The Experiment of Friendship:
Anarchist Affinity in the Wake of Michel Foucault

by

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B.A., Concordia University, 2008

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

This thesis considers Michel Foucault’s understanding of friendship as a way of life and its relationship to anarchist models of affinity based organizing. I argue that Foucault’s interviews on friendship, his understanding of power structures as simultaneously individualizing and totalizing, and his notion of the care of the self all help us to rethink what friendship means today. Further, friendship can be a guide towards experimental and aesthetic forms of political resistance. Friendship for Foucault is not utopian, however, and I examine its use as a technique of police surveillance and intelligence gathering in the context of the G20 protests in Toronto in 2010. If friendship can play an important role in the regime of what Foucault termed governmentality, it can also be a site of struggle whereby an alternative vision for politics is elaborated. I argue that this has particular resonance with anarchism, and that while friendship has the danger to becoming an invisible form of power, anarchism responds to this by proposing a culture of solidarity. Overall, I argue that Foucault offers an original account of friendship that fundamentally shifts our understanding of the relationship between friendship and politics.
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Introduction

Friendship is so tightly linked to the definition of philosophy… that without it, philosophy would not really be possible.


It is not two friends who engage in thought; it is thought itself that requires the thinker to be a friend so that thought is divided up within itself and can be exercised.

— Deleuze & Guattari, *What is philosophy?*, 1991

Rethinking friendship

Friendships are political today as “experiments in different forms of non-exploitative personal relationships,” and this is in part what characterizes Michel Foucault’s notion that friendship could become a way of life, a way to construct an alternative form of subjectivity. Friendship offers a rich and immediate experience of the kinds of relationships that might be possible without domination, coercion or hierarchy. It is significant because of this immediacy: most of us have close and trusted friends, and these friendships are based on some degree of affection and equality. If we consider them carefully, the experience of these friendships could offer a window into a more cooperative and egalitarian world. Friends, however, also play an important role in enforcing norms and moral codes, and this is why Deleuze and Guattari suggest that while the question of “what is philosophy?” can only be truly asked between friends, a

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1 Todd May, *Friendship in an Age of Economics: Resisting the Forces of Neoliberalism* (Lanham: Lexington
philosopher always reaches that “twilight hour when one distrusts even the friend.”² This distrust is not final, however, and it serves to create an encounter where the questioning of each other can intensify friendship rather than force one to abandon it. Friendship has a particular relevance to this kind of questioning because it exists at the nexus of the public and the private, personal and political. Friend is connected etymologically to freedom, and that aspect of choice in friendship is crucial, but as Foucault’s thought points out, this choice does not happen in a vacuum but “emerges from the complex system of relations that condition who we are and how we can act.”³ Yet friendship exists primarily outside of defined institutional roles, and that is why Foucault suggested it was interesting and dangerous, and what gives it the potential to be an experiment in a different way of life. As David Webb has noted, friends are those with whom we might work on the historical conditions of our existence and therefore “share the practice of becoming who we are.”⁴

Friendship has had a long history of reflection in political theory despite being a minor consideration within this tradition. Aristotle famously declared friendship a virtue necessary for living, and devoted two books of his Nicomachean Ethics to understanding the relationship between friendship and politics. Aristotle distinguishes three types of friendship: those based on utility, those based on pleasure and those based on virtue, and famously suggests that the friend is “another self.”⁵ Aristotle draws attention to the fact that from the very beginnings of political theory, friendship constituted an ethical issue. Therefore, attempting to understand or define what friendship was, and how it related to

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⁴ Ibid., 136.
justice and the *polis*, was a central preoccupation of philosophy. It is possible to interpret Aristotle’s ethical consideration of friendship as a strictly moral code of conduct that defines how we ought to act towards our true, perfect and rare friends. Foucault’s later work, by contrast, can be understood as an attempt to formulate an ethics that is not confined to this kind of program or set of decisions, but rather concerned with the practices that make up our relationships to ourselves and to others that allow for the possibilities of freedom to emerge. This thesis aims, then, to understand how such practices are involved in friendship, while keeping in mind that friendship is always constrained by its social and historical context. Rather than look for perfect friends, there is much value in starting from the real friends that one has, and seeing how the everyday practices they engage in might be modified. This echoes what Kant remarked in a lecture, when he noted friendship is “not a heaven but of the earth…” Kant insisted that the friend is an end in themselves, and that we should therefore see the relationship as having a value that cannot be explained in instrumental terms. This makes it difficult, however, to see how friendships often begin with the shared activity that might often look like “utility” and contain a dynamic and fluid potential to move between the Aristotelian typology. Further, it is not entirely clear friendship can be neatly divided into the two senses of Kant’s ends and means, and it seems more accurate that most of our friends move between these poles. Foucault’s sense of friendship looks to these problems without final resolution, but as such it offers an insight into all those flawed and imperfect relationships that often give such unexpected meaning to our lives.

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Further, the notion of the friend as the *other self*, said to originate in Aristotle, can serve to restrict the concept of friendship to a narcissism that attempts to reduce the *difference* of the friend. Friendship often arises out of similarity, as in shared tastes or activities, but to focus on this rather than the complex differences and disagreements that friendship often involves, seems to mask the meaning of friendship. Thinking of the friend only as an other self seems inadequate. Rather, the other involved in friendship is always an irreducible singularity, and one that opens up our life to different possibilities and can challenge our very sense of self. This idea has a long history as well, and Kant further suggests that *difference* and not “identity of thought” is what makes a friendship strong, and what gives it a solid foundation.\(^7\) Despite this understanding of the friend as another self, however, there is also good reason for the long shadow Aristotle casts on thinking about friendship: he raises the issue of the relationship of friendship to politics that still provokes much debate. Aristotle has the excellent insight that friends must “live together,” in the sense of sharing the very basic activity of life (rather than cohabitating), and the echoes of this thought are quite apparent in Foucault’s interviews on the theme of friendship as a way of life. The enigmatic phrase, handed down through Nietzsche and Montaigne, “O my friends there is no friend,” has also been attributed to Aristotle, and becomes the point of departure for Jacques Derrida’s book *The Politics of Friendship* which seeks to render the friend-enemy distinction undecidable in a gesture towards the impossibility of the perfect and true friend.

Giorgio Agamben has offered a recent alternative reading of the famous passage in Aristotle on the friend being an *other self* and suggested that, “the friend is not an other

\(^7\) Ibid., 216.
I, but an otherness immanent to selfness, a becoming other of the self… Friendship is this de-subjectification at the very heart of the most intimate sensation of the self.\(^8\)

Friendship for Agamben cuts to the very heart of the possibility of becoming a subject, and offers a way to see the other, and the friend, as necessary for the self to emerge at all. This ontological friend is therefore an other self in the sense that the sharing of acts and thoughts in common is what makes being possible. The other in Aristotle is not a reflection of the self, per se, but the very condition of possibility upon which any definition of self depends. This leads Agamben to conclude that “friends do not share something (birth, law, place, taste): they are shared by the experience of friendship… and it is this sharing without an object, this original con-senting, that constitutes the political.”\(^9\)

While friendship occupies a central position in ancient political theory (Plato’s Lysis being another important source), commentators have noted that this attention to friendship as being central to questions of politics and philosophy has largely waned in the modern period.\(^10\) Horst Hutter’s 1978 book Politics as Friendship stimulated interest in the topic within the field of political theory and has become an influential work, and in part inspired the collection The Challenge to Friendship in Modernity.\(^11\) Friendship & Politics appeared in 2008 with essays on ancient, medieval, Christian thinkers as well as

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\(^9\) Ibid., 36.


Hobbes, Montaigne and Nietzsche. The collection also addresses the lack of adequate thought given to friendship in the liberal political tradition and the editors draw out the opposing views of those who regard the practice of friendship as the preeminent activity of human beings, with politics taking a secondary position, and those who see law and duty as necessary to restrain friendship and therefore avoid the trappings of cronyism. A handful of other works looking at the relationship between politics and friendship have appeared in the last few decades, but absent from these considerations of friendship is any sustained account of how the concept relates to forms of political and cultural resistance, such as anarchism, and also how friendship might overlap with organizational forms of specifically anarchist social movements that have become influential since the 1990s and early 2000s. This thesis responds to this gap in the literature and demonstrates through an engagement with the work of Foucault how friendship has a particular value in its capacity to offer an experimental form of politics.

The scholarly work on the theme of friendship within the thought of Michel Foucault has to a certain extent stressed friendship's potentially subversive character. Foucault’s later interviews, and his gesturing towards friendship as a “way of life,” particularly for a community of gay men, begin to articulate an understanding of

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14 One exception to this is a recent special issue of the journal *Res Publica*, focused around the theme of friendship in political theory, in which two articles attempt to address this gap in thinking through friendship specifically as “a mode of resistance.” Derek Edyvane and Kerri Woods, “Reflections on Friendship in Political Theory,” *Res Publica* 19, no. 1 (February 1, 2013): 1–3, doi:10.1007/s11158-012-9202-6.
friendship as dangerous to the rigidity of sexual identity and the institutions which serve to enforce such regimes of compulsory heterosexuality.\textsuperscript{16} Foucault’s general project always emphasized the role of \textit{resistance} in the field of power relations, and so it seems apt to apply this to the theme of friendship.\textsuperscript{17} Todd May explains with greater detail how friendship could relate to more specifically \textit{political} forms of resistance, arguing that friendship is the kind of relationship that has a particular relevance in the resistance to the neoliberal encroachment of the market into personal relationships.\textsuperscript{18} Tom Roach’s 2012 book \textit{Friendship as a Way of Life} is the most in depth account of this theme in the work of Foucault, which argues that the concept of “shared estrangement” can illuminate AIDS activism in the 80s and early 90s. While drawing heavily on these two books, my own project attempts to formulate a robust and nuanced understanding of Foucault’s account of \textit{subjectivation} and therefore place the comments he makes about friendship in his interviews into context through a sustained reading of his work. Viewing friendship as a “way of life,” as a practice capable of intervening in the very process of being made a subject, allows for an intervention in the individualization of modern life which in part finds expression in the profound loneliness and feelings of separation so rampant in Western society today.

Foucault’s provocative comments on friendship are sparse and mostly contained in interviews. While they gesture towards the experimental view of friendship I have outlined, there is also within his work a certain challenge to understanding friendship as

\textsuperscript{18} May, \textit{Friendship in an Age of Economics : Resisting the Forces of Neoliberalism}. 
being inherently resistant to heteronormativity, exploitation, or the structures of domination that concern contemporary anarchist thinkers. Following Foucault, I argue that friendship is not in itself subversive, but that it offers a set of techniques for working at the limits of identity and historical formations of self. My first chapter therefore presents friendship as a site of struggle, and looks at how a relational understanding of subjectivation and Foucault’s late work on the “care of the self” opens up possibilities within friendship for what he terms de-individualization. Roach reminds us, however, that friendship for Foucault is “anything but utopian: betrayal, distance, brutal honesty [and] an impersonal intimacy founded in estrangement are its makings.”

Roach’s close reading of Foucault’s letter to artist Hervé Guibert, combined with analysis of his lectures, uses the concept of shared estrangement to characterize Foucault’s understanding of friendship, and it is in this sharing of the alienation and hostility of modern life that friendship offers an opportunity for experimental politics. Foucault insists we form an aesthetic relationship to the self, and I argue that the same can be true of friendship. What emerges from this position is not a set of ideal standards upon which to hold our friends, or a static idea of what makes a perfect or true friend, but instead how friends might become together something other than what they are, or as Foucault says, “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.”


Friend and enemy

Before moving to a close examination of Foucault’s idea of friendship in Chapter 1, it is necessary to first highlight some contrasting viewpoints on the theme of friendship and its relation to politics. Carl Schmitt in The Concept of the Political argues that the very definition of politics is the ability to decide on who counts as a friend, and by virtue of this decision, who is therefore counted as an enemy.21 In Schmitt’s words: “the specific distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is that between friend and enemy.”22 If Schmitt’s assertions are correct, it would mean that the very idea of friendship is deeply implicated, and indeed constituted by, the opposite idea of an enemy. Further, if what Schmitt signifies here by “the political” necessarily involves the state or the polis, deciding who is a friend and who is an enemy is the same gesture that founds the state. If this is correct, friendship presents a certain uneasy tension towards anarchism because it necessitates exclusions that create enemies. The line of thought that Schmitt picks up on here has a long lineage in political theory. In Plato’s Lysis Socrates suggests that the essence of friendship might be impossible to understand without some kind of opposition to an enemy, for indeed if friends and enemies become the same thing, this renders friendship meaningless.23 So, how can friendship be rethought without defining those who are not one’s friends as one’s enemies?

It is precisely this distinction that Derrida seeks to deconstruct in The Politics of Friendship. He shows that within Schmitt’s discourse itself, among many other

22 Ibid., 26.
23 Pakaluk, Other Selves : Philosophers on Friendship, 14.
philosophers in the Western canon, there are moments where friend becomes enemy and enemy becomes friend. As mentioned above, Derrida’s book revolves around the quotation, “O my friends, there is no friend,” and it meditates upon this apparent paradox in order to try and grapple with the difficult relationship friendship has always had with democracy. As his careful reading of this phrase points out, the plurality of the former (O my friends) must be contrasted with the singular form of the latter (there is no friend): one could address ones friends while the perfect and true friend might not exist. For Derrida friendship remains always “to come,” in the sense that no particular friend exhausts all possibilities for friendship. Further, Derrida suggests that the very experience of friendship always needs a kind of promise or future without which its present would cease to have any meaning. As such, Derrida rethinks friendship in a way that opens it up to the future. For Derrida, the decision of who is a friend does not define politics, but the inability to decide once and for all who is a friend and who is an enemy is what must be an emphatically political gesture.

Derrida further notes how the traditional philosophical discourses on friendship have stressed proximity (closeness) which either explicitly or implicitly relies upon a set of uncomfortable exclusions within the logic of the friend. For example, the language of fraternity and brothers often used in philosophical accounts of friendship is based on a “phallogcentric” exclusion of friendship between women, or of women to men. This privileging of the masculine within the construction of the meaning of friendship is not only about use of sexist language, it signifies that friendship has been constructed on the

25 Ibid., 236.
basis of similarity rather than difference or heterogeneity. Thus friendship is not a good model for politics because it reinforces a set of exclusions based on differences of class, gender, race, ethnicity, age, etc. Derrida asks us: can we think a friendship that remains open to the foreigner, the outsider, the Other? Derrida is concerned not only with the proclamations of friendship in texts of philosophy, but what silently takes place when we try to consider friendship philosophically. His goal then is to carefully re-read the Western canon of philosophical writings on friendship in order to undercut again and again any foundational knowledge of who might constitute an enemy. Through this he hopes to show that who is a friend and who is an enemy can never be decided upon once and for all, and therefore what defines a friend is for Derrida always deferred.

While *The Politics of Friendship* provides a massive treatment of nearly all the major figures in the Western philosophical tradition and their thinking on friendship, its focus remains on the impossibility and promise of the friend and connecting this to Derrida’s politics of democracy “to come.” This focus on the friend’s impossibility is useful for critiquing the tradition, and in particular for criticizing the way friendship might be motivated for projects of nation building (recall *fraternity* in the national motto of France). However, I believe that Foucault’s approach, in emphasizing friendship as a way of life, digs into the messy reality of friendship instead of insisting that “the friend” remains an impossibility. Derrida’s challenge mentioned above, however, that friendship does not make a good model for democratic politics due to its exclusive nature, is worth considering in more depth before moving on. Derrida’s argument can be countered in two ways: in seeing the friendship under discussion taking place between those already
excluded from democratic politics, and seeing aspects of democracy as precisely what must be criticized.

Following Todd May, Derrida’s work can be critiqued on the grounds that his notion of friendship seems to assume it is a friendship between those in relative positions of privilege and power, or in other words, friendships that maintain, rather than disrupt, the status quo. Derrida thus maintains one of the strategies of deconstruction in showing that the friend-enemy distinction is untenable from within its own theoretical trajectory. Therefore, the traditional philosophic discourses on friendship contain within them the seeds of their own unraveling, and through his deconstructive reading they are opened up to an uncertain horizon. However, it seems that the book misses something that is quite radical about the real, existing friendship between those who are not in privileged positions of power with regards to traditional philosophy. In Foucault’s example, it is the friendship between gay men in the late 1970s and early 1980s that is somewhat dangerous to heteronormative society, especially because in the absence of pre-existing roles it is a relationship that must be invented. It is not that this kind of example is necessarily opposed to Derrida’s critical project, but it is curious that he spends his entire book on the politics of friendship looking primarily at how “the friend” is impossible, and not giving any sense that friendship could also be a way to create some kind of alternative politics.

Second, following the arguments of Uri Gordon that I will draw heavily from in Chapter 3, I am interested here in an articulation of anarchism not as a more “radical” form of democracy, but an entirely different form of collective action. In emphasizing the

principle of decentralization, anarchists show how exclusion is not necessarily a bad thing when it comes to political organizing or a model for a future society. While friendship may lead to the creation of informal hierarchies and leadership structures, these are inevitable tensions to be challenged through the constant work of creating cultures of solidarity. Friendship may have the capacity to make power “invisible” in this sense, but I believe that the anarchist arguments against coercive authority and domination, which require that they abandon democratic politics that rely on state-based sanctions and enforcement mechanisms, are strong enough to deal with the kinds of “exclusions” that Derrida warns of in his text.

Following these rebuttals to Derrida, there are nonetheless elements of his work that I wish to bear in mind. Derrida’s attention to the fraternal aspect of the philosophical discussions of friendship cannot be ignored. Derrida suggests there is a “double exclusion… at work in all the great ethico-politico-philosophical discourses on friendship: on the one hand, the exclusion of friendship between women; on the other, the exclusion of friendship between a man and a woman…” If friendship is to remain tied to this kind of fraternal discourse, it of course cannot inspire a politics of resistance, or worse, the type of resistance it formulates will be one that simultaneously introduces heteronormativity and sexism. Derrida points out how it is not only the traditional thinkers of antiquity (Aristotle and Plato), nor the modern examples of Kant and Montaigne who remain tied to “phallogocentrism,” but the language of “brothers” and “fraternity” is used consistently in Nietzsche and Blanchot. Derrida, however, is not

28 Ibid., 283, 304.
arguing for a simple change in the language used to express the meaning of friendship. For him, talking about friendship without using the term “brother” is not enough: it is the very inclusion of such terms within the philosophic writings on friendship that indicates the underlying values of proximity and similarity have displaced those of distance and difference. Derrida seeks instead a friend that remains only ever a “perhaps,” always open to the future, who could just as easily be a foreigner as a neighbour. Derrida’s attention also to “androcentric” friendship implies this openness also relates to friendships that cross the boundaries of species.29

The approaches of Derrida and Foucault to friendship come together in a similar articulation of an “ethics of discomfort.” While Foucault’s genealogical method considers the past of friendship, and as such helps to illuminate the material practices that constitute its present existence, Derrida reminds us that an openness to the uncertainty of the future of friendship also gives it a critical edge. This comes from Derrida’s sense of ethics as a task that is never finished, and that in fact the moment one is certain one is ethical is the precise moment ethics disappears. Foucault in a way shares this view but articulates it instead as an “ethics of discomfort,” as the essential philosophical task of never “being completely comfortable with one’s own presuppositions… never to imagine that one can change them like arbitrary axioms, remembering that in order to give them the necessary mobility one must have a distant view, but also look at what is nearby and all around oneself.”30 This is the view I suggest we take of friendship, and following the analysis of Tom Roach, it is this “mutual discomfort” in friendship as shared estrangement that gives

29 Ibid., 13, 158.
it a very different form, one that “allows for individual and collaborative experimentation, one that nurtures singular and collective potentiality.”

Friendship in the neoliberal era

The most sustained academic treatment of how friendship relates to resistance is Todd May’s 2012 book *Friendship in an Age of Economics*. This work argues friendship is a motivation for political resistance specifically in the context of the neoliberal era, where markets have “become spread across our lives… not only our economic but also our political, social and personal relationships...” As such, it is these personal relationships, and by extension our friendships, that become a “site of struggle between who we are asked to be and who we might otherwise be.” In opposition to this, May argues deep and close friendships resist calculation and therefore run counter to the permeation of market logic into our everyday life. To be clear, May does not argue that *all* friendships escape the neoliberal logic of investment and return, but that some friendships, in particular those which take on a more intimate and trusting character, do not make use of the kind of calculation necessary for market interactions. While there might be some accounting that takes place in the context of friendship, May reflects on the phenomenal experience we have with friends to suggest that when we are absorbed in a fulfilling and meaningful friendship, it becomes difficult if not impossible to account

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33 Ibid., 2.
34 Ibid., 97–98.
for what each friend has given to the relationship. The moment we begin to “account” for the time or the material goods given to us by a friend, and the anxiety that might be felt over “owing” a friend, is the moment where the trust foundational to friendship has begun to break down, or in other words, it signifies that there is a problem with some aspect of the friendship. In reflecting on our closest friendships this seems quite apparent. It is for these reasons that May suggests friendship has the capacity to be the kind of relationship that defies calculation, or exists beyond measure.

May elaborates this further by looking at the dominant motifs of neoliberalism, drawing on Foucault’s lecture series The Birth of Biopolitics. As he suggests, “to live in a neoliberal world is to be encouraged to think of one’s fellows in terms of pleasure and profit… it is to be encouraged to be consumers and entrepreneurs.” Neoliberalism is therefore not only an economic system that has restructured the welfare state through massive privatization, but a series of social practices which have pushed us into certain modes of existence. For May, the consumer and the entrepreneur are the dominant figures of neoliberalism: understood as a set of practices which embody many aspects of who we are, but at the same time do not determine the entirety of our existence.

Friendship can motivate resistance to these figures, particularly in its deep and close variations, because it requires history and strong trust. May argues that as consumers we are forever focused on the present time, on entertainment and on how others can be entertaining and useful for us. While spending time with friends in the present for enjoyment and pleasure is certainly one important variety of friendship, a

36 Ibid., 118.
37 Ibid., 20–21.
38 Ibid., 32–33.
shared history is also part of what gives friendship its meaning. This does not mean that close friendships require years to develop, as intense periods of time spent with friends over shorter periods can have a similar effect. Friendship is often also “episodic,” and depends not on continued time together but a series of episodes that span a prolonged period of time and come to construct a history. This priority of the past in friendship is what for May causes it to challenge one’s role as a consumer, and to challenge as well the tendency to only see friends as existing for entertainment or pleasure. Placing more importance on the past of friendship, and trying to cultivate friendships that construct a history, help to encourage this resistant possibility.

The entrepreneur on the other hand is future oriented: always concerned with the return on investment, and with how to best profit in the future off of the time allocated in the present. May argues that under the economic logic of neoliberalism, personal relationships especially have been subsumed to this framework. Friends are considered more for their networking potential than for the support and simple joy they bring to our lives. This is why May argues that deep friendships are challenging to this entrepreneurial takeover of our relationships, as they cultivate a kind of trust that does not come right away, but is created through “living together,” and through a kind of temporal process that is distinctly not oriented towards the future. As May suggests

[friendship] must be animated by the time lived together between those beginnings and its present state. There is a vitality to time spent together that molds and re-molds its initial phases, adding dimensions to the friendship that were not present in its earliest incarnation. To be involved in a deep friendship is to be part of a temporal process, a process that does not simply unfold what was there in germ at

40 May, Friendship in an Age of Economics : Resisting the Forces of Neoliberalism, 42–43.
the outset, but that instead creates what will be there through conversation and shared activity. In entrepreneurial friendships, the only important consideration for how one spends one’s time with a friend is how much return on the *investment* of that time one will gain. This is why May argues that deep friendships in some important ways cannot be easily folded into the figure of the entrepreneur, the trust and loyalty that these kinds of friendships encourage are actually an obstacle to realizing the return on investment that must be accounted for with any consideration of how to evaluate the time one spends with others in the neoliberal era. The cultivation of deep friendships means spending time with another in an essential incalculable way with no guarantee of any future benefit. May argues this is precisely the opposite of how neoliberalism incites us to act.

May’s book has significantly informed this thesis, but my focus here is not neoliberalism. In Chapter 1, I look at how Foucault presents the dual character of power structures as simultaneously individualizing and totalizing, and how this creates a sense of isolation that is cultivated *in* and *through* our connection to others. As such, friendship is a site of struggle not only for the logic of neoliberal economics, but for the very functioning of identity and for the process by which human beings are “made subject,” detailed in Foucault’s work on the care of the self. Chapter 1 also looks to the more “anti-social” aspects of friendship that May leaves out of his account, and drawing on the work of Tom Roach, I explain how the *impersonal* aspects of friendship can challenge what he calls “identitarian politics.” Chapter 2 moves on to elaborate this second aspect of power as “totalizing,” and to see how friendship might intervene in a relationship of government

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41 Ibid., 94.
42 Ibid., 111, 117.
in addition to how it can work at the limits of identity. I present a brief case study of the use of the tactic of friendship in the intelligence gathering in the lead up to the protests of the Toronto G20 in 2010 to illustrate how friendship can be both used as a tool of the police and how it is itself sometimes the object of that policing.

Chapter 3 continues from this example to consider more carefully the claim by anarchist theory that friendship might be an effective model for political organizing, and intervenes in the debate about informal leadership and power in the anarchist movement. It looks at anarchist understandings of affinity and affinity groups and shows how this is based on a kind of difference that also ultimately defines friendship as well. Chapter 3 will look critically at The Invisible Committee’s provocative call for a political friendship understood as a form-of-life, as an effective way of organizing disruptive political actions by making use of the tactic of invisibility. Uri Gordon provides a more measured argument for the usefulness of informal organization and explains the necessity of invisible power to anarchist organizing, and provides an articulation of anarchist cultures of solidarity that mitigate the development of informal leaders, an issue that has both provoked debate within anarchist movements and been one reason anarchism has been criticized. Friendship has a particular power and strength as an aspect of informal and leaderless organizing that makes it of particular relevance to anarchism. Of course, what kind of friendship that has this power is ultimately always an open question. I maintain that an understanding of friendship as dynamic rather than static is important, and it must be admitted that friendship has an enigmatic and often chaotic nature. To rethink friendship is not to arrive at a new formulation of how one can be a true or perfect friend, once and for all, but to see the irruptive moment of friendship as that which “leads bodies
in new and unexpected directions… friendship is a movement of desire that threatens to make us lose our balance… a relation of permanence that defies the permanent, a presence that must remain an absence, an existence that grows bifurcated like a rhizome erupting at the frontiers of chance and necessity.” This, then, is the experiment of friendship, and it is through the consistent and repetitive work upon the limits of this friendship that it might become, as Foucault suggests, a “way of life.”

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Chapter 1: Friendship in an atomized world

Do not demand of politics that it restore the “rights” of the individual, as philosophy has defined them. The individual is the product of power. What is needed is to “de-individualize” by means of multiplication and displacement, diverse combination. The group must not be the organic bond uniting hierarchized individuals, but a constant generator of de-individualization.

– Foucault, Preface to Anti-Oedipus

Friendship as a site of struggle

In his 1982 interview “Friendship as a Way of Life” Foucault discusses the friendship through which gay men come to create alternative forms of subjectivity, and while brief, the interview raises a number of theoretical issues central to what Foucault was struggling with over the course of his philosophical investigations. Foucault articulated the problem of homosexual identity and gestured towards friendship as offering a possible point of tension with regards to how homosexuality has been tied to desire. Friendship was not a solution here, however, but a problem, and the kind of problem that could be elaborated through a way of life. He says, “we have to work at becoming homosexuals and not be obstinate in recognizing that we are. The development towards which the problem of homosexuality tends is the one of friendship.”

Foucault sees friendship as potentially subversive and experimental because it offered gay men the possibility of relating to each other outside of institutionally defined roles. Friendship as a problem, then, gestures towards how it might be understood as an interesting site of

struggle or an arena where power and identity play out in unexpected ways. As such it is one technique implicated in the process of being subjected to domination that Foucault’s critical project sought to show as historically contingent and not inevitable; the form a friendship takes can therefore be the beginnings of political resistance that could envision relationships with less coercive authority and domination. Friendship does not guarantee this vision, however, but must instead be understood as a site of struggle where these forces constantly take shape.

The specific example of friendship between gay men in the early 1980s that Foucault was speaking about in his interview should not, however, be overlooked. For Foucault at this time gay men faced each other with a kind of uncertainty over their relationships, and therefore had to, “invent, from A to Z, a relationship which is still formless, which is friendship: that is to say, the sum of everything through which they can give each other pleasure.”\textsuperscript{46} This inventive kind of friendship Foucault has in mind, and its challenge to the programmatic form of homosexuality defined by the liberation of an essentialized desire, is very different from the sense of “friend” as a close and trusted person with whom one does not have a sexual relationship. While friendship can exist with a spouse, a lover or a family member these kinds of relationships are largely not what define it. While friendships spring out of our historically conditioned identities (as workers, students or neighbours, for example) they still are not defined by these institutional affiliations; it takes something more for a friendship to take form. Foucault acknowledges the constraints of history on who we are, but begins from a place of

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 136.
openness concerning who might be or become a friend, and as such does not exclude
the possibility of movement between the roles of lover and friend.

Foucault raises three key problems in this interview on friendship which this
chapter will seek to articulate: (1) Why desire, and in particular sexual desire, has come
to typically constitute identity, and why the liberation of desire is an ineffective model for
sexual freedom compared to defining a new kind relationship to pleasure. (2) How
asceticism might be reclaimed, in a separate and different register from asceticism, in order
to transform the self, and to “make us work on ourselves and invent… a manner of being
that is still improbable.”47 (3) Why political programs are insufficient, in terms of the
struggle for greater sexual freedom in the example of gay men, but also as a more general
attitude. Foucault hints at the possibility of a homosexual culture with “polymorphic,
varied and individually modulated relationships…” and maintains that “the idea of a
program of proposals is dangerous. As soon as a program is presented, it becomes law,
and there’s a prohibition against inventing.”48 This is why Foucault proposed an aesthetic
relation to the self as a possible challenge to individualization and subjection, and in this
chapter I will extend this to a consideration of how friendship itself could be understood
as work of art.

The anti-programmatic attitude of Foucault, however, also demonstrates that it is
difficult to prescribe friendship being inherently radical or challenging to modern
political formations. For this reason this chapter will insist on friendship as a site of

47 Ibid., 137.
48 Foucault, “Friendship as a Way of Life,” 139.
struggle that offers only uncertain visions of alternative forms of subjectivity. As Foucault says,

For centuries after antiquity, friendship was a very important kind of relation: a social relation which people had a certain freedom, a certain kind of choice (limited choice), as well as very intense emotional relations… I think that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we see these kinds of friendships disappearing, at least in the male society. And friendship begins to become something other than that. You can find, from the sixteenth century on, texts that explicitly criticize friendship as something dangerous… The army, bureaucracy, administrations, universities, schools and so on—the modern senses of these words—cannot function with such intense friendships.\(^{49}\)

This chapter will argue that the potential danger friendship poses to these modern institutions in part results from how they can be understood as *individualizing*, understood not only as a process by which individuals are disconnected from each other but also as the method by which discipline produces individuals. My claim is that friendship is political in its capacity to work against this *individualization*. To see how this concept of power as individualizing is different than a simple critique of social isolation, I will first assess some popular discussion of how friendship is rapidly vanishing in North American society. This line of reasoning, however, is rejected by many who understand contemporary culture as more connected than ever before, and much research backs up this claim. Foucault’s perceptive comments about the totalizing *and* individualizing character of the political rationality at work in modern times cuts through this debate to provide a more nuanced understanding of how a multiplicity of beings has been fabricated into a society of individuals, who are both profoundly separated and intensely connected.

Part two of this chapter will assess *individualization* in relation to Foucault’s later understanding of the way human beings are made subject, or his concept of *subjectivation*, and how this relates to friendship. I will look at how Foucault formulates an essentially *relational* and *situated* conception of “the subject,” and this awareness of the essentially dependent and relational beings that we are changes how we must think about how we relate to our friends. I further argue that Foucault’s notion of the “care of the self” is not an individual endeavour but always involves others and has relations with others as its goal. The care of the self is not advocated by Foucault, however; he instead always returns to the notion of an aesthetic relation to oneself when he makes his cautious, and rare, proposals for ethics. Foucault asked instead how it might be possible to create one’s life as a work of art,\(^{50}\) and following the analysis of Steve Garlick, I will ask the same of friendship.\(^{51}\) How might it be possible to see the entirety of a relationship with one’s friend as work of art, or as an experiment? Part three of this chapter will flesh out what this aesthetic approach to friendship means, and how it contrasts to the isolating pressures of modern institutions discussed in part one. This final section of the chapter also addresses the difficult arguments by Tom Roach that a Foucauldian notion of friendship is essentially *impersonal* and involves an embrace of *shared estrangement*. This understanding allows us to see how friendship can be political not only in its opposition to the institutions Foucault mentions, but in its potential to work at the limits

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of identity and challenge the way in which subjects impose relations of power and domination on themselves and on each other.

This overall argument of this chapter is that friendship does not in itself provide any program for a radically alternative form of politics, but that it is one site of struggle where the individualizing process of modern institutions are wrestled with and at times overcome.\textsuperscript{52} As such, friendship is an arena for both the enforcement of moral codes and norms of behaviour, and the opening of a space to question the very rationality of the codes and norms that make up our social world. This chapter considers more fully the concept of subjectivation as it relates to friendship, and explains how the practices involved in the relationship one has with oneself can go about changing the way one relates to one’s friends. In this sense, Foucault’s concept of “the care of the self” gestures towards possible tactics that friends can deploy with each other not to police moral behaviour but instead to de-individualize, to focus on their relationships as more important than their identities as subjects.

\textbf{Isolation, individualization and the atomized society}

There has been debate in North American popular and academic discourse over whether as a society we are becoming more isolated from or more connected to one another. In favour of isolation, Robert Putnam’s 2000 book \textit{Bowling Alone} advances the

\textsuperscript{52} The idea of friendship as a “site of struggle” is indebted to Todd May’s \textit{Friendship in an Age of Economics}. However, while May focuses specifically on how this idea relates to neoliberalism, my focus here is on Foucault’s understanding of individualization and subjectivation, and so my argument proceeds quite different from his work. Todd May, \textit{Friendship in an Age of Economics : Resisting the Forces of Neoliberalism} (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012), 10.
thesis that Americans have become increasingly disconnected from family, friends and their community since the 1960s. Putnam’s fears were reinvigorated by a 2006 psychology study that claimed over the previous two decades Americans had become more and more socially isolated, based on the fact respondents said they had fewer and fewer close friends beyond their immediate families with whom they could discuss important matters.53 This report caused a minor media panic, with countless articles espousing the plight of the lonely American: headlines announced that 25% of Americans have no one to confide in, that loneliness has been on the steady rise since the 1950s, and that clear evidence is showing Americans’ circle of friends is shrinking rapidly.54 USA Today suggested the cause for this loneliness was obvious: the suburbs, TV, iPods and social networking.55

However, these studies were contested by sociologists and psychologists who argued the data had exaggerated the situation, and with more comprehensive interviews only around 5% of Americans reported having no close friends they spoke to regularly.56 Indeed, Putnam’s idea of “bowling alone” hinges on the fact that Americans are no longer part of bowling leagues; he himself acknowledges more and more Americans are

55 Fountain, “The Lonely American Just Got a Bit Lonelier”; Kornblum, “Study: 25% of Americans Have No One to Confide in.”
indeed bowling, just more often in informal groups of friends than in official leagues.57

The informality of these relational ties has begun to attract interest by commentators and academics: the popular 2010 book Connected argues that our world is not one of isolation, but one of “hyperconnectivity,” a deeply networked society where the decisions of “our friends’ friends’ friends” affect our own, and even well-being and success transfers through these same indirect connections.58 These authors are certainly not alone: there has been an veritable explosion of network thinking in recent decades. In 2011 Sherry Turkle added a twist to this discussion with the book Alone Together, highlighting the ways technology can make people feel alone and disconnected while they are in more constant communication with others on a daily basis than ever before.59 According to Turkle, contemporary society is not one of isolation, but a complex world where people come together in immediate, physical space and yet what they most want from that space is to be alone with their laptops and cell phones that connect them to social networks spanning the globe.60 Hence there is a certain loneliness to modern life, but it is not the result of a declining number of friends; this loneliness occurs within the context of connected individuals.

Hannah Arendt provides an exceptional understanding of how loneliness can exist in the midst of individuals being brought closer together, and she explained this process by showing that isolation was necessary to totalitarian government: “terror can rule

60 Ibid., 14.
absolutely only over men who are isolated against each other and that, therefore, one of the primary concerns of all tyrannical government is to bring this isolation about.\textsuperscript{61} Arendt understood that this isolation comes about not through any real separation of individuals, but through their connection and contact. She distinguishes \textit{isolation} from \textit{loneliness}, the latter understood as the feeling of “being deserted by all human companionship,” while the former is a basic human experience, necessary for acts of creativity and craft.\textsuperscript{62} However, it is when this necessary isolation is eroded that the social realm produces extreme loneliness. Tyranny for Arendt simultaneously isolates a people while ensuring that individuals are never left alone, and therefore cannot experience the freedom of solitude. For Arendt, loneliness is precisely not solitude: “solitude requires being alone while loneliness shows itself most sharply in the company of others.”\textsuperscript{63} The perfection of totalitarianism is taking this marginal experience of loneliness and making it the everyday experience of individuals:

\begin{quote}
It fits him into the iron band of terror even when he is alone, and totalitarian domination tries never to leave him alone except in the extreme situation of solitary confinement. By destroying all space between men and pressing men against each other, even the productive potentialities of isolation are annihilated.\textsuperscript{64}
\end{quote}

Totalitarianism is therefore an “organized loneliness” that depends on the connection of individuals, in the sense above that the \textit{space} between them is destroyed. As such, this kind of isolation links individuals together but wholly determines the character and quality of this connection. For Arendt, tyranny acts upon people even when they are alone yet paradoxically never leaves them alone.

\begin{enumerate}
\item[62] Ibid., 475.
\item[63] Ibid., 476.
\item[64] Ibid., 478.
\end{enumerate}
Foucault extends this totalitarian principle to the more general forms of government that have developed in liberal democratic states throughout the West. However, the issue becomes more complex because Foucault is not prepared to oppose the individual and the state but to look at how the state is one of the forces that *individualizes*:

Political criticism has reproached the state with being simultaneously a factor for individualization and a totalitarian principle. Just to look at nascent state rationality, just to see what its first policing project was, makes it clear that, right from the start, the state is both individualizing and totalitarian… Opposing the individual and his interests to it is just as hazardous as opposing it with the community and its requirements.⁶⁵

Through an attempt to demonstrate that the rationality at work in Nazism and Stalinism was not altogether unique, articulated here in the lecture *Omnes et Singulatim*, Foucault expresses this process of “individualization.” But what is this individualization for Foucault, and how does it differ from simple isolation?

For Foucault, this process of individualization, as articulated in *Omnes et Singulatem*, *The Subject and Power* and *Discipline & Punish*, has three significant features. First, individualization signifies the very real and material way that individuals were confined, controlled, disciplined, kept separated and isolated through institutions like prisons and asylums. Second, it explains a process where knowledge about individuals, in their particularity and uniqueness, became a necessary part of the art of government and the techniques used by state power. Third, individualization is a *productive* process where the individual, in the sense of a singular being distinct from any group or relationship, is *constituted* by technologies of power.

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Foucault’s understanding of individualization, however, is not only concerned with how human beings might be produced as individuals by power, but what political rationality is at work when this individualization occurs. Further, Foucault is always attentive to how this rationality has circulated between the techniques of government and those at use in market or capitalist relations. More so, Foucault argues that neither Marxist analysis nor liberal political theory provides an adequate framework for understanding this rationality that has used individualization as one of its techniques: “the main characteristic of our modern rationality… is neither the constitution of the state… or the rise of bourgeois individualism.”66 It is not sufficient to critique the state (and oppose it to the individual), or to critique “bourgeois individualism” and capitalist ideology. The rationality that Foucault seeks to understand can be used by the state or the market, but it is not limited to either sphere. The correlation between individualization and totalization means that power works not only in one direction or the other, but does both simultaneously and needs both for its existence. As the state gains knowledge of individuals, through, for example, grades recorded from standardized examinations, the totality of its power is increased. Further, this serves to naturalize or conceal that a technique such as the examination is itself integral to the functioning of power. In Foucault’s words, “the examination combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgement. It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish.”67

Indeed, individualization is often invoked in part three of *Discipline & Punish*, as Foucault formulates his sweeping concept of ‘discipline’ as a positive and productive power that operates on ‘docile bodies,’ as well as the individualizing effects of the great surveillance society which takes as its example Bentham’s Panopticon. Discipline as Foucault understands it has a creative function in regard to individuals: “discipline ‘makes’ individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise… it is a modest, suspicious power which functions as a calculated, but permanent economy.”68 The individual is “carefully fabricated” by our social order, in conjunction with but in a very different fashion from sovereign power or the law.69 The term individual might typically be understood to mean a single human being separated from a group or community, but Foucault draws attention to how this separation is not natural or indivisible but fabricated. This problem is fundamental because it bears upon any definition of friendship that might emphasize that friendship comes after the formation of discrete and autonomous individuals, and is formed between them. From Foucault’s detailing of *individualization*, we can see that the individual has in part been produced through the disciplinary mechanisms developed in the eighteenth century, many of which are still with us today.

Foucault’s account acknowledges that the view of isolated and abstract individuals serves a certain function, and attempts to criticize this view not by looking to how these individuals might be capable of becoming more connected or whole, but by undercutting the foundation upon which thinking of society as essentially *atomistic* depends. In so

68 Ibid., 170.
69 Ibid., 217, 223.
doing, however, he does not see the individual as an illusion, but as a historical reality that has been dominant, and remained so through a series of material acts on bodies and multitudes. The following passage exemplifies this conception of the individual:

It is often said that the model of a society that has individuals as its constituent elements is borrowed from the abstract juridical forms of contract and exchange. Mercantile society, according to this view, is represented as a contractual association of isolated juridical subjects. Perhaps. Indeed, the political theory of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries often seems to follow this schema. But it should not be forgotten that there existed at the same period a technique for constituting individuals as correlative elements of power and knowledge. The individual is no doubt the fictitious atom of an ‘ideological’ representation of society; but he is also a reality fabricated by this specific technology of power that I have called ‘discipline.’ We must cease 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 belong to this production.70

Putting this quote into the context of the debate over isolation and hyperconnectivity discussed at the outset, we can see that Foucault’s critique does not dismiss liberal political theory for its reliance on individuals as the “billiard balls” of modern society. While he argues that this atomistic view of individuals is fictitious, in itself a substantial claim to make, his point is that the individual is a reality fabricated specifically by techniques of power such as the ones he has described throughout this work: exercise, training, examination, surveillance, observation, punishment, normalization, judgement. This is in a sense why society can be seen as atomized instead of atomistic; the division and isolation of individuals is an active and ongoing process that requires continual maintenance and the perfection of specific techniques of power, it is not the inherent foundation of the social world that is made up of singular and indivisible entities.

70 Ibid., 194.
Foucault’s work on disciplinary power, and as such the schema of individualization which I have sketched here, is often thought of as distinct or separate from his later ethical writings. I would argue, however, that there is a clear connection between his understanding of individualization and what he comes to term subjectivation, that is the process whereby human beings are made subject. As Judith Butler has shown, however, we must be clear not to conflate ‘the subject’ with the individual, and instead show how it is that these concepts relate.71 Foucault becomes concerned with how this process of becoming a subject involves new problems that could not be explained through individualization, even if power needs to individualize through the process of subjectivation. He explains: “this form of power that applies itself to immediate everyday life categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognize and others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power that makes individuals subjects.”72 As Foucault took up his studies of Greek sexuality his concern became “the way a human being turns him- or herself into a subject” both in the senses of subject to someone else’s control and tied to one’s own identity through conscience and self-knowledge.73 As such Foucault becomes concerned with the variety of ways power not only individualizes but how subjects reinforce their subjection to power and authority through technologies of the self.

73 Ibid., 327.
Friendship might therefore be understood as one site of struggle where these techniques of individualization are playing out, and where one’s attachment to identity or control can be either reinforced or challenged. Think for example of the way a group of friends can encourage adherence to certain norms and can implicitly enforce the rules of the *status quo*. Friends also confess desires in a way that might be understood as the “truth” of one’s identity, a practice Foucault was critical of. However, as Foucault’s interviews suggest, friendship might also be a technique or strategy in opposition to the techniques of subjection and individualization as it can open a space to question such norms and values, and even be the kind of relationship that questions very fundamental aspects of identity. Friendship can help to construct a new form of subjectivity that Foucault called for in *The Subject and Power*:

The conclusion would be that the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state, and from the state’s institutions, but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality that has been imposed on us…

But what does the “us” in this statement really mean? If individuals are constituted by the state, and power is in some ways productive of subjectivity, what can it mean to “liberate” an *us*? I read this *us* as signifying the object of liberation is not an individual, or even a fixed collective, but an *us* in the sense of a relationship which is prior to individuals or subjects. Friendships and other forms of political solidarity can in a sense be liberating, but this can only happen by understanding the essentially relational characteristic of the self and of subjectivity: that we are always formed in and through our relationship to others. Therefore this kind of resistance cannot happen alone, but

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74 Ibid., 336.
through social practices that oppose techniques of state power and normalization.

Friendship is one such technique.

**Subjectivation and the care of the self**

Foucault characterized his final investigations, those that coincided with the research he undertook for his *History of Sexuality* project, as principally concerned with the problem of “how human beings are made subject,” which for him is articulated by his concept of subjectivation. This notion expands upon individualization to examine how subjects constitute themselves in relation to “truth,” and how subjects become enmeshed in certain rituals of truth. In *The Use of Pleasures* Foucault describes this “third shift,” which has usually been interpreted as his ethical period, as moving from an analysis of “the rational techniques that articulate the exercise of powers” to the “forms and modalities of the relation to self by which the individual constitutes and recognizes himself *qua* subject.” Further, he states that after his focus on punitive practices and the power relations that began in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, his focus came to be on “games of truth in the relationship of self with self and the forming of oneself as a subject,” in reference to the history of “desiring man,” or more generally the history of how human beings came to understand themselves as subjects of desire, and how desire became constitutive of identity.

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75 Ibid., 326.
77 Ibid., 6–7.
This shift is important for the topic at hand because it allows us to understand the potential friendship might have for intervening in one’s relationship to oneself, whether this is an intensification of identity or a practice that gestures towards its undoing. In Foucault’s articulation of the individualizing effects of power in institutions such as prisons, friendship could be understood to play a certain kind of “de-individualizing” role that might combat the isolation of these institutions with an openness to vulnerability, a practice of trust and intimacy in the face of a bleak situation.

Foucault expressed in his interviews that historical texts specifically warn of friendship as something dangerous, and diminishing or minimizing intense and affectionate friendships became one of the goals of institutions such as prisons and armies, and especially schools.78 One way to understand friendship in this context is as the beginning or contact point for groups or collectives that might seek to challenge the institutions that individualize (in the sense of isolating people from each other). However, with Foucault’s turn towards subjectivation in his later period, the issue of discipline and domination comes to be intertwined with the basic process of subject formation itself. Subjection is present within the relationship of the self with the self, and this relationship is a necessary condition of the constitution of ‘the subject,’ and therefore at a very profound level one is complicit in various forms of self-subjugation. Recall the two meanings Foucault gave to ‘the subject’ in his essay The Subject and Power: “subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power that subjugates and makes subject to.”79 The formation

79 Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” 331.
of the subject for Foucault is very distant from the idea of a subject as substance, which he explicitly rejects, or as a unique consciousness where thought resides, split from an external world.\textsuperscript{80} I will argue throughout this section that Foucault’s sense of ‘the subject’ is \textit{relational} and \textit{situated}, as opposed to conceptions of the subject that point to its universal or trans-historical nature. For Foucault, the focus is always on how humans, these “beings that think,” are \textit{made subjects}, as an active and repetitive process. Again, this is the process he termed \textit{subjectivation}, but as I will show his later work focuses on how the subject in its self-relation always has an active, and even a daily, practical role, in being made a subject. Foucault maintains however that he never articulates a cohesive \textit{theory} of the subject, saying in an interview, “I rejected… the idea of starting out with a theory of the subject… and, on the basis of this theory, asking how a given form of knowledge was possible. What I wanted to try to show was how the subject constituted itself, in one specific form or another, as a mad or a healthy subject, as a delinquent or nondelinquent subject, through certain practices that were also games of truth, practices of power.”\textsuperscript{81} For Foucault no general, universal idea of the subject is possible, but there are certain sets of practices whereby we constitute ourselves as sick, healthy, insane or abnormal within relations of power. While the subject is involved to some extent in its own self-constitution, however, this never takes place outside of an inherited regime of reflexive practices that are enacted through one’s self-constitution, so the norms governing sickness or madness, for example, work on both the level of interiority of the self and the external web of embedded practices that the self is always bound up within.

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
If the formation of the subject therefore takes place through the relation of a self to itself, as Foucault goes to great lengths to demonstrate throughout *The Care of the Self* and in his lecture course *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, then this seems to indicate that the process of subject formation, which occurs through exercises of the self on itself, is flexible to a certain extent. While the work that transforms the self never happens outside relations of power, or outside an inherited regime of self-cultivation that positions the subject in relation to the truth, there is however the possibility of intervening through adopting different kinds of practices or techniques of self. Friendship is one of the factors in the care of the self, and as such this begins to explain how certain forms of friendship can be a part of the critical work of becoming other than what one has been made to be. In other words, friendship has to potential not only to be a factor in the care of the self but as a relationship that might lead to what Foucault terms ‘de-subjectivation.’

The primarily relational understanding of the subject is expressed throughout Foucault’s lecture course *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, where he comes to define the entire thrust of his theoretical endeavour as coming to terms with the problem of the subject’s relationship to truth.\(^2\) Here, he suggests that a relationship of knowledge of the self has misplaced or obscured what has been a much more important theme in the history of Western thought, that of *the care of the self*, or more generally the practices and technologies that the self uses in its relationship with itself.\(^3\) Foucault is concerned with uncovering this thematic of the care of the self, which he suggests was necessary for there to be any possibility of self-knowledge at all. He also connects this to the “Cartesian

\(^3\) Ibid., 2–3.
moment” when philosophy for the most part became disconnected from self-transformation and practices of a more spiritual character that were necessary in order for a subject to gain access to the truth.84 Descartes, in Foucault’s estimation, in introducing knowledge of the self as resting on the inability to doubt one’s own existence as a thinking subject, discredited the importance of the care of the self. For Foucault this splits in a certain way philosophy from spirituality, by which he means the most general “search, practice, and experience through which the subject carries out the necessary transformations on himself in order to have access to the truth… the set of these researches, practices, and experiences which may be purifications, ascetic exercises, renunciations, conversions of looking, modification of existence… which are… for the subject’s very being, the price to be paid for access to the truth.”85 This preoccupation with how it came about that spiritual practices, understood in this sense, came to be severed from philosophy as such, remains a theme throughout the lecture series.

Indeed, near the end of the Hermeneutics of the Subject, Foucault explains further how this problem of recovering the practices of self that are involved in any kind of knowledge of the self lead him to a situated understanding of the subject:

…the subject himself, constituted by the form of reflexivity specific to this or that type of care of the self, will be modified. Consequently, we should not constitute a continuous history of the gnothi seauton whose explicit or implicit postulate would be a general and universal theory of the subject, but should, I think, begin with an analytics of the forms of reflexivity, a history of the practices on which they are

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84 Ibid., 14–15. Foucault notes that this is a very crude and schematic rendering of a large and complex shift in the history of philosophy. This is understandable given that these were lectures based on ongoing research and he did not intend them for publication, and while the distinction is rather crude it nonetheless highlights the differences between the ancient culture of the self and the tradition that in some regards begins with Descartes.
85 Ibid., 15.
based, so as to be able to give the old traditional principle of “know yourself” its meaning—its variable, historical and never universal meaning.\textsuperscript{86}

It is not that knowledge of the self is unnecessary or unimportant, but that it changes in relation to what practices or techniques are used in a given time and place. It is for this reason the subject is always \textit{situated}, and this points therefore to the dynamic and flexible nature of the subject’s relation to itself, even if there are always forces at work to limit or constrict this flexibility.

The meaning of ‘the subject’ for social and political theory has become a central debate, bound up with the very possibility of agency. Judith Butler explains:

…if, following Foucault, we understand power as \textit{forming} the subject as well as providing the very condition of its existence and the trajectory of its desire, then power is not simply what we oppose but also, in a strong sense, what we depend on for our existence and what we harbour and preserve in the beings that we are… subjection consists precisely in this fundamental dependency on a discourse we never chose but that, paradoxically, initiates and sustains our agency.\textsuperscript{87}

Butler here presents a reading of Foucault that hones in on an ambiguity that his project maintains with regards to subject formation: if the subject is constituted in and through power, what existence could one have without this power? One response that Foucault anticipates is that he has not set out to form a general theory of the subject, but to looks at specific \textit{subjects}: mad, ill, delinquent, criminal. However, his statements made about the basic necessity of practices of the self in order for there to be a self in the first place seem to exist in tension with this.

Butler, for her part, emphasizes the linguistic dimension of the process of subject formation, perhaps as one way of resolving this tension. She writes, “‘the subject’ is

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 462.
\textsuperscript{87} Butler, \textit{The Psychic Life of Power}, 2.
something bandied about as if it were interchangeable with ‘the person’ or ‘the individual.’ The genealogy of the subject as a critical category, however, suggests that the subject, rather than be identified strictly with the individual, ought to be designated as a linguistic category, a place holder, a structure in formation.”

Butler’s goal here is to show the fundamental ambivalence at work in subject formation, and to think through the paradoxical and circular process of subjection; that the story told about subjection presupposes the subject it seeks to account for. Her work looks to this “psychic life of power” that is left unaccounted for in Foucault’s work, but in so doing her view of subject formation is at odds with what Foucault was attempting to understand in his later works, namely the material and spiritual practices involved in subject formation that exceed the linguistic realm. Indeed, Butler’s reading seems to be in tension with Foucault when he says: “…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.”

This apparent tension between Foucault and Butler in the articulation of subject formation—whether it is primarily a matter of a linguistic category or “real, historical practices,” points to a more general problem of whether “practices of self” can enable self-transformation, or whether beginning from the point of subject formation only repeats a form of subjection. The theme of the care of the self developed in Foucault’s last published work does not formulate a concept of ‘the subject’ that can completely escape

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88 Ibid., 10.
subjection, and the discursive production of ‘the subject,’ but for Foucault this is a repetitive process that happens over time and one in which there is capacity for transformation. All of this serves to show the contingent and historical nature of ‘the subject,’ rather than its universal character, a point on which Butler would likely agree.

It is therefore important to understand precisely what Foucault meant by his concept of the care of the self, and why it shifted his thinking more generally towards ethics. First, in *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault says his whole project of the *History of Sexuality* came to be reorganized around this theme of “the slow formation, in antiquity, of a hermeneutics of the self.” It is the interpretation of the self by the self, those manifest practices that Foucault terms *subjectivation*, that grounds his project. While the relationship of self to self takes centre stage, we have to remember this critical work still takes place within a history of *sexuality*, understood not so much as sexual acts as we normally think of them, but moral problematizations: a genealogical tracing of why *desire* was an issue for the Greeks, and how their regime of sexuality was very different from the austere practices later Europeans inherited from Christianity. The whole elaboration of the care of the self is indeed part of a project of showing how the austere morality associated with Christianity is actually more fundamental to the history of thought in the West and to the very formation of subjectivity, and this is why Foucault takes such great pains to show its development in ancient Greece. The care of the self, however, is more of a theme that carries a complex and wide meaning for a range of reflexive forms of relationship.

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91 Ibid., 12.
Foucault notes this theme is also termed the “cultivation of the self,” whereby the relations of oneself to oneself were valorized and intensified.92 While the “care of the self” is the general phrase he uses, it is important to note here that cultivation is stressed in addition to care. The French souci de soi can be translated as either care or concern for self. Therefore, the self is cared for, it is the object of concern, and it is also something that must be cultivated: that is to say, when Foucault invokes ‘care of the self’ he is usually referring to a theme that existed across the ancient world that encompassed a wide range of meanings. The French could be rendered as well as “care of self,” which adds a linguistic emphasis on the relationship rather than the self as object of care.93

Foucault explains how the care of the self functioned and operated: “It… took the form of an attitude, a mode of behaviour; it became instilled in ways of living; it evolved into procedures, practices, and formulas that people reflected on, developed, perfected and taught.”94 It was a theme touched on by almost all the philosophical work of the ancient world, with the exception of Aristotle.95 It was not a purely contemplative or reflective practice, or simply an attitude, it was an occupation that took great time and demanded exercises, examinations, regimens and meditations. There was an intense focus on the requirements of the body (diet and exercise), on health, on education and on the mastery of the passions and desires, and this entire practice of the care of the self was both a daily preoccupation and a lifelong pursuit.96

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Foucault further insists that the care of the self was one of the main principles of the Greek cities, and one of “the main rules for social and personal conduct, and for the art of life.”97 It was not only a principle but a constant practice, a precondition for political activity, and something that involved practices such as self writing and working on oneself with others.98 The care of the self was therefore not a narcissistic turn inwards but always required others: the philosophical preoccupation of the Greco-Roman world was that others should take care of themselves. Foucault shows how Socrates was the figure who pestered others to take care of themselves, stopping people on the street and insisting, “you must take care of yourself.”99 In this light the care of the self becomes a “thorn which must be stuck in men’s flesh, driven into their existence, and which is a principle of restlessness and movement, of continuous concern throughout life.”100 This passage makes it quite clear that the care of the self was not seen by Foucault as an ethical model to be followed, but is a theme that has taken different forms at different times and has elements that are relevant to the kinds of relationship we form with ourselves today.

In order to understand the full meaning and significance of the care of the self, it became important for Foucault to consider what the full meaning of the term ‘self’ in the phrase “care of the self” signified, and also what the term ‘care’ in this context consisted in.101 While there was a sufficient repetition of the discourse of the care of the self, his analysis attempts to uncover what the precise meaning of these terms are in shifting

98 Ibid., 232.
100 Ibid., 8.
contexts and as used by different authors throughout the ancient Greek and Roman world. In the analysis of Plato’s dialogue *Alcibiades* Foucault encounters one of the first appearances of the phrase “care of the self,” and in this context the *self* that is being cared for is not the body but the soul, and more so, not even just the soul but the *activity* itself of worrying about the soul.\(^2\) This leads Foucault to speculate that while the object of care in the formulation “care of self” can be something like the soul, or the essence of one’s being, it can also, for different authors at different times, come to be defined with a different object in mind. In the first and second centuries AD, Foucault notes that while the “care of the self” remains an important part of philosophical discourse, the *object* of the practice changes, or in other words, what is signified by ‘self’ in the phrase shifts. Rather than the ‘self’ that needs caring for being a soul, Foucault suggests in *Hermeneutics* that “[t]he relationship to the self appears as the objective of the practice of the self. This objective is the final aim of life, but at the same time a rare form of existence.”\(^3\) What changes here is also the goal that ‘the care of the self” is directed towards: for Plato in the *Alcibiades* the goal of the care of the self was to be capable of governing others, of having the capacity to perform political action. In the Hellenistic model where the activity itself is cared for the goal relationship one has with oneself is an end in itself, and it intrinsically involves others, such as friends and mentors.\(^4\)

In his lectures Foucault presents this information as descriptive historical analysis, but the example of forming a relationship to oneself that does not have the true self as a goal, but is instead concerned with the practical activity and techniques of self, allows a

\(^2\) Ibid.
\(^4\) Ibid., 126; 129; 134–143.
concept of the *relational* self to emerge: the self can only be defined *in relation* to others and the world. This relationship is both inherited from the moral codes and norms of one’s time, but involves practices and techniques that must reproduce these codes and norms through everyday activity. Tom Roach argues that the specific Hellenistic model of self-transformation assessed by Foucault, which contrasts strongly with a model of self-knowledge or self-deciphering, is one of a self that emerges between *subjection* (sociohistorical determinants that produce a self) and *subjectivation* (exercises that work on and modulate forces of subjection to produce an autonomous self, a subject of truth).\(^{105}\) In my estimation, seeing Foucault’s expansive concept of *subjectivation* as only the exercises that challenge the subjection involved in the determination of identity due to social and historical production seems incomplete, and I would argue instead for a more general conception of *subjectivation* that encompasses how human beings are made, and make themselves, subject. To see this process as always opposed to, and different from, *subjection* seems to leave something out.

However, Roach presents an interesting argument by suggesting that Foucault, through his historical reconstruction of the specifically Hellenic model of the practices of self, as opposed to the Platonic and earlier Greek models, is developing what amounts to an *immanent* conception of the possible relationship one can have with oneself.\(^{106}\) Rather than understanding the *self* in the phrase “care of the self” as a pre-given, essential or substantial thing, this self can be understood as only a *form*, a kind of *relation*. What is cared for, in this sense, is *the relation*, not an identity or essence, as I have discussed

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\(^{106}\) Ibid., 24–27.
above. Now, this is not to state we are free to create whatever identity in whatever way we choose: for Foucault, there must be some kind of relation that the self forms with itself. One cannot simply abandon the techniques and practices through which one forms a relationship with oneself. But one can work at constantly transforming these practices, of creating through the critical work one does on oneself an aesthetic (and therefore experimental) relation to self, where the self becomes more of a “work of art” than a true and authentic entity to be discovered, as will be discussed fully in the next section.

As was stated previously, relations with others always form a part of the care of the self, and Foucault further relates the care of the self to friendship. In The Care of the Self, Foucault says that Seneca specifically saw the cultivation of the self as requiring friendship in order to take place, and Foucault suggests this was a theme of the period.107 It is within this context that he writes: “The care of the self—or the attention one devotes to the care that others should take of themselves—appears then as an intensification of social relations.”108 Friendship is one such social relation, in the sense that friends ensure that their friends take care of themselves. This can be in order to enforce dominant norms or to challenge them, but the point here is that all of the practices involved in friendship are capable of working at the level whereby one forms a relationship of self that is constitutive of that very self (or immanent to the self, as Roach suggests). Friendship is therefore not a relationship that only fixed and stable selves have with each other, but what forms those selves in the first place.

108 Ibid., 53.
Foucault further mentions friendship a handful of times in *The Care of the Self* in regards to the other problematics he attempts to investigate: in relation to the love of boys, and the way friendship is made central within and exclusive to marriage.\(^{109}\) In *The Use of Pleasures* he discusses friendship in relation to Aristotle and the special nature of the husband’s friendship for his wife, as well as the ethical problems of the transformation of love to friendship as adolescents age.\(^{110}\) Nowhere in his published books, however, do we see the same kind of statements he makes in interviews about the potentially subversive qualities of friendship. In some cases it is almost the opposite: we see how friendship can become an intensification of the processes of subjection, a relationship that can actually encourage and deepen each friend’s fixed sense of identity, and rather than being an *inventive* relationship, the friend becomes the one who insists that one must care for one’s self, must essentially remain subjected to the existent historical determinations. We can therefore see how it is possible for friendship to be the context where social codes and moral behaviour are enforced. Certainly this type of friendship is not what Foucault celebrates in his interviews, but it is nevertheless one of his dominant themes.

Foucault’s historical investigations into the care of the self, which unearthed numerous commentaries on friendship, were likely one factor that led him to suggest to his contemporary audience that friendship could be instead imagined as a “way of life,” in the same way that the Greeks thought philosophy was properly practiced. Hence the importance for Foucault of both self-knowledge and self-transformation to critical

\(^{109}\) Ibid., 201, 204, 163, 181.
philosophy. This connection was severed in the so-called “Cartesian moment,” when philosophy became conceived of as a kind of knowledge that could be separated from a practice that transforms the self. And according to Roach “the friend is the one through which spirituality materializes, through which self-knowledge is linked with self-transformation… practices of friendship are materialist spiritual practices.” The emphasis here on material practices is key; Foucault is interested not in practices of spirit necessarily, of what aims at transforming an interiority of the mind, but practices that are bodily and social. Friendship can be a way that philosophy becomes connected again to an everyday practice, a way of life.

While Foucault was looking at very different historical periods and stressing different themes with his assessment of the individualizing character of state power, as was articulated in the first section of this chapter, there is a connection to be made here through the theme of friendship. As Foucault suggested, power individualizes, and therefore functions partly through an affective separation of individuals, in that they feel and experience disconnection from each other even as modern institutions might destroy all space between them. In its concern with individuals in their individuality, state power has become more minute and precise in its control, but still requires the circulation of individuals in order to function. Foucault maintained in “Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity” there are texts that explicitly refer to friendship as something dangerous to these bureaucratic institutions, and if we take his later work into account, I would further argue that friendship brings awareness of the relational character of subjectivity itself, and

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therefore it can have an anti-individualizing effect. For Foucault it is in part the institutions themselves that give rise to this kind of friendship, through bringing together and connecting individuals in places like schools, factories, army barracks, asylums and prisons. Once those relationships have formed, however, they can be worked on and transformed.

Friendship is therefore not in itself anti-individualizing. It is a site of struggle where these power relations are played out: for example, two students who become friends can encourage the normalization and competition put in place through standardized grading, or can through practices of friendship begin to question the necessity of defining their identity according to this one marker of success or failure. Given that there is always some way in which subjection is a process that is never finished, the subjects who enact it are always transforming each other through the arena of friendship. This friendship can either be a scene of anxiety and competition or an experiment that gestures towards alternative visions of politics.

**Friendship as experimental politics**

Despite the nuanced view elaborated in the previous section, Foucault’s late work on the care of the self and his concept of subjectivation might still be criticized for putting too much emphasis on the relationship one has with oneself. Even though others play a role in the care of the self, there is a way that the self takes a privileged place in his analysis and that social or collective kinds of relationships are regulated to the
background. However, Foucault’s idea of the care of the self is very different from what he terms the “cult of the self”:

In the Californian 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 be able to tell you what your true self is. Therefore, not only do I not identify this ancient culture of the self with what you might call the Californian cult of the self, I think they are diametrically opposed.\(^{113}\)

For Foucault the ancient culture of the self is not a formula to be emulated, but shows clearly how different the relationship of the self to the self can be; the fact that these two forms of self-relation are diametrically opposed points to the wide range of possibilities open concerning self-cultivation. There was a certain kind of aesthetic relation in the ancient practices of self, and he wants to employ this inventiveness without bringing along all the baggage of the virile sexuality of Greek and Roman times. This inventive relation to the self always and necessarily involves others, and is an “intensification of social relations” rather than a turn inward towards the discovery of a true or authentic self.

This relationship to the other can take a variety of forms. In *Hermeneutics* Foucault understands the care of the self operating in Plato’s text *Alcibiades* as having a necessary connection to political action—the politician must care for himself so that he may be capable of governing the city, and of governing others. As such there is nothing challenging to the structures of power or the Athenian city-state in the practice of the care of the self: it is what any capable politician should master in order to master others. I emphasize this point in order to show that Foucault is not *advocating* the care of the self.

His does not provide a political program that might suggest people work at taking care of themselves and that this would therefore lead to a different kind of social and political world. It is as much that many of the political problems we face today, and many of the practices we have inherited from a long tradition of political subjection, are themes that are already present in this kind of insistence that we “take care of ourselves.” It is not that we must police each other to “take care of yourself,” as Socrates insisted around Athens, but that we come to recognize in the care of the self how fragile and contingent the subject’s self-constitution is, and how with experimentation and invention the limits of identity can be tested and worked at, in order to think and become different that we currently are.

Indeed, when Foucault speaks more prescriptively (which is rare as he much prefers to develop historical analyses which leave the reader or listener to form their own conclusions), he does not suggest the adoption of “care” as any kind of desirable relationship to the self, but that the self could become a “work of art.” In these statements, he develops an aesthetic relationship to the self and to everyday life:

What strikes me is the fact that, in our society, art has become something that is related only to objects and not to individuals or to life. That art is something which is specialized or done by experts who are artists. But couldn’t everyone’s life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object but not our life? [...] From the idea that the self is not given to us, I think that there is only one practical consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art.114

I believe we can connect this notion of creating the self as a work of art, indeed of taking the entirety of one’s life as the object of this creative endeavour, to friendship. As is shown above, however, this is only possible after we accept the idea that the ‘self’ is not

114 Ibid., 261.
pre-given, which follows necessarily from the relational self discussed in the previous section. According to Garlick friendship extends one’s capacity to create oneself like a work of art: “it is in relations of friendship with the other, that for Foucault, the beauty of the work of art can be received and preserved.”

Treating friendship as the aesthetic object does not only imply an attempt to create this relationship as a thing of beauty but of an experimental process whereby failure and ugliness are as much a part of the dynamic life of a friendship as beauty might be. And if the object of art is no longer a piece but life itself, then friendship too becomes an artistic experiment.

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, Roach reminds us that Foucault’s version of friendship is not utopian, and is instead based on impersonal intimacy and estrangement. These counter-intuitive values can, however, be productive: “when the most troubling aspects of relationships become the very foundation of a friendship… new subjective, communal, and political forms can be imagined.” Roach offers a close reading of a letter from the author and artist Hervé Guibert to Foucault, in order define five key themes of Foucauldian friendship: (1) anticonfessional discourse; (2) parrhesia; (3) ascetics; (4) impersonality; and (5) estrangement. The characteristics of anticonfessional discourse relate to much of what Foucault suggested in his interviews concerning the inventive possibilities of friendship that does not involve speaking one’s true desires. Foucault showed the perils of the historical practice of confession in the History of Sexuality, Vol. 1, and explained how this practice transferred from its place in

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117 Roach has an extended discussion of the real and problematic friendship between these two figures. By his account it was fraught with creative intensity and love but also betrayal, anger and bitter disappointment.
Christianity to psychoanalysis, and circulated throughout modern practices of giving account of oneself.\textsuperscript{119} Ascetics concerns the ritual practices discussed in the previous section, and \textit{parrhesia} means speaking truth or truth-telling. Roach suggests that \textit{parrhesia} as the practice of telling truth in friendship operates in a precisely different way then that of a confessional discourse, in that requires friends not to “act as supplicant and judge” but instead “a \textit{parrhesiatic} friendship is an experiment in truth-telling that provokes a productive tension.” I will expand upon impersonality and estrangement in what follows to develop a more full understanding of Foucault’s notion of friendship.

Roach views impersonality as a key theme in the letter between Guibert and Foucault, one that brings up a puzzling aspect of what Foucault values in friendship. He speaks here of how Foucault recounts looking at a neighbour from his apartment:

Foucault’s gaze objectifies and fragments a body rather than humanizing or personalizing an individual. And yet in his anonymity, in his object-ness, the man seems to become, at least in this letter, a closer friend than Guibert. His very “facelessness” attracts Foucault: ‘My shortsightedness protects me from knowing what his face looks like: he is thus beautiful.’ Shielded from his identity, Foucault is allowed to enter into the man’s life with an intensity that an actual meeting might never engender. His nonidentity motivates Foucault to invent this stranger, and, in the process, another strange self. Anonymity and nonidentity thus offer the opportunity for desubjection and subjectivation—in other words, the undoing of socially, historically determinable selves and the creation of new ones.\textsuperscript{120}

Roach further highlights the praise Foucault gave to anonymous sexual encounters, particularly as it functioned in gay saunas and bath houses as a means of inventive pleasure.\textsuperscript{121} This remains for Roach an emphatically \textit{political} task, and does not only have to do with an individual’s sexual relationship but with the first step to forming “non-

\begin{footnotes}
\item[120] Roach, \textit{Friendship as a Way of Life: Foucault, AIDS, and the Politics of Shared Estrangement}, 34.
\item[121] Ibid., 35.
\end{footnotes}
normative, anti-identitarian communities,” allowing participants to relate to each other not through self-knowledge but with a bond that can cultivate an impersonal friendship: a friendship that encourages new pleasure, and new identities and selves.\textsuperscript{122} Roach suggests anonymous sex is one emblematic of “a larger political project fostering anti-subjective forms of relationality and resistance through anonymity, impersonality, and creative cooperation.”\textsuperscript{123} Roach thinks this is connected to the “de-genitalization” of pleasure, to practices of S&M, and a shifting away from the teleology of the orgasm in sex.\textsuperscript{124}

I believe this theme of impersonality is difficult to accept, yet it does signify a very interesting problem for an understanding of friendship and demonstrates the truly unique perspective Foucault offers. A possible rebuttal to this point might be that friendship is not impersonal at all—being friends with someone and developing a close tie means knowledge about who they are, and what defines them, and is therefore much more than knowledge of their body as an object. Indeed, it could be argued that forming a friendship that remains impersonal is precisely how friendship has been encouraged in the neoliberal era to be a relation of instant gratification and enjoying others in the present moment, rather than a dynamic, changing and life-long relationship with depth and history. Todd May has argued precisely this point. This apparent tension can be resolved somewhat if we note that impersonality is only one feature of the kind of friendship Roach is attempting to articulate here, and it can be seen more as a practice or a method of disrupting identity that friends might adopt. What impersonality seeks to avoid is not closeness altogether, or a friendship that develops strong ties of mutual trust and comes to

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 36–47.
have a history, but the characteristic of *desire* tied to one’s identity, the reduction of an individual to this singular desire, that so often takes place when we try to get to know someone on a more “personal” level. The political aspect of this kind of *impersonal* relationship is when it opens up a space for reconsidering and rethinking relationships, movements and communities. As such, for Roach, “communal forms… can emerge from depersonalization: an ethics of impersonality in friendship encourages an anti-identitarian politics.”

The last major theme of Foucauldian friendship for Roach is *estrangement*, which might at first seem opposed to friendship. What Roach has in mind, however, is not estrangement itself but the *sharing* of estrangement from some larger social structure. For Roach the example of estrangement he wants to look at has to do with AIDS activism:

As a radically destructive yet absolutely immanent force, AIDS forces an acknowledgement of life’s precariousness and of death’s immanence to life. Facing such destruction produces suffering, despair, alienation, and estrangement from others and the world. And yet in embracing this estrangement, in abandoning oneself to finitude and making necessary those contingent, historically determined aspects of existence, new relational, ethical and political possibilities emerge. In actively willing the past, in embracing the brute force of absolute negation, a path is cleared for pure creation, for an absolute affirmation of life. I understand the inventive politics of ACT UP to have emerged from such a movement—from destruction to creation, from death to life.

Here we can see most clearly how the idea of *shared estrangement* can connect back to the problems investigated in part one of this chapter. Rather than seeing the contemporary world as being essentially defined through *isolation* or *hyperconnectivity*, following Foucault we might look to how both of these processes are simultaneously at work. Friendship can therefore become the space where this estrangement is shared and

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125 Ibid., 37.
126 Ibid., 39.
therefore becomes political, not by attempting to resolve this estrangement but
through, as Roach suggests above, *embracing* it. One example of this kind of sharing of
finitude and death is the AIDS activism chronicled by Roach in his book. I would argue
that the generalized estrangement and the feelings of isolation that are becoming so
rampant in modern life can also lead to a sharing of estrangement that cultivates
alternative and resistant political cultures. These might not all have the same force of the
ACT UP actions or be as radically oppositional as the homosexual way of life Foucault
envisioned, but many people beyond these groups feel the difficult and wearying
disconnection that is endemic to consumer society, and looking at what kinds of
experimental and inventive friendships could be fostered within this context is a first step
to challenging that disconnection at its very core.

However, a simple imperative for how to act with regard to one’s friends or what
type of friendship to seek out is not sufficient. Which is not to say that there is no value in
the ethical considerations involved in decisions about how one acts towards one’s friends.
This is not enough, however, to truly challenge the *rationality* at the core of modern
political institutions. Further, it is not that social isolation can be alleviated simply
through making more friends, or that if we shift priorities away from other
preoccupations towards friendship we might resist the atomization of the modern world.
As David Webb has noted,

[…]. reading Foucault suggests that we can learn more about friendship by not
narrowing the focus down to the relation itself… Friendship is an experience that
arises in and through a shared practice in a complex and dynamic system of
relations between conditions and conditioned. It would be wrong to see this rich
background intruding on the relation of friendship ‘after the fact,’ as though
friendship existed first and foremost between two individuals abstracted from their
specific involvements and the context in which they are played out. On the
contrary, without this context, friendship would be quite artificial, for I cannot set
out to make a friendship from nothing. It is only when I discover friendship already burgeoning, springing from something we share (however obscure), that I may choose to strengthen it through a particular gesture or act. Friendship has no form of its own, and so the singularity of friends results from the fact that the conditions of each friendship are themselves always particular, always concrete, and unlike those of any other… These different experiences can arise because there is no essence of friendship, no true friendship, and no true friend.127

Connecting this to the problems set out at the onset, these gestures that can strengthen friendship by working on its particular conditions are a way to intervene in today’s severely atomized social world, but not through a return to an ancient culture that would seek to place more value on friendship or describe a precise a moral framework for how we act towards our friends. As Webb explains, friendship is shaped through a context, and it can only be nurtured through an expansive view of what shapes and defines the environment within which it has arisen. The experiences we have from our friendships, therefore, are a microcosm of the world in which they exist. But, they are also the relational building blocks of which that very world is made up. As Arendt pointed out, isolation has been one of the basic methods of creativity, and the cultivation of strong and meaningful friendship also means having the capacity for solitude. To begin to see friendship as a way of life, then, is not to focus in on one’s friends at the expense of all else, but to integrate into the space of friendship the aesthetic techniques one might use to create life as a work of art. And as Roach and Webb have noted, this experimental attention to friendship as a shared process of becoming, which is itself always chaotic and in flux, can open up new and different horizons for thinking itself.

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**Desire-in-uneasiness**

In this chapter I have sought to understand how Foucault’s comments in his interviews on friendship can be placed within the context of his work developing the problems presented by any theory of the individual or the subject. In his expansive account of individualization Foucault demonstrates how power individualizes and totalizes, and as such separates and connects individuals simultaneously. Foucault’s understanding of subjectivation and the care of the self point to relationships not as secondary but as the ontological condition of the self’s very emergence, and therefore friendship has tremendous power in shaping who we are and who we might become. Friendship does not inherently challenge domination, subjection or atomization, but it can become one aspect of the process of “de-individualization.” Because friendship is a type of relationship that always retains some degree of openness and gradation with respect to others, and does not need a specific institution in order to exist, it offers a particular kind of experimental political space that is worth taking seriously. Foucault thought of friendship as always crossing certain kinds of boundaries as well, as “a way of life [that] can be shared among individuals of different age, status, and social activity. It can yield intense relations not resembling those that are institutionalized. It seems to me that a way of life can yield a culture and an ethics.”

Friendship is about sharing existence, about “living together” as Aristotle would say, and therefore the practices that this necessitates: “sharing their time, their room, their leisure, their grief, their knowledge, their confidences […] What is it to be “naked” among men, outside of institutional relations,

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family, profession, and obligatory camaraderie? It’s a desire, an uneasiness, a desire-in-uneasiness that exists among a lot of people.\textsuperscript{129} This dimension of friendship is felt most strongly in its aesthetic forms, in the way one can begin to look at friendship as dynamic and fluid, as “a work of art” rather than a static entity that is either perfect and true, or not worthwhile. In order to fully grasp the possibilities of this kind of aesthetic relation, it is necessary to understand the self as never complete, and without an essential truth that is concealed deep within the individual. Foucault’s expansive understanding of subjectivation shows how we ourselves enact the very practices that form and define the self, and the self’s subjection to power, just as this power acts on us. Foucault demands we look with fresh eyes at friendship, this peculiar form of being together that is at once all around us and yet can so often remain illusive. Not taking friendship as natural or universal, we come again to ask of our friends, as we might as of politics and ethics, “what can be played?”\textsuperscript{130}

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., 136.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 140.
Chapter 2: Govermentality and the Toronto G20

Friendship as biopolitical resistance

I have argued thus far that friends can cultivate the kind of experimental relationship that challenges the limitations of identity, and the process of becoming subjects that Foucault was so curious to understand in his later work. The question remains, however, of the role friendship might play in the paradigms of governmentality and biopolitics, concepts through which Foucault radically redefined our notions of how power operates. In some regards, these concepts seek to investigate that process of “totalization” that Foucault alludes to in “The Subject and Power.” The population, then, instead of the individual, becomes the object of techniques of power. Foucault writes,

One of the great innovations in the techniques of power in the eighteenth century was the emergence of “population” as an economic and political problem: population as wealth, population as manpower or labor capacity, population balanced between its own growth and the resources it commanded. Governments perceived that they were not dealing simply with subjects, or even with a “people,” but with a “population,” with its specific phenomena and its peculiar variables: birth and death rates, life expectancy, fertility, state of health, frequency of illnesses, patterns of diet and habitation.\(^\text{131}\)

The idea of a population, therefore, is not something natural or universal, but a problem with a specific history that still informs much of our political rationality today. As this quote demonstrates, the relationship of subject and ruler cannot fully explain what is at stake in the relations between government and population. A new productive type of power was necessary in order to “manage” the population, one that was concerned with

“generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them” as much as impeding and destroying. In this sense governmentality is very similar to Foucault’s concept of 

discipline, but it is directed toward the population rather than the individual, body or soul.132

This productive aspect to power however does not for Foucault indicate that the health or livelihood of a “population” is safeguarded, but rather this power to make live, of administration over life and concern with the biological existence of populations, created regimes that visited unprecedented “holocausts on their own populations” and waged technological wars tending towards all out destruction on behalf of “the existence of everyone.”133 Biopower, starting from the seventeenth century, focuses on “the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary…”134 Foucault articulates this as a biopolitics of the population, an entire series of interventions and regulatory controls based on a power over life. Further, Foucault suggests that the development of capitalism relied heavily on this biopolitics and the “controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production.”135 Equally, the instruments and institutions of the state utilized the techniques of biopower in a way that Foucault says guaranteed “relations of domination and the effects of hegemony.”136 This chapter will consider how friendship

132 Ibid., 136.
133 Ibid., 137.
134 Ibid., 139.
135 Ibid., 141.
136 Ibid.
might be a possible point of contention to the domination and hegemony at work in a biopolitics of the population.

Again, there is nothing inherent in friendship that offers resistance to this kind of regime that Foucault is articulating. As Roach suggests, “patriarchal, homosocial friendships are the vehicles through which contemporary governmental and corporate organizations perpetuate their reign of terror.” Yet when friendship becomes a form of shared estrangement rather the bond between those in positions of authority, it does have the potential to enact, “a mode of biopolitical resistance that breaches boundaries of race, class, and generation… a powerful model for [the] biopolitical formations… needed to combat the social management of life in the age of Empire.” As discussed in the previous chapter, Roach’s example is the politics of friendship at the heart of organizations like ACT UP and the AIDS buddy system, who formulated a kind of resistance whereby friendship “mutated” from a way of life into a “way of death,” in the sharing of the ubiquity and unavoidable finitude that AIDS makes so apparent. The centrality of death is what for Roach makes ACT UP, and the politics of friendship they mobilized, a biopolitical form of resistance: as biopolitics is concerned with the precise management of life, or the power to make live and let die, the friendship embodied in these groups reclaimed this “letting die” through a kind of sharing that challenged the culture’s basic assumptions about sexuality. This made for an inventive and intense social movement whose direct action, street theater, die-ins, and explosive moments of

138 Ibid., 12.
public mourning completely transformed legislation and public conceptions of AIDS in the early 1990s.

Another way to understand the activity of these groups, and one that could be extended to many groups engaged in similar strategies today, would be as an example of what Foucault referred to as “counter-conduct.” In Security, Territory, Population Foucault develops this notion as a way of understanding the activity of those who opposed pastoral power and governmental reason from the end of the Medieval era, as a form of activity that did not oppose political sovereignty or economic exploitation, but was based more around an entirely oppositional way of life. The struggles this involved became the context for which saw the development of governmentality. As such, while Foucault variously referred to “insurrections, revolts and resistances” of conduct, his idea of counter-conduct expresses a positive conception of the ways of life and that challenged government. These can be understood as positive because they not only performed a critical function in questioning how much and in what way government took place but did so in a way that took the form of a different way of conducting oneself, or a different way of conducting relationships between oneself and another. Counter-conduct does not have the expressly political determination of terms like resistance, revolt or dissent and therefore blends the political and cultural. Foucault further suggests counter-conduct encompasses but is not reducible to struggles against economic exploitation.

The next section of this chapter will look at Foucault’s lecture series Security, Territory, Population to show counter-conduct is a tension with government, in that it

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serves a critical function but is not defined by how it opposes government. In other
words, counter-conduct is in tension with an irreducible set of sites where government
acts, and it does not oppose a *central* locus of power such as the state or sovereignty. So
the “counter” in “counter-conduct” is already somewhat misleading, as for Foucault it is
not possible to see government as prior to the existence of these “revolts” of conduct.
Bearing in mind Foucault’s genealogical method, the forces that make up the techniques
of government are inseparable from the struggles involved in these counter-conducts, and
the multiplicity of forces and sites that inform the notion of counter-conduct. Counter-
conduct therefore is not reducible to the opposition between two actors such as the
sovereign and the people, or the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. In the wake of the
development of governmentality, counter-conduct can be likened to the function Foucault
gives to *critique*, that of an “art of not being governed,” and like critique he argues
counter-conduct encompasses an entire attitude and form of culture.\textsuperscript{141}

Paying attention to the practices involved in friendship, and utilizing friendship as
the basis for political mobilization, can be one aspect of this art of not being governed. In
the final section of this chapter, I will highlight a slightly different problem illuminated
by Foucault’s thinking on governmentality: that of the efficacy of friendship as a police
technique of surveillance. After my explication of counter-conduct and governmentality,
I will examine the legal fallout from the G20 protests in Toronto in June of 2010, looking
specifically at the tactic of infiltration used by police. Using Foucault’s understanding of
government, I want to argue that the effects of the massive state repression on the
protestors and activists involved in this case cannot be fully comprehended through the

\textsuperscript{141} Michel Foucault, *The Politics of Truth*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext, 2007), 45.
framework of the “criminalization of dissent.” Instead, I will consider how much more than the political activities of protestors and activists was shaped by the mobilization of an extraordinary police apparatus, and that friendship specifically was a tactic necessary for the cultivation of the affective ties that made intelligence gathering possible. Further, the relationships of those whom the state brought charges against following the disruptive protests surrounding the G20 were in a sense what was being targeted, rather than individuals or groups. Protestors themselves, however, made use of a kind of politics of friendship through informal organization and the affinity group model which did in some ways limit the effectiveness of the police strategy.

By understanding friendship as one aspect of what Foucault called “counter-conduct,” we can see how it can challenge one particular type of governmentality, and serve a critical role in the art of “not being governed.” In his articulation of the concept of government, Foucault draws attention to the state as an episode in a longer history of government, one that takes the theme of policing as its dominant characteristic. The police use friendship as one tactic of intelligence gathering and surveillance through informants, as the recent case of the repression against G20 protestors has demonstrated. Viewing friendship as a potential form of “counter-conduct,” or a way of life, shows how it can intervene in the relationship of government, secured by the police order, that has come to define the contemporary world.
Governmentality and counter-conduct

Foucault’s notions of “conduct” and “counter-conduct” emerge in his genealogical investigations into the history of government, but they are at the same time connected to the more general project of understanding power in the most nuanced and meticulous way possible. The essay “The Subject and Power” articulates the centrality of conduct for how Foucault comes to understand power:

Perhaps the equivocal nature of the term “conduct” is one of the best aids for coming to terms with the specificity of power relations. To “conduct” is at the same time to “lead” others (according to mechanisms of coercion that are, to varying degrees, strict) and a way of behaving within a more or less open field of possibilities. The exercise of power is a “conduct of conducts” and a management of possibilities. Basically, power is less a confrontation between two adversaries or their mutual engagement than a question of “government.” This word must be allowed the very broad meaning it had in the sixteenth century. “Government” did not refer only to political structures or to the management of states; rather it designated the way in which the conduct of groups might be directed…¹⁴²

Conduct is therefore central to what Foucault has in mind when he invokes this question of government in the most general sense. Coercion might normally be thought of as the persuasion or manipulation of someone to do something, specifically under threat, but Foucault makes a key shift here in defining it as the “management of possibilities,” and this is crucial to understanding what makes governmentality unique. Further still, Foucault has in effect sought to look at the practices and activity which define government as relational, and he argues that government is best understood as not having an origin in a political centre such as the state. At the same time, this does not mean the state is not an important and specific site where power has congealed, or that the form of the state contributes disproportionately to the hegemony and domination he spoke of.

¹⁴² Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” 343.
before. Foucault’s inquiry into government, however, demonstrates that the state is not where government originates. Therefore, it is not only the state that must be criticized but instead the political rationality of which the state is but one instance, and which circulates throughout the institutions and apparatuses of modern life. By looking at the “conduct of conduct,” or the shaping of behaviour, Foucault elaborates an understanding of government that is flexible enough to apply to the diverse arenas where power is exercised in the most minute and potentially invisible ways. Conduct also signifies how one conducts oneself, and so the concept allows for Foucault’s attention to the dual character of government as the activity of one group or individual on another, and the actions of individuals in relationship towards themselves. Conduct is for Foucault always “equivocal,” however, as the above passage notes, and it is precisely this ambiguity which allows for the potential to understand government in a way that other terms lack, because they may have been captured for other more specific uses. This will become particularly clear in terms of how Foucault articulates counter-conduct as distinct from political resistance or dissidence. In order to fully understand what is at stake in Foucault’s definition of conduct and counter-conduct we must look at how these terms relate to Foucault’s conception of governmentality, how it develops from pastoral power, and the historical examples he gives of counter-conduct in Security, Territory, Population.

This lecture course provides one of Foucault’s most sustained definitions of his influential concept of governmentality,

…this ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical
instrument… by ‘governmentality’ I understand the tendency, the line of force, that for a long time, and throughout the West, has constantly led towards the pre-eminence over all other types of power—sovereignty, discipline, and so on—of the type of power that we can call ‘government’ and which has led to the development of a series of specific governmental apparatuses (appareils) on the one hand, [and, on the other] to the development of a series of knowledges (savoirs).  

So, governmentality is absolutely fundamental to understanding Foucault’s method for studying power. This term has ushered in an entire field of divergent scholarly work, but my goal here is to show that putting government at the centre of an analysis of power points to the importance of the practices that exist in friendship as one site of potential government, and where friends can attempt to not be governed quite so much. The expansive notion presented above, however, looks to the great difficulty that might be involved in such a process. Governmentality is a durable and consistent form that has a long development throughout the West, and operates on the population through political economy and apparatuses of security. The methods by which government targets and produces a population, and what is meant by an apparatus of security is largely articulated throughout the lecture series Security, Territory, Population and Foucault’s full treatment of political economy is found in the subsequent course The Birth of Biopolitics.  

The argument that government comes to be primarily a form of shaping the conduct of others is strengthened by Foucault’s research into the development of Christian pastoral power, which he suggested was “unknown to any other civilization” and importantly marks a decisive break from forms of power inherited from Greek and

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Roman thought.\textsuperscript{144} His goal is also to show the religious source of much of the rationality at work in the relations of government that later developed, and the various treatise on \textit{rasion d’État} which in attempting to define an art and science of government could never fully shed this legacy tied to the Christian pastorate. As such, Foucault’s fundamental problem is to understand, “the relationship between religion and politics in modern Western societies… the essential aspect of this relationship is not found in the interplay between Church and state, but rather between pastorate and government.”\textsuperscript{145} The pastorate is important because of its distinction from other aspects of Church authority and its origin in the image of a shepherd tending a flock. The key aspect of pastoral power is that the shepherd has a \textit{duty} to tend to his flock, and must even sacrifice himself for the flock. In addition, the shepherd has the duty to tend to the flock both individually and as a group, “he does everything for the totality of his flock, but he does everything also for each sheep of the flock.”\textsuperscript{146} This is the meaning of the Latin phrase \textit{omnes et singulatem}: of one and all. In the lecture of the same name, Foucault shows how this sense of guiding and directing became a political metaphor that signified a kind of power over the flock that involved individual attention, and attention to each individual in their individuality.\textsuperscript{147} For Foucault however this constitutes a fundamental problem or paradox because of course the societies most concerned with this theme of pastoral power, of looking after the flock through the tactic of “individualized kindness,” were as well societies of great aggression and conquest, and as Foucault notes, “capable of the

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 128–130.  
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 191.  
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 128.  
\textsuperscript{147} Foucault, “‘Omnes et Singulatim’: Towards a Critique of Political Reason,” 301–303.
most stupefying violence, against themselves and others…” The is the problem or paradox that interests Foucault: how did a political rationality develop which on the one hand stressed that a shepherd, or governor, must do everything for the safety of the flock, or the population, and yet it was precisely this rationality that opened up the population to an unknown violence, and indeed as Foucault articulates with his thinking on biopolitics in the twentieth century, this same rationality was capable of sacrificing entire populations in order to “save” them.

Foucault introduces the notion of conduct in part to understand most effectively the way that this development of pastoral power had as its goal the shaping and guiding of another’s behaviour and activity. The translators of Security, Territory, Population note conduire can be rendered in English as “lead, direct, guide, take, run, manage, behave” depending on context. Conduct has this wide meaning and also signifies how one conducts oneself at the same time as having the capacity to conduct the behaviour of others, and for this reason the term is essential to understanding the broad meaning Foucault gives to the term government. Further, Foucault suggests that we think of counter-conduct not as a reaction or response to the crisis in pastoral power he outlines, even if the term counter-conduct seems to necessitate this link. For Foucault this is merely a way to understand certain “revolts of conduct” after the fact, and he wants to stress the “immediate and founding correlation between conduct and counter-conduct.” In many ways it was the political rationality of government which developed out of techniques aimed at the control of forms of conduct that already existed.

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148 Ibid., 303.
150 Ibid., 196.
As such, Foucault maintains that these forms of counter-conduct emerge *within* the field of pastoral power.\(^{151}\) While he acknowledges there may have been heretical and extra-Christian practices that also challenged pastoral power, he leaves these to the side in order to examine how pastoral power was challenged immanently, rather than from outside the tradition. That resistance has the potential to come from *within* and is not *external to* the pastorate is key to Foucault’s conception of counter-conduct. Why the movements that define these kinds of counter-conduct interest Foucault in particular is that they respond to the “historical singularity” of pastoral power, and that they can be understood as resisting power that aims at the conduct of others, rather than being understood as resistance to forms of power that are based in notions of political sovereignty or economic exploitation.\(^{152}\)

Though he uses the terms revolt and resistance often throughout his elaboration of counter-conduct, he also suggests these terms are not sufficiently capable of signifying how the conduct of pastoral power was being challenged. Foucault settles on the term *counter-conduct* to try and explain the “revolts of conduct,” struggling to find a terminology that is not immediately captured by economic or political language. Because of these constraints he admits that the notion of *conduct* is somewhat awkward and vague. Revolt, for instance, is too closely tied to forms of political action that are for Foucault specific to a sovereign or state-centric form of power. He also rejects the term *dissidence* because it was “too localized” to movements in the Soviet Union at the time he was speaking, and because it also seemed to personalize the *dissident* and focus on

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\(^{151}\) Ibid., 194.  
\(^{152}\) Ibid., 195.
their identity rather than their activity.\textsuperscript{153} Foucault resigns himself to the construction of “counter-conduct” and remarks that despite its awkwardness, he sees it as the only term capable of expressing the \textit{active} sense of “conduct.”\textsuperscript{154} Foucault believes that with \textit{counter-conduct} there is no “substantification” possible:

by using the word counter-conduct, and so without having to give a sacred status to this or that person as a dissident, we can no doubt analyze the components in the way in which someone actually acts in the very general field of politics or in the very general field of power relations; it makes it possible to pick out the dimension or component of counter-conduct that may well be found in fact in delinquents, mad people, and patients.\textsuperscript{155}

What becomes important for his conception of counter-conduct is the possibility of analyzing the “components” of the practices or activity involved, rather than the identities of those performing the types of counter-conduct he was preoccupied with.

Foucault gives a number of specific historical examples of this “immense family” of counter-conducts. First, he looks at the practice of desertions and insubordination of soldiers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, saying that “refusing to be a soldier… appears as a form of conduct or as a moral counter-conduct, as a refusal of civic education, of society’s values… as a refusal of the actual political system of the nation, and as a refusal of the relationship to the death of others and of oneself.”\textsuperscript{156} Foucault also looks at the practices of medical counter-conduct such as the refusal of vaccination as that which challenged medical authority, and as such is equally not reducible to the economic or political.\textsuperscript{157} His further examples are religious groups that were in conflict.

\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., 201.
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., 202.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., 198.
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., 199–200.
with the Church establishment such as the Waldensians, the Hussites, the Anabaptists, the Beghards and the Beguines. What Foucault found in these anti-pastoral struggles or pastoral counter-conducts was, “a whole new attitude, religious comportment, way of doing things and being, and a whole new way of relating to God, obligations, morality as well as to civil life.” He articulates five themes that he found brought these struggles together: asceticism, the formation of community, mysticism, interpretation of scripture without mediation and eschatology. Foucault notes how these themes were often recuperated and taken up again by the Church and adapted for its own ends, often in response to these anti-pastoral struggles. Foucault suggests the Church “tries to re-utilize them and re-insert them in its own system through the Counter Reformation.”

Foucault looks as well at the diversity of groups who formed the Brethren of the Free Spirit, inspired by Amaury de Bène and Ulrich de Strasbourg, which were exceptional in their recognition of no form of obedience. This pantheistic community asserted that God was matter itself and all individuality was only illusion, and thrived in Europe in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. By constructing a system that excluded all obedience, the legitimacy of all forms of conduct was asserted. Foucault finds this historical example fascinating but is not glorifying them—he wants to show how much possibility there was for counter-conduct at this time, and how completely different forms of conduct could exist in constant struggle with the development of pastoral power.

158 Ibid., 204.
159 Ibid.
160 Ibid., 204–214.
161 Ibid., 215.
162 Ibid., 11.
163 Ibid., 211.
Obedience was also challenged through the phenomena of “hierarchical reversal” found in the Oberland Friends of God, who used pledges of reciprocal obedience from one individual to another as if the other was God himself. Systematic reversals of hierarchy were found where “the most ignorant or poorest person, or someone with the lowest reputation or honor, the most debauched, the prostitute, was chosen as leader of the group.”  

Foucault concludes that these forms of counter-conduct were not external to Christianity, but were “border elements” that fall within its general horizon. Foucault takes a view of these movements from the perspective of pastoral power in order to try and find “the inner depth and background of governmentality that begins to develop in the sixteenth century.”  

He explains the reasoning for this method:

it is not a question of undertaking anything like an endogenous history of power that develops on the basis of itself in a sort of paranoiac and narcissistic madness. Rather, the point of view of power is a way of identifying intelligible relations between elements that are external to each other. Fundamentally the problem is why and how political or economic problems that arose in the Middle Ages, such as the movements of urban revolt and peasant revolt, the conflicts between feudalism and the merchant bourgeoisie, were translated into a number of religious themes, forms, and concerns that finally result in the explosion of the Reformation, of the great religious crisis of the sixteenth century.

This internal (endogenic) perspective of the history of power must not develop a “paranoiac and narcissistic madness,” by which he means the tendency of thought to see all counter-conduct or struggle as a mere reaction or response to pre-existing and established forms of power. He insists at the beginning of this lecture that one should not

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164 Ibid.
165 Ibid., 215.
166 Ibid.
167 Ibid.
assume the prior existence of any solid form of power, but look to the struggles already
taking place. This is an example of the meaning of genealogy for Foucault, which seeks
not origins in the history of power relations but rather sees emergence as produced by
struggle and reversal, by forces that wage war on each other, that “hazardous play of
dominations.” Further, this paranoia and madness he alludes to seems to imply that
understanding resistance to power as always and only defined by the political or religious
authority of the time is not sufficient, and following genealogically it is not that the origin
is in the forms of political rationality but that there are continual struggles between a
multiplicity of forces. Resistance can therefore not be completely defined in relation to
the power it opposes. This is why Foucault was so insistent to show that counter-conduct
was possible from within the religious tradition itself, and that in examining the different
elements that make up his examples of counter-conduct it is possible to see how they
might apply to other situations or historical eras. This must be done without championing
or denouncing the specific groups or movements in question, but looking to their actual
practices and in understanding their struggles with government.

Arnold I. Davidson has connected the concept of counter-conduct to Foucault’s
understanding of the possibility of gay friendships, saying “the kinds of counter-conduct
made possible by these friendships both changed the force relations between individuals
and modified one’s relation to oneself. One conducts oneself in another way with friends,
fabricating new ethical and political possibilities.” This echoes Foucault’s comments

that what was dangerous in male affection was not the sexual encounter but the ties of friendship, and Davidson elaborates on this by showing how this affection is captured in popular constructions of homosexuality as a problem: “behind every intense friendship lurks the shadow of sex, so that we no longer see the striking perturbations of friendship. The counter-conduct of friendship has become pathologized—the unruliness of friendship is but a form of abnormality.”

The idea of friendship as a form of counter-conduct is extended by Foucault’s sense of the “components” of conduct being important, rather than the personality or identity involved in *dissent*. This is similar to what was outlined in Chapter 1 concerning the impersonal character that friendship can take, and while difficult to accept, this impersonality does demonstrate how friendship can challenge and work at the limits of identity. Friendships can be impersonal to the extent that they focus on experimentation and invention rather than simply reiterating existing identities. Again, as Roach suggests these impersonal friendships can be “relationships that urge the mutual cultivation of other pleasures, other selves.” As such they can become “emblematic of a larger political project fostering… resistance through anonymity, impersonality and creative cooperation.” We can liken impersonal friendship to a form of counter-conduct, one that can become the beginning of a way of life that cultivates larger projects of political resistance, but is also not exhausted or defined by these projects. Foucault insisted that the refusal of military service, for example, was not limited to this decision but took place

172 Ibid.
in the context of an entire attitude that challenged the conventions of civil society. Things like the way people choose to dress or the different kinds of slang and language they use all contribute to a “counter-conduct” that opens up a space to question the practice and rationality of government, and for this reason friendship can be challenging to the very paradigm of government that Foucault elaborates in *Security, Territory, Population*. That counter-conduct has such a rich history in the heretical religious traditions demonstrates that aspects of spirituality that emphasize daily practices which shape a different way to conduct oneself have tremendous power, and in some way it is these rituals and ways of life that must be experimented with in an attempt to discover new forms of counter-conduct. Friendship in many ways already embodies this ritualistic component, as it is a relationship shaped by our everyday activity and it informs very basic elements of how we view the world. In understanding friendship as experimental we can see how it might oppose the meticulous management of populations by the modern state, and as such become one type of what Foucault has referred to as counter-conduct.

**The Toronto G20 and policing of friendship**

Throughout *Security, Territory, Population* Foucault also dwells upon the historical development of the concept of *the police* in relation to his understanding of governmentality. The police is for him one of the central aspects of how a relationship of government circulates, and it connects to other “apparatuses of security” that come to form a unity with political economy and the state in the total management of the
population. Foucault shows how the term police meant something completely different in many political discourses of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, and was a much more general type of activity that was concerned with providing the necessities for keeping populations alive and happy. Instead, the police involve a positive form of governing “men’s co-existence with each other,” or as Foucault says, “the immense domain that… goes from living to more than just living.”\textsuperscript{173} As such the police is concerned with happiness, with well-being, with health: a much wider function that what we normally think of as the police today.\textsuperscript{174} A shift or reversal takes place however whereby the notion of the police that has been popular is entirely overturned and marginalized, and the police comes to have the negative function that is more familiar. In other words, the police become the instrument of “direct, but negative, intervention” and assume an entirely repressive function.\textsuperscript{175} Foucault connects this to the problem of constructing a genealogy of the modern state that is not an ontology: that the state has a history of which there are a multiplicity of forces at play such as economy, population, security, freedom and governmentality. The state is not natural but it is also not the expression of an opposition between only two forces, such as the sovereign and the people. In the example that follows I will look at a contemporary instance of such repressive policing, but it is worth asking if the police still has such an entirely repressive function today, or if it has kept aspects of this history as an institution more broadly involved in the government of the population. Obviously, the police institutions of today intersect with a range of other apparatuses to make up the type of governmentality

\textsuperscript{174} Ibid., 327–328.
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid., 354.
Foucault outlines, but bearing in mind Foucault’s genealogy of the police can help to illuminate how policing takes conduct as its object and attempts to police relationships as much as individuals.

In this section I will therefore examine some events surrounding the G20 protests in Toronto in June of 2010 and how they are one example of how such contemporary forms of policing might not serve an entirely repressive function, but also attempt to induce certain forms of conduct for the purpose of gathering information and shaping behaviour. I will focus specifically on the operation of undercover police officers that resulted in conspiracy charges against a group of 17 individuals and how this repression was handled by the defendants and their supporters. I will provide some brief context on the G20 protests and the political climate surrounding them, then examine the details of the group charged with conspiracy, and finally show how the G20 extends Foucault’s idea of government as the shaping of conduct and the descent of the practices of government into the minute details of everyday life.

Talks between the G20 world leaders took place on June 26th and 27th of 2010 in Toronto. An great variety of different groups organized protests to the summit, under a banner of opposition to corporate globalization. The groups mobilizing against the G20 worked on issues of poverty, indigenous sovereignty, gender justice and immigration. An incredible security apparatus was also rallied to “keep the world’s most powerful people safe and secure.” In the lead up to the event, the authorities were bolstered with a $1 billion dollar budget, some of which was used on a $9.4 million security fence that

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enclosed the Metro Convention Centre in a ten kilometer, three meter high perimeter of concrete and metal. On June 26th, the largest day of demonstrations, tens of thousands of people were in the streets along with at least twenty thousand police officers, and the now infamous confrontation that broke out saw police and protestors skirmishing on the streets, police cars set on fire and countless broken shop windows on Queen and Yonge St.\textsuperscript{177} This resulted in the largest mass arrest in Canada, over 1,100 people, and the notorious use of indiscriminate police “kettling” of large groups of people who had nothing to do with the demonstrations.\textsuperscript{178} Sunday, June 27\textsuperscript{th} saw riot police charging protestors gathered outside of a jail to show solidarity and plainclothes police orchestrating “strategic kidnappings” in crowds that had gathered throughout the city.\textsuperscript{179} Areas around planned or spontaneous rallies on Sunday saw widespread search and seizure, and the detention of anyone carrying items such as a bandana or swimming goggles, prompting a situation some described as “martial law.”\textsuperscript{180} Those arrested were held in a detention centre where many were harassed and sexually assaulted by police officers.\textsuperscript{181}

The policing of the G20 however began long before the protests themselves. While the summit was only announced in December of 2009, the RCMP in coordination with other police agencies and CSIS formed the Integrated Security Unit in 2003 to


\textsuperscript{179} David Wachsmuth and Tom Malleson, Whose Streets?: The Toronto G20 and the Challenges of Summit Protest (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2011), 97–98.

\textsuperscript{180} Ibid., 139–41.

\textsuperscript{181} Ibid., 115–25.
handle security for the 2010 Winter Olympics and collect intelligence on activist
groups planning protests of this event in Vancouver. As such a covert infiltration program
began as early as January of 2009, involving at least 12 undercover officers and targeting
a wide array of groups across Canada: anti-poverty groups, Indigenous groups, anarchist
collectives and immigrant justice organizations. In what follows I want to look closely at
the legal fallout and ramifications of this operation in Southern Ontario.

Several scholars have looked critically at the role of policing during the protest and
argued that it contributed to a further “criminalization of dissent” in Canadian politics.182
Walby and Monaghan show that intelligence agencies conflated anarchism with
criminality through what they term “threat amplification.”183 Renzi and Elmer examine
the shifting discourse of the summit compared to past meetings of world leaders, and
argue that the justification for security practices and spending of the G20 can be better
understood through a “biopolitics of sacrifice”: the discourse of crisis and austerity
replaced that of the war on terror used to justify the security operations in earlier
meetings of world leaders.184 Renzi and Elmer take sacrifice here to mean a new
technology of power that enabled the destruction of certain elements (civil liberties,
institutions, individuals) as the rearrangement of life took place.185 Accounts of the
protestors and organizers themselves have documented the sexual assault and harassment
that took place during arrests and at the detention centre (including rape threats directed

182 Margaret E. Beare, Nathalie Des Rosiers, and Abigail C. Deshman, eds., *Putting the State on Trial: The
183 Jeffrey Monaghan and Kevin Walby, “‘They Attacked the City’: Security Intelligence, the Sociology of
Protest Policing and the Anarchist Threat at the 2010 Toronto G20 Summit,” *Current Sociology* 60, no. 5
184 Alessandra Renzi and Greg Elmer, “The Biopolitics of Sacrifice: Securing Infrastructure at the G20
185 Ibid., 60–61.
at women and humiliation of transgender people), and looked at how these seemingly random acts are deeply rooted in structural inequalities between genders.  

Monaghan and Walby have demonstrated from analysis of security documentation based on access to information requests that the infiltration program targeting activist groups was part of a national, years-long operation. The use of informants in this operation was given some media attention after the summits, especially as evidence was presented in court from intelligence gathered by undercover officers. Much of this intelligence formed the basis for the 50 pre-emptive arrests that took place before the G20 protests began. Many of the 17 individuals charged with conspiracy and asserted by crown prosecutors to be the “ring-leaders” were arrested during house raids in the early morning hours before Saturday’s planned demonstration.

Specifically, two Ontario Provincial Police officers Bindo Showan and Brenda Carey spent 18 months infiltrating a variety of Southern Ontario activist and community groups ahead of the G20, gathering intelligence for 59 criminal charges with more than 70,000 pages of evidence disclosure. Bindo Showan had success in infiltrating various anti-war and activist groups in Kitchener-Waterloo, and Brenda Carey posed as an activist in Guelph, Ontario for a year and a half. During this time she was able to join the Toronto Community Mobilization Network and keep tabs on almost all the organizing

187 Monaghan and Walby, “‘They Attacked the City,’” 655.
189 “G20/G8 Summit Opponents Infiltrated by Police.”
191 “G20 Case Reveals ‘Largest Ever’ Police Spy Operation.”
surrounding the G20 protests. In a personal and anonymous account of someone involved in a group that was infiltrated by Carey, it is clear that she became a trusted member of the community:

Brenda wormed her way into people’s lives through the Guelph Union of Tenants and Supporters (GUTS), a radical anti-poverty group in Guelph that had recently been involved in some high-profile actions in that city. In March 2009, as they were getting to know Brenda, their main project was a weekly meal serving downtown, and they were pleased to find someone who would show up reliably, work tirelessly, and always volunteer to wash the dishes… By hanging around there and encouraging gossip, Brenda quickly got to know the social and political layout of the anarchist community in Guelph. Gossip was one of Brenda’s favourite tools for gathering information. She encouraged people to vent their frustrations to her, to talk to her if they were feeling sad, and she was never above dropping bits of information gleaned from others in order to provoke those feelings.192

Brenda Carey was eventually able to form close connections with many individuals in the activist community in Southern Ontario. Immediately before the G20 summit Brenda was even living in the same house as Mandy Hiscocks, who would end up taking a plea agreement with six others of the seventeen facing conspiracy charges and be sentenced to 16 months in jail for counselling to commit mischief.193 The tactics involved in this intelligence gathering have been criticized as the “criminalization of dissent,”194 but the effectiveness of this cultivation of emotional ties, and how this relates to friendship, is what I want to add to the ongoing discussion of how the policing of the G20 has changed the security practices of Canadian politics.

Scholars examining the relationship between informants and friendship in other contexts besides the G20 have found that it is an effective tactic, and in some cases a requirement of effective information gathering. Much of the media reporting and scholarly attention to the seventeen conspiracy charges has pointed out how in the end most of these charges were dropped, and since only six individuals plead to lesser charges this indicates a failure on the part of the intelligence gathering operation and the years of work put in by officers like Brenda Carey. If instead, following Foucault, we look to the type of conduct that their infiltration shaped, especially in the wake of its discovery, then it appears effective instead at other goals: the activist “ring-leaders” were for over a year and a half as the trial was taking place restricted from any form of political organizing, banned from attending protests or talking to any member of a long list of organizations. As such, these individuals were prevented from seeing or having any communication with many others who had been friends and co-organizers, except in the presence of lawyers in order to deal with the details of the case. Severely restrictive bail conditions, house arrests and forcing individuals to live with their parents as sureties were all common for this case, again, before any of the individuals had been found guilty of any crime and most of whom would eventually have their charges withdrawn. The behaviour of the group was altered and the dynamics were completely disrupted even though eventually most of the charges were dropped. The actions of Brenda Carey can also be read through this lens—regardless of what rationality might have been used by

police agencies to justify and explain this infiltration, the cultivation of strong emotional ties that were shown to be based on deception contributed to a climate of fear and paranoia following the summit.

Thinking of this activity under the rubric of the “criminalization of dissent” misses an important aspect of how policing is not concerned with dissent as such, or the specific criminal charges that might result from intelligence gathering efforts. In looking at how the conduct changed in the wake of the policing, we can see that this behaviour encompasses more than only the political acts that might be qualified as dissent. It was not only the dissent of those individuals surveilled that was being criminalized: their entire lives fell under scrutiny, down to minute details recorded in the 70,000 pages of evidence. This included their friendships, romantic relationships, aspirations, habits, routines, desires, anxieties, and etc. It follows that the shaping of their conduct is an example of governmentality as outlined earlier; it did not stop with the policing of what could be said or what kind of political acts could be taken but had to do with the entirety of their lives. Indeed, in many ways this policing took as its object the management of the possibilities of this small group of defendants and the wider population they were a part of. We can see how ripples follow out from each defendant towards their friends, co-workers, families, neighbours and people they organized with. The behaviour and conduct of many, many people was shaped through the attempted prosecution of one case, even if it did not meet its officially stated goals.

Clearly, friendship can therefore be just as easily used as a technique of police and intelligence agencies as a way to disrupt and cultivate distrust in their targets, and through this cause fear and panic amongst those in the larger social network. It is not
friendship in itself, therefore, that is a form of counter-conduct. But because of the extent to which the entirety of daily life becomes the object of concern for a regime of governmentality, friendship also has a power to challenge government in these sites of control that are outside of what is traditionally considered as “political.” Todd May speaks to this by examining what is going on when friends “tell” each other things, and why this practice involves a relationship to truth that implies a very particular kind of trust. As he writes,

> to trust someone… is to put oneself in the position of depending upon the other for the truth of what it is told. When you tell me it is raining outside, you ask me not only to believe that it is raining outside, but to believe it because you told me so. To tell someone something is to invite them into a particular relation with the teller, where what is told stands not simply as a claim to be believed but as the offer of a bond between the one who tells and the one who is told.¹⁹⁶

So, deep and close friendships are encouraged by this kind of truth-telling. The betrayal and deception at the heart of the friendships Brenda Carey developed with the activists she had infiltrated may have feigned this trust, and made use of this kind of intimacy for the purpose of gathering information, but in was obviously different from the kinds of friendships that have the potential to be subversive. That friendship was used in this way, however, speaks to its power and importance as the glue that holds communities together. Friends make connections throughout and between social movements that cannot readily be mapped by listing members of organizations or looking at political affiliations. In a joint statement released in explanation of the plea deal reached by the group of 17 conspiracy defendants, they express criticism of the legal system and the police tactics of surveillance and infiltration, by saying “this system is designed to break up communities

¹⁹⁶ May, *Friendship in an Age of Economics: Resisting the Forces of Neoliberalism*, 68.
and turn friends against each other.” Certainly the massive security operation that came to a head with the G20 protests in Toronto had this as one of its goals. It also raises the issue of the meaning of police, following Foucault’s genealogical inquiry, as having a purely negative function or as forming part of a larger apparatus of security that takes as its object every aspect of the well being of a population. For Foucault, the tension between conduct and counter-conduct is essential to the form of governmentality present today. This demonstrates that insofar as policing must make use of friendship it breaks out, to a certain extent, of the entirely repressive function reserved for it by the modern discourses Foucault surveys at the end of Security, Territory, Population. Yet we also must be attentive to the connections forged in excess of this display of force, and how the demonstrations represented such a threat to the corporate globalization under criticism by protestors precisely because they were able to organize through forms of affinity and friendship, as will be discussed at length in the next chapter.
Chapter 3: Anarchism and the invisible power of friendship

The state is a social relationship; a certain way of people relating to one another. It can be destroyed by creating new social relationships; i.e., by people relating to one another differently.

— Gustav Landauer, 1910

Friendship as model for anarchism

Anarchism has since its beginnings been a partial example of what Foucault gestures towards in his later interviews: an ethical form of freedom understood as a practice and an assertion that the state is not inevitable but a historically contingent entity, the existence of which does not exhaust all possibilities for how to organize the social world. In his enigmatic proposal of friendship as a way of life, leading to intense relations that are not institutionalized, Foucault’s thought has a certain resonance with anarchist theory. This reverberation is most apparent in the contemporary debates about how anarchists can organize themselves and how their relationships with each other embody a radically different way of being in the world, as opposed to the classical anarchist philosophy of thinkers such as Proudhon or Bakunin. Tom Roach has echoed this thought by suggesting friendship, understood in a Foucauldian register, has an

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198 This is not meant in any way to dismiss these thinkers or others in the anarchist tradition of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. These thinkers should be reread with new understandings of power and government that might illuminate how early anarchists anticipated many of the arguments made by Foucault.
“anarchic” nature that is fundamentally anti-institutional but still points towards communal social and political forms. As such Roach shows how anarchism and friendship overlap, and in this intersection provide a method through which “we might think and live beyond inherently inequitable hierarchies.”

Greek anarchist Tasos Sagris, for example, in speaking of the notably large and militant anarchist “space” in Greece over the last decade, has said that friendship helps to explain the insurrectionary activity in that country: “…the main organizational form in Greece is friendship. We believe that friendship will be revolutionary. Very close, very good loving friends, that like each other, that spend their lives together, they trust one another. This is a part of the insurrection.”

North American anarchist propaganda has presented a similar articulation of friendship as based on a kind of trust that has the capacity to fend off authority:

Friendship is a bond between equals who support and challenge each other while respecting each other’s autonomy. That’s a pretty good standard by which to evaluate all our relationships. Without the constraints that are imposed upon us today—citizenship and illegality, property and debt, corporate and military chains of command—we could reconstruct our relations on the basis of free association and mutual aid.

In a popular underground pamphlet Wolfi Landstreicher further suggests that the social conditions of commodity exchange and work have devalued friendship, and anarchists should seek to

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200 Sagris suggests that anarchists in Greece prefer to use the phrase “anarchist space” rather than anarchist movement to try and have a label which looks to an entire range of practices which might not be properly conveyed by a term like movement: squats, collective spaces, groups of friends, cultural activities, etc.
build our friendships upon the greatness we discover in each other—joy, passion, wonder sparked both by what we share in common and by how we differ... let us pursue friendships with the same intensity with which we pursue love, blurring the boundaries between them, creating our own fierce and beautiful ways of relating free of that logic of submission to mediocrity imposed by the state and capital.203

While these views present a somewhat idealized or utopian view, friendship does offer a very real and immediate experience of how we might relate to others that is very different from relationships of authority, coercion, hierarchy and domination. However, this raw experience of friendship aside, is it entirely clear as stated above that friendship is an important or effective organizational model? Could it not just as easily be that organizing something like a protest only with friends might create the perception of an in-crowd, or lead to informal hierarchies and invisible leaders? What does it really mean to see *friendship* as an organizational form?

This chapter will assess three key debates that will help to elaborate this problem of friendship and its invisible power. First, on the issue of *affinity*, I will look at whether affinity means essentially similarity or something else altogether. Further, whether *affinity groups* are formed out of strictly *political* ties or if they instead are affective and emotional in character. My sense of affinity is based on *difference*, and returns us to Foucault’s claim that a group might be the “generator of de-individualization” rather than an organic bond.204 Next, I will look at the anonymous group The Invisible Committee and their attempt to think through friendship as relevant to a combative vision of social struggle, outlined in books such as *The Coming Insurrection* and *To Our Friends*. Drawing considerably on the work of Foucault, they attempt to sketch out a way to

rethink relationships within a revolutionary movement without relying on the idea of a fixed self. Whether or not one accepts their provocative calls to action, their theory provides a window into how and why friendship is political in the context of contemporary social movements. While The Invisible Committee leans more towards a communist position that is in some ways at odds with anarchism, they have nevertheless been tremendously influential in the North American anarchist milieu.

In the third section I will turn to Uri Gordon’s 2008 book *Anarchy Alive!* to disentangle this issue of *invisible* power that results from informal organization. Gordon provides a well argued case for why invisible power is actually desirable and politically meaningful, and why if anarchism is opposed to domination it has no choice but to organize without formalized leadership. The overall argument of this chapter, informed by these three debates, is that friendship overlaps with informal organizing characterized by affinity groups, that it has a particular relevance to the expanded domains of contemporary social struggles, and that invisible power is an inevitable aspect of anarchist organizing that can be mitigated through commitments to cultures of solidarity.

**Affinity, difference and the anarchist tension**

Since the late 1990s there has been a rise in the popularity of anarchist ideas, and during that same period the decentralized model of *affinity groups* has become an essential component of how anarchists carry out actions and organize themselves internally. Throughout this section, I want to try and understand what concept of *affinity* informs the affinity group, and show how this relates to friendship. Like anarchism itself
affinity is a difficult concept to pin down theoretically, as anarchist authors and the
discourse of activists often use the term in disparate ways, and in ways that are different
from a meaning of the word based in similarity, resemblance or natural liking. While this
sense of similarity does capture one aspect of affinity, the term also implies a
relationship, especially one chosen rather than based in family. One literal origin of the
word affinity is to be “bordering on” each other. This echoes the understanding of the
term as a shared outlook that also implies the coming together for a purpose, for some
common undertaking. At issue in this section, however, is whether affinity is a strictly
political or comradely type of relationship, or if there is overlap with the emotional and
affective dimensions of friendship.

Nathan Clough remarks in his study of anarchist organization and police tactics at
the 2008 Republican Nation Convention in Minneapolis, that affinity refers “both to a
mode of political organization and to a particular kind of emotive connection between
comrades.” In his view, while affinity can be understood in its basic sense of similarity,
anarchist usage implies the cultivation of “a feeling of trust, closeness, respect, and
equality upon which alternative politics are based.” Clough elaborates the dual
characteristic of affinity as both a feeling and an organizational form, and that there is a
feedback loop between these two aspects. As people form trust and emotional connection
with each other, their capacity to act together increases. As they carry out actions
together, their affinity is increased through a greater sense of trust and closeness. This

205 Nathan L. Clough, “Emotion at the Center of Radical Politics: On the Affective Structures of Rebellion and
206 Ibid.
concept of affinity informs what Clough terms the “affective structure of anarchist politics.”

The term affinity group, as used in contemporary anarchist discourse, originates in the Spanish grupos de afinidad which were the basic organizational form of the anarchists fighting Franco in the Spanish Civil War. Uri Gordon suggests, however, that while the term affinity group has its beginnings in formally structured federations, the term has come to mean an informal and small group consisting of up to about a dozen members, closely familiar to each other, who take on specific roles in order to carry out an action, organize an event or take on another project which is impermanent in nature. Affinity groups organize in isolation or in collaboration with other groups, and in the lead up to mass protests or other convergences, they come together in “spokescouncil” meetings where each group sends one member to an assembly that shares information and makes decisions. Gordon explains: “The participants in an affinity group form a self-sufficient unit, plan their action down to the smallest details and look after each other on the streets.” Affinity groups are therefore distinct from collectives (permanent organizations) and larger networks by virtue of these informal and often temporary characteristics, as well as the fact that they require a level of trust that might not be necessary for other types of public political organizing.

While the terminological link to anarchist activity in the Spanish Civil War is clear, Gordon notes that the content and form of the affinity group draws its unique

207 Ibid., 1674.
209 Ibid.
210 Ibid., 16.
characteristics from the diverse experiments in political organizing that have origins in 1960s and 70s, especially feminist groups. He expands on this point:

> From the 1970s on, movements increasingly began to organise themselves in a decentralised manner without (formal) structures or leaders, inspired by critiques of political centralisation… Anti-nuclear blockades and sabotage actions, for example, were often organised through the cooperation of decentralised affinity groups, arguing that the movement should model the social structures it looks forward to in its own organisation.²¹¹

This last point connects the affinity group to prefigurative politics, the notion that the group seeks to embody, in the relations of its members to each other, the kind of world the group is working towards. The anarchist critique of domination and hierarchy, then, has its beginnings in the relationships between individuals in the ways they organize together.

One example of affinity groups in the anti-nuclear movement, and an example that challenges the view of affinity as merely similarity or resemblance, is Donna Haraway’s reflection on her own participation in a 1987 “Mothers and Others Day” action at a Nevada nuclear test site. Haraway provides an account of her own affinity group the Surrogate Others, and the struggles both within her group and within the larger movement over differing ideas about the essentializing language of “mother earth” and over the appropriateness of using a satellite’s view of the planet for a protest against the nuclear industry. Through this discussion she asserts “affinity is precisely not identity,” that “sacred image of the same…”²¹² If sameness was what defined the affinity group, for Haraway, there would be no point to the long hours together spent processing disagreement, which according to her is often what defines their political existence.

²¹¹ Ibid., 36.
Affinity, then, is something altogether different than the coming together of identical beings. Affinity is based in similarity or sharing, but can only meaningfully exist when there is work done to cultivate and create a relationship which entails difference, and therefore affinity cannot be fully understood as spontaneous or natural likeness. The relevance of affinity as a political form stems not from sameness but how it struggles over differences, and Haraway’s use of the term struggle is important because it emphasizes the conflict that can make up affinity group dynamics. For Haraway this extends beyond the boundaries of the group itself, and she suggests that the “processing of differences… is about ways of life.” Haraway expresses this insight into affinity groups through personal narrative in a way that much impersonal anarchist theory has been incapable of doing. Through her simple yet profound insistence that affinity is not identity, Haraway hints at an entire world that can be built on the coming together of differences, processing them and using them fruitfully. Haraway gestures towards how this micro-political interaction of many small groups can be connected to something larger, to a way of life that differs in her example here from the misogyny of the Nuclear industry. Anarchism could make use of Haraway’s notion that affinity is not identity to see in what other ways the differences that make up affinity groups can become instructive of other forms of domination and how they might be outmanoeuvred.

Richard Day’s 2005 book Gramsci is Dead continues this thinking by providing one account of the meaning of anarchist affinity and its relation to theorists such as Foucault, Agamben, Deleuze and Guattari. The book argues against what Day calls the “hegemony of hegemony,” or an assumption that social change is achieved as a counter-

213 Ibid.
hegemonic process, or through a mass singular event “across an entire national or supranational space.”

Day employs his conception of the hegemony of hegemony in order to critique the Marxist revolutionary strategy of seizing state power, but at the same time suggests that liberal and postmarxist reformism ultimately remain within this logic as well. He argues instead that certain currents in contemporary radical activism operate 
non-hegemonically rather than counter-hegemonically, that is to say, through an entirely different logic than that of seizing state power or attempting “to influence its operation through processes of pluralistic co-operation,” as Day suggests is the strategy of liberalism and postmarxism.

Affinity for Day has a kind of logic that operates on an entirely different register from hegemony, and as such there is an affinity for affinity that counters the logic of the hegemony of hegemony. Day suggests as well a concept of affinity that cannot be fully rendered by identity or similarity, as for him there exists in contemporary anarchist movements a discernable “affinity for affinity, that is, for non-universalizing, non-hierarchical, non-coercive relationships based on mutual aid and shared ethical commitments.”

Day argues that the affinity group is not simply the label for a particular organizational form which has flourished in North America and Europe since the rise of the anti-globalization movement in the early 2000s, but the concept of affinity relates to a whole set of practices and values that cannot be effectively understood through

215 Ibid. While this is a somewhat sweeping claim, Day does provide a length and thorough critique of both of these positions, however my focus here is to understand the concept of the affinity of affinity throughout this critique.
216 Ibid.
“(neo)liberal or (post)marxist theoretical traditions.” As such Day’s book traces the genealogy of this 
affinity for affinity, looking at its sources in feminist, ecological, queer and indigenous groups which have tended towards affinity based practices rather than hegemonic ones. For Day, affinity groups are politically effective in part because they are able to share in the accomplishing of tasks with a minimum of bureaucracy, and through developing close ties help limit exposure to infiltration. However, this strategic function is, again, only one part of the value of the affinity group model. For Day, the importance of the affinity group is “in building alternative cultures and societies—alternative subjectivities and ways of being—within the currently hegemonic order.”

Day’s book makes a further point about the “practice of affinity,” namely that it involves communities guided by groundless solidarity and infinite responsibility. He uses these two key concepts in an attempt to map out ethical and political commitments that he believes are positive features of contemporary anarchist social movements. Groundless solidarity is way to see one’s own privilege or oppression in a way that interlocks and connects to other forms of inequality, in such a way that neither class, race, gender, sexuality, ability, or any other one axis of oppression can be thought of as central. Infinite responsibility is for Day always being “open to the invitation and challenge of another Other,” and in this openness still avoiding corporate forms, or liberal models of recognition and integration. These two principles, combined with an orientation

\[\text{\textsuperscript{217} Ibid., 13.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{218} Ibid., 35.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{219} Ibid., 18.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{220} Ibid.}\]
towards direct action, is what Day sees at the centre of contemporary anarchist movements and as such important aspects of what he terms the affinity for affinity.

This discussion has aimed to contextualize what is meant by affinity in the context of anarchist theory, specifically the dual characteristic of affinity groups as a strategic organizational form and as a prefigurative political gesture towards a world with less domination. Italian anarchist Alfredo Bonanno has presented a conception of affinity that challenges what some anarchists have taken for granted about the meaning of affinity, and about what the utility of affinity groups is for the larger anarchist movement.

Bonanno is of interest here because he confronts the idea that affinity and friendship are connected, and argues for precisely the opposite. He says,

…we maintain there is a need for the formation of small groups based on the concept of affinity, even tiny groups made up of very few comrades who know each other and deepen this knowledge because there cannot be affinity if one does not have knowledge of the other. One can only recognise one’s affinities by going into the elements that determine one’s differences, by frequenting each other. This knowledge is a personal fact, but it is also a question of ideas, debate, discussions. So, there is a continual reciprocal process of going into ideas and realising actions… A small group of comrades… who simply meet in the evening to have a chat would not be an affinity group but a group of friends. On the contrary, a group that meets to discuss things and in discussing prepares itself for doing and through that doing contributes to developing discussion that transforms itself into discussion about things to be done, this is the mechanism of the affinity group.  

While at first it seems that Bonanno is taking care to describe affinity as something dependent on knowledge of others in a group, and that it is different from friendship in that it involves the realization of action, I would argue that this does not mean that affinity and friendship do not overlap, but that certain types of friendship, and the practices involved in maintaining bonds between friends, encourage the search for and

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building of affinity. Bonanno echoes the idea that the process of carrying out an action and then discussing it builds affinity, and therefore shows that it is something that can only take place over time. Therefore, the affinity group must be more than just a venue for pleasant discussion with friends. Bonanno makes this point in order to stress how people need to develop close ties and really try to know the others with whom they choose to engage in direct action with. However, Bonanno misses something crucial about how affinity groups are actually formed and how they become capable of carrying out actions by reducing their operation to that of knowledge of each other. Wolfi Landstreicher, influenced greatly by Bonanno, makes a similar distinction about an affinity group not being about “feeling good” around each other but about a deepening of knowledge of each other, one that develops as projects and actions are realized. This disconnection of knowledge from emotion, under the assumption that these can ever be meaningfully separated, in my view only limits the value of the affinity group model.

As Clough demonstrated, emotion and the cultivation of affect is as important to building capacity as is the deepening of knowledge. The Bonanno passage above, however, also makes clear that one can only recognize affinity by “going into the elements that determine one’s differences, by frequenting each other.” As such Bonanno is getting at a similar point as that articulated by Haraway, that affinity necessitates difference for its strength and efficacy, and cannot be fully understood through similarity. I would add here that the same practices that friendship involves are relevant and meaningful for affinity groups, in the sense that Bonanno’s “frequenting” of each other might echo Aristotle’s dictum that friends must “live together,” meaning that they share the activity of daily life. I think Bonanno makes a valuable contribution when he insists
on the informal and temporary character of the affinity group. While friendships persist and can last for entire lifetimes, often in enigmatic ways, affinity is itself constructed through a shared experience of struggle or momentum. Once conditions or situations change, affinity groups need to be rearranged and reconfigured. This is not a weakness of anarchist organizing but what gives it such a dynamic character in the face of uncertain and unpredictable times.

Bonanno’s goal here is to differentiate an informal method of organizing from that of the anarcho-syndicalist organizations of the early twentieth century, which he believes are incapable of dealing with the changes brought about by post-industrial capitalism, particularly the technological conditions of Western countries such as Italy since the 1950s. The reality which large anarchist federations responded to in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century for Bonanno no longer exists, and the most effective way for anarchists to meet the new reality is to organize themselves in small groups informally, in organizations that are not permanent but come together to accomplish specific actions and intervene in existing social struggles that often coalesce outside of the workplace.

This is connected with how Bonanno reconceives of anarchism itself as a form of tension:

Anarchism is not a concept that can be locked up in a word like a gravestone. It is not a political theory. It is a way of conceiving life, and life, young or old as we may be… is not something definitive: it is a stake we must play day after day…. For anarchism, for the anarchist, there is no difference between what we do and what we think, but there is a continual reversal of theory into action and action into theory.

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For Bonanno anarchism is not something that can be finished or closed off, but something always in tension. It is not a realisation of utopia or a blueprint for a future way of organizing society, but it is a tension towards that idea. At the same time, because of their ideas anarchists are always in tension with dominant structures such as capitalism and the state. Bonanno further connects anarchism to everyday life, and in so doing redefines anarchism as an open philosophy that adjusts to understand new and different forms of domination and oppression. Bonanno explains that this tension requires daily activity: “we continually need to maintain a relationship between this tension towards something absolutely other, the unthinkable, the unsayable, a dimension we must realise without very well knowing how to, and the daily experience of the things we can and do, do. A precise relationship of change, of transformation.”224 Further, anarchism as a tension means an agonistic relationship to domination, a continual practice of “perfecting the tension” towards anarchy by always struggling against the smallest traces of exploitation, but recognizing that this can never be fully complete.225 While Bonanno relies on a concept of the individual that is very different from Foucault’s notion of individualization that I articulated in Chapter 1, there is a strong connection here in regards to the daily practice required so that anarchism might be a lived ideal. For Bonanno anarchism in this way cannot become an identity for one to assume, or a certain political position to hold, but only has relevance to life in action and practice. While for Bonanno this often means examples of class conflict and direct action, one other way that this takes form (and not in opposition to or at the expense of direct action) is through

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224 Ibid., 10.
225 Ibid., 30.
seeing *friendship* as well as a way of life, as something that is practiced every day.

One must continue to try every day to meet the struggles and disagreements of friendship without manipulation, coercion, domination and exploitation, with no guarantee that one might reach a final destination without any “trace” of these forces still at play.

**Friendship as a form-of-life**

This section will look at three anonymously published texts by two different collective authors, The Invisible Committee and Tiqqun, in order to understand how they conceive of friendship as political, and of great importance to contemporary social movements. The Invisible Committee made headlines worldwide in 2008 when several supposed members of the group were arrested in the small village of Tarnac in France and charged under anti-terrorism laws for the alleged sabotage of high speed train lines.226 During this scandal French authorities insisted in court that the accused were responsible for publishing *The Coming Insurrection* and its content was used as evidence in the case against them. Afterwards, the book continued to incite controversy in the U.S., where conservative newscaster Glen Beck proclaimed it the “most evil book I’ve read in a long, long time.”227 This, however, only boosted sales and increased popularity, which helps to explain its wide readership and influence. In 2015 The Invisible Committee released *To Our Friends*, which follows up from *The Coming Insurrection* with a series of reflections

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on strategies for social struggle in the wake of insurrectionary activity in Greece, the
Occupy movement, and the Egyptian movement of the squares which felt its resonance
throughout Europe and the Middle East. This recent text demonstrates again the
importance The Invisible Committee place on friendship as it is addressed only to their
friends rather than to those they might seek to convince or persuade. This work also
draws much from Foucault’s work on subject formation and governmentality, but The
Invisible Committee have applied this work more directly to contemporary social
movements. Their utilization of the concept of form-of-life in opposition to bodies and
individuals, for example, provides a way to understand friendship through a relational
politics that accommodates Foucault’s sense of individualization. *Introduction to Civil
War*, published as part of an anonymous journal in 2001 called *Tiqqun*, bears much
resemblance to the later work and is believed to be authored by some of the same
writers.228 This text develops an affective and ethical understanding of friendship as an
elementary form of existence.229

Tiqqun begin *Introduction to Civil War* with the assertion that, “the elementary
human unity is not the body—the individual—but the form-of-life.”230 Drawing on the
work of Giorgio Agamben, Tiqqun want to emphasize the inseparability of life to its
form, hence the hyphenation, but also to sketch out a more ambiguous and complicated
way of understanding how beings come together but are also able to be distinct from one
another. Form-of-life could be likened to way of life, but is also more basic and gets at

229 *Tiqqun, Introduction to Civil War*, trans. Alexander R. Galloway and Jason E. Smith (Los Angeles:
Semiotext, 2010).
230 Ibid., 16.
the sense of one’s life form as well, all of the biological, physiological and chemical processes that may be going on to give rise to existence. As such Tiqqun oppose form-of-life to bare life, and suggest that these two are polar opposites that nevertheless do not exceed each other.\(^{231}\) Tiqqun’s concept of form-of-life requires some further interpretive discussion, because it is this concept which informs their understanding of friendship. Tiqqun say the form-of-life relates “not to what I am, but to how I am what I am… in other words, between a being and its qualities, there is the abyss of its own presence and the singular experience I have of it, at a certain place and time.”\(^{232}\) What animates a form-of-life is not qualities or its predicates (white, woman, nice, poor, arrogant, crazy, etc.) but its presence and more so the way it is present as an “event,” or a “being-in-situation.” While the language may seem cryptic, the target here is clear: “Imperial power depends on the adherence of bodies to their supposed qualities or predicates in order to leverage control over them.”\(^{233}\) Through the form-of-life, Tiqqun are trying to reformulate how power has become so radically dispersed in the present moment and understand how it flows through bodies, rather than being possessed by bodies themselves. As such the qualities we think of as our own, in a certain sense, have already become part of Empire,

\(^{231}\) Ibid., 16-17. The concept of bare life of course receives a thorough treatment in Agamben’s Homo Sacer, but since Tiqqun do not directly invoke Agamben I attempt to demonstrate here how the concepts form-of-life and bare life function in their text, rather than focusing on how they may have been influenced from Agamben. Put crudely, Agamben’s sense of bare life is that which remains after life has been stripped of all politics, but only after it has already been distinguished from natural life, or bios. Bare life is therefore not natural or biological, but what happens to life when politics (rights, nationality) are stripped away and it is therefore exposed to murderous violence. This lingers in the background of Tiqqun’s thought, but is not made explicit. Giorgio Agamben, Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

\(^{232}\) Tiqqun, Introduction to Civil War, 23.

\(^{233}\) Ibid.
their term for the global web of apparatuses that is in part explained by imperialist and capitalist states but also as what circulates through citizens and economic subjects.

It is in this context that Tiqqun develop a conception of friendship as being one of the basic constitutive features of human life. Friendship for Tiqqun is connected to hostility and enmity:

When two bodies animated by forms-of-life that are absolutely foreign to one another meet at a certain moment and in a certain place, they experience hostility. This type of encounter gives rise to no relation; on the contrary, it bears witness to the original absence of relation… Hostility is therefore the impossibility for bodies that don’t go together to know one another as singular… Whenever a thing is known in its singularity, it takes leave of the sphere of hostility and thereby becomes a friend—or an enemy. 234

So the conditions of possibility for the friend is this “taking leave” of the sphere of hostility, of that basic encounter between “bodies animated by forms-of-life.” This underpins the central concept of civil war for Tiqqun, not as an inter-state conflict, but as the basic conflict or struggle at the heart of social or even physical existence. While this may sound like a relapse into a Hobbesian view of the state of nature, for Tiqqun it is the liberal and democratic state which covers up this civil war, and horrific and totalitarian conclusions are the result of attempting to impose peace on this elementary conflict.

While it might be easy to be critical of Tiqqun’s attempt to make war almost anthropological, it is important to remember that Introduction to Civil War is only one text of a complete journal and not meant to stand alone as a definitive outline of their position. It is also necessary to see their theorization of civil war takes place within the context of a four part critique of all aspects of contemporary life: against the modern state and the economic subject on the one hand, and Empire and citizen on the other. In

234 Ibid., 46.
sketching out this schema of power relations they follow Foucault’s attempt to account for how power produces and normalizes subjects and circulates through the deployment of a specific apparatus, such as sexuality. For Tiqqun, the modern state is capable of exercising control only through a relationship with the economic subject, as “the more societies constitute themselves as states, the more their subjects embody the economy.” In other words, Tiqqun suggest the economic subject operates on a molecular scale, while the modern state operates on a molar scale. Rather than a traditional opposition between state and economy, they see that these operate at a micro level within our very identity and in abstract structures that involve millions of people. This depends upon the production of the state within the body: “the State ends up progressively creating economy in man, creating ‘Man’ itself as an economic creature. With each improvement to the State the economy in each of its subjects is improved as well, and vice versa.” Tiqqun connect this to a historical process carried out through various intensifications since the Middle Ages whereby forms-of-life are broken and torn apart, and have bare life extracted from them. The result for Tiqqun again is that subjects come to embody the economy, and they “monitor themselves and each other, they control their emotions, their movements, their inclinations, and believe that they expect the same self-control from others... they link up, put themselves in chains and chain themselves to each other, countering any type of excess.”

235 Ibid., 85.
236 Ibid., 82.
237 Ibid., 83.
238 Ibid., 85.
Tiqqun invoke the figure of the friend throughout *Introduction to Civil War* as a type of relationship that can be a form-of-life that does not conceal or repress civil war, and therefore provides the capacity to struggle against this type of control they outline above. Friendship is important for Tiqqun because it grows power that is more than the sum of individuals: “I am bound to the friend by some experience of election, understanding or decision that implies the growth of his power entails the growth of my own.”239 The decisions and choices involved in friendship make it a different kind of relationship, one with an entire ethical and political world all its own. As they write, the only way to reduce the sphere of hostility is by spreading the ethico-political domain of friendship and enmity. This is why Empire has never been able to reduce this sphere of hostility, despite its clamoring in the name of peace. The becoming-real of the Imaginary Party is simply the formation—the contagious formation—of a plane of consistency where friendships and enmities can freely deploy themselves and make themselves legible to each other.240

Friendship is for Tiqqun an “ethico-political domain” because it is so closely connected to struggle and war, rather than to political formations that depend on representation and the state. These forms of politics, in their estimation, attempt to decisively end all political conflict but instead expose entire populations to destruction. In opposition to this Tiqqun propose the “Imaginary Party,” an *us* that’s neither “a subject, nor something formed, nor a multitude. *Us*—it is a heap of worlds, sub-spectacular and interstitial worlds, whose existence is unmentionable, woven together with the kind of solidarity and dissent that power cannot penetrate…”241 The Imaginary Party stands in opposition to the citizens of Empire, those whose morality and everyday behaviour is necessary for the

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239 Ibid., 55.
240 Ibid., 179.
241 Ibid., 174.
kind of imperialism that needs no “juridical or institutional existence” because it has become a global technique of government, a “uniformity of attenuated forms-of-life produced through the conjunction of Spectacle and Biopower.” Friendship becomes a decisive moment or point of contact in this opposition because it provides the seed to the creation of this kind of “us,” precisely because it is a relationship that carries with it both a distinct aspect of choice and freedom but also the affective capacity to build a power together that cannot be tapped into alone. Friendship can create this “us” that is a “heap of worlds” because it is an entire world unto itself, and not entirely bound up with or captured by the figures of the economic subject or the citizen of Empire.

Tiqqun’s conception of friendship here serves as the backdrop to the development of a similar idea in The Coming Insurrection, where the authors offer a critique of revolutionary and activist organizations:

Organizations are obstacles to organizing ourselves. In truth, there is no gap between what we are, what we do, and what we are becoming. Organizations—political or labor, fascist or anarchist—always begin by separating, practically, these aspects of existence… To organize is not to give a structure to weakness. It is above all to form bonds… The degree of organization is measured by the intensity of sharing—material and spiritual.

This articulates how friendship can begin the “organizing” that is not organization. Even anarchist organizations need to be critiqued. Friendship is one type of bond they are referring to in the passage above, as it involves sharing all aspects of existence. The forming of this kind of bond does not necessitate friendship, but the kind of material solidarity they speak of certainly can begin with the friendships that come from

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242 Ibid., 141.
243 The Invisible Committee, The Coming Insurrection (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009), 15. See also 99 – 100 for a further elaboration of their critique of organizations and social milieus.
unpredictable contact with others and are not limited to more institutional type of relations, such as coworkers or family. The authors elaborate this point with their cautious use of communism as “experiment,” as sharing in its most basic form and as “the matrix of a meticulous, audacious assault on domination. As a call and as a name for all worlds resisting imperial pacification, all solidarities irreducible to the reign of commodities, all friendships assuming the necessities of war.”

Friendship becomes this experiment in communism, as they say, because they see it capable of challenging commonplace understandings of the self and the individual. They argue that the self cannot be opposed to state power and capitalist relations, but rather our notion of self is itself inherited from commodity relations, from the forms of the modern state. This echoes Foucault’s view of the self I discussed in Chapter 1, but The Invisible Committee take this notion and connect it more explicitly to the demands of contemporary social movements. As they say, “the self is not some thing within us that is in a state of crisis; it is the form they mean to stamp upon us. They want to make our self something sharply defined, separate, assessable in terms of qualities, controllable, when in fact we are creatures living among creatures, singularities among similar, living flesh weaving the flesh of the world.” The Invisible Committee suggest that “creatures” and “singularities” not begin with the construction of a self but of what is in common, what can be shared, and from their they develop an argument for how these bonds of friendship and affinity might go on to form communes, the experiment with which in the present is what they see as defining the social upheavals of the contemporary period.

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244 Ibid., 16. 
245 Ibid., 32–33.
They urge readers not to “back away from what is political in friendship. We’ve been given a neutral idea of friendship understood as pure affection with no consequences. But all affinity is affinity within a common truth. Every encounter is an encounter within a common affirmation…”246 This serves as the example for why in the beginning of the worker’s movement it was possible to forge alliances of trust and solidarity in the factory, and within this context solidify these bonds with a material action such as carrying out a strike.247 Without the factory at the centre of social movements today, friendship becomes important because it can extend beyond the space of work, and so “we have the whole of social space in which to find each other.”248 The Invisible Committee see that momentum now must begin with people’s existing relationships, their closest ties, as the contacts from which social struggles can emanate from. For example, we can think of temporary workers who might find it easier to organize with others based on shared tastes in music rather than the location where they work, as this could change any day. Friendships can develop from uncertain places, and so The Invisible Committee is trying to imagine how those ties might be strengthened, and if possible, politicized.

What The Invisible Committee has asserted concerning this possible politicization of friendship might seem like uncritical optimism for revolutionary movements and the insurrections and upheavals of the past few decades. However, my use of their texts here has been to show how they offer friendship as a possible beginning for different kinds of politics. They insist on a certain strategy, that of trying to form small groups of friends

246 Ibid., 98.
247 Ibid., 99.
248 Ibid.
who get organized, informally, to plot actions that might lead to insurrections. This way of going about things in some sense makes power *invisible*, which is a dangerous affair. It would be correct to criticize it for not being democratic. Likewise, it could be critiqued from an anarchist or egalitarian perspective for creating a vanguard. In the next section, Uri Gordon demonstrates the importance for anarchism of keeping power invisible, but doing so in a way that tries to work against domination and remains anti-authoritarian.

**Invisible power and cultures of solidarity**

Uri Gordon, an Israeli political theorist and anarchist activist, makes clear what is at stake with this issue of organizing through the kind of informal, friend based networks that The Invisible Committee call for. While anarchist groups might attempt to organize themselves in such a way as to limit internal domination, hierarchy and centralization, there nevertheless exist *informal* power imbalances within anarchist groups and the development of leaders who might wield an *invisible* kind of power in an affinity group, collective, network or within a larger movement.249 There is also the issue that one particular small group might become a cadre, and as such possess influence over many others involved in a large network or social movement. One could argue this might result in some way from a focus on friendship rather than an openness to organize with others who are not necessarily friends. Gordon identifies this as the tension between exercising overt and covert influence in anarchist organizing, and his overall argument is that there

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is an inherently unaccountable yet diffuse and autonomous use of power in anarchist political culture, and there are good reasons not to develop formal structures or procedures despite this unaccountability. Gordon argues instead for a “culture of solidarity” around power, that makes its use more reflective and responsive within anarchist groups.

This issue echoes Slavoj Žižek’s critical comments on anarchism, when he suggested in an interview, “the tragedy of anarchism is that you end up having an authoritarian secret society trying to achieve anarchist goals…” Further, that anarchist groups who claim to organize themselves without formalized leaders do not quite achieve this goal, because “beneath the mask of this consensus, there [is] one person accepted by some unwritten rules as the secret master.” I think Gordon provides an excellent response to this kind of critique by responding first of all that anarchist groups are not authoritarian even if much of what they do must be kept secret. Anarchist affinity groups might exert influence on others due to organizing certain actions that could affect others without their knowledge or consent, but Gordon points out this takes place within a culture of solidarity and is always based on anarchist principles of mutual aid and voluntary association. The criticism of these groups being secretly authoritarian in their own makeup seems unfounded, as Gordon and Day have both shown through extensive ethnographic research how the practices of anarchist affinity groups attempt to embody an anti-authoritarian character, even if they have many problems and difficulties in achieving this this goal. Anarchists themselves recognize that domination does not go

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250 Ibid., 49.
away when a group calls itself anarchist, but that it is an ongoing processes to try as much as possible to reduce domination to a minimum. To cite one example, Jamie Heckert has redefined anarchism as an ethics of direct relationships involving a radical commitment to listening, caring and becoming as an always unfinished task. The second point by Žižek that there are “secret masters” or those who wield more power by unwritten rules is definitely a real problem, and one anarchists also freely admit. Gordon suggests anarchist political culture is an evolving attempt to work on these imbalances and informal hierarchies. In what follows I will reconstruct the development of Gordon’s argument in order to understand in greater depth how he makes the claim invisible power is necessary and what he means by cultures of solidarity.

Gordon suggests that debates on power and anarchist organizing often are not clear about what kind of power is under discussion, and therefore he distinguishes three different types of power: power-over, power-to and power-with. His sense of power-over is a relationship where one can get someone else to do something through force, coercion, manipulation or authority. For Gordon power-over informs the anarchist conception of domination, and one is dominated when “s/he is systematically subject to power-over.” Gordon suggests this domination is reproduced through intersecting regimes of exclusion, and that it is conceptually distinct from power-to and power-with. Gordon understands power-to as the basic capacity to act, or “to alter physical reality, to

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254 Ibid., 50.
255 Ibid., 51.
cause an effect or to achieve a desired result."²⁵⁶ Of course, power-over is always dependent in some way on this power-to, as one cannot have power over someone else without a basic capacity to act, even if it is as minute as pulling a trigger or speaking a command. As Gordon explains: “the possession of power-to is logically and temporally antecedent to its use: it is ‘there’ to the extent that success can be predicted for the possessor’s attempts to influence physical objects or other persons’ behaviour.”²⁵⁷ Gordon thinks however it is also possible for one to wield power-to in human relationships without it becoming a power-over, and this is what he terms power-with, understood as influence without force, coercion, manipulation or authority. He argues this area of power has largely been left unexamined by political theory, but helps to explain how individuals influence each other’s behaviour in the “absence of a conflict of wills or interests.”²⁵⁸ For Gordon this distinction of power-with is central to coming to an understanding of power within anarchist groups, but while it is not the same as power-over, power-with “can still be wielded unequally and/or abusively.”²⁵⁹

The difficulty, Gordon notes, is that leadership can form within anarchist groups in ways that are not easy to mitigate because what makes a leader is often access to resources which cannot be redistributed, or are not possible to duplicate.²⁶⁰ Anarchist groups do not formalize leadership but leadership can result from things like commitment, energy, available time, confidence and charisma. Gordon stresses that anarchist culture works to redistribute money, access to space and equipment within

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 52.
²⁵⁷ Ibid., 51–52.
²⁵⁸ Ibid., 54.
²⁵⁹ Ibid., 55.
²⁶⁰ Ibid., 58.
collectives and networks, and to share skills such as those involved with facilitation or using technology.\textsuperscript{261} But sharing and collectivizing resources that are “non-zero sum” is extremely difficult or impossible (and as a result self-confidence, charisma and free time can all contribute to the creation of informal or invisible leadership, yet cannot be redistributed within a group). This has often resulted in anxiety and disagreement about the presence of this invisible power behind the scenes, but for Gordon it points to difficult questions about inclusion, accountability and enforcement that help to explain why power functions this way in anarchist groups, and how creating a culture of solidarity is the only way for these groups to change and still remain anarchist.

Another way Gordon articulates this problem is that informal organizing can lead to the creation of a “friendship-elite,” or a tight knit group of friends can be perceived as wielding an invisible kind of power while those left out are disempowered.\textsuperscript{262} Debates within anarchist networks have often invoked this tendency of friendship to create an “in-group” as a barrier to organizing effectively. However, while this is a potentially negative aspect of how friendship might overlap with organizing, I do not believe it is friendship that causes or creates this perception of invisible power that might encourage hierarchy and coercion. It is the lack of a political culture surrounding how and why invisible power is important, as Gordon suggests, which results in this perception. Since there are good arguments against formalizing leadership or creating more rigid organization structures, it is up to anarchists to create the kind of culture that fosters openness and the extension of friendship outside of these existing groups of friends. More importantly,

\textsuperscript{261} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{262} Ibid., 62.
because of the way anarchists view decentralization as a core value, this suggests many smaller and selective affinity groups, which often overlap with groups of friends, can coexist without any one becoming a “friendship-elite.”

Gordon explains invisible power operates in the anarchist movement in part because of this valuing of decentralization. Based on his research with the Dissent network, Gordon argues that decentralization was viewed as a positive value connected to autonomy, and that it was often invoked so as not to micromanage or interfere with smaller groups more directly affected by the issues at play. Gordon writes,

[Decentralization] is a new centre of power-with. To describe what is happening in such a situation, one could say that the plenary, a temporary ‘centre’ of collective power-with in the network, is ‘seeding’ several new ‘centres.’ So clearly decentralization means not fewer centres but more. It means that there should be a process to increase the number of ‘places’ (face-to-face or virtual) where power gets exercised, while avoiding disproportionate aggregations of power, and/or transferring existing ones into the new locales (a principle of equality enacted on an increasing number of recipients).  

This is why for Gordon what often has the appearance of a decision in a large anarchist network or spokescouncil is actually more of an announcement, because the decentralization of decision making makes it such that large networks and assemblies have little to no capacity to enforce any decisions they make. This issue of accountability is what Gordon suggests critics of anarchist groups view as most problematic, and indeed it is a source of anxiety and uncertainty for many within the movement as well. This gets to the heart of the matter, because while the rhetoric of anarchist protest might urge things like “holding corporations accountable” such arguments always depend on “notions of accountability based on the idea of exerting certain behaviours from agents

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263 Ibid., 66.
through *demands backed by sanctions*… And this is where the problems begin. Sanctions are impossible to use in a consistent way in decentralized networks…”264 This is because sanctions depend on some kind of mechanism of enforcement, which Gordon believes always comes down to a type of coercion that anarchists are not willing to accept.265

Anarchists of course lack enforcement because they possess neither armies nor the capacity to impose economic sanctions. The only limited power anarchist or activist communities possess is the capacity to marginalize or exclude individuals from their own networks. According to Gordon, the voluntary association involved in anarchist communities renders rationalized, permanent enforcement not only undesirable but also structurally impossible.266 This gets at the background assumptions of the debate on informal power, that of attempting to understand anarchist organizing in the language of democracy. Gordon says,

democratic discourse assumes without exception that the political process results, at some point, in collectively binding decisions. That these decisions can be the result of free and open debate by all those affected does not change the fact that the outcome is seen to have a mandatory nature. Saying that something is collectively binding makes no sense if each person is to make up their own mind over whether they are bound by it.267

While anarchists are often interested in radical democratic theory and what insights it offers on participation, deliberation and inclusion, ultimately there is a fundamental difference between the two because, again, *enforceability* is always assumed in

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264 Ibid., 67.
265 Ibid. Gordon concedes that some aspects of coercion might be inevitable or inescapable in human social relations, such as diffuse social sanctions or the coercion involved in self-defence. What differentiates this most basic kind of coercion and what anarchists criticize as domination, is that coercion becomes backed by a permanent and rationalized edifice capable of enforcement. See Gordon, 68-69.
266 Ibid., 69.
267 Ibid., 69–70.
democratic discourse. The outcomes of anarchist processes are inherently unenforceable and therefore represent “not the most radical form of democracy, but an altogether different paradigm for collective action.”\textsuperscript{268} For Gordon, this explains why anarchists value consensus decision making because in a culture without enforcement consensus serves the functional role of increasing “the \textit{likelihood} that a decision will be voluntarily carried out by those who made it.”\textsuperscript{269}

This distinction between anarchism and democracy raises again the issue of the invisibility of influence in anarchist networks and groups, and how to confront the “power-with that anarchists use invisibly, behind the scenes—where those affected may never know who made things this way, and how they conspired to do it.”\textsuperscript{270} This is essentially the same critique that could be levelled at The Invisible Committee (as even their name gestures towards the \textit{invisible}). Gordon responds to this critique by suggesting that for anarchism, \textit{invisibility} is politically valuable \textit{and} inevitable.\textsuperscript{271} The invisibility of power relations is inevitable because the actions carried out by anarchists are often illegal, as anarchism has always embraced direct action as a principle for creating social change, and there is no way to square this with complete transparency of decision making. Secondly, Gordon argues that the invisible influence or power of certain individuals is \textit{politically meaningful} in itself because it can allow for power-with to be developed outside of the public theatre of “the Plenary.” This allows for the participation of activists who are not comfortable in crowds or speaking in front of others, on the one

\textsuperscript{268} Ibid., 70.
\textsuperscript{269} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{270} Ibid., 71.
\textsuperscript{271} Ibid., 71–73.
hand, or those who take more time and consideration to form opinions and come to
decisions, on the other. For Gordon this connects to the privilege of public kinds of
power against private ones, and as such privileging of the plenary repeats an essentially
patriarchal notion of what kinds of power are valuable or meaningful. More so, that the
informal or behind-the-scenes venues were power is wielded have the potential to
empower marginalized groups who already have little or no access to the “the plenary,”
whether in anarchist networks or in society at large. For this reason Gordon says in the
end “this invisible, subterranean, indeed unaccountable use of power is not only
inevitable in some measure (because of habit and secrecy), but also needs to be
embraced, since it coheres with [anarchism] in important respects.”

Gordon returns us then to the very real issues brought up with invisible and
informal power in anarchist organizing, such as the development of the “secret” leader as
suggested above by Žižek, but with a firm position that this issue cannot be resolved by
demands for accountability or transparency. Instead, he says the only possibility
compatible with anarchism would be cultural changes that influence the habits and
everyday activity of anarchists, through the active creation of a “culture of solidarity”
around the invisible wielding of power. Gordon concludes:

A culture of solidarity would encourage activists to wield power reflectively rather
than tripping on empowerment; to make actions participatory and/or easily
copyable whenever possible; and to encourage consideration for the anticipated
needs and desires of those whom one’s actions will inevitably impact
unaccountably… The way to promote such cultural change—an act of power in

272 Ibid., 74–75.
273 Ibid., 75.
itself—is not so much through verbal propaganda but through propaganda by deed.\textsuperscript{274}

This kind of culture can be encouraged also by looking carefully at our experiences with friends, and what kind of practices between friends shape strong relationships. As such friendship is important not only because it overlaps with affinity groups and has a certain relevance to anarchist organizing in a post-industrial age, but because it offers us an instructive and direct experience of what anarchist relations can feel like. This illuminates what Todd May says about deep and close friendships being a kind of training ground for solidarity movements, in that they provide a kind of insight into ways of treating others that have the potential to make a movement flourish and grow. It is not that one has to organize only with friends or that everyone in a social movement should be friends with each other, but that friendship teaches a particular kind of trust and respect.\textsuperscript{275}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{274} Ibid., 76–77.
\item \textsuperscript{275} May, \textit{Friendship in an Age of Economics : Resisting the Forces of Neoliberalism}, 145–147, 154–155.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
**Conclusion: Postanarchism, technology and silence**

Hakim Bey’s 1987 book *Temporary Autonomous Zone* began a long if somewhat distant friendship between Foucauldian philosophy and anarchism, when speaking through the voice of the Association for Ontological Anarchy he made the poetic call for a “post-anarchism” that deserts the ideology of all political systems and does not abandon chaos and experimentation. Bey suggests Foucault is useful in elaborating a tactic of disappearance, which opposes head on confrontations with power and instead suggests social movements should consider how to appear and disappear, and, as such, create spaces of temporary autonomy.\(^{276}\) Whether or not this represents a faithful reading of Foucault, it began a long engagement with his writings by anarchist thinkers. Todd May’s 1994 book *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism* attempted to bring the work of Foucault, Lyotard, Deleuze and Guattari together with classical anarchist theorists such as Bakunin and Kropotkin to form a tactical political philosophy that views the emergence of power as essentially diffuse, and not centred in the sites of the state and capitalism traditionally considered primary.\(^{277}\) In 2003, Lewis Call’s *Postmodern Anarchism* had a similar goal in the field of literary studies, and again argued that Foucault’s thinking must necessarily be read as “outside the state.”\(^{278}\) Saul Newman has continued this trajectory using Foucault to argue for a *postanarchist* politics that understands power itself as productive, and suggests Foucault offers an approach to


power that shows “there is a much closer and more paradoxical interaction between
the state and society than classical anarchists imagined.” Many other scholars have
taken up and applied Foucault to anarchist theory, or used his methodology to pursue
anarchist research, and some have even expressed that there is an anarchist turn taking
place within the field of political philosophy and political theory.

There has been a tendency within this emerging theoretical landscape to read
Foucault as an anarchist, or to make the argument that his theory is a more contemporary
way of articulating an anarchist politics. I think this goes too far. When responding to a
question following the lecture “What Is Critique?” Foucault says that his understanding
of critique is not an anarchism that posits an originary freedom, but instead an attitude
that seeks to develop a critical relationship towards government, one that could be
understood as a will not to be “governed thusly, like that, by these people, at this
price.” Critique for Foucault has to do with the relative amount of government going
on, and is not concerned with the question of whether or not there can be government at
all, or whether we can, as The Invisible Committee suggest, leave the paradigm of
government altogether. However, Foucault goes on to say in “What is Critique?” that
just because his sense of critique as the will not to be governed is not the same as a
“fundamental anarchism,” it also does not absolutely exclude that kind of position. These

Saul Newman, From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power (Lanham:

280 Jimmy Casas Klausen and James R Martel, How Not to Be Governed: Readings and Interpretations from a
Critical Anarchist Left (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2011); Duane Roussele and Süreyyya Evren,
eds., Post-Anarchism: A Reader (London: Pluto Press, 2011); Jacob Blumenfeld, Chiara Bottici, and Simon

281 Foucault, The Politics of Truth, 75.
282 The Invisible Committee, To Our Friends (South Pasadena: Semiotext(e), 2015), 79.
marginal comments provide what I believe to be the best way to see the affinity between Foucault’s work and anarchism: it is not that Foucault can or should be read as an anarchist, but that he makes important contributions to an understanding of the individual, subjectivity, power and government that do not exclude a complimentary anarchist analysis.

This thesis has attempted to offer that kind of productive combination of Foucault and anarchist theory by an investigation into the problematics of friendship and its relationship to politics. There are aspects of the model of anarchism I have presented in Chapter 3, however, that Foucault might view with a critical eye. There is as well some ways in which anarchism might point out what could be lacking in Foucault’s thought. If affinity groups are understood primarily as a way that individuals come together and through deepening knowledge of each other create the capacity to carry out actions, how can this attack the fabrication of the individual Foucault speaks of in *Discipline & Punish*? How can one posit an autonomous individual that can be completely opposed to state power, if what gives this individual its very meaning is inherited from that same power structure? Much anarchist theory still relies on a fairly fixed concept of the individual in order to articulate a critique of the state and capitalist social relations.

This is why Foucault’s view of friendship as a way of life, as an inventive and experimental process, is important, as it takes the relationships and not the individuals as primary. Friendship becomes not a relationship that emerges between atomistic and discrete entities with fixed boundaries, but constitutive of those entities, and has the potential to modify and mix each friend’s own sense of self. I believe there can be a notion of anarchist affinity that can learn from and incorporate this relational
understanding of friendship. Anarchism already incorporates an aspect of this in its continued insistence that collective and individual aspects of liberation cannot be separated, or as Cindy Milstein writes, “no one is free unless everyone is free, and everyone can only be free if each person can individuate or actualize themselves in the most expansive of senses… anarchism’s basic aspiration for a free society of free individuals gives transparency to what should be a productive, harmonic dissonance: figuring out ways to coexist and thrive in our differentiation.”283 This thought must be pushed further, however, and affinity groups, collectives and friends organizing collectively must always try to ask how their relationships might produce norms and moral codes, and constantly question the historical forces at work that create the individuals who might “actualize themselves.” Working at the limits that fabricate and produce us as individuals, Foucault suggests, is also not absolutely excluded from anarchist politics, but some work is needed in order to engage this complimentary thought.

At the same time, Foucault’s later work does leave something to be desired concerning how collective experiments might challenge the subjection he believes to be so deeply ingrained in the history of Western culture. In trying to create the self as a work of art, we can encourage a way of thinking and living that opposes the everyday “fascism in us all, in our heads… that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us.”284 Foucault gestures towards the formations of groups which might “generate de-individualization,” but because of his disdain for a program of any

283 Cindy Milstein, Anarchism and Its Aspirations (Oakland: AK Press, 2010), 14.
kind, anything more concrete about how these groups might organize themselves or what actions they might take is left ambiguous. This is I believe where anarchism can complement Foucault’s analysis, not as an exhaustive account of all the possibilities for mobilizing Foucault, but at least for one of them. Through the informal model of organization offered by affinity groups outlined in Chapter 3, and the way these groups can make use of the training in trust and respect offered by certain forms of deep and close friendships, one specific example of how to challenge the individualizing and totalizing processes of modern power can be put into practice.

After I have said so much throughout this thesis about the virtues of friendship, it might seem like the next logical step would be to criticize the degree to which social networking and technological mediation is destroying friendship today. Deep and close friendships, the argument goes, are being replaced by the “faux friendships” of Facebook, where one collects thousands of friends that one barely even knows. 285 Perhaps. But jumping to conclusions about the impact of social networking and virtual communication on friendship is unwise. It remains to be seen what actual effect on the practices and experience of friendship these technologies will have, as in many regards friendship has remained a durable facet of human life since it was reflected upon by Aristotle thousands of years ago. Certainly one of the meanings of friend has shifted since the ubiquity of Facebook, and the term has now come to signify a connection that is more fleeting, and similar to an acquaintance. But it is not entirely clear that email, mobile devices, instant messaging and other methods of communication are detrimental to friendship. Indeed,

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given the precarious economic conditions that so often force relocation in the
neoliberal era, technology offers a way that deep friendships can be maintained across
vast distances, rather than replacing friendships that have a history with ones that offer
immediate pleasure or entertainment value. And the privileging of face to face
friendships over those that might be based solely on virtual connection seems to foreclose
the meaning of friendship in a way that Derrida warned against: assuming in advance that
proximity rather than distance is what matters most in the friendships that give our life
meaning.

It is certainly cause for concern when the entirety of our communication depends
on social networks and apps owned by multi-billion dollar corporations. Facebook also
seems to encourage the kind of communication that speaks to no one in particular, as we
post messages in the void of the infinitely scrolling news feed. Following Foucault,
instead of dismissing these relatively recent technologies as necessarily impoverishing
friendship, we should look to the actual practices involved in the interface between
friendship and technology. It is not entirely clear that virtual friendships exist at the
expense of face to face connections, or that technologically mediated friendships do not
crossover with those that take on a life away from the screens. There is also sociological
evidence to suggest that virtual communication encourages interpersonal communication
and civic participation in the so called “real world.”\textsuperscript{286} This thesis has largely left to the
side the question of friendship and technology in order to focus more on the meaning of
friendship for Foucault and for anarchism, but the understanding of friendship I have
articulated here could offer much to any future research on the relation between

\textsuperscript{286} May, Friendship in an Age of Economics : Resisting the Forces of Neoliberalism, 148.
friendship and technology, which is obviously becoming a more and more pressing concern. Rather than asking what the final and true version of friendship might be today, Foucault would suggest we look at how it functions, what power relations are involved in the struggles that give it meaning, and how it might still, in its hyper-mediated forms, become a site of experimentation and resistance.

In an interview given in 1982, Foucault touches on one curious aspect of friendship that I have not yet explored: silence. He explains how there can be a form of silence that can imply a deep friendship and emotional admiration, and tells the story of meeting a filmmaker for the first time and spending ten hours together without speaking for more than twenty minutes. It was not the communication of some secret desire or the deepening of knowledge of each other which began this friendship, but instead the simple activities of cooking, eating and drinking together, which all took place in relative silence. Foucault says, “from that moment a rather long friendship started. It was for me the first time that a friendship originated in strictly silent behavior.” This attention to silence may be one thing that our text and Twitter obsessed culture could learn to appreciate. This does not have to be an absolute refusal of communications technology, but using it in a way that also makes the space for embracing, at certain times, the silence of our friends.

Nietzsche as well noted that silence is important for strong friendships when he said “we are friends from the beginning; we have grief and ghastliness and ground in common; even the sun we have in common. We do not speak to one another because we

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know too much: we are silent to one another, we smile our knowledge to one
another.”知识和情感是相互交织的，无法分离，知识是“微笑的。”朋友分享了他们之外的一切（太阳，他们的痛苦），但正如Tom Roach提醒我们，有时对欲望的承认对友谊并不是一种生产力，而是将我们与身份联系起来。尼采总是赞扬孤独的美德以避免人群的常事，但他也一次又一次地回到友谊，作为一种动态和充满活力的关系。289 如哲学家Elizabeth Tefler警告道，长期关注友谊的优点和价值是有危险的，我希望我不是过于在这里犯了错误。她说，这种关注可能会“使人们集中精力寻找友谊，而不是朋友。”290 这种态度是自相矛盾的，因为当我们在抽象中停止思考它时，友谊变得有价值，而当我们将注意力集中在已经存在的朋友时，它才变得有价值。288


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