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Andreas Fejes

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Andreas Fejes, andreas.fejes@liu.se
Linköping University

Abstract
This article focuses on how confession operates in contemporary discourses on reflective practices. By revisiting and mobilising Foucault's genealogy of confession in relation to how reflective practices are mobilised in an in-service training programme for health care assistants (HCA) in elderly care, it is argued that the HCAs are shaped as their own confessors. It is further argued that we need to take into account traces from both Stoic and Christian times to fully understand how reflective practices operate and shape subjects. The empirical material consists of interviews with HCAs, their managers, supervisors and teachers in an in-service training programme where the use of reflective practices was a key component.

Introduction
Reflection as a concept and idea has become a conspicuous part of education and work life. Not least in the wake of the publication of Donald Schöns (1983) book The Reflective Practitioner, published in 1983. Different techniques are mobilised in education and working life to develop so-called reflective practices and thus produce a better learning process, a better work practice, etc. Some researchers have described such mobilisation of reflective practices as disciplinary practices and as part of a neoliberal mode of governing (cf. Dean, 1999; Edwards, 2008; Fejes & Nicoll, 2008; Rose, 1999; Simons & Masschelein, 2008). In this article, such arguments will be developed through a historical perspectivisation based on Foucault's (2003a, 2003b, 2005) genealogy of confession. By relating such genealogy to an empirical study of a contemporary education-related practice in working life, the aim is to make visible some aspects of how governing operates in the present time.

Much research on reflection and reflective practices has been conducted. Their popularity as a concept, idea and practice is not least visible in that there is a scientific journal dedicated to such issues entitled *Reflective practice*. There is no room here to introduce the numerous publications on reflective practices. However, in brief, we can see how one strand of research on reflective practices focuses on the output of such practices and on how one can improve them, for example, in teachers' work (cf. Larrivee, 2008; Van Manen, 1995). At the same time, there is a growing body of literature that critically discusses reflection and reflective practices as practices of subjectivity formation (cf. Atkinson, 2004) or as a disciplinary practice, where the writing of Foucault is mobilised, for example, in relation to Schön's writing (Erlandson, 2005), in relation to professional development (Edwards & Nicoll, 2006), educational guidance (cf. Fejes, 2008a; Usher & Edwards, 2005) or in relation to health care work and nursing (Cloud & Sellars, 2004; Cotton, 2001; Fejes, 2008b). Some of these studies draw on Foucault's genealogy of confession to problematise reflective practices. One general line of argument is that reflective practices are practices of confession and normalisation related to the Christian confession and its idea of disclosure of the self (Cotton, 2001; Usher & Edwards, 2005). Others critique such arguments and argue that reflective practices have more in com-

mon with the idea of care of the self as it emerged among the Stoics (cf. Cole, 2006; Rolfe & Gardner, 2006).

This article aims to engage in such discussion by firstly, and carefully, outlining a genealogy of confession as it emerged among the Stoics and with Christianity based on Foucault's writing (2003a, 2003b, 2005). Secondly, an analysis is conducted of reflective practices in an in-service training programme for health care assistants (HCA) in elderly care work in Sweden. The analysis aims at illustrating how the distinction between the Christian confession and the Stoic care of the self can make visible central aspects of contemporary neoliberal modes of governing and open up spaces for further inquiry.

Empirical material
As a basis of the analysis, I turn to two different kinds of material. Firstly, I turn to the writing of Foucault as a way to outline a framework for interpreting contemporary practice of confession. Secondly, I draw on interviews conducted within a research project concerned with recognition of prior learning within health care work in the elderly care sector. The interviewees are all involved in an in-service training programme aimed at increasing the level of formal competencies among employees at elderly care homes. By recognizing health care assistants (HCA) prior learning in relation to the certificate from the health care programme at upper secondary school in Sweden they would be able to become licensed practical nurses (LPN). One of the central ideas of the programme was to use reflective practices as a means of assessing prior learning. Six nursing homes for elderly people participated in this programme. All six managers, five of the six supervisors and five teachers were selected for interviews. Further, one third (26) of the participants in the in-service training programme were interviewed, where the sampling was based on who was available at the time of the interviews. The sample consisted of a total of 42 persons. In total, 30 semi-structured interviews (Kvale, 1996) were conducted where the aim was to see how the interview persons perceived their participation and work within the framework of the programme. 20 interviews were conducted with only one interview person at a time, and 10 interviews were conducted with 2-5 interview persons together. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. The reason for conducting group interviews was practical – to talk with as many participants as possible with a time schedule that had to be adapted to their work and study schedule (cf. Vaughn et al, 1996). Of special interest in this article are the interviews with the managers, teachers and supervisors, as they are positioned as subjects who represent the ambition of the programme.

Drawing on a discourse analysis inspired by Foucault, the epistemological starting point is that 'reality' is constituted through discourse. The focus is on gaining insights into such a construction by analysing texts (either written or spoken text, or an artefact such as a map, painting, etc.) (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983). Therefore, the interview transcripts from the interviews have been interpreted as texts constituting and constituted by discourse. The interest is not in analysing what the interview persons 'really' meant. Instead, the focus is on the discursive production of meaning, and how confession operates within such production. Accordingly, this article can be seen as a text making claims about other texts (and thus shaping subjects), which can be deconstructed and analysed as discourse.

A genealogy of confession
In this section, I will present parts of Foucault's (2003a, 2003b, 2005) genealogy of the care of the self with a specific focus on the genealogy of confession. A central focus in Foucault's writings was on games of truth. In Discipline and Punish (Foucault, 1991) such games were seen as coercive practices. In his later writing (e.g. Foucault, 2005) he shifted his focus to

viewing games of truth as ascetic practices of self-formation. 'Ascetic' means 'the subject's attainment of a certain mode of being and the transformations that the subject must carry out on itself to attain this mode of being' (Foucault, 2003c, p. 36). Here, it is not about the liberation of the "true" self, as this would mean that there is a hidden self which can be found through practices of liberation. Instead, it is about ontology – processes of self-formation – of becomings (cf. Besley, 2005). Therefore, the interest in analyzing games of truth is related here to practices of self-formation and becomings. As a way of analyzing such becomings, Foucault conducted a genealogy of the care of the self, where he turned his attention to the Greco-Roman period and to the emergence of Christianity (Foucault, 2005).

In his genealogy of the care of the self, the relation between the Delphic statement *know yourself* and the Greek practice of *care of the self* is important. During the Greco-Roman period, the former was seen as a consequence of the latter while in the case of Christianity, the former has obscured the latter one. Self-renunciation came to be the condition for salvation. To renounce oneself, one had to know oneself. Foucault (2003a, p. 149) argues: '"know thyself" has obscured "Take care of the self" because our morality, a morality of asceticism, insists that the self is that which one can reject". Further, from Descartes to Husserl, the thinking subject is the first step in the theory of knowledge. Therefore, in the modern world, knowledge of the self becomes the fundamental principle.

In the following, I will first present the idea of care of the self as construed during the Greco-Roman period, especially focusing on the Stoics. Secondly, I will present the emergence of confession within Christianity, and finally I will summarize the argument before moving to contemporary confessional practices.

Care of the self during the Greco-Roman period
During the Greco-Roman period, care of the self became a universal philosophical principle. To care for the self was to make life into an object of an art – a tekhne – it was about existence. Here, care of the self became care of the soul, but only insofar as it was the care of the activity, not the soul as substance. For example, among the Stoics, a group of philosophers mainly active from around 300 BC to 200 AD (Strange & Zupko, 2004), life as an art was about retiring into the self and staying there. The aim was to develop good values in life, not to develop these values aimed at a life after death as later on in Christianity. Writing became an important technique in such an endeavour. Taking notes on oneself, about the activities of the day, to be reread, and keeping notebooks, was a way 'to reactivate for oneself the truths one needed' (Foucault, 2003a, p. 153). Through such writing, the subject becomes an object of writing activity, which indicates that this trait (writing) is not a modern one. According to Foucault (2003a), writing is one of the most ancient Western traditions. However, this kind of activity is not about knowing oneself as in Christianity. Instead, it is about turning life into an art of existence.

With writing activity, an examination of conscience emerges. For the Stoics, this had to do with self-examination of what good and bad one had done during the day. However, one was not looking for bad intentions, as later on in Christianity. Faults were simply good intentions left undone. Here, the person became the administrator of her/himself and looked at what she/he had done correctly with the aim of finding lack of success instead of finding faults. Errors concerned strategy, not moral character. The goal was to find out how one can be successful in one's intentions, not to excavate guilt as in the Christian confession. 'In Christian confession, the penitent is obliged to memorize laws but does so in order to discover his sins' (Foucault, 2003a, p. 157). Among the Stoics, it was not about discovering the truth in the sub-

ject but of remembering the truth, recovering a truth that had been forgotten. The subject does not forget her/himself, but she/he forgets the rules of conduct, what ought to be done. The recollection of errors committed measures the gap between what has been done and what should have been done. 'The subject constitutes the intersection between acts that have to be regulated and rules for what ought to be done' (Foucault, 2003a, p. 157). Among the Stoics, self-regulation thus became an important aspect in the art of life where the focus was on activities and deeds of the individual, not on his thoughts. As I will illustrate later on, this is different from Christianity, where the focus came to be on thoughts – it was about verbalizing and making visible one's own sins (thoughts).

Besides the technologies of writing and self-examination, there was a third Stoic technique for the care of the self - askesis. Askesis was 'not a disclosure of the secret self but a remembering' (Foucault, 2003a, p. 158). The truth is not to be found within the self, but in the teachings of the master. What one hears is memorized and turned into rules of conduct. The aim here is a subjectivation of truth. In Christianity, asceticism instead refers to a renunciation of the self and reality as a way of finding another level of reality. Among the stoics, there was no renunciation of the self. Instead askesis was:

> the progressive consideration of the self, or mastery over oneself, obtained not through the renunciation of reality but through the acquisition and assimilation of truth. It has as its final aim not preparation for another reality but access to the reality of this world (Foucault, 2003a, p. 158).

Connected to askesis are exercises, which test whether the person is prepared to confront events with the truths he has assimilated. Melete was meditation which, through dialogue with one's thoughts, anticipated real situations. Meditation tested your preparedness for different situations in life. Gymnasia, 'to train oneself' (Foucault, 2003a, p. 159), on the other hand, is physical exercise in real situations. It could be about 'sexual abstinence, physical privation and other rituals of purification' (Foucault, 2003a, p. 159), which had the aim 'to establish and test the independence of the individual with regard to the external world' (Foucault, 2003a, p. 159).

In summary, we can see how the Stoics construed care of the self as an activity which requires listening and remembering of rules. Such activities are a way of preparing for life as an art. Technologies of writing, self-examination and askesis are used as a way of caring for the self, which, in turn, is to train oneself for life. As will be illustrated in the next section, such techniques were also important in conjunction with the emergence of Christianity, although they were different.

Christianity and the emergence of confession
With Christianity, as it emerged in the 3rd and 4th Century AD, the care of the self was reconceptualised. It was no longer about creating the self as an art – as existence. Now, everyone has a duty to know who she/he is, to search oneself and acknowledge one's faults, recognize temptations, to locate desires, etc; and one needs to disclose these things either to God or to others in the community, and thus bear public or private witness against oneself. 'The truth obligations of faith and the self are linked together. This link permits a purification of the soul impossible without self-knowledge' (Foucault, 2003a, p. 162). Although there are many differences between Catholic and Reformist traditions, in both there is a need for purification of the soul as a consequence of self-knowledge and as a condition for understanding the Holy Text.

Among the Stoics, the problem of aesthetics concerned existence. Through the emergence of Christianity, the problem of aesthetics became linked to the question of purity. The reason for taking care of your self was to keep your self pure. Physical integrity rather than self-regulation became important. The self was no longer something to be made (art of living) but something to be renounced and deciphered. In Christianity, writing becomes a test which 'brings into light the movements of thought, it dissipates the inner shadow where the enemy's plots are woven' (Foucault, 2003b, p. 121). In other words, here, it is about finding the truth about one's self as a way of accessing the light, which is accomplished by making visible one's inner thoughts – disclosing one's self. Previously, writing was about constituting the self by writing down the truths of the masters, and by keeping notebooks of deeds of the day, which were then meditated on.

Disclosure of the self was during early Christian times conducted through the ritual of exomologesis – which 'was a ritual of recognizing oneself as a sinner and penitent' (Foucault, 2003a, p. 162). The bishop was asked to impose upon the individual the status of a penitent. This act in relation to the bishop was not a confession, only a ritual where the status of a sinner is made public and confirmed. The sinner was then, over a period of several years, required to make visible her/his sins through self-punishment, suffering, shame and humility. Here, we can see how what was private among the Stoics (meditating about the activities of the day), have become public. Through the ritual of exomologesis, the sinner erases her/his sins and restores the purity acquired through baptism, at the same time as her/his status as a sinner is confirmed. This 'was not a way for the sinner to explain his sins but a way to present himself as a sinner' (Foucault, 2003a, p. 163).

This paradox of confirming the status as a sinner and erasing one's sins at the same time was most commonly explained by the model of death, torture and martyrdom. With this model, the sinner would die rather than abandon her/his faith. She/he illustrates that she/he is able to renounce both life and the self.

> The difference between the Stoic and Christian traditions is that in the Stoic tradition examination of self, judgement, and discipline show the way to self-knowledge by superimposing truth about self through memory, that is, by memorizing the rules. In exomologesis, the penitent superimposes truth about self by violent rupture and disassociation. It is important to emphasize that this exomologesis is not verbal. It is symbolic, ritual, and theatrical (Foucault, 2003a, p. 164).

During the fourth century, exagoreusis emerged as another technology for the disclosure of the self. Exagoreusis has to do with self-examination related to two principles of Christian spirituality: obedience and contemplation. Obedience for the monk was total obedience to the rules and the master, in comparison to the instrumental and professional relationship between the master and the disciple among the Stoics. In exagoreusis, every act conducted without the permission of the master is seen as a theft. This was about the sacrifice of the self, of the subject's own will, which is a new technology of the self. 'The self must constitute itself through obedience' (Foucault, 2003a, p. 165). The second aspect is contemplation which is seen as the supreme good. It is the obligation of the monk to turn his thoughts continuously to that point which is God and make sure that his heart is pure enough to see God. The goal is permanent contemplation of God. This contemplation is directed towards present thoughts, not on past actions of the day as with the Stoics. The monk needs to scrutinize his thoughts to see which ones are directed towards God and which are not.

> The scrutiny of conscience consists of trying to immobilize consciousness, to eliminate movements of the spirit which diverts from God. That means we must examine any thought that presents itself to consciousness to see the relation between act and thought, truth and reality, to see if there is anything

in this thought which will move our spirit, provoke our desire, turn our spirit away from God. The scrutiny is based on the idea of a secret concupiscence. (Foucault, 2003a, p. 165-166)

Thus, we can see how self-examination has been construed differently with the emergence of Christianity compared to the Stoics. Among the Stoics, self-examination concerned the way our thoughts relate to rules and to our actions of the day. Among the Christians, the examination of self was focused on the relation between hidden thoughts and an inner impurity. 'At this moment begins the Christian hermeneutics of the self with its deciphering of inner thoughts. It implies that there is something hidden in ourselves and that we are always in a self-illusion that hides the secret' (Foucault, 2003a, p. 166).

As a way of making this kind of scrutiny, we 'must care for ourselves, to attest to our thoughts this kind of scrutiny' (Foucault, 2003a p. 166). One way to do this is to be the permanent moneychanger of ourselves – and the changer is conscience. Our inner thoughts need to be scrutinized, to see if they are good or bad, in the same way as the moneychanger examines coins, their quality, where they came from, etc. There is only one way this discrimination between good and bad thoughts can be made: 'to tell all thought to our director, to be obedient to our master in all things, to engage in the permanent verbalization of all our thoughts' (Foucault, 2003a, p. 166).

> By telling himself not only his thoughts but also the smallest movements of consciousness, his intentions, the monk stands in a hermeneutic relation not only to the master but to himself. This verbalization is the touchstone or the money of thought. Why is confession able to assume this hermeneutic role? How can we be the hermeneuts of ourselves in speaking and transcribing all of our thoughts? Confession permits the master to know because of his greater experience and wisdom and therefore to give better advice. Even if the master, in his role as a discriminating power, does not say anything, the fact that the thought has been expressed will have an effect of discrimination. (Foucault, 2003a, p. 166-167)

Confession can thus be seen as a mark of truth and it allows the master to discriminate between good and evil. Even if the master does not say anything, 'the fact that the thought has been expressed will have an effect of discrimination' (Foucault, 2003a, p. 167). By confessing verbally, the devil might leave the one who confesses. Without verbalization we cannot truly discriminate between good and evil.

As has been illustrated, there is a big difference between exomologesis and exagoreusis. But, what they both have in common is that one cannot disclose without renouncing. In exomologesis, 'the sinner must "kill" himself through ascetic macerations…disclosure of the self is the renunciation of one's own self' (Foucault, 2003a, p. 167). In exagoreusis, one constantly verbalizes oneself and obeys one's master, thus one is renouncing one's will and one's self. This practice continued until the 17th century.

Foucault (2003a) argues that the relation between the disclosure of the self and the drama of verbalized renunciation of the self is important throughout Christianity. But today, he argues that verbalization has become the most important one.

> From the eighteenth Century to the present, the techniques of verbalization have been reinserted in a different context by so-called human sciences in order to use them without renunciation of the self but to constitute, positively, a new self. To use these techniques without renouncing oneself constitutes a decisive break. (Foucault, 2003a, p. 167)

In this section, I have illustrated how care of the self in Christianity becomes a renunciation of the self. The aim was for the self to become pure which was accomplished through techniques

of disclosure (either dramatic or verbalized) and renunciation of the self. Power operates through these techniques, where the subjects is both being positioned and, at the same time, positioning her/himself as a sinner and as a "good" Christian. Thus, confession emerged as an important technology of the self in Christianity, which was later taken up and re-shaped with the emergence of the human sciences. With the human sciences, a different kind of rationality of governing emerges that aims to shape and foster subjects who, at the same time, are being governed and who governs themselves and others – the conduct of conduct (Foucault, 2007).

Summary
The aim of presenting Foucault's genealogy of the care of the self has been to create a starting point for problematizing contemporary confessional practices related to education. The genealogy illustrates the emergence of confession as a technology that fosters and shapes subjects. Techniques of self-examination, which emerged during Greco-Roman times, were re-shaped during Christianity, and have once again been reshaped in contemporary practices.

Contemporary confessional practices
Generally speaking, in contemporary times, confession has become linked to science. As Peters and Besley (2007) argue:

> Since Freud one might say that the secularization of confession has been "scientized" through clinical codifications, personal examinations, histological techniques, the general documentation and date collection of personal data, the proliferation of interpretative schemas and the development of a whole host of therapeutic techniques for "normalization". (Besley & Peters, 2007, p. 16)

Verbalization has become linked to science, and reinvented as "scientific" practices that promise to help us live a better life. Such scientization construes confession as an interface between the public and private domains. Confession requires an other to whom one confesses although this other can be either real or virtual (cf. Rose, 1989).

In the in-service training programme analysed in this article, reflective practices of different kinds were mobilised as a way of assessing and developing the HCAs' prior learning, at the same time as some of these techniques were mobilised with the ambition of continuously using them in the workplaces in the future as a way of developing the quality of care work provision. In the following, I will problematise some of these practices as practices of confession. These are: learning conversations, log books and reflection as everyday work practice.

Learning conversations
Learning conversations were a central pedagogic practice used in the training programme as a way of developing the HCAs' abilities to reflect on their work experiences. These were designed in the following way: five to eight HCAs participated in a one-hour seminar led by a teacher or a supervisor (a person who worked in the same nursing home as the participants but who was engaged to support them in their assessment and learning process). At the beginning of the seminar, the teacher or the supervisor raises a problem of current interest that is faced in the nursing home. Each person is then invited to reflect on this for five to ten minutes and to take notes about their reflections. This is followed by an invitation to share their reflections with the rest of the group. After each person has shared his/her reflections, a discussion takes place. During these learning conversations, there is also a passive person present (one of the supervisors or teachers who is not leading the seminar), who takes notes about the discussions. At the end of the seminar, she/he provides a reflection on the similarities and differences of experience and opinions raised during the discussions. The main aim of these conversations was to engage the HCAs in reflection about how to develop the work practice, at

the same time as they were part of the process of being assessed in relation to the curriculum of the health care programme. The ambition was also to implement these conversations as a tool that the nursing homes would use in the future as part of developing the quality of care provision and the competencies among its employees. The focus on the experiences and reflections from the HCAs is emphasized by one of the supervisors in the following quotation where she describes her role as seminar leader:

> The important thing is to be neutral in the discussions, at the same time as being active. That is my role during learning conversations. Then it is not about my opinions and beliefs but about what other believes and thinks, and to raise their knowledge and make it visible. And that is what I believe we have – that kind of strength. I'm very grateful to have learnt this technique of learning conversation. (Megan).

In such a mobilisation of learning conversation, reflection is construed as a desirable activity that should produce better care work and nursing practice. As we can see, reflection is also construed as desirable both in groups and by individuals themselves, as each individual needs to prepare by him/herself at the beginning of the seminar, and they need to make visible their reflections in relation to other individuals' reflections. Such reflective practice is seen as making it possible to discuss and solve problems faced at work. The idea is that people can learn from each other and learning conversations are seen as a tool that can enhance the work practice in the future, as explained by one of the managers:

> I was thinking, that in some way you could – through supervision, through these techniques - through them create those opportunities for the reflection we often lack. With a deeper cultivation of these questions which are problematic – questions that we have here everyday at our nursing home. It is a way of raising the issues…the knowledge which is actually here already. Instead of searching for it outside. (Miriam)

Here, the idea is to use the knowledge already available at the nursing home, i.e. the knowledge that the care workers already have. As a way of using such knowledge, it needs to be made visible, and learning conversation is one practice where this happens. Through such reflective practice, the individual is encouraged to contribute his/her knowledge – to confess to others. By making one's knowledge visible, by disclosing themselves to others, the HCAs are objectified and made visible for scrutiny and assessment, i.e. they make their experiences available to others to engage with. The process is constitutive, by the act of reflecting the HCA becomes constituted as a reflective practitioner.

What we can see is a situation where we have those doing a verbal confession (everyone, at least those who are speaking) and those who are the confessors (everyone who is listening). The person doing the confession and the confessor are thus the same person. Through the working of power, participants are positioned as in need of confessing to a wider audience at the same time as they are the confessor to others. Thus, here we have a situation of public confession, where one directs the confession towards "real" others. However, there is always the possibility, through the act of freedom, to decide not to make the confession public, either by refusing to speak or to say something else that differs from what had been noted at the beginning of the session. But by making the confession public, the participant is internalising the norm at the same time as she/he is positioning her/himself as a "good" example of how to behave. Thus work is being done upon the self and upon others – a conduct of conduct. Drawing on a governmentality perspective inspired by Foucault, here, subjectivity is not determined but rather elicited, fostered and shaped (cf. Foucault, 2007; Fejes, 2008a).

We can see similarities with the Christian confession, as described by Foucault, in its focus on disclosure through verbalisation and the public nature of the confession. However, in the practice analysed here, there is not only one master (the priest or monk) to whom one needs to confess; instead, everyone has become a master in the sense that they are positioned as subjects who can discern good from bad and who represent the norm. I.e. as we can learn from each other, the correct knowledge is somewhere to be attained among ourselves.

Log-books
All the HCAs participating in the programme was encouraged to write a log-book, where they took notes about how they perceived what they were doing during the programme. It could be any reflections they had, and they were not required to share the log-books with anyone else. As expressed by one of the teachers:

> We encouraged them to write a log each week. Just to write what they think about the passed week, personal things. (Sandy)

However, if you had any idea or thought in your log-book that you wanted to raise in one of the seminars, that was OK. It was up to you to raise issues or not. One of the supervisors explains the uses of the log-book:

> We have a log-book that everyone should take notes in. And if someone believes they have written something good or if they have any queries about, then they can raise that during our sessions…there are questions in the log book that you can. Or, think! Thoughts, so you can think really. Write your thoughts in the log-book concerning things you can do to pay attention to your own way of communicating and collaborating in the job. So, then you need to think and then write. (Helen)

What is emphasized is the individual's aptitude to reflect about her/his own progress in the training programme or any other issue related to her/his process. Through the log-book the HCA is encouraged to take responsibility for her/his own learning – something made possible through individual reflection. Here, the log-book is mobilised as a confessional technique in which the HCA verbalizes her/himself in relation to her/himself. You are expected to write a log-book with 'personal things' and about 'your own way of communicating'. What is written is not expected to be read by anyone else if one does not wish to raise any issue from one's own log-book. In this sense, it is possible to say that such a confession is a private one, i.e. there is no public others to whom we need to confess. Instead, the log-book activates ourselves as confessors where we need to scrutinise ourselves in relation to the work tasks and our own behaviour. However, when we confess ourselves to ourselves, there is always a virtual other present, i.e. a norm in relation to which we assess and judge ourselves, our thoughts and our actions. The virtual other takes the role of the master or the priest – to compel us to speak (reflect on) the truth about ourselves and to interpret and assess such truth in relation to the norm. The log-book is thus part of a wider discourse on learning and governance, where the desirable norms produce subjects at the same time as they are reproduced by the HCAs (subjects) themselves. Writing the log-book is about writing the self – of becoming a new and improved self.

Here, we can see some similarities with the practice of writing among the Stoics. Log-books are used here by HCAs to take notes on themselves and about the activities of the day that could then be reread. Among the Stoics, keeping notebooks was a way 'to reactivate for oneself the truths one needed' (Foucault, 2003a, p. 153). In both cases, there is a focus on action according to the rules that can fulfil good intentions. By taking notes about what action was good and what intentions were not fulfilled during the workday and during the training programme, the HCA can reflect on those actions, and change her/his behaviour and conduct

her/himself in a better way next time. However, if the truths needed among the Stoics were directed at knowledge that could help turn life into an art – a tecknhe, among the HCAs as described here, the aim is to change themselves in order to enhance the work practice, thus knowledge needed is limited to the 'a consideration of the relationship between the outcomes, evidence and knowledge held as resources' (Edwards & Nicoll, 2006, 128). Accordingly, there are different kinds of knowledge's positioned as important.

Log-books also have similarities with the practice of writing among the Christians, an aspect that makes them different from the Stoics. Writing among the Christians was a way of finding faults in the self, and then making this public to a confessor as a way of distinguishing good thoughts from bad ones and making oneself pure. In the training programme, the log-books also have a function of disclosure, although not as strongly as the learning conversations. As the HCAs are invited to raise issues from the log-books during the learning conversations, there might be a disclosure taking place. The participants know that if they disclose their notes written in the log-book they might provide descriptions that help enrich their assessment. In this way, the participant is positioned as one who needs to make active choices in terms of how to behave to become what they themselves deem desirable in relation to the norm. However, as already noted, when writing a log-book by oneself this is also always done in the presence of a norm – a virtual other – to which you need to relate your actions, thoughts and behaviours, especially as the HCAs are invited to use the log-books as an instrument to note 'personal things' and assess their own way of 'communicating'. Therefore, in this example there is always a disclosure when writing a log-book and thus there is work upon the self.

Reflection as everyday work practice
Reflection as confession in relation to oneself is not only related to the reflective practices of log-books and learning conversations. Through such practices, care workers are shaped and fostered to become care workers who continuously reflect on their selves, what they do and how to improve work practice and thereby improve their selves. This is about shaping subjects who desire to be reflective persons. For example, one of the supervisors, who had participated in a training course on how to lead learning conversations, points to how reflection on the individual level at work makes it possible to work upon oneself to become a better care worker.

> If I have learnt anything since taking this course, (it is) to reflect more about issues. That's what I learnt. And I think that is good. It is also something one has to learn, to reflect on, every day. To reflect about what one has done. To scrutinize yourself, to ask myself, what good have I done today? And what have I done that could be improved? (Helen)

Reflection on an individual level construed here as desirable. A person should reflect about his/her daily activities and evaluate what is good and what is bad –scrutinize themselves. Thus, a confessional practice is constructed where one is both doing the confession and being the confessor of the self. As one of the supervisors expresses it:

> You do a lot based on routine. You never think about why you do something. Instead…everyone else does it that way, therefore I also do it…and here there might be an opportunity to reflect about it, why did I do it that way? Then, if we…yes that's the ambition to wake! Yes, to awaken. (Nora)

By means of reflection you can, according to the text, break with your everyday routine, become a better care worker and be awakened. Here, we can see a linguistic relation to the church, where the church attender should be awakened as a way to live a good life and to get closer to God. Thus, the same technology seems to be operating in care work as in church (but

in another form and with another discursive effect in terms of shaping subjects). However, even though there are linguistic relations to the church, there is a closer connection to the Stoics and the idea about meditating about one's actions during the day as a way of improving work practice. In the examples above, the care worker is shaped as one who reflects on the actions of the day as a basis for improvement. Such activities take place through questioning and scrutinizing one's self and one's actions in relation oneself. At the same time, confession of the self to the self is also a confession to virtual others in the sense that what is good or bad is formulated in wider discursive formations. Thus, the private ambition to do good work is discursively merging with the public ambition to govern and shape the future and subjects.

Concluding notes
Reflection is a key term, which presupposes at least two things: to reflect is to be active and through reflection a modification of behaviour is expected. Thus, reflection is positioned as a central discursive concept (idea) that shapes subjects. As illustrated in the analysis of reflective practices, care workers are shaped as active subjects through practices of confession in which the individual should, by means of reflection, disclose her/his knowledge and experiences in a dialogue with her/himself and to others. By such action, the HCA is objectified, scrutinized and assessed in relation to the norm. If the norm about what was correct action among the Stoics was represented by the master and the rules, or the norm about what were pure thoughts was represented by the priest and the monk among the Christians, today, the norm of correct action is represented by everyone. With individualising technologies such as the confession in the shape of log-books and daily reflection at work, there is no longer any need for a specific expert who guides us or decides what is good or bad. Instead, the norm is both the producer and product of subjects. This construction is not one of domination, but one of subjectification. Subjects are shaped and fostered in a situation of "freedom", where the individual is encouraged to make choices of actions based on reflection. Thus, a new subject is being shaped, one who is not only responsible for desiring to become better and better, but also the one who supports her/himself in such an enterprise (cf. Rose, 1999), i.e. governing of the self.

Such notion of freedom and how it is mobilised in how governing operates can be seen in the two different types of reflection identified within the programme analysed. On the one hand, learning conversations position a public confession as desirable and "good". The participant is positioned as one who should confess to others and be the confessor of others, actions that are promoted as something that might enrich the assessment and help the participant to become better at work. Even though the participant can decide, through freedom, not to take up such position, by making a public confession she/he does work upon the self and positions her/himself as a desirable care worker. On the other hand, through the log-book a public confession is invited rather than demanded. Here, confession of the self to the self is instead positioned as desirable. The participant is invited, through the act of freedom, to take notes about the actions of the day and scrutinize these. If she/he then is willing, she/he can complement the private scrutinizing with a public one. However, in one way, a private confession is also public in so far as it takes place in relation to a norm represented by virtual others, i.e. the act of confession is being internalised. In both types of reflection, through the workings of power, reflective practice is turned into a means of normative control of both professional identity and professional practice. Through the mobilisation of reflective practices, the subject is invited to work upon the self to become that which is deemed desirable. In this way, there is a process of governing taking place that works through the freedom of the participants. Freedom is thus both the starting point and the output of governing, and can be related to what

Nikolas Rose (1999) calls advanced liberal rule, where the political ambition to govern coincides with the actions of citizens.

The analysis has further illustrated how reflective practices can be seen as a confessional practice with lines of descent and emergence in relation to both the Stoic ideas about writing and action, and the Christian confession. For example, the act of disclosing through verbalisation, emerging with Christianity, is still important. However, such verbalization is related to both "real" public others and virtual others, i.e. there is no need to have a priest or monk present to whom we confess. Nor do we need a friend, parent, colleague or peer. We are positioned as our own confessors. Central techniques for verbalizing ourselves to our selves (and thus for verbalizing ourselves to virtual others) are log-books and daily reflections about work. Here, writing becomes an important technique. As with the Stoics, writing is, in the reflective practices analysed here, used as a way of taking notes of the rules according to which one should act, which is then meditated upon (scrutinized). In both cases, the focus is on how to improve one's actions and fulfil good intentions. However, these rules are not, as with the Stoics, the truth told by the master. Instead, the truths are produced through discourse, which, in turn, is both a producer of and a product of subjects. At the same time, writing is about making the self visible by disclosing as in Christianity. But this is not about showing the true impure self, as a way of renouncing the self. Instead, it is about constituting a new and better self who can deliver better care work.

Even though the analysis suggests that reflective practices, as analysed here, can be seen as disciplinary confessional practices that shape subjects, it might also create a space for a different way of reasoning. In one way, the analysis illustrates that there are clear connections to the Stoic practice of writing, action and good intentions that is not foremost related to disclosing. Thus, one could argue like Rolfe and Gardner (2006, 599) that when a reflective practice is 'concerned only with improvements to practice, and makes a very clear distinction between the person and the actions of the practitioner', there is no confession, only metacognition about practice. However, the question one can raise in relation to such a statement is whether it is possible to make such a separation between a person and the actions of that person? In what way can an HCA or pupil be asked to, and then engage in reflection about her/his work or educational practice without relating it to her/himself as a person? With this is mind, it would be interesting to further analyse reflective practices in greater detail to see how they are mobilised and constituted and how subjects are positioned within them, and to further elaborate on the Stoic notion of care of the self as a starting point for broadening the discussion.

Notes
1. This article is part of a larger research project aimed at problematising how subjects are shaped and fostered within different educational practices (cf. Fejes, 2006; 2008a, 2008b).

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