Rose 1996:31) - reading, writing, sentence completions, memory techniques - in which one's relationship to one's self may be transformed. These activities or devices, with the objective of acquiring greater self-understanding and self-knowledge, are promoted in order to generate a particular relation of the self to the self. Journalling and diary-writing is a particularly popular technique and activity to be exercised by the individual

wherein this "autobiographical thinking" serves as "a central element in self-therapy...[t]he autobiography is a corrective intervention onto the past, not merely a chronicle of elapsed events. One of its aspects, for example, is "nourishing the child-that-you-were" (Giddens 1991:72).

The 'individual subject' becomes the target of power/self-knowledge wherein the psyche or interiority of the self is approached as an object to be analyzed and separated into constituent parts. The aim of these disciplinary technologies is to shape a self "that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (1979:136). The individual is persuaded that through such confessional practices it is possible to 'truly' know oneself.

The confession has spread its effects far and wide. It plays a part in justice, medicine, education, family relationships and love relationships, in the most ordinary affairs of everyday life, and in the most solemn rites; one confesses one's crimes, one sins, one's thoughts and desires, one's illnesses and troubles...One admits to oneself, in pleasure and in pain, things it would be impossible to tell anyone else...Western man has become a confessing animal (1990a:59).

Foucault sees the confession as a central component in the expanding technologies for the discipline and regulation of the self in modern society. Technologies of power/knowledge have constructed what we know as "psyche, subjectivity, personality, consciousness" (Foucault 1979:29). As a technology of the self, the confession is supposed to reveal

our deepest, truest selves and this promise becomes so appealing and enmeshed in power relations they become difficult to see or break from. Even "the most private self-examination is tied to powerful systems of external control: sciences and pseudo-sciences, religious and moral doctrines" (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982:174).

The cultural desire to know the truth about oneself prompts the telling of truth; in confession after confession to oneself and to others, this *mise en discours* has placed the individual in a network of relations of power with those who claim to be able to extract the truth of these confessions through their possession of the keys to interpretation (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982:174; emphasis in original).

The examination and the confession are principal technologies for the subjectifying and objectifying element of self-help. The authority of psychology in this context no longer remains in the secret domain of trained experts; on the contrary, the individual subject as the target audience can now actively engage in understanding what is being said by the expert authorities.

More knowledge about one's self leads to more specification and an increased capacity for self-regulation. "The examination is, as it were, the ceremony of this objectification" (Foucault 1979:187). This "whole meticulous archive" is constructed where the subject's most mundane, personal and intimate activities, feelings, thoughts and

memories are recorded. This function both individualizes the subject and becomes a process of realizing one's self. Through the realization of practices of scrutinization and recording, the individual engages in the concretization of experience and self-knowledge. In short, activities or techniques of the self make the self 'real.' The subject 'real-izes' through 'self-real-izations.'

According to Foucault, the "power of writing" (1979:189), indeed, "the whole apparatus of writing" that accompanies self-examination opens up two correlative possibilities, one of which is paramount in the analysis of the self. For example,

the constitution of the individual as a describable, analyzable object, not in order to reduce him [sic] to 'specific' features...but in order to maintain him in his individual features, in his particular evolution, his own aptitudes or abilities, under the gaze of a permanent corpus of knowledge (1979:190).

This ordering of the self by the subject allows for ever more areas of self-monitoring and self-regulation. Thus, the individual becomes both the effect and object of a certain crossing over of power and knowledge. "Knowable man (souls, individuality, consciousness, conduct, whatever it is called) is the object-effect of this analytic investment, of this dominant-observation" (1979:305). Through psychological 'advances' the individual psyche could be isolated and known

to the subject her/himself. Thus an entirely new culturally produced arena was opened for the detailed self-subjectification and regulation of individual life.

The psychologization of the self is based upon the premise that individuals possess a powerful and profoundly influential consciousness which must necessarily be discovered, understood, explained and changed with the assistance and direction of expert knowledge. It has become common-sense knowledge that external events affect one's inner life. Perhaps more significant is the assumption that one's internal constitution determines one's life experiences, occurrences and outcomes. Self-help experts claim an ability to know why and how one's inner life affects one's social conditions, and consequently, offer the keys, the habits, the tools and secrets of how to remedy the psychological causes of one's failures, disappointments and frustrations.

Aligning oneself with the truth claims of the self-help discursive regime expose subjects to the exercise of power that inheres in accomplishing and establishing personal truths – truths needed for purposes of self-realization. Power can thus be both repressive *and* productive, an often ironic duality, as Foucault's discussions regarding "the repressive hypothesis," sexuality and the development of the Catholic sacrament of confession suggest (1984c; 1984d; 1990a). The central irony is that the very effort to construct a taxonomy of forbidden and "confessable" desires, acts, and utterances

incites talk about forbidden topics, talk in the new "form of analysis, stocktaking, classification...specification, [and] quantitative or causal studies...[which] installed...an apparatus for producing an ever greater quantity of discourse" (1984d:306).

With the assistance of self-help texts, individuals are encouraged to govern the self by the utilization and application of various techniques of self-formation to assist them in creating better and more fulfilled selves. By engaging in practices of self-examination a coherent perception of the self is formulated, an understanding concretized, which prepares the self for continuing self-scrutiny and governance. The apparatus for the production of the real and true self relies upon the interrogation of personal narratives, questionnaires, through self-examination relies then, to a large degree on the techniques of the self.

Creating the Real/True Self

Psychology, in contemporary culture, acts as one of the primary modes "of access to the natural truth to man" (Foucault 1987:74). In the last two centuries *homo psychologicus* has been established as the subject/object of psychological authority assuming that its expertise and systems of knowledge and decipherment can reveal the "the truth of the truth" of the psychologically constituted

individual (Foucault 1978:88).

The function of excavating the 'real', the 'true' self is to make the subject define her or himself as a case to be self-examined, to be studied and analyzed, in short, to self-objectify for rational - productive, efficient, constructive and other rewarding - ends. These normalizing functions are linked with technologies of power, relations of power that exist in a myriad of social relations, not only contained in self-help texts. Techniques of visualization, journal writing, sentence completions and the like form some of the discursive practices by which the self is incited to establish the 'truth' and 'reality' of itself.

Precisely because we have no "true self", Foucault insists that "we have to create ourselves as works of art" (Foucault 1983:565). In an interview with Dreyfus and Rabinow, Foucault is asked to comment on the relationship of the *rapport a soi* to Jean Paul Sartre's idea that individuals create themselves.⁷⁹

I think that from the theoretical point of view, Sartre avoids the idea of the self as something which is given to us, but through *the moral notion of authenticity*, he turns back to the idea that we have to be ourselves - to be truly our real self...From the idea that the self is not given to us, I think there is only one practical

⁷⁹. Sartre's notion of the authentic self is relevant in this thesis to the extent that it has been incorporated and appropriated by self-help experts in their urge for individuals to locate and "get in touch" with their "real" selves.

consequence: we have to create ourselves (1982:237; emphasis added).

According to Foucault, although a certain number of important constant moral elements about the self come from ancient Greek practices and conceptions of the self, the present culture of the self is very different in one major way. For example,

In the California cult of the self, one is supposed to discover one's true self, to separate it from that which might obscure or alienate it, to decipher its truth thanks to psychological or psychoanalytic science, which is supposed to tell you what your true self is. Therefore, not only do I not identify this ancient culture with what you might call the California cult of the self, I think they are diametrically opposed. W h a t happened in between is precisely an overturning of the classical culture of the self. This took place when Christianity substituted the idea of a self which one had to renounce because clinging to the self was opposed to God's will for the idea of a self which had to be created as a work of art (Foucault 1982:245).

This idea of a 'true', deep self is a cultural invention. The desire to embark on self-realization and self-discovery leads individuals to engage in certain techniques of self-formation found in cultural regimes of power/knowledge, such as the self-help genre. These systems of discourse and relations of power work together to form normalizing and naturalizing conditions that construct selves as both subjects and objects. Furthermore, through creations rather than

processes of 'discovery' the self constitutes itself.

Self-help texts claim to provide subjects with the techniques to undertake an intensive process of self-learning in which the individual can deploy the tools and habits for unlocking the inherent secret of the 'real' self. Within this logic, this political rationality of the self, a coherent, transparent and active subject is directed towards uncovering, deciphering, understanding and expressing the 'hidden truth' of the 'real'/'core' self. And indeed, it is the suppression and repression of the real self that results in feelings of misery, unhappiness and failure, or so the self-help literature claims.

Within the self-help genre the ethic of self-care requires that the individual conform to a certain art of living, as a recovering alcoholic or codependent, as a survivor of childhood traumas, or as a person with intimacy 'issues', all of which comes to ground and define the ethical criteria of existence. "[B]ut this art refers more and more to a universal nature or reason, which everyone must observe in the same way, whatever their social status" (1986:67). Indeed, self-help authors make appeals to all individuals not just to those who are 'troubled' or 'marginalized.' In fact, McMahon claims that her self-help book was written for "the person who is balanced, emotionally healthy, and loaded with Self-Esteem" (1992:vx).

Conclusion

The self 'discovered' through self-help practices should not be viewed as the result of an emancipatory process of self-understanding, but rather, as a product of 'pastoral power' whose techniques and practices of self-surveillance, self-discipline, self-interrogation and self-disclosure are learned, in this instance, from and taught by a myriad of 'psy' professionals and/or self-help experts. The information and knowledge gained by the self through knowing 'how' to evaluate and understand the self are precisely the material needed for self-constitution.

Self-help technologies are not simply about devising techniques that will control individual behaviour but a form of governance that incites individuals to self-regulate and constitute themselves through the *rapport a soi*. In Chapters 3, 4, and 5 I have emphasized that one of the major problematizations in the self-help literature is that of the problematic relationship one has to oneself. According to self-help promoters this is the site of one's problems; relations to others become secondary while the relationship to self becomes primary for achieving happiness, peace and prosperity. For example, the subject of self-help is told that she/he must first come to love herself/himself and only on this basis can the individual truly and genuinely love others. The point of 'functional' and 'healthy' living starts within the parameters and inner constitution of the self and more

specifically, how and in what processes the self relates to itself.

Helping one's self thus becomes first a matter of knowing oneself, and then a matter of self-governance: the disciplinary and self regulatory practices exercised by individuals in the conduct of themselves in their everyday, concrete lives. As Foucault so sagaciously realized, the real and constructive "'incorporation' of power was necessary, in the sense that power had to be able to gain access to the bodies of individuals, to their acts, attitudes and modes of everyday behaviour" (Foucault 1980:124-5). In conceptualizing ethics as a primary force of power relations which promotes the care of the self through modes of self-help as social governance, I have drawn on Foucault's conception of technologies of the self to theorize the specific practices promoted within the context of self-help literature. The care of the self approach advocated by self-help enthusiasts can be understood as a technology of normalization, subjectification, standardization and objectification not merely through the exterior networks of experts 'acting at a distance' but equally, and perhaps more importantly, through the instructions, advice, remedies and techniques aimed at reforming and reconstructing the *rapport a soi*, the individuals relationship to itself, as an expert on itself. Through these variegated processes, techniques and practices of self-reformation the individual constitutes and creates

rather than discovers, or uncovers the essence of one's true self. This is not, as suggested by the internalization thesis, merely a matter of appropriating or assimilating certain cognitive or affective constellations. Rather, the practices of self, are the very condition of the possibility of an interiority at all.

Chapter Seven:

Neo-Liberal Modes of GovernanceIntroduction

The objective of this concluding chapter is to link the proliferation of popular self-help psychologies with the rationalities and technologies of modern power in liberal democratic societies. Since the connections between political rationalities of neo-liberalism and individuals engaged in self-help projects may not be directly evident, this chapter develops an account of the relationship between the two through the Foucauldian conception of 'governmentality.'

Furthermore, in demonstrating how the contemporary regime of self-help is based on the liberal values and individual practices of choice, autonomy, liberty, and freedom contribute to inspire and inform projects of self re-construction, I will outline how the mentalities of self-help technologies are intertwined with the Foucauldian notion of 'governmentality'. Employing the analytic of governmentality provided by Foucault and some of his followers can help us to understand how self-help texts are related to both governmental and ethical practices of self-formation.

Governing Through 'Self'-Help

The rise of popular psychology should not be dismissed as a purely cultural fad, reduced to the status of a residual, larger social structure, treated as the logical outcome of particular *Zeitgeist*, or attributed to the intrinsic logic of a prevailing political 'philosophy.' Rather, it should be seen as a complementary correlative of a larger series of *practices* and complex matrix of techniques coterminous with and based on a 'governmentality,' a particularly modern liberal mode of rule.

Following Foucault, some have suggested that we use the term 'government' to encompass the multiplicity of tactics, strategies, calculations, reflections and programs that have sought to "conduct the conduct" of human beings in advanced liberal democracies (Foucault 1978, 1984; Dean 1994, 1995; Gordon 1986, 1987; Rose 1990; 1996, Rose and Miller 1992). From this position it is understood that not only governments govern; government can also be seen as the conduct of conduct, a form of activity that is aimed at shaping, guiding or affecting the conduct of individuals (Gordon 1991:2). Thus, governmentality implies an ethical relationship of self to self concerning types of strategies and regimes which attempt to direct the conduct of free subjects (Foucault 1988a:19-20).

Governance in this instance refers to a "perspective from which one might make intelligible the diversity of attempts by authorities of different sorts to act upon the

actions of others in relation to objectives of national prosperity, harmony, virtue, productivity, social order, discipline, emancipation, self-realization, and so forth" (Rose 1996:29).

Neo-liberalism, as a mode of political rule in modern society, comprises an ensemble of specific techniques and problematizations of the population.⁸⁰ Historically, the liberal state has been represented as the antithesis of the absolutist police state (Minson 1993:61). But as Burchell et al (1991) and Minson (1985) have observed, liberalism is not to be seen simply as a political philosophical doctrine or 'philosophy' based on setting limits to government but also as an 'art' and sets of techniques used to govern the population. However, the relation between practices of government and self-formation, cannot be subsumed under one single schema, typology, or causality, but rather, should be understood in terms of the forms of self-relation they presuppose and enact. It is thus necessary to discuss the interconnection between those two domains - government and self-formation - in which various authorities seek to direct the conduct of individuals and the ways in which individuals seek to act on themselves (Dean 1994:159-60).

⁸⁰. Minson's (1985) reconstruction of Foucault's genealogical arguments claims that the modern categories of person are in part the historical products and instruments of a liberal style of administration. The political rationalities of liberalism contributed to the formation and exaltation of self-determined individuals and the public/private divisions of daily life.

Dean (1995:562-3) suggests that liberal government, as a form of a government of conduct, presupposes the possibility of a self-governing individual is intimately intertwined within different ways of thinking about the organization of the self, of which the self-determining individual is but one. He argues that an analytic of self-formation need not depend upon the separation of political and ethical domains in any given instance. These governmental-ethical practices underline the way in which what might loosely be called 'practices of government' come to depend upon, operate through and create linkages to 'practices of the self.' Dean likens these practices to a type of 'hybrid' in that it is often not clear where the locus of agency for the direction of conduct lies, thus suggesting flexible boundaries in the process of self-formation.

To some degree, liberal modes of governance render the lives of individuals as private affairs free from state interventions by offering citizens the opportunity for "choice", to "autonomously" pursue their own life plans and the "freedom" to follow one's own personal interests. This model assumes that "good" government is a republic of autonomous self-governing citizens (Minson 1993:61-3). Modes of regulating the person, then, are connected to the deliberations, strategies and obligations of political rule and encoded in the apparatuses of citizen formation: the government of a polity has become intrinsically linked to the

regulation of self-governing responsible citizens (Rose 1996a:317-18).⁸¹

An ethic of personal responsibility is integral to the language of democratic citizenship, particularly the valorization of choices⁸² and freedom in the shaping of one's self and lifestyle.

The doctrine of the liberty of the individual under the law was to go hand in hand with the infolding into that free individual of a complex of authorities that were as much secular as spiritual, and whose injunctions as to prudence, order, temperance, continence, responsibility, steadfastness, obedience and virtue were embodied in the habits...in the multitude of little practices of everyday life (Rose 1996:313).

According to many self-help treatises, the first step in reconstructing a healthy self is to realize that the only one responsible for how you feel is yourself (Beattie 1987; 1989).

⁸¹. For example, "the great masturbation panic" was constructed as a social and individual problematic in which certain populations increasingly became a target and object of knowledge within the realm of human sexuality. As an object of knowledge and social governance, masturbation legitimated the intervention of a growing network of specialized knowledges (Hunt 1995).

⁸². The choices of the self have become central to the moral bases of political arguments, Left or Right, and from all parts of the political arena (Rose 1996:164). Cushman raises several important political questions which reveal the importance of discussing the configuration of the self and the political implications of those conceptualizations. For example, he asks, "If psychologists can prove that each individual possesses a unique self the potential of which is present at conception, or soon after, and that self is a natural entity that grows organistically with the proper nourishment, will the putative scientific truth be used to justify banning abortion?" (1995:336).

Problems of human conduct are articulated less and less as being social in character or in origin but rather as imperatives that 'good citizens' should undertake themselves. "Citizens should want to regulate their conduct and existence for their own welfare, that of their families, and that of society as a whole" (Rose 1990:224). As such, the private realm of personal life was delineated as the ultimate form of freedom in a liberal democratic society. Foucault identifies the quotidian operation of power as working most insidiously when it is the least visible. The self-help genre is concerned to regulate, rehabilitate, and reconstruct the self through technologies of the self. Its medium is neither coercive power or law, but rather normalization based on seemingly benign strategies, techniques and tactics of self-governance.

Governmentality, or the conduct of conduct, can be seen as the corollary to popular technologies of self-help in the sense that each domain attempts to inform the regulated autonomy of individual subjects by invoking the capacities and powers of ethical self-governance whose subjection, and indeed, self-subjection, is consistent with channelling and promoting forms of choice, liberty, and responsibility while at the same time undertaking to advance, encourage, and configure those same capacities and powers. As Dean writes, "the ways in which the subject works upon itself, the relation of the self to the self, must also be taken into account and

linked to the most general forms of government" (1994:166). This is because the modern citizen is formed not only as an active member of a political community but also as one who works on her or himself, as an ethical being, as seen as the representative subject exemplified in contemporary self-help manuals. "The well-governed commonwealth can no longer be divorced from the commonwealth of the many souls that is the self" (Dean 1994:166). According to one popular self-help author, Thomas Moore (1992:xi), the great malady of the twentieth century is "loss of soul" which has appeared symptomatically in "obsessions, addictions, violence, and the loss of meaning." He goes on to claim that "by caring for the soul we can find relief from distress and discover deep satisfaction and pleasure" (Moore 1992:xi). This mentality also intimates that subjects are able to *choose* happiness over unhappiness, success over failure and health over illness.

The self-help language and vocabulary of responsibility, freedom, and choice, enables a morally regulating political rationality to be translated and transcribed on to aspects of personal existence that are considered to be problematic in psychologic interpretations of the good and healthy self. For example, consider the following statements made by self-help authors:

People choose their actions and reactions. And they should be held accountable for these choices and the consequences of those actions, no matter what the history or the present circumstances. When we move away from that imperative, we move away from

being human and move closer to being animal (Schlessinger 1997:75).

Whenever choices are made morality is immediately an issue (Schlessinger 1997:156).

When these choices are determined by virtue and values, you bring purpose, meaning, and integrity to your life (Schlessinger 1997:268).

It is through your choices and your individual uniqueness that you can make things happen on the road of your life-journey (Zonnya 1995:xvi).

These pronouncements embody "the presupposition that humans are, could be, or should be enterprising individuals, striving for fulfilment, excellence, and achievement" (Rose 1996:154).

The knowledges and forms of expertise concerned with the internal characteristics of individual selves assume a significant importance here because it is the 'free individual' upon whom liberalism depends for its political legitimacy and functionality in various processes of rule. "Perhaps one can say that the general strategic field of all those programmes of government that regard themselves as liberal has been defined by the problem of how free individuals can be governed such that they enact their freedom appropriately" (Rose 1996:29).

The "self-steering capacities" of subjects are directly linked to the rhetoric of self-help and political rationalities of the regulated freedom of autonomous selves. "Governing in a liberal democratic way means governing *through* the freedom and aspirations of subjects rather than in spite

of them" (Rose 1996:155).

Following the analysis of Pierre Hadot, Foucault claims that the subject is in the first instance its relationship to itself. This does not posit an illusory negation of the other but instead a negative relationship in which the subject is constituted as a 'free individual.' Liberty, in this sense, becomes a certain form of relationship of the individual to himself [sic]" (Jambet 1992:239) where individuals are not just "free to choose" but *obliged to be free* (Rose 1996:17; emphasis in original). The notion of a free, autonomous self elucidates something quite significant in the ways through which modern subjects have come to experience, understand and evaluate their lives. This understanding of the subject is precisely what Foucault (1982) argued against.⁸³ The individual, understood as the sole author dedicated to its own well being enslaves human beings by eliminating the horizon against which the enslavement could be made visible. A social order that is taken-for-granted delivers the most deceptive of deceptions; while appearing to be normal, neutral and natural, its monstrosities remain invisible.

It seems to me that the real political task in a society such as ours is to criticize the workings of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent; to criticize them in such a manner

⁸³. Alex de Toqueville raised a key political point when he stated that a "nation that asks nothing from its government but the maintenance of order is already a slave at heart, the slave of its own well-being, awaiting only the hand that will bind it" (1990:142).

that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight them (Foucault cited in Rabinow 1984:6).

The self-help literature, with its own various concealments of authority, is just such an "institution" (Poster 1993). However, as Rabinow (1984:11) has pointed out, conceptualizations of the self as a self-contained individual that makes its own values based on a subjective sense of well-being cannot see that turning itself into a subject, it also becomes objectified.

This autonomization of a choosing, responsible, self have become central ontologizations of the properties and characteristics of human beings endemic to contemporary modes of governance. These ideas and practices regarding the nature of the modern subject in advanced liberal societies are paramount to the maintenance and reproduction of practices of modern governmentality.

This form of the self is a subject simultaneously of freedom and different modes of governance. And according to popular self-help texts, with some determination and tenacity, everyone is or can be free. The replete litany of virtues that the wealthy once preached to the poor are, once again, restored to service, now directed at all members of society. Inner courage, discipline, strength, faith, humility, dignity are proffered by these philosophies as a patent fix for living in an unjust world.

Thus the individual of liberalism should be conceived as a construction of power in which "the `self' can become an instrument of power, a tool actively working at reducing its own recalcitrance, resistance, unpredictability, and at obtaining its own docility. Indeed, *self-discipline* seems to be the most efficacious technique of power in modern society" (Pizzorno 1992:207).

Modern configurations of power and knowledge lead us to think of ourselves as distinct and separate individuals who are endowed with the abilities to create our own selves without necessarily having a set of external rules imposed on us. We make our own choices and live our own lives. Nobody tells us who to be; we are obliged to construct ourselves.

In contrast, Foucault's (1990b) discussion on the care of the self does not describe the forging of the human capacity to choose and understand. As with knowing oneself, the practice of caring for the self *postulates*, rather than excavates, the ability of human beings to act. All of the self-help texts presuppose agency and the capacity to engage in the prescribed practices, to understand and to accept some or all of their features. Thus, if the self has the capacity to choose and act, it is not constituted through either knowing or caring for the self but rather through the regulation and governance of the self. As Foucault argues in a more general context:

This individual freedom should not, however, be understood as the independence of a free will. Its polar opposite was not a natural determinism, nor was it the will of an all-powerful agency: it was enslavement - the enslavement of the self by oneself (Foucault 1986a:79).

In order for a society to be just, subjects not only need to be thought of as free, they actually must be free. In order to exercise a relation of power, there must be on both sides at least a certain form of liberty (Foucault 1980). This does not, however, imply the non-existence of states of domination. The link between the spheres of government and the 'free' individual is not just an external imposition but also an internal one in which the very constitution of the 'free' subject has been the objective and consequence of regulatory programs and techniques (Foucault 1982; Rose 1990, 1996).

Governments of Subjectivities

The government of subjectivity has taken shape through a multitude of complex and heterogenous professional authorities. The 'psy' professionals have assumed a particularly significant role in governing the constitution of self-constituting subjects engaging in ethical self-reformation. These "experts on subjectivity" transfigure existential questions about the purpose of life and the meaning of suffering into technical questions about the most effective ways of managing malfunction and improving the

"quality of life" (Rose 1996:151).

The therapeutic government of the self and its experts of subjectivity offer a freedom to realize our potential and our dreams through reshaping the style in which we conduct our secular existence. The "mentalities of government and technologies of regulation operate in terms of an ethic of the self that stresses not stoicism or self-denial in the service of morality and society, but the maximization of choice and self-fulfilment as the touchstone of political legitimacy" (Rose 1996:164).

Neoliberalism has been a powerful contributor to this reorganization of the problematics of government, questioning, from a particular ethic of individual sovereignty, the legitimacy and capacity of authorities to know and administer the lives of their subjects in the name of well-being (Rose 1996:164).

Rose (1996) argues that subjectivity is inherently linked to particular types of knowledges and that projects based on autonomy are linked to the growth of expertise, and that freedom is inextricably bound up with certain ways of exercising power. It is thus no accident that popular psychology is a powerful discourse as a language, a set of norms, a body of values, an assortment of techniques, a plethora of experts - plays such a significant role in the technologies of government in liberal democracies (Rose 1990; 1996).

Modern characteristics, practices and ideals such as individualism, personal ambition, professional success, inner fulfilment, and self-realization require a mode of political rule that operates through the well-being of self-governing individuals. The political rationalities of liberal government are concerned with, among other things, inspiring, encouraging and inaugurating techniques and programs that will both "autonomize" and "responsibilize" subjects (Rose 1996).⁸⁴ So even while bad habits may not be our fault "it is our *responsibility* to change" (Beattie 1987:123; emphasis in original).

Discussions of individual 'responsibility' are a key dimension in inciting and directing individuals to 'take the initiative' for their own selves. Morally regulating the ethical self-formation of those aspiring toward self-improvement relies heavily on Western society's understanding and obligation of 'being responsible for one's own self.' To

⁸⁴. For example J.S. Mill wrote in *On Liberty* (1947) that self-direction is an ethical imperative of the sovereign individual of liberal government. Mill's assertion that "[o]ver himself, over his body and mind, the individual is sovereign" demonstrates the practical training of citizens and the rule of conduct over the self as an elementary function of governmentality. The

peculiar training of a citizen, the practical part of political education of a free people...and accustoming them to the comprehension of joint interests, the management of joint concerns...habituating them to act from public or semi-public motives, and guide their conduct by aims which unite...[w]ithout these habits and powers, a free constitution can neither be worked nor preserved...(Mill 1947:164-5; emphasis added).

'take initiative' of positive self-change requires the recognition that one's responsibility does not simply mean, however, to take responsibility for one's self, it also means one must recognize one's 'response-ability' - the ability to choose one's response, and act most appropriately (Covey 1989:71, 75). This critical caveat is neatly demonstrated by the following self-help advice.

We are responsible for our own effectiveness, for our own happiness, and ultimately...for most of our circumstances (Covey 1989:93).

The only thing we can effectively control is our reactions to whatever life hands us (Jeffers 1996:24; emphasis in original).

It's not what happens to us, but our response to what happens to us that hurts us...But our character, our basic identity, does not have to be hurt at all. In fact, our most difficult experiences become the crucibles that forge our character and develop internal powers, the freedom to handle difficult circumstances (Covey 1989:73).

The task of learning to live life to its fullest will be mainly left up to you as an individual. You will largely be your own teacher. Of course, there will be those from whom you learn...But when it comes down to the practical adaptation and actualization, the responsibility will be up to you, individually (Zonnya 1995:xv).

According to Harris, 'Transactional Analysis' offers subjects a chance to pursue autonomy and break away from parental and other authoritarian influences in order that the genuine self might be expressed. Transactional analysis, he

claims, enables people to change, to establish self-control and self-direction, to be liberated from dishonest "games" and to "discover the reality of freedom of choice" (1973:14). The tendency for self-help tenets to emphasize the autonomization of a freely choosing, responsible self are precisely the central properties and characteristics prescribed to 'self-governing' human beings so vital and integral to contemporary modes of governance. Such a self conceives itself to be free. The modern subject can thus be governed, and comes to govern itself through the very technologies that promise to secure its well-being and success.

The entanglement of individualization, objectivization and self-subjectivization in self-help psychology results in the illusion that the modern subject is a actor endowed with agency and responsibility to forge his or her self. The self that creates its self based on a subjective sense of well-being cannot be detected because it appears to be neutral and normal and therefore remains hidden and ubiquitous. Such a self becomes what Rose (1990:213) calls "a vital element in the networks of power that traverse modern societies." He goes on to describe this entanglement:

The regulatory apparatus of the modern state is not something imposed from outside upon individuals who have remained essentially untouched by it. Incorporating, shaping, channelling, and enhancing subjectivity have been intrinsic to the operations of government. But while governing society has come to require governing subjectivity, this has not been achieved through the growth of an omnipotent

and omniscient central state whose agents institute a perpetual surveillance and control over all its subjects. Rather, the government of subjectivity has taken shape through the proliferation of a complex and heterogenous assemblage of technologies. These have acted as relays, bringing the varied ambitions of...authorities into alignment with the ideals and aspirations of individuals, with the selves each of us want to be (Rose 1990:213).

Rose's quotation nicely captures the double movement or double force of modern power that both *produce* individual selves (productive power) and *constrain* individuality and difference (normalizing and standardizing power).⁸⁵ Modern power fuses the production of individual selves (techniques of individualization) in concert with the constraining of alternative forms and legitimate possibilities of human being (totalization procedures) (Foucault 1982:213). This double movement is contingent upon both constituting and constraining powers in which the "inter-weaving, the intrication of two great technologies of power", rather than being binary in its operations and investments, became complex and multiform. This effect involves a "vast technology of the psyche, which became a characteristic feature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries"; it presents the possibility of decoding reality

⁸⁵. This argument derives in part from Caputo's (1993) thesis that modern power is not only productive, but also repressive in its effects.

behind a rational consciousness (Foucault 1980:184-5).⁸⁶

Conclusion

The type of individualization produced and maintained by the political rationalities of liberal democratic society seems to be quite consonant with programs based upon self-reliance, self-help and self-rule and the freedom of choice so integral in the forging, reconstruction and reification of the modern self. The diverse processes of governmentality are productive in that they enlist individuals as allies. By structuring personal capacities into values, decisions and judgements made by individuals as part of their 'self-steering' mechanisms (Rose and Miller 1994) the government of populations directly translates into the ways in which individuals fashion a 'self'; or rather, the various problematizations which specify the subject as object to be known, regulated and governed via the power and knowledge of one's self. Self-help texts include directions on acceptable and preferred approaches to values, decisions and judgements which these individuals make including the management of their own lives. As a result of governmental directives individuals

⁸⁶. Foucault argues against an uni-dimensional conception of power. For example, "one should not assume a massive and primal condition of domination, a binary structure with 'dominators' on one side and 'dominated' on the other, but rather a multiform production of relations of domination" (1980:142).

are incited into doing work upon themselves. This is precisely what Foucault is referring to when he indicates technologies of the self enabling individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others perfection or immortality (Foucault 1988b:18).

Practices of self-regulation generally, and self-help specifically, are thus connected to the management and government of populations. Governing through the liberal political rationalities of choice, freedom, autonomy and freedom ensure that the practices based on governmentality continually turn the subject back on itself. Through obligation, accountability, responsibility the subject of modernity in liberal democratic regimes is induced to assume the penultimate position of personal self-rule. The self, as a governmental object, can be understood as a set of practices and technologies that structures the individuals conduct of conduct, where individuals 'should naturally' engage in projects aimed at fashioning a unique, better, more productive or divine self. However, while there "is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives..., this does not mean that it results from the choice or decision of an individual subject" (Foucault 1980:94-5).

Popular self-help psychologies are intrinsically linked to the rationalities and technologies of modern power in liberal democratic societies. Practices and notions of democracy are also important in the sense that they

preconfigure forms of contemporary freedom. This preconfiguration is evident in the contemporary regime of self-help in the sense that it is based on, and attempts to buttress and reconfirm the liberal values and practices of choice, autonomy, liberty, and freedom that inspire, support, legitimize and inform popular 'psychologic' projects of self re-construction.

Within programs such as those exemplified by self-help books, the management of the subject is based on a vast array of technologies by which the individual is invited to regulate conduct him or herself through programmes and techniques of self-governance. This is part and parcel of the general program in advanced liberal democratic regimes to enrol and incite individuals to become their own objects of self-reformation. Doing specific works on the self, it is argued here, is part of a wider project of social governance and moral regulation of the constitution and (re)construction of ethical, healthy and well-adjusted human being.

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**Appendix B: Action Criteria for 15
Problem Behaviours (Prochaska et al 1994:67)**

<i>Problem Behavior</i>	<i>Action Criteria</i>
Smoking	Abstinence
Drug abuse	Abstinence
Gambling	Abstinence
Alcoholism	Abstinence
Troubled drinking	Abstinence, at times; or no more than 14 drinks per week, with no more than 5 drinks ever at any sitting
Sex (high risk)	Always use condoms
Depression	No more than 2 days of the blues at any time
Panic attacks	No panic attacks in any normal situation
Physical abuse	Never hit anyone and never be hit
Obesity (health criteria)	Less than 20% over standard weight tables
Diet (high fat)	Less than 30% of calories from fat
Sedentary life	Minimal: physical activity 3 times weekly, 20 minutes at a time Optimal: vigorous exercise 3 times weekly, 20 minutes at a time
Dental hygiene	Brush twice a day and floss each tooth
Procrastinating	Never put off anything that hurts you or others
Sun exposure	Always use sunscreens when exposed for more than 15 minutes

Appendix C: The Lifetrapp Questionnaire
and Scoring Key (Young and Klosko 1994:14-15)

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AS A CHILD	NOW	DESCRIPTION
		1. I find myself clinging to people I'm close to because I'm afraid they'll leave me.
		2. I worry a lot that the people I love will find someone else they prefer and leave me.
		3. I am usually on the lookout for people's ulterior motives; I don't trust people easily.
		4. I feel I cannot let my guard down around other people or they will hurt me.
		5. I worry more than the average person about danger—that I will get sick or that some harm will come to me.
		6. I worry that I (or my family) will lose money and become destitute or dependent on others.
		7. I do not feel I can cope well by myself, so I feel I need other people to help me get by.
		8. My parents and I tend to be overinvolved in each other's lives and problems.
		9. I have not had someone to nurture me, share him/herself with me, or care deeply about what happens to me.
		10. People have not been there to meet my emotional needs for understanding, empathy, guidance, advice, and support.
		11. I feel like I do not belong. I am different. I do not really fit in.
		12. I'm dull and boring; I don't know what to say socially.
		13. No one I desire who knew the real me—with all my defects exposed—could love me.
		14. I am ashamed of myself; I am unworthy of the love, attention, and respect of others.
		15. I am not as intelligent or capable as most people when it comes to work (or school).
		16. I often feel inadequate because I do not measure up to others in terms of talent, intelligence, and success.

		17. I feel that I have no choice but to give in to other people's wishes; otherwise they will retaliate or reject me in some way.
		18. People see me as doing too much for others and not enough for myself.
		19. I try to do my best; I can't settle for good enough. I like to be number one at what I do.
		20. I have so much to accomplish that there is almost no time to relax and really enjoy myself.
		21. I feel that I shouldn't have to follow the normal rules and conventions other people do.
		22. I can't seem to discipline myself to complete routine, boring tasks or to control my emotions.
		YOUR TOTAL SOCIAL EXCLUSION SCORE (Add your scores together for questions 1-10)

SCORING KEY

- 1 Completely untrue of me
- 2 Mostly untrue of me
- 3 Slightly more true than untrue of me
- 4 Moderately true of me
- 5 Mostly true of me
- 6 Describes me perfectly

Appendix D: The Abandonment Questionnaire (Young and Klosko 1994:61)

SCORE	DESCRIPTION
	1. I worry a lot that the people I love will die or leave me.
	2. I cling to people because I am afraid they will leave me.
	3. I do not have a stable base of support.
	4. I keep falling in love with people who cannot be there for me in a committed way.
	5. People have always come and gone in my life.
	6. I get desperate when someone I love pulls away.
	7. I get so obsessed with the idea that my lovers will leave me that I drive them away.
	8. The people closest to me are unpredictable. One minute they are there for me and the next minute they are gone.
	9. I need other people too much.
	10. In the end, I will be alone.
	YOUR TOTAL SCORE (Add your scores together for questions 1-10)

Appendix E: The Defectiveness Questionnaire (Young and Klosko 1994:209)

SCORE	DESCRIPTION
	1. No man or woman could love me if he/she really knew me.
	2. I am inherently flawed and defective. I am unworthy of love.
	3. I have secrets that I do not want to share, even with the people closest to me.
	4. It was my fault that my parents could not love me.
	5. I hide the real me. The real me is unacceptable. The self I show is a false self.
	6. I am often drawn to people—parents, friends, and lovers—who are critical and reject me.
	7. I am often critical and rejecting myself, especially of people who seem to love me.
	8. I devalue my positive qualities.
	9. I live with a great deal of shame about myself.
	10. One of my greatest fears is that my faults will be exposed.
	YOUR TOTAL DEFECTIVENESS SCORE (Add your scores together for questions 1–10)

Appendix F: The Failure Questionnaire (Young and Klosko 1994:241)

SCORE	DESCRIPTION
	1. I feel I am less competent than other people in areas of achievement.
	2. I feel that I am a failure when it comes to achievement.
	3. Most people my age are more successful in their work than I am.
	4. I was a failure as a student.
	5. I feel I am not as intelligent as most of the people I associate with.
	6. I feel humiliated by my failures in the work sphere.
	7. I feel embarrassed around other people because I do not measure up in terms of my accomplishments.
	8. I often feel that people believe I am more competent than I really am.
	9. I feel that I do not have any special talents that really count in life.
	10. I am working below my potential.
	YOUR TOTAL FAILURE SCORE (Add your scores together for questions 1-10)

Appendix G: Self-Image Self-Inventory (Zonnya 1995:76)

1.	YES	NO	Are you satisfied with what you are doing for a living?
2.	YES	NO	Do you take pride in your appearance?
3.	YES	NO	When you look in the mirror, are you reasonably satisfied with what you see?
4.	YES	NO	Do you look forward to meeting people?
5.	YES	NO	Do you believe that most people like you?
6.	YES	NO	Can you admit a mistake without losing confidence in yourself?
7.	YES	NO	Do you regard yourself as a useful, interesting person?
8.	YES	NO	Do you consider yourself a person who is worth knowing?
9.	YES	NO	Do you know what you want to do with your life?
10.	YES	NO	Do you feel fully capable of addressing your problems?

1. Can I enjoy a MORE beautiful lifestyle? _____
2. Do I believe that wanting "more, better, greater" of the productive things in life will improve my lifestyle? _____
3. Will my lifestyle improve by me giving individual daily attention to each area? _____
4. Through more of my individual daily attention, I can enjoy balanced living. What steps will I choose to take in each area?

PHYSICAL: _____

MENTAL: _____

SPIRITUAL: _____

SOCIAL: _____

FINANCIAL: _____

FAMILY: _____

Appendix I: Mental Balance Self-Inventory (Zonnya 1995:158-9)

1. Am I fully aware of the possibilities that lie within my mind to be explored? _____
2. Do I believe that a continuing education is necessary for me to grow? _____
3. What one new thing have I learned today? _____
4. List the title and author of the last book I read: _____
5. Do I resist learning new things? _____
Am I in a rut? _____
6. List my general attitude toward myself: _____
7. List my general attitude toward people: _____
8. List my general attitude toward problems: _____
9. Am I generally a happy, fun loving person? _____

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10. How can I increase my happiness? _____

11. List one feeling that seems to dominate my life: _____
12. Am I changing things about myself to create a more balanced life?

13. List five such changes:
1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
 5. _____
14. List three problems that I have faced and solved in the past week:
1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
15. List five things that I think of myself as:
1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
 5. _____

Appendix J: Social Balance Self-Inventory (Zonnya 1995:204-5)

1. Do I like people? _____
2. Are my expectations realistic of others or do I tend to expect too much? _____
3. Is it easy for me to talk to others? _____
4. Do I look forward to new social situations? _____
5. List two assets that I have that make people like me:
 1. _____
 2. _____
6. Do I do at least one good deed every day without expecting it to be returned? _____
7. List three things that I have done this week to help someone:
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
8. Do I stay up to date on things that are happening in the world, so I can effectively communicate with others? _____
9. List the organizations that I participate in and are a vital part of:

10. How do I show someone I love them? _____

11. Am I quick to judge others? _____

12. Name my two closest friends:

1. _____

2. _____

13. List the name of one new person I have met this week that I would like to develop into a closer friend:

14. Do I practice the "Ten Commandments For Building Rewarding Friendships At Home, At Work, At Play?" _____

15. List any of the "Ten Commandments" that I am weak in and need to make stronger: _____

Appendix K: Codependency Progression Checklist (Beattie 1987:202-3)

Early Stages

- _____ Often born of dysfunctional family and learned to "care" for others as measure of self-worth.
- _____ Failed to cure parents so will "cure" the over/undereater.
- _____ Finds over/undereater who is "needy" so controls.
- _____ Begins doubting own perceptions and wants to control eating to show decisiveness.
- _____ Social life affected. Isolated self from community to "help" over/undereater.

Obsession

- _____ Makes pleas and threats related to the eating behavior.
- _____ Judges self and feels the cause of eating/starving.
- _____ Hides food.
- _____ Attempts controlling eating, hiding food, idle threats, nagging, scolding.
- _____ Shows anger and disappointment regarding the over/undereater's promises.

Secret Life

- _____ Becomes obsessed with watching and covering up.
- _____ Takes over responsibilities of the over/undereater.
- _____ Takes pivotal role in communications, excluding contact between the over/undereater and others.
- _____ Expresses anger inappropriately.

Out of Control

- _____ Makes violent attempts to control eating. Fights with the over/undereater.
- _____ Lets self go physically and mentally.
- _____ Has extramarital affairs such as infidelity, workaholism, obsession with outside interests.
- _____ Becomes rigid, possessive. Appears angry most of the time and careful and secretive about home life.
- _____ Has related illness and drug abuse: ulcers, rashes, migraines, depression, obesity, tranquilizer use.
- _____ Constantly loses temper.
- _____ Becomes sick and tired of being sick and tired.

Appendix L: Psychological Distress Self-Assessment (Prochaska et al 1994:260-1)

0 = not bothered at all, 1 = not bothered much,
2 = bothered a lot

1. Not having much interest in things	—	
2. Feeling too tired to do things		—
3. Feeling afraid or scared without good reason		—
4. Having trouble remembering things		—
5. Feeling hopeless about the future	—	
6. Having trouble getting up in the morning and facing the day, even when I've had		
7. Worrying too much		—
8. Having trouble making up my mind		—
9. Feeling sad or crying without good reason	—	
10. Having trouble getting myself going		—
11. Feeling nervous, fidgety, tense		—
12. Being so restless I can't sit still		—
13. Being bothered by some unimportant thought that keeps running through my mind		—
14. Feeling blue or down in the dumps or depressed	—	
15. Losing my appetite or losing weight without trying		—
16. Feeling keyed-up or overexcited		—
17. Avoiding certain places, people, or things because they frighten me		—

Appendix M: Recovery Potential Survey (Whitfield 1987:2-4)

Circle or check the word that most applies to how you *truly* feel.

- 1) Do you seek approval and affirmation?
Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 2) Do you fail to recognize your accomplishments?
Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 3) Do you fear criticism?
Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 4) Do you overextend yourself?
Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 5) Have you had problems with your own compulsive behavior?
Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 6) Do you have a need for perfection?
Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 7) Are you uneasy when your life is going smoothly?
Do you continually anticipate problems?
Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 8) Do you feel more alive in the midst of a crisis?
Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 9) Do you care for others easily, yet find it difficult to care for yourself?
Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 10) Do you isolate yourself from other people?
Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 11) Do you respond with anxiety to authority figures and angry people?
Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 12) Do you feel that individuals and society in general are taking advantage of you?
Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 13) Do you have trouble with intimate relationships?
Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 14) Do you attract and seek people who tend to be compulsive?
Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 15) Do you cling to relationships because you are afraid of being alone?
Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 16) Do you often mistrust your own feelings and the feelings expressed by others?
Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 17) Do you find it difficult to express your emotions?
Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually

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- 18) Do you fear any of the following:
- losing control?
 - Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
 - your own feelings?
 - Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
 - conflict and criticism?
 - Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
 - being rejected or abandoned?
 - Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
 - being a failure?
 - Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 19) Is it difficult for you to relax and have fun?
- Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 20) Do you find yourself compulsively eating, working, drinking, using drugs, or seeking excitement?
- Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 21) Have you tried counseling or psychotherapy, yet still feel that "something" is wrong or missing?
- Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 22) Do you frequently feel numb, empty, or sad?
- Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 23) Is it hard for you to trust others?
- Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 24) Do you have an over-developed sense of responsibility?
- Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 25) Do you feel a lack of fulfillment in life, both personally and in your work?
- Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 26) Do you have feelings of guilt, inadequacy or low self-esteem?
- Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 27) Do you have a tendency toward having chronic fatigue, aches and pains?
- Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 28) Do you find that it is difficult to visit your parents for more than a few minutes or a few hours?
- Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 29) Are you uncertain about how to respond when people ask about your feelings?
- Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 30) Have you ever wondered if you might have been mistreated, abused, or neglected as a child?
- Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually
- 31) Do you have difficulty asking for what you want from others?
- Never Seldom Occasionally Often Usually

Appendix N: Family Drinking Survey (Whitfield 1987:27-8)

	Yes	No
1. Does someone in your family undergo personality changes when he or she drinks to excess?	_____	_____
2. Do you feel that drinking is more important to this person than you are?	_____	_____
3. Do you feel sorry for yourself and frequently indulge in self-pity because of what you feel alcohol is doing to your family?	_____	_____
4. Has some family member's excessive drinking ruined special occasions?	_____	_____
5. Do you find yourself covering up for the consequences of someone else's drinking?	_____	_____
6. Have you ever felt guilty, apologetic, or responsible for the drinking of a member of your family?	_____	_____
7. Does one of your family member's use of alcohol cause fights and arguments?	_____	_____
8. Have you ever tried to fight the drinker by joining in the drinking?	_____	_____
9. Do the drinking habits of some family members make you feel depressed or angry?	_____	_____
10. Is your family having financial difficulties because of drinking?	_____	_____
11. Did you ever feel like you had an unhappy home life because of the drinking of some members of your family?	_____	_____
12. Have you ever tried to control the drinker's behavior by hiding the car keys, pouring liquor down the drain, etc.?	_____	_____
13. Do you find yourself distracted from your responsibilities because of this person's drinking?	_____	_____
14. Do you often worry about a family member's drinking?	_____	_____
15. Are holidays more a nightmare than a celebration because of a family member's drinking behavior?	_____	_____
16. Are most of your drinking family members' friends heavy drinkers?	_____	_____
17. Do you find it necessary to lie to employers, relatives or friends in order to hide your family member's drinking?	_____	_____
18. Do you find yourself responding differently to members of your family when they are using alcohol?	_____	_____
19. Have you ever been embarrassed or felt the need to apologize for the drinker's actions?	_____	_____
20. Does some family member's use of alcohol make you fear for your own safety or the safety of other members of your family?	_____	_____

	Yes	No
21. Have you ever thought that one of your family members had a drinking problem?	_____	_____
22. Have you ever lost sleep because of a family member's drinking?	_____	_____
23. Have you ever encouraged one of your family members to stop or cut down on his or her drinking?	_____	_____
24. Have you ever threatened to leave home or to leave a family member because of his or her drinking?	_____	_____
25. Did a family member ever make promises that he or she did not keep because of drinking?	_____	_____
26. Did you ever wish that you could talk to someone who could understand and help the alcohol-related problems of a family member?	_____	_____
27. Have you ever felt sick, cried or had a knot in your stomach after worrying about a family member's drinking?	_____	_____
28. Has a family member ever failed to remember what occurred during a drinking period?	_____	_____
29. Does your family member avoid social situations where alcoholic beverages will not be served?	_____	_____
30. Does your family member have periods of remorse after drinking occasions and apologize for his or her behavior?	_____	_____
31. Please write any symptoms or nervous problems that you have experienced since you have known your heavy drinker.	_____	_____

If you answered "Yes" to any 2 of the above questions, there is a good possibility that someone in your family may have a drinking problem.

If you answered "Yes" to 4 or more of the above questions, there is a definite indication that someone in your family does have a drinking problem.

Appendix O: Self-Affirmations (Zonnya 1995:36, 162, 207)

I, _____, accept that
balanced living is a productive way to live.

I, _____, know that
by giving individual daily attention to each area of my life, I can enjoy
a more beautiful lifestyle.

I, _____, choose to
receive "more, better, greater" of all the abundance in life.

I, _____, learn to grow more
loving and compassionate toward others.

I, _____, experience each
person I meet with reasonable expectations.

I, _____, accept my
responsibility to be involved with people in my life and to make things
happen in my friendships.

I, _____, am optimistic about
life. I look forward to, and enjoy, challenges.

I, _____, know that people
feel better when they do things well, so therefore, I trust people to do
their best.

I, _____, enjoy improving
my knowledge about myself and my attitudes and thoughts toward
others.

Appendix P: Environmental Control Self-Assessment (Prochaska et al 1994:190)

1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Occasionally, 4 = Often, 5 = Repeatedly

FREQUENCY:

- _____ I remove things from my home that remind me of my problem behavior.
- _____ I leave places where other people are encouraging the problem behavior.
- _____ I put things around my home or workplace that remind me not to engage in my problem behavior.
- _____ I relate less often to people who contribute to my problem.
- _____ = Score

A score of 8 or less means that you should concentrate more on your use of environmental controls.

Appendix Q: The Twelve Steps of Codependents Anonymous
(Beattie 1990:270)

1. We admitted we were powerless over others - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other codependents, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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