

The Future of Subject in Post-Coronavirus World in the Light of Foucault's Technology of the Self¹

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Abstract

This paper aims to present the relevance of Foucault's technology of the self to face the future of the post-coronavirus world. The significance of Foucault technology of the self lies in the practice of self-forming where the pandemic era has urged humans to evaluate their subjectivity. It is because the subject is faced with the external challenge of the biopolitics of the state as well as internal challenge of the Subject's future anxiety. Hence, this study tries to respond to these problems by analyzing Foucault's technology of the self which was inspired by the ancient practice of the care of the self to practice self-examination in order to achieve self-mastery. In compiling this paper, the author applied a qualitative methodology through which descriptive, textual, and contextual analyses are applied to written materials related to the subject matter. By developing self-mastery techniques, Foucault presupposes the individual to be a critical and reflective subject who will actively respond to biopolitics as well as his future anxiety.

Keywords: Foucault; Technology of the Self; Biopolitics; Future Misfortune.

¹ This is a revised and expanded version of my paper entitled "Unveiling the Future of Subject: Reading Foucault's Technology of the Self in the Time of Crisis" presented at the 8th International Conference on Nusantara Philosophy (ICNP) on 21st November 2020 in Faculty of Philosophy Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

1. Pendahuluan

The COVID-19 outbreak that has spread throughout the world seems to have hit every individual. It not only gave birth to disease, fear, and stagnation of activity, but it also produces a form of discipline on how one should act and behave in their daily activities. One of the philosophers who have a view and analysis of the pandemic and the various aspects that follow it such as the disciplinary project imposed by governments or institutions is Michel Foucault. Moreover, he also examines how disciplinary practices continue in the post-epidemic era.

Foucault is known as a philosopher who introduced the methods of genealogy, archeology, and power which were applied in several domains of scientific studies such as medicine, prison, and sexuality. Therefore, people have presumed that his main focus is to investigate the relationship between power and knowledge. In fact, in the *Subject and Power*, Foucault explained that his 20 years of effort was not to analyze the phenomenon of power or provide foundations for the issue. Instead, He argues that his research seeks to explore the factors of the formation of the subject, which are manifested in three objectives: given knowledge, dividing practice, and the way a human being turns himself into a subject. Therefore, the general theme of Foucault's research is subject, not power.² In this relation, one of his main objectives is to demonstrate the technology developed by the subject to establish self-formation which is known as the technology of the self.

There are several studies that examine Foucault's technology of the self. Burkitt argues that the technology of the self operates in the form of habitus and capacities. In order to support this thesis, he explores the notion of technology and the self in their original meaning by referring to Aristotle's opinion. He further argues that there is a dark side of habitus and capacities, namely "the way they figure in relations of power and domination to support the current social system". He concluded that the technology of the self is a form of production and domination.³ In another place, Mitcheson describes how the concept of technology of the self has a valuable contribution to analyzing the relationship between subject and power relations in the contemporary era. She argues that technology of the self is a form of resistance that operates between

² Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (July 1982): 777–95, <https://doi.org/10.1086/448181>.

³ Ian Burkitt, "Technologies of the Self: Habitus and Capacities," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 32, no. 2 (June 2002): 219–37, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5914.00184>.

control and creativity. It allows the subject to critically interact with power relations and continually promote self-formation.⁴

These two studies show two different poles in understanding Foucault's technology of the self. The former is looking skeptically at the concept of Foucault about the technology of the self, while the later argues that Foucault's technology of the self has proposed an alternative concept to view the subject. In this study, the researcher's position is closer to Mitcheson than to Burkitt. Here, the researcher tries to explain the importance of technology of the self in order to form self-mastery for subjects to face two challenges, first, the challenge of biopolitics in the post-Coronavirus era and the challenge of future anxiety.

2. Metodologi Penelitian

This paper used a qualitative methodology through which descriptive, textual, and contextual analyses are applied to written materials related to the subject matter. The primary sources of this research are Foucault's writings and lectures which emphasize the practice of care of the self, such as *Technologies of the Self*, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, and *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*.

3. Hasil Penelitian dan Pembahasan

3.1 Foucault and Technology of the Self

Foucault's intellectual enterprise has a broad scope that highlights various issues and themes. According to Davidson, Foucault's philosophical thought has three fields, namely the analysis of knowledge systems, modalities of power, and the self-relationship to itself. All of which can be understood sequentially as archaeology, genealogy, and ethics.⁵ The archaeological axis is clearly applied in *The Order of Things* and the genealogical axis is reflected in *Discipline and Punish*. While the ethical axis, which is still less widely known than the previous two, appears in *The History of Sexuality*, particularly volumes 2 and 3 as well as interviews, seminars, and lectures delivered at Collège de France in his later period. It was at the end of his life that Foucault elaborated a lot on ethics which was understood as building a relationship between the self and itself. Here he introduced the concept of the technology of the self.

Foucault describes the technology of the self along with three other forms of technology. He found that there are four types of technology: (1) technologies of production, which makes it possible to produce, change, or manipulate things; (2) technologies of sign systems, which makes it possible to apply signs,

⁴ Katrina Mitcheson, "Foucault's Technologies of the Self: Between Control and Creativity," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 43, no. 1 (January 2012): 59–75, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00071773.2012.11006757>.

⁵ Arnold I Davidson, "Archeology, Genealogy, Ethics," in *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Couzens Hoy (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 221.

meanings, symbols, or significations; (3) technologies of power, which determines the behavior of individuals and submits them to a particular goal or domination or an attempt at objectivizing subject; (4) and technologies of the self. For Foucault, these four technologies never function separately, each of which is associated with a certain form of domination. The first two technologies are widely applied in the realm of science and linguistics. While the second two technologies are Foucault's concerns so far. Foucault realizes that he has focused a lot of his work on the technology of power as can be seen in his studies on *Madness and Civilization* as well as *Discipline and Punish*.⁶

Therefore, he feels the need to explain the form of technology used by the subject to establish self-formation through the concept of technology of the self. Foucault defines the technology of the self as “*a technology which permit 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 way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.*”⁷

Through the technology of the self, Foucault tries to elaborate on how certain civilizations or groups of people build a technology that tries to understand how the self relates to itself as in the ancient Greek, Christian, and modern periods. He argues that contemporary subjectivity has been shaped by the technology of the self developed by early Christian and then Governmentalized by the modern state. He insists that such technology had subjugated the subject and reduced the primary status of the subject as the master of themselves and their action. Here, Foucault tries to explore the practice of technology of the self in ancient Greek and Hellenistic traditions which can be seen as a counter-discourse for both Christian and Modern self-formation.⁸

According to Foucault, before moving on to investigate the practices of self-formation developed in the Greek and Hellenistic eras, it is important to understand the true position of the conceptual status between *epimeleisthai sautou* "the care of the self" and *gnothi seauton* "know yourself". He argues that there is a hierarchical inversion between two concepts in Christianity and modern society which obscured the real practice and status. He saw that in the contemporary era, the maxim “know your self” has obscured the true concept of “the care of yourself”. Therefore, Foucault sees an urgency to re-substitute the hierarchical status of the two concepts. For Christianity, to know oneself means self-renunciation. Whereas in the modern world, knowledge of oneself

⁶ Michel Foucault, *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. Luther H Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H Hutton (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 18.

⁷ Foucault, 18.

⁸ Timothy O’Leary, *Foucault and the Art of Ethics* (Continuum, 2002), 35.

establishes the basic principles.⁹ He argues that in ancient Greek and Hellenistic thought, knowledge of the self is the result of the care of the self and not the other way around. Therefore, He insists that the care of the self is the foundation of imperative know your self.

During the Greek period, the concern of the self was not an abstract concept but a philosophical practice in life or a technique of live, *tekhne tou biou*. Technology of the self teaches how subjects live in the world with all the events around them. Therefore, neither Socrates nor Seneca worries about the afterlife world or question what happens after death.¹⁰ Furthermore, one does not take care of the self to live better or more rationality. One has to live this way to knit the best possible connection with oneself. Here, Foucault tries to establish an ethical relationship between the self and itself. He argues that such an idea must be exercised because it provides a service to the soul. Maintaining the soul is an important practice for attaining self-cultivation, which on the other hand does not neglect the importance of the body. Apart from that, it should be emphasized that the care of the self is not the care of the self as a substance but the care of the activity.

The aim of the care of the self is to develop the independence of the subject through a set of mental and physical exercises. Moreover, Foucault claims that in the pedagogical aspect, the practice of care of the self provides several functions, such as critical function, struggle function which equip one with the courage and weapons to struggle all his life, and therapeutical function to the human body and soul. Furthermore, from several forms of technology of the self practiced by Greek philosophers, it is important to see Foucault's description of some of the self-training practices developed by Stoics in order to achieve self-mastery. These practices are including Seneca's examination of conscience, Marcus Aurelius's writing activity, and Stoic *akesis* to deal with future misfortune.

In the *Care of the Self*, Foucault investigates Seneca's examination of conscience technique which evaluates his daily activities. Seneca presents how Sextius applies his practice of self-evaluation at the end of the day. When the night fell, Sextius would ask himself several evaluative questions: "What bad habit have you cured today? What fault have you resisted? In what respect are you better?. Furthermore, Seneca also did a similar practice during the evening where he did a sifting to all his activities in a day.¹¹ Furthermore, Foucault called Seneca's practice a taking stock of one's actions where the rule is not judging what happened in the past, but rather means of doing something

⁹ Foucault, *Technologies of the Self*, 22.

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: New Press, 1997), 260.

¹¹ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality: The Care of the Self*, trans. Robert Hurley, vol. 3 (New York: Random House, 1986), 61.

correctly. Seneca wants to make adjustments between what he wanted to do and what he had done. According to Foucault, the practice is an administrative review that evaluates individual activities to reactivate the rules of conduct and ensure their correct implementation in the future. In this context, faults are not interpreted as a crime or disgrace but as good intentions left undone.¹²

Moreover, Foucault presents another form of the care of the self activities in writing activities practiced by Marcus Aurelius. In his letter written to the tutor, Fronto, he lists down the activities he does in a day. he wrote about the minutiae form of his day from informing how he slept last night until he got lunch. Foucault called such practice "an account of the self through an account of the day".¹³ Furthermore, Foucault explains that Marcus Aurelius writing practice on daily activities is close to the examination of conscience as practiced by Seneca.¹⁴ Both of them share the same objectives of care of the self through self-evaluation practices about what they have done.

Foucault stressed that the aim of Stoic self-examination practice is to train the subject who performs and evaluates his/her actions. By doing so, it can be expected that the subject will perpetually practicing self-formation where the ultimate goal is self-mastery. Foucault explained that the Stoic practice of self-examination which emphasized self-mastery was in contrast to the practice of self-examination developed by Christianity. It is because the ultimate goal of Christian self-examination is obedience and contemplation. Here, the purpose of self-examination is no longer self-mastery but rather the contemplation of God. And since all thoughts are devoted to God, it is much more concerned with thought than action.¹⁵

In addition, the principle of obedience might be understood in terms of the relationship between student and teacher. In Stoicism, the relationship between the disciple with the master was a professional relationship as reflected in Seneca and Aurelius. Through good advice, the master teaches students how to live well and achieve self-autonomy. Then, when the disciple has mastered himself, he can leave his teacher. In contrast, in the Christian tradition, the relationship between student and teacher is total obedience that ignores the autonomy of the disciple. At this point, the practice of the confessions to the self was replaced by the confessions to the master. For Foucault, this practice is self-

¹² Foucault, *Technologies of the Self*, 237.

¹³ Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981–82*, ed. Frédéric Gros, François Ewald, and Alessandro Fontana (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2005), 159, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-09483-4>.

¹⁴ Foucault, 162.

¹⁵ Michel Foucault and Mark Blasius, "About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self: Two Lectures at Dartmouth," *Political Theory* 21, no. 2 (May 1993): 216, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591793021002004>.

sacrificing and ensnares the subject's own will.¹⁶ In addition, this form of obedience actually provides a large portion for the others to interpret our thoughts, nature, and subjectivity. In other words, other people will dictate and dominate how the process of self-formation. Foucault argues that such practice of confessions to others continues in the form of secular confessions where the self is formed through subjugation, as occurs in modern science and medicine.¹⁷

Further, Foucault identified that there are significant differences between the technology of the self developed by Christianity and Modern culture. If in Christianity, the purpose of the self-examination means the sacrifice of the self, Modern projects try to substitute this concept by developing technology of the self that examines the emergence of the subject through a positivistic framework. The purpose of such self-formation is "to constitute the ground of the subjectivity as the root of a positive self". Foucault called this kind of self-formation project "the permanent anthropologism of Western thought", a form of judicial institution that spreads in various fields such as medical, psychiatric, political, and philosophical theory.¹⁸ Thus, Foucault argues that neither Christian nor modern technology of the self provides an alternative to the self-formation of subjectivity because they produce a subjugated form of the subject. Hence, Foucault argues that our task is to create an alternative form of technology of the self to build our contemporary subjectivity.

At this stage, the question arises whether Foucault tries to propose an ancient Greek Hellenistic kind of self-cultivation as an alternative form to our contemporary subjectivity? However, he didn't come up with an explicit answer. He said, "*I do not think it is ever completely clear or resolved in Hellenistic and Roman thought whether the self is something to which you return because it is given in advance or an objective you must set for yourself.*"¹⁹ Therefore, it can be said that for Foucault, the ancient practices were not ideal but the exemplary model of the technology of the self.²⁰ In this context, the concept of technology of the self in the Hellenistic era, including the Stoics, at least provides a valuable insight that "the self has to be created".²¹ It is equivalent to Foucault's instruction of self-formation: "You must set for yourself".

Foucault's technology of the self aimed to provide space for subjects to develop their independence. And at least, he saw some of these principles of

¹⁶ Foucault, *Technologies of the Self*, 246.

¹⁷ Mitcheson, "Foucault's Technologies of the Self," 69.

¹⁸ Foucault and Blasius, "About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self," 222.

¹⁹ Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 213.

²⁰ Brian Seitz, "Foucault and the Subject of Stoic Existence," *Human Studies* 35, no. 4 (November 2012): 584, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10746-012-9223-3>.

²¹ Barry Smart, "Foucault, Levinas and the Subject of Responsibility," in *The Later Foucault: Politics and Philosophy*, ed. Jeremy Moss (London: Sage Publication, 1998), 84.

self-cultivation have been formulated by Stoics.²² Mitchenson, quoting O'Leary, argues that the values of the Hellenistic philosophical tradition lie in critical and reflective practices that can be used for the purpose of questioning our current modes of subjectivity. Therefore, the idea of a subject as their own master, critical and creative practice is invaluable teaching learned from Stoic technology of the self.²³ In other words, these practices provide space for oneself to self-evaluate, respond to the development of autonomy, and avoid submission.

3.2 Subject, Power Relations and Biopolitics in Post-Pandemic Era

Today, one of the challenges in the formation of the subject in the contemporary era comes from power relations, disciplinary and the practice of biopolitics. These external challenges are getting stronger during the current Covid-19 outbreak, where the subject is prone to be subjugated to power strategies, which in this context is referring to the domination of the state. Hence, it is necessary to discuss how the subject should deal with the challenge of power relations, and biopolitics in the post-pandemic era. However, before going further into the discussion, it is important to explore Foucault's concept of the subject.

One of the crucial points of Foucault's conception of the subject is that a subject is a form, not a substance.²⁴ The subject is not a given form, and because of that the subjects are required to actively shape their subjectivity and become masters of themselves. Consequently, Foucault rejected an a priori theory of the subject developed in the modern philosophical tradition. He criticized Descartes' conception of "I" as a universal and unhistorical subject. Also, Foucault firmly condemned the theory of the subject's given-knowledge propagated by phenomenology or existentialism. Further, He refuses both Descartes' and Kant's a priori existential articulation of "what we are". He argues that a relevant focus on contemporary conditions is not to answer the question "what we are?" but the statement of resistance, "to refuse what we are".²⁵ As a consequence, it presupposes a dual process, namely deconstructive and constructive process which is manifested in the self-formation process which begins with a dissolution of the self. For O'Leary, Foucault's idea of the unsolved subject was

²² Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 279.

²³ Katrina Mitcheson, "Foucault, Stoicism and Self-Mastery," in *Ethics and Self-Cultivation: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Matthew Dennis and Sander Werkhoven, 1st ed. (1 [edition]. | New York: Routledge, 2018. | Series: Routledge studies in ethics and moral theory; 45: Routledge, 2018), 136, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315102269>; O'Leary, *Foucault and the Art of Ethics*, 152.

²⁴ Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 290.

²⁵ Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 785.

influenced by Nietzsche, Blanchot, Bataille, and Klossowski who emphasized the annihilation, or the dissolution of the self.²⁶

Foucault argues that resistance is one of the important elements to sustain an un-subjugated subject. The resistance to subjugation is important to understand in the context of power relations. Foucault argues that power relations have integrated within society, therefore Foucault argues that he "do not think that a society can exist without power relations".²⁷ But then, it should be emphasized that Foucault does not see power as something negative. He argues that in power relations "we are in a strategic situation toward each other". Therefore, one is always involved in power relations and in a symmetrical relationship. Through resistance, the subject always has the opportunity to change the situation. Here, resistance cannot be understood as the opposite of power but must be considered as intrinsic to it.²⁸ Foucault argues that "if there was no resistance, there would be no power relations. Because it would be simply matter of obedience." In other words, resistance is a vital aspect in the dynamics of power relations.²⁹ Therefore, this process presupposes a process of creative resistance to form one's own subjectivity, especially in the covid era where discipline and restrictions are imposed on all elements of the subject's life.

But the fact is that during the Covid-19 pandemic, power relations were not the only challenge faced by the subject. The pandemic creates total discipline and control over the subject's life and will probably continue into the post-epidemic period. In the context of a pandemic and post-pandemic, the position of the subject can be understood by referring to the form of the technology of power, as previously described referring to the control over the behavior of the subject in the form of domination for the purpose of objectivizing the subject. Foucault states that there are two forms of technology of power: The first is a technology of power that concerns the body. This technique appears to discipline or control the body as an organism regulated by institutions. The second technology of power or known as the new technology of power no longer concerns humans as bodies but as life. This second form of technology power is useful as a disciplinary mechanism to the multiplicity of man, not as individual bodies, but to man-as-species, which concerns birth, death, illness, and so on. Discipline is no longer an individual-as-body, but a new body that is multiple bodies. This new technology of power is identified by Foucault with

²⁶ O'Leary, *Foucault and the Art of Ethics*, 141.

²⁷ Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 298.

²⁸ Kevin Thompson, "Forms of Resistance: Foucault on Tactical Reversal and Self-Formation," *Continental Philosophy Review* 36, no. 2 (2003): 113–38, <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1026072000125>.

²⁹ Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 167.

biopolitics and biopower.³⁰ The technology of power or biopolitics has a very different mechanism from the disciplinary mechanism. Because the biopolitical mechanism covers a wider range of forecasts, statistical estimates, and overall measures in society.³¹

The practice of technology of power or biopolitics can be observed in the context of handling the covid outbreak where discipline is imposed upon multiple bodies. In his observations of the plague that occurred in the 17th century, Foucault argues that the plague gave rise to disciplinary projects. The plague-stricken city was filled with full discipline from the establishment of a hierarchy, observation, and surveillance. This creates a deep chain of control and oversight as well as an intensification and branching of power over citizens. Foucault reveals that the rulers or governments dreamed of a plagued state in which discipline could perfectly function. This, according to Foucault, gave rise to a utopia of a perfectly governed city where one could ideally formulate the exercise of disciplinary power involving the government assisted by the apparatus.³² The description at a glance is in accordance with the conditions when the outbreak began at the end of 2020 to 2021 where it was followed by biopolitical control in almost all countries in the world. Such as the implementation of quarantine or movement restriction in which individual movements are regulated and restricted in such a way. Offices, schools, sports centers, and libraries are closed to comply with the protocol for preventing the spread of the epidemic. All over the place social distancing is enforced where the individual is totally regulated and controlled. Violation of it can pose a danger of virus contagion and violate health and safety protocols.

Pandemics do not only reduce people's lives from lived lives to biological lives but also reduce to their bare biological existence.³³ In this case, the subject is the target of what Foucault calls the triangle of sovereignty, discipline, and governmental management, which is carried out by the governmental apparatus.³⁴ According to Foucault, the plague fulfills government political dreams that gave rise to the penetration of regulation into the smallest details of everyday life through solid hierarchies that ensured the functioning of power. In this sense, the plague as a fact and an image has both medical and political

³⁰ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 242–43.

³¹ Foucault, 246.

³² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 198.

³³ Philip Højme, “Biopolitics and the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Foucauldian Interpretation of the Danish Government’s Response to the Pandemic,” *Philosophies* 7, no. 2 (March 19, 2022): 3, <https://doi.org/10.3390/philosophies7020034>.

³⁴ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 107–8.

disciplines that are imposed upon the subject.³⁵ In other words, it creates a comprehensive and determinate power in all aspects of subject life.

Now with the discovery of a vaccine and the transmission of the virus gradually decreasing in various parts of the world, it does not necessarily mean that the pandemic will totally disappear, and life will continue as before. In fact, the virus still exists, even though countries are trying to move from a pandemic to an endemic. However, what should be noted is that the country's biopolitical practices will extend in the post-coronavirus period which will continue to objectify the subject. In the relationship between biopolitics and a post-coronavirus condition, Foucault reminds us of the role of biopolitics in the post-epidemic period. Foucault analyzes the epidemic outbreak that took place in the Middle Ages which was a disaster that caused many deaths. However, Foucault explains that in the 18th century, epidemics were not a major concern, but rather the emergence of endemics infecting populations. At this stage the disease is considered difficult to eradicate and is no longer considered the main cause of death, but as a permanent factor that weakens the strength of the population. In this stage, the disease is a phenomenon that affects the population. This phenomenon gave rise to coordination and campaign 'to teach hygiene and to medicalize the population'.³⁶

Foucault's explanation can be used to analyze today's conditions. The government has called for the importance of hygiene such as in the use of masks to prevent the transmission of outbreaks of other diseases. The use of masks has become a new norm in society, especially when dealing with government offices and institutions as well as other social spaces such as train stations, libraries, or courtrooms, which before the outbreak did not require the mask norm to campaign for hygiene. Furthermore, the shape of the medicalized population can be seen in the case of vaccination. Vaccination has become a new prerequisite for taking care of things, the movement of individuals to various places, and even attending university. Vaccination is not considered a voluntary form of the subject, but an obligation that must be fulfilled. It is based on the rationalization of preventing outbreaks and achieving life as before the outbreak which, even after vaccination, the practice of discipline and supervision of the subject is still regulated.

Today, we are not only required to live together with the virus or *convivurus*³⁷ but also to live together with the form of biopolitical practice. In a

³⁵ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 196–97.

³⁶ Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 243–44.

³⁷ Fernando Castrillón and Thomas Marchevsky, "Of Pestilence, Chaos, and Time," in *Coronavirus, Psychoanalysis, and Philosophy: Conversations on Pandemics, Politics, and Society*, ed. Fernando Castrillón and Thomas Marchevsky, 1st ed. (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2021.: Routledge, 2021), 2, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003150497>.

plague, the government produces versions of truths that cover all the movements of human life. Therefore, it is important for the subject to always establish his own subjectivity in order to analyze and evaluate the course of the epidemic truth regime. This is not to negate or deny the truth of something but to describe how a new regime of truth is produced in life.³⁸ Because, as Foucault said that the regime of truth can make something that doesn't exist, becomes something.³⁹

Thus, the role of the subject in maintaining his subjectivity by establishing a relationship of the self with itself through the scheme of technology of the self is very necessary to always organize self-subjectivity in the face of the practices of the technology of power embodied in biopolitical products. Foucault emphasizes the idea of subject freedom, it can be seen in his works *Discipline and Punish*, and *The History and Sexuality*, he is actually identifying how the subject loses his freedom because the subject is always subjugated by a set of values and institutions that affect his freedom. In other words, the subject's freedom is limited by certain norms and powers, knowledge, and regimes of truth that come from outside himself. In the future context of the post-coronavirus, the freedom of subject is pivotal thing, especially in building himself with himself or what is known as the technology of the self where the subject can continue to control himself and his own subjectivity to compete in the practice of power technologies such as biopolitics.

3.3 Subject and Future Anxiety

Coronavirus has caused crises in the fields of education, politics, health, and especially the economy. The crisis caused by the covid-19 outbreak has affected the psyche of many people. Although vaccination against the virus has been invented and circulated throughout society, in fact, it does not eliminate people's worries about an uncertain future. Moreover, before the pandemic crisis completely disappeared, other crises emerged such as the war between Russia and Ukraine which caused the world to be on the edge of recession. This condition raises the subject's concern about another future misfortune that will come in the future, particularly in post-coronavirus conditions. This anxiety threatens the status of the subject's self-mastery who is prone to become the object of submission in power relations on the one hand and threatens the subjectivity formation of the subject on the other. Therefore, it requires a thought exercise to equip the subject with discourse-aid from the perspectives of technology of the self.

³⁸ Mark Horvath and Adam Lovasz, "Foucault in the Age of COVID-19: Permitting Contingency in Biopolitics," *Identities* 17, no. 1 (2020): 147.

³⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 19.

In the practice of the technology of the self, the interpretation of the subject and the future anxiety can be viewed from two aspects. First, Foucault identified that the subject was formed through a set of processes of perpetual self-formation to master their self. The activity of self-formation is very important given that subjects live with events that constantly change. In other words, thinking about future events is an inevitable thing for the subject. On the other side, Foucault argues that too much worry about future misfortune can absorb a subject's mind and self and it leads the subject to no longer be free.⁴⁰ However, it should not be misunderstood that Foucault refuses to think about the future. What should be noted is that such a condition can interfere with the process of self-mastery where freedom becomes an absolute condition to achieve it.⁴¹

In this context, it is important to examine Foucault's assessment of the Greek attitude regarding the future and the memory (Past). Quoting Plutarch, Foucault explains that there are two types of people in dealing with the future and the past (memory). someone who is turned toward the future is referred to as *anoetoi*; while someone who turned toward the past or the memory is called a *phronimoi*. People in the first category are described as something negative because of thinking about future preoccupies while the latter is perceived as something that has a positive value. Furthermore, Foucault refers to Plutarch's saying about the rope maker in Hades' painting who allowed the donkey to eat the rushes he plaiting. According to Foucault, this opinion illustrates someone who is so distracted by something that he does not pay attention to what he is doing and forgets himself. Like a rope maker who makes rope but he doesn't notice that the donkey eats what he plait. This is the picture of people who are distracted by the future so that they forget what has passed (memory).⁴²

Man of the future neglect what he does to be consumed by something else while he is working in the present. This causes him to be unable to establish a social life and incapable of pleasant leisure as an important activity in the care of the self. Moreover, according to Foucault, he also cannot establish himself as an identity. In this case, there is an opinion that emphasizes the significance of memory (past). According to Seneca, through the practice of memory, we can perceive a reality that we cannot reach because it has passed. The realities of the past are still available to us in memory, "Memory is the mode of being of that which no longer is." In other words, through memory, we can maintain our sovereignty and can always wander in our memories.⁴³ Thus, it indicates a privileged status of memory (past) over the future.

Furthermore, according to Foucault, although there is a negative perception of the future in Greek thought, the conception of *praemeditatio malorum* is an

⁴⁰ Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 464.

⁴¹ Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 284.

⁴² Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 466.

⁴³ Foucault, 468.

exception as the thought exercise of the future.⁴⁴ *Praemeditatio malorum* is a technology of the self related to thought exercise developed by Stoics. *Praemeditatio malorum* can be conceived as a form of meditation imagining various possible future misfortune which befall one.⁴⁵ There are three ways to explain how it works: first, it is a test of thinking that what is possibly the worst that happens to us will happen to us. Second, a test of the worst that anything will take place not in the distant future, but in the process of taking place. For example, let's imagine that we are already infected by the coronavirus and dying. Third, the test is not for inarticulate feelings but makes sure that the misfortune is not a real evil.⁴⁶

Foucault stresses that these three processes are not to immerse the subject in future thinking, as many would presume. In fact, it is a nullification of the future and a reduction of imagination into a simple fact. He argues "*we do not start from the present in order to stimulate the future, we give ourselves the entire future in order to stimulate it as present.*"⁴⁷ In other words, this exercise reinforces the subject to emphasize the importance of the present reality. The objective of *praemeditatio malorum* lies in the closing of the future through a simulation of actuality and reducing its reality and releasing it into certain truths.⁴⁸ In this way, when anything happens, the subject has prepared his mind and soul which is trained through the practice of reducing evil to strict truths.

From the above explanation regarding the two forms of attitude about the future, Foucault seems to appreciate the practice of *praemeditatio malorum* which is because the practice is very useful for the subject's self-mastery. Foucault seems to have a negative perception of the man of the future and leans towards the man of memory in the understanding that the man of memory always controls and maintains his subjectivity. while the man of the future devotes too much thought and himself to something that has yet to happen which will eventually swallow the subject itself. However, this does not mean that Foucault is trying to negate or try to eliminate the future from the subject's attention. Foucault's concern is how the subject can deal with the future without sacrificing his mastery. Eventually, he found this practice in *praemeditatio malorum*.

According to Foucault, the value of *praemeditatio malorum* is to equip the subject with discourse-aid or *logos boethos* to face future misfortune. If someone does not prepare, then when faced with unexpected misfortune, someone puts himself in a weak position due to the unavailability of discourse-

⁴⁴ Foucault, 470.

⁴⁵ Edward F. McGushin, *Foucault's Askesis: An Introduction to the Philosophical Life* (Northwestern University Press, 2007), 133, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv43vtxw>.

⁴⁶ Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 239.

⁴⁷ Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 471.

⁴⁸ Foucault, 473.

aid available to him. Therefore, *praemeditatio malorum* is a discourse-aid that is useful for training how to react properly and not allow himself and his soul to be disturbed by misfortune and most importantly, to maintain his position as the master of himself.⁴⁹ In this context, Foucault quoted a statement from Plutarch: "when misfortune arrives, we should never be able to say: "I didn't expect it". "You should have expected it", then "you would not have been taken unawares". Men "who have not trained are unable to resort to reflection in order to play a suitable and useful part".⁵⁰

Foucault's analysis of Stoic's *praemeditatio malorum* can provide several points worth considering in relation to the subject's condition in dealing with future anxiety in the post-coronavirus era. In Foucault's conception, the subject's fear of future misfortune could be anticipated with the discourse-aid they prepared and practiced independently through Stoics' *praemeditatio malorum*. For example, losing a job. The subject has to start accepting that he really lost his job. In this context, we should not think that it is a lamentation over something that will happen, but rather a prepared response if one day it actually happens to us. With that, we can neutralize the fears and anxieties that arise. If this really happens, the subject has prepared so that his subjectivity feels undisturbed. Thus, the subject can still maintain his self-mastery which is his sovereignty and authority over himself.

4. Simpulan

After a thorough study of Foucault's presentation and analysis of the technology of the self and then contextualizing it to analyze the future of the subject in the post-coronavirus era in particular by highlighting two challenges faced by the subject, namely, first, external challenges with the emergence of biopolitics from state power during the pandemic. and will continue in the post-pandemic era in the future. Second, the internal challenge of the subject with the emergence of future anxiety. This paper concludes that in Foucault's framework of technology of the self, the future of the subject is at his resistance, creativity, and self-mastery. By developing technology that seeks to build a relationship between the self and itself, the subject is given a reflective space to maintain his self-mastery over the dynamics of domination of state power relations and biopolitics that are strengthening during a pandemic and will continue to post-pandemic era on the one hand and neutralize the representations of the subject's future anxiety on the other

⁴⁹ Foucault, 469.

⁵⁰ Foucault, 469.

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