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## Chapter One. Introduction: Foucault, Levinas and the Rebirth of the Ethical

### Embodied Subject after Modernity

#### A. Postmodern Critique of Dualism and Its Repression of the Body

Edith Wyschogrod states that one of the important strands of postmodernism<sup>1</sup> “can be identified as the concern with corporeality.”<sup>2</sup> For the postmodernists, the body has long been repressed or distorted by Cartesian rationalism and dualism. They argue that Cartesian subjectivity, which privileges the mind over the body, has negated the value of the human body. For Descartes, the “I” is the soul, which is distinct from the body, and would not cease to exist even if the body did not exist. Thus, consciousness, which separates from the world and the body, becomes “an island unto itself.”<sup>3</sup> We regard such

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<sup>1</sup> Steven Best and Douglas Kellner define postmodernism/postmodern theory as follows: ‘The discourses of the postmodern also appear in the field of theory and focus on the critique of modern theory and arguments for a postmodern rupture in theory. Modern theory--ranging from the philosophical projects of Descartes, through the Enlightenment, to the social theory of Comte, Marx, Weber and others--is criticized for its search for a foundation of knowledge, for its universalizing and totalizing claims, for its hubris to supply apodictic truth, and for its allegedly fallacious rationalism.’ Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations* (New York: Guilford Press, 1991), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Edith Wyschogrod, “Towards a Postmodern Ethics: Corporeality and Alterity,” in Edith Wyschogrod and Gerald P. McKenny (eds.), *The Ethical* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), p. 54. Wyschogrod also argues that the twentieth’s century’s understanding of corporeality occurs in three waves: “The first wave consists in identifying the problem. The subject of rationalist and empiricist philosophies in their classical forms is mind or consciousness. If the subject is not merely a consciousness but always already in a world, a new account of the subject’s transactions with that world in which spatial orientation and motility figure is required. If these primordial world-relations bypass consciousness, then the character of the subject must be reconfigured. The second wave focuses on the body as intrinsic to subjectness, on what *bodies* must be if the subject is a body-subject and what the *subject* must be if it is corporeal. The third wave (only now coming to the fore) asks whether and how the corporeality of the subject bears upon ethics and, if it does, how are we to understand both ethics and corporeality in that context. What happens to practical reason, to moral deliberation, when the subject is constructed corporeally? If there is something like a body-subject, how does it force a reconsideration of notions of freedom and responsibility?” Ibid., p. 55. According to this classification, this dissertation, which deals with the question of embodied ethics, belongs to the third wave.

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis:

a Cartesian worldview as a dualist model. Dualism refers to the view that reality or human being consists of two disparate parts (mind and body) that cannot be reconciled. Dualism is already formed in the pre-Socratic separation between appearance vs. reality and Plato's soul vs. body. These two substances, like Plato's soul and body, are two distinct, mutually exclusive and mutually exhaustive substances, each of which has its own self-contained sphere.<sup>4</sup>

—The major problem of dualism is not only its separation of two substances but also its hierarchy that privileges one (like Plato's idea or Descartes' mind) over the other (like Plato or Descartes' body). For instance, Plato privileges the eternal Idea and regards the body as the prison of the soul. He not only negates the value of the body but also negates the value of the gendered body. Prudence Allen says that, in Plato's philosophy "a woman's or a man's nature flows directly from the character of her or his soul, which is an immaterial and therefore non-sexual entity. Since the soul or mind is neither male nor female, when Plato considers the question of how woman and man are opposite, he concludes that when they are considered from the perspective of their real nature, they are the same. More specially, it is the sexless soul and not the material body that

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<sup>4</sup> Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 7.  
<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 6.

determines the identity of the woman and man.”<sup>5</sup> Plato believes that since the soul is the true nature of a person, bodily existence is merely an appearance of the true reality; men and women also have no significant difference.

The postmodern feminist Elizabeth Grosz says that dualism is a form of reductionism that “reduces either the mind to the body or the body to the mind.”<sup>6</sup> It does not presume that there is an interaction between mind and body; rather it always privileges one side at the expense of the other. For instance, rationalism and idealism are a dualist reductionism since they always explain the body and matter in terms of mind, ideas, or reason. Therefore, Grosz says, “the major problem facing dualism and all those positions aimed at overcoming dualism has been to explain the interactions of these two apparently impossible substances, given that, within experience and everyday life, there seems to be a manifest connection between the two in willful behavior and responsive psychological reactions.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, dualism not only refers to a split or separation between mind and body, but also refers to a reductive relation between mind and body. Body and mind in a dualist model are no longer in a dynamic interactive relation; rather one side is always subordinated to another side. More specifically,

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<sup>5</sup> Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution 750 BC--AD 1250* (Montreal: Eden Press, 1985), p. 61.

<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 6.

Cartesian dualism not only denies the value of the body, but also denies the value of gendered bodies and gender.

The postmodern approach to the body aims at re-affirming the value of the body and criticizing any repressive discourses that negate the body. In particular, the postmodernists are against an essentialist understanding of the body that reduces the body to a controlled or manipulated object. The postmodernists claim that the body is a socially and culturally constructed product, which does not have any pre-given or transcendent essence. Any essentialist understanding of the body is a repression of the body. The social constructivist approach to the body has become an important paradigm in contemporary gender studies and queer studies.

Many influential contemporary feminists or queer theorists, such as Simon de Beauvoir, Monique Wittig, Judith Butler or Elizabeth Grosz, adopt a social constructivist approach to the social and cultural formation of the body. Serene Jones defines the constructivist approach to the body as follows: “Feminist constructivism can be defined as a theory that focuses on the social, cultural, and linguistic sources of our views of women and women’s nature. Feminist theorists do not always use the term ‘constructivism’ precisely, however. In most cases, use of the term makes the general point that supposed eternal verities of women’s nature are historically and culturally

variant and, consequently, that gender is ‘formed’ rather than ‘given.’”<sup>8</sup> In particular, social constructivists argue that giving the gendered body an “essence” or “ontological nature” is to impose power towards those who have an alternative bodily and sexual identity distinct from the dominant sexual culture. Social constructivists think that an essentialist understanding of the body is always associated with various kinds of repressive heterosexual and patriarchal norms that repress or manipulate those who cannot conform to the norms.

Social constructivists argue that there is no pre-discursive/pre-cultural body. Rather, all kinds of bodies are culturally and discursively constructed. Grosz states: “The body must be regarded as a site of social, political, cultural, and geographical inscriptions, production, or constitution. The body is not opposed to culture, a resistance throw-back to a natural past; it is itself a cultural, *the cultural*, product.”<sup>9</sup> Ontological understandings of body, which give the body a pre-given nature, are unethical: first, they mask the fact that the body is simply a socially constructed body; second, they negate the singularity of body through generalizing the meaning of the body. Thus, Grosz says, “it [a feminist philosophy of the body] must refuse singular models, models which are based on one

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<sup>8</sup> Serene Jones, *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology: Cartographies of Grace* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), p. 32.

<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 23.

type of the body as the norm by which all others are judged. There is no one mode that is capable of representing the 'human' in all its richness and variability."<sup>10</sup>

For some social constructivists such as Butler, the aim of body politics is to "deconstruct" different ontological understandings of the body, particularly coherent and fixed understandings of the body, then reconstruct the subversive meaning of the body so as to subvert our traditional, heterosexual and patriarchal understandings of the body. As Ladelle McWhorter says, such body politics aims at deconstructing any discourses that fix one's sexual identity: "Counterattack against sexual normalization in general and sexual identities in particular, based on normalized bodies as a rallying point, depends upon affirming development without affirming docility, depends upon affirming the free, open playfulness of human possibility even within regimes of sexuality without getting stuck in or succumbing to any one sexual discourse or formation."<sup>11</sup> Therefore, gender for Butler is performative,<sup>12</sup> and gendered identities are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs. The body is simply a style, a variable boundary, a

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<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 22.

<sup>11</sup> Ladelle McWhorter, *Bodies and Pleasures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 181.

<sup>12</sup> Sara Salih explains Butler's gender performativity as follows: "Butler has collapsed the sex/gender distinction in order to argue that there is no sex that is not always already gender... which means that there is no 'natural body' that pre-exists its cultural inscription. This seems to point towards the conclusion that gender is not something one is, it is something one does, an act, or more precisely, a sequence of acts, a verb rather than a noun, a 'doing' rather than a 'being'." Thus, for Butler, genders are neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of stable identity. See Sara Salih, *Judith Butler* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 62.

signifying practice, but not a being.<sup>13</sup> Gender and the body have no ontological status.

Even the interiority of the self is an effect of public discourse.

For social constructivists, stylization of one's bodily identity, which includes subverting all social laws in an endless bodily mutation, subversion or deconstruction, is the only way to defend one's bodily freedom. In *Gender Trouble*, for example, Butler privileges an alternative non-stereotyped bodily identity over a traditional stereotyped bodily identity. Butler's subversive bodily politics proposes that we need to keep constructing or styling an alternative non-stereotyped gender identity so as to subvert various kinds of stereotyped gender identities constructed by dominant social laws.<sup>14</sup> In *Lesbian Body*, Wittig also demonstrates how non-stereotyped bodily identity can offer us a new imagination towards our sexual identity. As Svi Shapiro says, the contemporary body movement is deeply informed by "a particularist thought" that affirms the value of the concrete and the autonomy of the body.<sup>15</sup> The social constructivists' political strategy is an aesthetic subversion of repressive gender culture through symbolically styling one's

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<sup>13</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 139.

<sup>14</sup> In *Gender Trouble*, Butler privileges a "future style of body." While Butler criticizes Kristeva's pre-discursive libidinal multiplicity, she asserts a future mode of sexual drive. She argues, since all bodies are culturally constructed, the culturally liberated body will be liberated neither to its natural past nor to its original pleasures but to an open future of cultural possibilities. In other words, she expects that the future mutation of a culturally constructed body is more "desirable" than a traditionally constructed body. In this way Butler privileges a "future style of body." This, I think, is the hidden normative ground of her theory of the body. See *Gender Trouble*, p. 93.

<sup>15</sup> Svi Shapiro, "Introduction: The Life-World, Body Movements and New Forms of Emancipatory Politics," in Sherry Shapiro and Svi Shapiro (eds.), *Body Movements: Pedagogy, Politics and Social Change* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2002), pp. 15-18.

body. Such particular/alternative/subversive/queer gender identity can make one become a stylish and free subject who need not conform to the dominant social and cultural norms or laws.

But is stylization of one's bodily identity an unconditional act? One's subversive bodily identity is not necessarily ethical. For instance, if a "right wing racist" makes a "kill the immigrants" tattoo on his or her body, we would not regard it as a "subversive bodily act" because it is basically an unethical bodily subversion that simply promotes the "hatred of others." Thus we should think of how stylization of one's bodily identity can yield a subversive and ethical bodily act. But most social constructivists fail to take into account an ethics of bodily subversion.

Furthermore, for some social constructivists, the meaning of the body is only cultural. They regard stylization of one's bodily meaning as a construction of the cultural meaning of the body. To put it bluntly, they reduce the body to cultural text. While I agree that changing the cultural/textual meaning of one's body can subvert some repressive boundaries, I do not agree that only the cultural meaning of the body can subvert repressive boundaries. Rather I believe that the body per se, which includes one's bodily gesture, suffering face and bodily sensation, can also generate a subversive or even ethical meaning.

Of course, some social constructivists would not agree that they fail to take into account the subversive element of one's bodily sensation. In fact, in today's body politics, most social constructivists do treat the bodily pleasure as a "force" or "strategy" to subvert the social norms so as to achieve one's freedom. In other words, it is unfair to argue that social constructivists simply ignore the power of the natural body and reduce the body to cultural text. While I agree that social constructivists do recognize the subversive meaning pleasure as a bodily sensation, they do not pay enough attention to the ethical meaning pain, which is crucial for making a responsible subject in contemporary body politics.

My concern is this: if social constructivists treat "liberation of pleasure" as the ultimate aim of body politics, this might cultivate a pleasure-driven egoist subject who is indifferent to the suffering of others. I do not reject or repress the value of bodily enjoyment; what I reject is a body politics that is solely driven by pleasure-seeking. In other word, social constructivists ought to ask how one's bodily sensation can cultivate a responsible subject, who not only takes care of himself or herself but also takes care of others who suffer. Besides pleasure, can another bodily sensation subvert repressive boundaries and limit one's egoist mentality?

In response to the ethical problems generated from contemporary body politics,

McWhorter asks: “How can we remain within the movements of development in such a way that they remain movements of change, difference, becoming, and self-overcoming—ever open to newness, unconstrained by some pre-determined developmental trajectory?”<sup>16</sup> We need to ask: Is bodily transformation an unconditional transformation? Can stylization of the body be ethical? Is stylization of self simply a symbolic deconstruction and reconstruction of self? Can stylization of body fully actualize the meaning of the body? How can the subversive subject become a responsible and ethical subject? Beyond one’s subverting repressive boundaries or identity through changing the cultural meaning of the body, can the body per se generate a meaning that is both subversive and ethical? In addition to pleasure, can other bodily sensations become a subversive and ethical force to subvert repressive boundaries? Can the pleasure-driven subject mourn for the other’s suffering?

## **B. The Idea of an Ethical Embodied Subject after Postmodern Critique of Cartesian**

### **Dualism**

In response to the problems generated from the Cartesian dualist and the social constructivist approaches, we need to develop a comprehensive notion of an ethical embodied subject. By “ethical embodied subject,” I mean the subject is not only an

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<sup>16</sup> Ladelle McWhorter, *Bodies and Pleasures*, p. 180.

embodied subject, who can sense or comprehend the world with his or her bodily sensation, but also an ethical embodied subject, who can build up an inter-subjective relationship with the other. In particular, such an ethical subject can take responsibility for the other and respond to the other's suffering.

With respect to the notion of embodied subject, one thinks of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty's innovative phenomenological approach to the body. Both these two phenomenologists not only assert the importance of embodiment in understanding our life-world but also re-construct an embodied subject after rejecting a disembodied notion of human being. Husserl and Merleau-Ponty take embodiment seriously. Yet their approaches to the body mainly assert the epistemological dimension of the body, not the ethical dimension.

What matters for Husserl and Merleau-Ponty is how the body can serve as a condition of perceiving our life-world, not how the body can serve as an essential condition of being ethical. Although this does not mean that Husserl and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach to the body lacks ethical implications, their emphasis on the body is mainly driven by an epistemological concern. Husserl uses his notion of kinaestheses (the experiential expression of our ability to move our bodies), discussed in the *Fifth Meditation*, to describe how the subject's bodily movement constitutes the

subject's perception towards the object surrounding him or her. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body attempts to show that our perception of the world cannot be separated from our bodily existence: "my body does not perceive, but it is as if it were built around the perception that dawns through it; through its whole internal arrangement, its sensory motor circuits, the return ways that control and release movements, it is, as it were, prepared for a self-perception, even though it is never itself that is perceived or itself that perceives."<sup>17</sup> While both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty offer us a sophisticated reflection on the epistemological dimension of embodiment, their approach does not emphasize the ethical dimension of body. Their approach is less relevant to the ethical and normative questions raised in the dissertation.

After Husserl and Merleau-Ponty's innovative approach to one's embodiment, other contemporary philosophers have reflected on the ethical dimension of the embodied subject, which was underdeveloped by Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. Inspired by Merleau-Ponty's embodied subject,<sup>18</sup> the political philosopher Charles Taylor develops a notion of the ethical embodied self that deeply inspires contemporary political debate on liberalism and communitarianism. Because Cartesian dualism and political liberalism

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<sup>17</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> See Charles Taylor, "Embodied Agency" in H. Pietersma (ed.), *Merleau-Ponty: Critical Essays* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1989).

generate a disengaging self-centered subject that separates the subject from his or her moral sources, in *Sources of the Self* Taylor re-articulates an ethical embodied subject whose ethical identity is informed by one's dialogical relation with one's ethical tradition and living community. Taylor's ethical embodied self, a dialogical self, not only helps one escape from one's self-centered world, but also gives one a "strong" ethical horizon to interpret one's life and cultivate one's spiritual depth: "I define who I am by defining where I speak from, in the family tree, in social space, in the geography of social statuses and functions, in my intimate relations to the ones I love, and also crucially in the space of moral and spiritual orientation within which my most important defining relations are lived out."<sup>19</sup> Taylor believes that such an ethical embodied self can overcome the modern problem of individualism or narcissism that celebrates the interest of the self and ignores the interest of the community.

Inspired by Husserl and Levinas' notions of otherness and embodiment, Paul Ricoeur, an influential phenomenologist, also argues that otherness is an important condition for the making of one's ethical identity. In *Oneself as Another*, Ricoeur argues that three bodily experiences make us become an ethical embodied subject: the experience of one's own body, one's bodily relation to the other's body, and the relation

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<sup>19</sup> Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 35.

of the embodied self to itself, that is, conscience. The other, for Ricoeur, is not separate from the subject, and the subject is not passive towards the other's ethical command. The subject and the other are in a symmetrical and reciprocal relationship. That is to say, the subject has a capacity to love the other and build up friendship with the other. As Annemie Halsema rightly says, "Ricoeur's 'oneself as another' ultimately implies that the relationship to the other is not the relationship to the other outside, but that it is already prepared within the ontological structure of the self. The self already relates to itself as other, engaging in a relationship with another who is foreign as well as having others included in its conscience. Hegel's definition of love as 'being oneself in another' is here complemented with a self that relates to itself."<sup>20</sup>

Unlike Levinas, Ricoeur does not allow the other to "persecute" the subject so as to motivate the subject to respond to the other's need. He argues that what makes one respond to the other's need is self-esteem, not self-hatred: "Even recognizing this [the ethical primacy of the other than the self over the self], it is still necessary that the irruption of the other, breaking through the enclosure of the same, meet with the complicity of this movement of effacement by which the self makes itself available to

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<sup>20</sup> Annemie Halsema, "The Gift of Recognition: Self and Other in the Multicultural Situation," in Helen Fielding, Gabrielle Hiltmann, Dorothea Olkowski and Anne Reichold (eds.), *The Other: Feminist Reflections in Ethics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 34.

others. For the effect of the ‘crisis’ of selfhood must not be the substitution of self-hatred for self-esteem.”<sup>21</sup> Ricoeur emphasizes a model of mutuality to understand an inter-subjective relationship.

Although Taylor and Ricoeur’s ethical approach to the ethical embodied subject can supplement Husserl and Merleau-Ponty’s epistemological approach to the embodied subject, their approach still cannot solve the social constructivists’ problems. First, Taylor and Ricoeur’s notions of an ethical embodied subject fail to take into account the ethics of stylization of self. While both of them affirm the importance of one’s body in one’s ethical formation, they do not consider one’s bodily transformation as primary or foundational in one’s ethical formation.<sup>22</sup> Thus, their notion of the body cannot offer us a strong ethical ground to think of the ethical implication of self-stylization that prioritizes the transformation of the body. Second, both Taylor and Ricoeur’s ethical embodied subject, who has a strong inter-subjective dimension, cannot overcome the egoist

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<sup>21</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 168.

<sup>22</sup> Of course, this does not mean that Taylor and Ricoeur view the ethical embodied self as a “static self” that does not have a capacity of self-transformation. In fact, since both of them view “narrative,” “interpretation” and “dialogue” as the nature of self, their subject keeps changing its identity through interpreting the text, tradition and community that surround him or her. But, I have to emphasize that their subject’s ethical identity is primarily transformed by a change of horizon or narration, not primarily changed by one’s sensual contact with the other. Thus, their transformation of the ethical self is not “bodily” or “fleshly” enough. In *Oneself as Another*, Ricoeur obviously links up with Taylor’s thesis that one’s ethical identity is primarily formed by one’s interpretation: “Here, I link up with one of Charles Taylor’s major themes in his *Philosophical Papers*: man, he says, is a self-interpreting animal. By the same token, our concept of the self is greatly enriched by this relation between interpretation of the text of action and self-interpretation. On the ethical plane, self-interpretation becomes self-esteem. In return, self-esteem follows the fate of interpretation. Like the latter, it provides controversy, dispute, rivalry--in short, the conflict of interpretation--in the exercise of practical judgment.” Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, pp. 179-80.

tendency of the pleasure-seeking subject. While I appreciate that both Taylor and Ricoeur can affirm the importance of the “other” in one’s ethical formation, they fail to give a “priority role” to the other, which I think, is crucial in limiting one’s egoism.<sup>23</sup> Since both Taylor and Ricoeur privilege a symmetrical relationship between subject and other, over an asymmetrical relationship between subject and other, their notion of an ethical subject cannot warrant that the subject should take responsibility for the other. That is to say, the other is not “transcendent” or “high” enough for the subject to live for him or her.

### **C. Foucault and Levinas on the Ethical Embodied Subject**

Thus far I have outlined the theoretical problems of contemporary social constructivists’ approach to the body. These problems include an unconditional stylization of the self and an unconditional celebration of bodily pleasure. I have also discussed why Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Taylor and Ricoeur’s embodied subject fails to respond to the social constructivists’ problems.

This dissertation will focus on Foucault and Levinas’ notion of an ethical embodied subject because this notion can respond to the social constructivists’ problems. Foucault’s theory of body deeply inspires contemporary body politics. Foucault inspires the social

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<sup>23</sup> I agree with Ricoeur’s critique of Levinas that an unconditional affirmation of the priority of other and the passivity of subject eliminate the self’s capacity for making an ethical response to the other. Thus, in the chapter four of the dissertation, I shall discuss how Foucault’s care of self can leave “room” for the Levinasian subject to develop his or her ethical sense towards the other without giving up the principle of “priority of other.”

constructivists' claim that one's body is socially constructed by culture, and stylization of self is the only way to achieve a freedom of life. Most social constructivists share Foucault's claim that one can achieve one's stylish bodily identity only if one transgresses or subverts one's bodily boundary. Butler, for example, mentions that her "stylish body" is similar to Foucault's "stylistics of existence."<sup>24</sup> Where Foucault differs from most of the social constructivists, however, is that he can further show a stylish embodied subject to be not simply a "stylish subject" but an "ethical stylish subject." Stylization of the body, for Foucault, is not an unconditional act; rather it aims at cultivating a unique and free ethical subject that not only takes care of oneself but also takes care of the other. Foucault's ethical embodied subject can show us the importance of the ethical dimension of stylization of self. Of course, as I shall discuss later, Foucault's approach to the embodied subject, which fails to give the other a "transcendent role" and treats the subject as a "pleasure-driven subject," cannot solve the second problem: limiting one's egoism in one's bodily subversion.

Thus, in response to the second problem, I argue that Levinas' ethical embodied subject can provide a solution to Foucault's problem. For Levinas, the subject cannot become an ethical subject without an irresistible intervention by the other. The other is

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<sup>24</sup>Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 139.

the only way to limit one's egoism. Furthermore, Levinas argues that it is the sense of suffering, not the sense of pleasure, that makes one ethical. If we fail to give priority to the experience of suffering, we can never cultivate a truly critical and responsible subject who not only subverts any repressive culture but also mourns for the suffering other. For Levinas, one's sense of responsibility towards the other can only be aroused and maintained through one's empathetic bodily relationship with another suffering body; one's pleasure-seeking egoist mentality can only be "overcome" by one's bodily exposure towards the other's pain. I shall argue that Levinas' ethical embodied subject can transform Foucault and social constructivists' subject into a truly ethical subject: a subject who can mourn for the other.

Of course, while Levinas' ethical embodied subject can modify Foucault's limitation, this does not mean that Levinas' project can offer us a sufficiently comprehensive notion of ethical embodied subject after the critique of Cartesian dualism and social constructivism. Thus, this thesis will compare the strength and weakness of Foucault's and Levinas' ethical embodied subjectivity to see how they can complement each other so that a more comprehensive notion of ethical embodied subject is formulated.

In this dissertation, I shall discuss the later Foucault's writings *History of Sexuality II* and *Hermeneutics of the Subject* and the later Levinas' writing *Otherwise than Being*,

which have given us a constructive and in-depth approach to the ethical embodied subject.

In chapters two and three, I shall first discuss Foucault and Levinas' ethical embodied subject and outline their basic characters:

1. Their ethical embodied subject is not a disengaged rational subject who detaches from the other/world and treats the other/world as an object of knowledge; rather their subject is an embodied being who either inhabits an inter-subjective social world or incarnates the other's life. More important, such an ethical embodied subject is not an egoist subject; rather he or she is concerned with the other's life either in an active way (Foucault) or in a passive way (Levinas).

2. Their approach views the body as a "vehicle" to perform or express one's ethical existence. One's ethical identity is realized or revealed through one's body or bodily life. To certain extent, ethics for the embodied subject is a "performative ethics."

3. Ethical consciousness and subjectivity are not separable from the body. One becomes ethical not by obeying a social norm or rule but by transforming one's body through exercises (Foucault) or by exposing one's body to/for the other (Levinas). Bodily transformation is a necessary condition of being ethical. Foucault and Levinas do not unconditionally or indiscriminately accept all bodily transformations or identity-formations, however. There is a qualitative or ethical difference among various

kinds of bodily transformations and identity-formations. Their theory of the body is an ethics of the body.

4. Their view of the ethical embodied subject not only asserts the ethical dimension of one's bodily sensation (Foucault's pleasure or Levinas' pain) but also treats it as a way to subvert all repressive social (Foucault) and psychological (Levinas) boundaries.

In chapter four, I shall examine the differences and commonalities of Foucault and Levinas' ethical embodied subject so as to see whether they can complement each other's strength and weakness. Although many studies focus on either Foucault's or Levinas' ethics, studying their ethical thought from a comparative perspective, especially their later thought, is still rare. Thus far we can find only four attempts to compare Foucault and Levinas' ethics: Noreen O'Connor's essay on "The Personal is Political: Discursive Practice of the Face-to-Face," Barry Smart's essay on "Foucault, Levinas and the Subject of Responsibility," Johanna Oksala's small section in *Foucault on Freedom* and Benda Hofmeyr's doctoral thesis on *Ethics and Aesthetics in Foucault and Levinas*. These four works mainly compare Foucault and Levinas' ethics of the other without paying much attention to their notions of the ethical embodied subject. That is to say, they all fail to understand and compare Foucault and Levinas' ethics from their notion of body or embodiment. Chapter four will fill this "gap" through comparing their notions of ethical

embodied subjectivity.

In chapter five, the conclusion, I shall discuss how Foucault and Levinas' ethical embodied subject can offer us a more solid ethical ground for contemporary body politics.

I shall argue that Foucault's stylization of self can show the social constructivists the ethical dimension of stylization of self. Then, I shall show how Levinas' mourning subject can transform Foucault and social constructivists' pleasure-driven subject into a truly ethical subject.