

Foucault's Subject: An Ontological Reading.(philosopher Michel Foucault)

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From the mid-1970s until his death, Michel Foucault sought to develop an account of the subject that would avoid both regarding the subject as merely the passive product of power relations and regarding it as entirely selfcreating. Following Foucault's final cues focused on his discussion of the ethics of the self and rooted in a conception of freedom as an ontological condition of possibility rather than as human will drawn mainly from Heidegger, I argue that Foucault sought to develop an account of humans as beings-in-the-world situated within an existing web of relations occurring within a context of background practices, all the while possessing an ontological freedom that is not molded by power relations but is instead the condition of possibility of power itself. In this way, Foucault sought to achieve a balance between activity and passivity, agency and structure in his account of the subject.

In "The Subject and Power" Foucault reformulates the Kantian question "What is man?," to give it a historical slant. "Who are we?" Foucault asks; "What are we in our actuality?"(1) These questions are intimately related to Foucault's poignant critique of the "humanist" tradition of "Man"(2) and to his refusal to privilege an a priori conception of the subject. Foucault does not subscribe to an ideal human nature and introduces the idea that the subject is produced by power. When discussing the Foucauldian subject most commentators recount this idea and thus accentuate the subject's passivity.

Although Foucault never developed a general theory of the subject (such a theory would be antithetical to his project), in what follows I argue that in his later work Foucault strove to resituate the subject, seeking a balance between agency and structure, activity and passivity.(3) While scholars tend to discuss his philosophy via the concepts of power and truth, I follow Foucault's final cue and proceed through an analysis of the subject and freedom.(4) I adopt Arnold Davidson's differentiation between three periods in Foucault's thought(5)--archaeology, genealogy and ethics--to suggest that an ontological reading clarifies a number of claims Foucault advanced during his ethical period and to a certain extent even his genealogical period.

I begin by highlighting the structural motif in Foucault's work and the ubiquitous nature of power, both of which underlie the conception of the passive subject. I then discuss Foucault's notion of freedom, first, by outlining some of the scholarly interpretations of Foucault's understanding of freedom, and second, by presenting an alternative reading which emphasizes the ontological elements in his later work and accentuates the idea that freedom is the condition of possibility of power. It is in this context that I attempt to unravel the idea of care of one's self which Foucault discussed in considerable length during the last years of his life. I argue that Heidegger's ontological conception of freedom is compatible with Foucault's notion of care of the self and enables us to articulate a cogent idea of agency. I conclude by suggesting that it is untenable to conceive of the Foucauldian subject as an artifact produced by power, and that an ontological reading of Foucault can sustain a constant tension between agency and power. Thus, the analysis indicates how the subject can maintain agency within a structure that not only restricts, constrains and delimits action, but also produces modes of behavior, fabricates objects of knowledge, and constructs reality. It shows how the tension between structure and agency can be preserved without one undermining the other.

I. The Passive Subject

Most scholars emphasize the contrast between Foucault's relational conception of power and the more prevalent understanding of power as a property which can be possessed. They stress his sensitivity to the fluctuating network of power relations, his development of the "capillary" conception of power--a micro-power which permeates all social strata producing and thus constraining subjectivity--and his notion of bio-power, which he considered to be an indispensable element in the development of capitalism. Some underscore his constant endeavor to problematize the "normal," praising Foucault's success in showing that phenomena which society deems permanent, inevitable, and universal, are but a specific period's fabrication. Moreover, commentators tend to agree that Foucault has opened a new path of critical inquiry.

Debates concerning Foucault's work emerge, not as a consequence of his disclosure that social practices pertaining to the insane or criminals are historically contingent and arbitrary, nor as a direct result of his critique of the human sciences' on-going production of "normalcy." Rather, nearly all disagreements revolve around his analysis of background practices and, more particularly, address his conception of both truth and power, and the difficulties arising from the relationship

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between the two. Despite the plethora of diverse views advanced on both sides of these debates,(6) the majority of scholars agree that, according to Foucault, subjects are produced by power.(7)

The scholarly consensus that Foucault regards subjects as an effect of power can be traced to his rejection of the constituting subject. In the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, he tells his readers that "the authority of the creative subject, as the *raison d'être* of an oeuvre and the principle of its unity, is quite alien to [archaeology]." A few years later, in a more emphatic tone, he states that "one has to dispense with the constituting subject, to get rid of the subject itself, that's to say, to arrive at an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework." (8) Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow point out that Foucault's criticism of the constituting subject was triggered by what he believed to be an unworkable Kantian idea which attributes to man sovereignty in spite of his being enslaved.(9)

Foucault's disavowal of the constituting subject is also at the core of the criticism he directs against phenomenology and existentialism. Claiming that human beings are always thrown into an existing web of constraints, Foucault denounces both the idea that the subject is the sovereign of power and the notion that one is nothing but what one makes of oneself. This standpoint has been noticed by practically all critics and has frequently been linked to the influence of structuralism. When mentioning the Foucauldian subject,(10) commentators often evoke passages in which Foucault suggests that "the individual, with his identity and characteristics, is the product of a relation of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires, forces"; or "Discipline `makes' individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and instruments of its exercise." (11) The Foucauldian subject has no inherent characteristics, and seems to gain meaning only through its relationships with other units in the structure. In other words, subjects acquire identity as a result of the interplay of power relations taking place within the system.

A paradigmatic example of this idea is Foucault's treatment of the panopticon "architectural figure" designed by Jeremy Bentham.(12) The perpetual "gaze" of an unverifiable observer situated inside the panoptic tower acts directly on prisoners without the necessity of physical instruments. The constraints and norms which this "gaze" projects upon the person sitting in a cell, permanently visible, render a prisoner docile.(13) Moreover, the prisoner internalizes the disciplinary requirements. This becomes even clearer through the analysis of the confession practice, in which Foucault illustrates that not only exterior relationships impose an objective mold upon the subject; it is as if the "gaze" penetrates the subject, ensuring that the "soul" conforms to the existing rules, codes, and mores, which are considered to correspond with the soul's "essence."

In "The Subject and Power" Foucault states that he has studied the different dimensions of power in order to understand how the subject is objectified. We read that the "form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him." (14)

This idea is discussed in great detail in *Discipline and Punish*, where Foucault analyzes not only surveillance but other techniques by which the subject is constituted--e.g., "normalization" and "examination." The power of normalization determines the "acceptable" limits of behavior by demarcating the normal and "respectable." Normalization "imposes homogeneity" on the subject both in thought and comportment; but at the same time it individualizes the subject "by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialties, and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to another." Examination "establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them." It enables the teacher, for example, to transmit specific information and "to transform his pupils into a whole field of knowledge," while each individual "receives as his status his own individuality" thus marking him as a case. Foucault concludes that a new modality of power is introduced through discipline whose procedures and techniques "constitute the individual as an effect and object of power, as effect and object of knowledge." (15)

So it seems that power makes human beings into objects by giving them identities to which a set of categories are attached: woman/passive/lack, criminal/illicit/dangerous, and sane/reason/normal. The categories or attributes are concatenated to the subject and are conceived of as natural, normal and/or essential; they become the standards of the existing social practices. The "normalization" of attributes permeates social practices via a complex network of power relations, which in his later years Foucault also described via the term "games of truth." Scientific models, medical and legal discourses, economic institutions, etc. are constituted by games of truth.

It is precisely the vivid images which depict the subject as an effect that have led many scholars to recite Foucault's claim

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that power produces the subject. This claim postulates a passive subject and accentuates the structuralist motif in Foucault's thought.(16) Yet it raises a serious question. If power is the condition of possibility of the subject, if it precedes and creates the existence of subjects, how can we explain the escape of a subject from a given system of power relations, not in the sense of mere difference--being a delinquent or insane--but rather opening a new direction that is not within the set binaries and definitions integral to that system? Thomas Flynn recounts the occasion on which Sartre reminded the Marxist economists that Flaubert may be a petit bourgeois, but not all petit bourgeois are Flauberts.(17)

II. Foucault's Notion of Freedom?

The question we need to address is whether Foucault actually conceives the subject as an object which power has engendered. William Connolly seems to believe that he does. He says: "Power produces the subject that becomes not a mere fiction of theory and law, but a real artifact." By imposing "an artificial reality on material not designed to receive it," power creates artifacts, i.e., criminals, homosexuals, academics, etc. This material, according to Connolly, is the self and power transforms the self into a subject. The self is not designed to receive the artificial reality because it is recalcitrant, which explains why power is often an act of imposition.(18) Connolly persuasively argues that Foucault understands the subject to be embodied, and that "bodies and pleasures" can resist power.(19) Nonetheless, Connolly's suggestion that the self is a recalcitrant material seems to be foreign to Foucault's thought and, furthermore, creates a problematic subject/self binary.

More importantly, Connolly's analysis does not seem to concur with the thoughts Foucault advanced during his "ethical" period, and does not enable us to relate to the issues addressed during those years, particularly the idea of "care of the self."(20) By leaving the notion of recalcitrant material opaque, Connolly's description does not help answer the basic guiding question posed earlier: how does Foucault's analysis of the subject differ from a rigid form of structuralism where one can account only for differences within the existing system? In a late interview, Foucault asserts: "In my books I have really tried to analyze changes, not in order to find the material causes but to show all the factors that interacted and the reactions of people. I believe in the freedom of people. To the same situation, people react in very different ways."(21)

Foucault's oeuvre is not only an analysis of historical change, as he states in the interview, for it has also helped create the conditions needed for transformation and alteration. In this way he is a follower of the early Marx who pointed out that poverty is not natural (it is not a result of scarcity but of violence and violation) and suggested that the mechanisms which produce it can and should be resisted. Foucault has also attempted to undermine notions of necessity and naturalness which have permeated our social practices. His underlying assumption, as the passage above indicates, is that people are free. This point has been discussed by several commentators, the majority of whom, I believe, misconstrue what Foucault means when he says that the subject is free.

Thomas Dumm, for example, discusses Foucault's idea of freedom extensively. He uses Isaiah Berlin's Two Concepts of Liberty as a point of reference, to which he contrasts and opposes Foucault's notion of freedom.(22) Dumm begins by underscoring the differences between Berlin and Foucault regarding their conception of space, and its relation to freedom. Dumm points out that Berlin starts from the liberal notion of neutral space which can be divided into public and private, and from the idea that human beings embody a "natural status." Berlin then cultivates a notion of normalcy vis-a-vis "neutral space" and the "natural status of humanity." Foucault, Dumm says, exposes the contingent and open character of both agents and the space they inhabit, while showing how the "quality of imagination in a given society is intimately related to the external organization of that society's space."(23) I agree with Dumm's critique of Berlin and appreciate his attempt to highlight Foucault's notion of space. Nonetheless, I find his interpretation of Foucault's freedom misleading and ultimately flawed.

Dumm tells his readers that "Discipline and Punish is at root a book about the practices of freedom and the conditions that bear upon those practices in the modern era ... a book that sets an agenda for uncovering not only the terms of our imprisonment but the conditions of our freedom" (emphasis added). Quoting Foucault, he claims that mechanisms of power create "normalization,"(24) but suggests that disciplinary order is, nonetheless, always incomplete. Precisely because discipline is always incomplete the existence of freedom is not in question (an idea reminiscent of Berlin's negative freedom).(25) For Dumm, then, freedom is dependent on the incompleteness of discipline, and identified with the lack of discipline.(26)

Paul Patton, who also analyzes Foucault vis-a-vis Berlin, provides the reader with a much more nuanced argument. He

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avers that it is insufficient to represent "Foucault's work as concerned with expanding the sphere of negative freedom open to individuals"; rather it is directed at enlarging a sphere of positive freedom. Positive freedom attains a different meaning in this context, for Patton equates positive freedom with "the existence of a human capacity for active self transformation" and gives it the name "power to." Contrary to Dumm, Patton believes that "power to" is the condition of possibility of discipline, which he regards as a specific form of "power over," the power that confines and produces human beings. "Power to" is later renamed "force," meaning the "capacity to act and be acted upon." While I willingly follow Patton's interpretation this far, his notion that "force," "power to," or "positive freedom" can be increased leads me to suspect that he too conceives freedom as a human property.(27)

Both commentators make interesting observations, yet fail to disclose the fundamental difference between Foucault and Berlin. Unlike Foucault, Berlin treats freedom as a subject's will, that is, a property which can either be constrained (negative freedom) or amplified (positive freedom).(28) To make sense of Foucault's later writings, the period Davidson calls "ethics," it is advantageous to read Foucault through a Heideggerian,(29) and to a lesser extent Sartrean, lens. Foucault, I believe, particularly in his later writings, does not conceive freedom as a property that can be expropriated from human beings, but rather as the condition of possibility of human beings.

III. Foucault's Freedom: An Ontological Reading

Examining the similarities between the Foucauldian subject and a few of Sartre's ontological insights proves helpful. In his famous lecture Existentialism and Humanism, Sartre points out that unlike other beings-in-the-world whose essence precedes their existence, the existence of human beings precedes their essence. The existence of a table is preceded by the form and quality which made its production and definition possible. The essence of human beings, on the other hand, is dependent on their existence: "man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world--and defines himself afterwards."(30) Since existence precedes essence, one cannot explain one's action by referring to some idea of human nature. Man, according to Sartre, is freedom. Sartre goes on to explain that because human beings do not have a nature each person is what he makes of him/herself. Sartre is aware of external and internal constraints on the subject, yet he thinks that ultimately the subject has the capacity to overcome them and live authentically, i.e., to relate to him/herself as free.

Foucault, I believe, would subscribe to the "existence precedes essence" formula with two major qualifications. First, Foucault would reject Sartre's claim that humans are responsible for what they are.(31) The second, and surely more important qualification, relates to the status or notion of "existence." We have seen that Foucault believes that human beings are free. Yet Foucault, in my opinion, would attribute a different sense to freedom. While Sartre says that human existence is freedom, Foucault, as I will explain momentarily, seems to consider freedom to be the condition of possibility of human existence. The major disagreement between Foucault and Sartre is ultimately related to their different conceptions of Being, a topic which is beyond the scope of this paper.(32) Here it is sufficient to say that Foucault's ideas appear to correlate more with Heidegger's position than with Sartre's.

Heidegger suggests that human beings are thrown into the world and that their condition of possibility is freedom. Freedom is used here in the ontological sense and not as free will. In *The Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger says that the "essence of freedom is originally not connected with the will or even with the causality of human willing."(33) Heidegger argues that "the essence of the being-in-itself of all beings is freedom,"(34) and that freedom is actualized through the engagement in the disclosure of beings; "man should be understood, within the question of being, as the site which being requires in order to disclose itself."(35) In his discussion on Schelling's *Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, Heidegger writes:

Schelling finds it remarkable that Kant realized in his practical philosophy that the essence of the "ego" is freedom and thus determined the essence of this being in itself in its own being, but then declared on top of this in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that the essence of the thing-in-itself is unknowable. Only one step was necessary, to carry over the insight about man's being-in-itself to the being-in-itself of all beings in general and thus to make freedom into a positive and completely universal determination of the "in-itself" in general.(36)

Elsewhere Heidegger explains that "Freedom is the comprehensive and pervasive dimension of being in whose ambiance

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man becomes man in the first place. This means: the essence of man is grounded in freedom; freedom itself, however, is a category transcending human Dasein, that is, a category of authentic being as such." In Schelling's Treatise Heidegger stresses that ontological freedom is not "freedom as a property of man; but the reverse: man as the possibility of freedom. Human freedom is a freedom which invades and sustains man, thereby rendering man possible."(37) Heidegger, Fred Dallmayr explains, conceives freedom of will to be "based on human Dasein construed as freedom or a mode of 'being free', and not vice versa. Viewed as Dasein's ontological core, 'being free' is neither imposed on as an external fate or destiny, nor can it arbitrarily be chosen or discarded."(38)

As is all too evident, the Foucauldian subject is a being-in-the-world, and not an autonomous rational being set against the world as Berlin would have us think. Moreover, Foucault's later work reveals an understanding of freedom similar to Heidegger's. Two conditions of possibility are necessary, Foucault says, for a power relationship to exist: "That the 'other' (the one over whom power is exercised) be thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may be opened." Power is characterized as an action which modifies the actions of others, and "is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free." A few pages later, he adds: "For, if it is true that at the heart of power relations and as a permanent condition of their existence there is an insubordination and a certain essential obstinacy on the part of the principles of freedom, then there is no possibility of power without the means of escape or possible flight."(39) Thus, it seems that freedom is the condition of possibility of power. Power does not act on objects like chairs, but only on human beings, and only insofar as their condition of possibility is freedom.

In the final years of his life, Foucault reiterated that the possibility of escape from the constraints of power is power's condition for existence. In one of his last interviews, he says: "One must observe also that there cannot be relations of power unless the subject is free.... [I]n the relations of power, there is necessarily the possibility of resistance, for if there were no possibility of resistance--of violent resistance, of escape, of ruse, of strategies that reverse the situation--there would be no relations of power."(40) So one could say that the subject, construed as that whose condition of possibility is freedom, is the condition of possibility of power. This amounts to a new reading of the earlier assumption that power produces subjects.

Following such a line of thinking a few scholars have claimed that the later Foucault reversed his conception of the subject, transforming it, as it were, from absolute passivity to absolute activity.(41) If one accepts that a reversal actually occurred, one must conclude that an irreconcilable fissure exists between the first two periods in Foucault's oeuvre and the last. To reveal the shortcoming of such an interpretation, while striving to attain a better grasp of Foucault's position concerning freedom and the subject, I turn to other works he produced during his last period.

In *The Use of Pleasure*, the Second Volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault discloses similarities between antiquity and Christianity regarding which sexual activity was sanctioned and prohibited, while arguing that the Greeks recognized and organized sexuality differently. Already in classical Greek thought sexual practices were considered to be part of an ethical domain. This ethical domain, however, was not governed by rules or universal interdictions regarding the use of pleasure as it subsequently did in the Christian morality of sexual behavior. Nor did the Greeks think that desires lay "hidden in the mysteries of the heart" waiting to be deciphered. Antiquity's ethical domain of pleasure was not determined by codes and/or a hermeneutical approach which assumes a well defined yet concealed meaning, essence, or nature, that needs to be revealed. Rather, sexual moderation was considered to be an exercise of freedom and individuals were expected to master themselves according to need, time, and status, so as to create and recreate the rule of the self over self. When Foucault tells us that mastering the use of pleasure was characterized as an "active freedom, a freedom which was indissociable from a structural, instrumental, and ontological relation to truth," we notice that his assumptions are beginning to change--the structure/agency relationship is brought to the fore and renegotiated.(42)

This change, however, does not constitute a reversal of his earlier position; it is an elaboration. In a seminar given at the University of Vermont, Foucault begins to develop what he called the technology of the self, suggesting that in his earlier works he had over-emphasized the technology of domination and power. In his analysis of technologies of the self, he finds that the notion of care of the self, which had been prominent in antiquity, had been obscured by the Delphic principle "know thyself." Foucault claims that "know thyself" became dominant for two major reasons. On the one hand, "our morality, a morality of asceticism, insists that the self is that which one can reject," while on the other hand, since Descartes, philosophers have considered the thinking subject to be the cornerstone of epistemology, and consequently emphasized the scrutiny of the self. Both observations are firmly linked to his prior work. As I have already suggested,

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Foucault argues that human beings do not have a nature that can be rejected, liberated, or renounced (as some Christian teachings would have us think). At the same time, as mentioned at the outset, he claims that the self cannot be simultaneously the transcendental condition of possibility of knowledge and an object of empirical inquiry.

The dominance of "know thyself" is an inversion of the hierarchy of the two principles of antiquity, he says, and sets out to disclose the ancient understanding of taking care of the self. He turns to Plato's Alcibiades and Socrates's Apology and finds the notion that to take care of the self, one has to take care of one's activities, and not over the soul-as-substance. Foucault takes great pains to emphasize that care of the self is not a turn inside one's self, it is by no means a call for quietism, for if it is a call for anything it is a call for action. Taking care of one's self, as opposed to "know thyself," accentuates an ontological notion of freedom, where freedom is not a property of the self. Only because care of one's self assumes that freedom is the condition of possibility of being human, and not human will, can it coherently stress the idea of improving one's self and transcending one's own limits.(43)

This is the major theme in the third volume of *The History of Sexuality*, which is titled *The Care of the Self*. Foucault points out that in Hellenistic and Roman thought attentiveness to one's self was problematized even further. While for the Greeks the care of the self was an ethics that pertained to free men and was firmly linked to their status in society, in these later eras the care of the self could no longer accord with one's status. Foucault quotes Seneca(44) saying that man needs to seek his own soul, a soul that is upright, good, and great. "What else," Seneca says, "should you call such a soul than a god dwelling as a guest in a human body. A soul like this may descend into a Roman knight just as well as into a freedman's son or a slave."(45) Foucault concludes that during this period the exercise of power was relativized in two ways. First, while political activity was considered a life commitment, it was no longer obvious that one had to accept this responsibility as following from the particular status one held at birth--one's place in the social structure was no longer considered to be a causal force leaving no room for recourse. We notice that, according to Foucault's reading, the subject is not an effect of external constraints, but has the opportunity to act and if need be defy these constraints. Second, and more important in this context, the Hellenistic and Roman thinkers recognized that one exercises power already within an existing field of complex relations, which entails that one is simultaneously always ruler and ruled. Aristotides, Foucault says, sees the principle of good government "in the fact that a man is one and the other at the same time, through an interplay of directions sent and received, of checks, of appeals, of decisions taken."(46) This, I think, is exactly the balance Foucault was looking for in the last years of his life, and I will discuss its implications in the final section.

In a late interview, Foucault characterizes the care of the self as the deliberate practice of freedom. Care of the self means first and foremost relating to one's self as a non-slave, as free, which, in turn, is a care for the other. To justify the latter claim, Foucault mentions the Greeks' conception of the tyrant as a person who is evil towards his subjects because he is a slave to his appetites; his immoral comportment towards others is a consequence of neglecting self care.(47) In another interview from the same period, Foucault asserts that the care of the self is the "elaboration of one's life as a personal work of art."(48)

Sartre, towards the end of *Existentialism and Humanism*, strives to answer the accusation that existentialism amounts to nihilism and voluntarism. "The moral choice," he says, "is comparable to the construction of a work of art." There is no a priori code or rule which human beings must follow, "there is no pre-defined picture for [humans] to make."(49) Sartre has one guideline to offer based on his conception of human ontology: humans should relate to themselves and others as free. This advice, including the metaphor of the work of art, resembles Foucault's understanding of the ethic of the care of the self as a practice of freedom.

This conclusion does not indicate that in his later years Foucault espoused a constituting subject, a sovereign. Consider for a moment the introduction of the second volume of the *History of Sexuality*, where Foucault explains why the publication of the book was delayed. The initial plan was to publish six volumes which dealt with the history of the experience of sexuality, "where experience is understood as the correlation between fields of knowledge, types of normativity, and forms of subjectivity in a particular culture." After completing the first volume, Foucault realized that in order to accomplish this objective, he had to analyze the interrelations along the three axes that constitute it: "1) the formations of sciences (savoirs) that refer to it, 2) the systems of power that regulate its practice, 3) the forms within which individuals are able, are obliged, to recognize themselves as subjects of this sexuality." Foucault tells the reader that he had mastered the tools to analyze the first two axes in his earlier work, and that the delay occurred because he had to undertake a "shift" so he could understand the third. "I felt obliged," he says, "to study the games of truth in the relationship of self with self and the forming of oneself as a subject, taking as my domain of reference and field of

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investigation what might be called 'the history of desiring man.'"(50)

Along the same lines, Foucault answers an interviewer who asks him whether in the second and third volumes of the History of Sexuality he had changed direction.

Yes, I have changed direction. When I was dealing with madness I set out from the "problem" that it may have constituted in a certain social, political, and epistemological context: the problem that madness poses for others. [In the History of Sexuality, volumes two and three] I set out from the problem that sexual behavior might pose for individuals themselves (or at least to men in Antiquity). In the first case, I had to find out how madmen were "controlled"; in the second, how one "controls" oneself... Here I would like to show how self control is integrated into the practice of controlling others. They are, in short, two opposite ways of approaching the same question: how is an "experience" formed in which the relationship to oneself and the relationship to others are linked together.

Foucault conceived his later work not as a reversal or rejection of an earlier position, but as an attempt to approach the same problematic in a new and refreshing manner. To be sure, it was a change in direction, a shift which inevitably became a self-critique of preceding work. Yet he did not abandon the notion of power, the idea that humans are always within a web of constraints, but rather strove to enrich and go beyond his earlier work in order to solve some of the problems arising from it. Foucault tells us that accentuating the care of the self complements his previous endeavors. His late work is, I believe, an attempt to rethink and consequently resituate the subject vis-a-vis power relations, which, in turn, is a rethinking of the capacity of power itself.

So while I disagree with the so-called reversal claim, I also think that it is erroneous to suggest that Foucault considers the subject to be an artifact of power. Already in Discipline and Punish he insinuates that discipline is dependent on indiscipline, while in The History of Sexuality Volume One he suggests that power is dependent on resistance.(51) Considering that the two subsequent volumes of The History of Sexuality and other late writings complement Foucault's earlier work, and taking into account that during the later period there is a strong accent on agency and that he states clearly that power is dependent on freedom, it does not make sense to continue reading Foucault as if he considers the subject as a mere effect. A coherent account of Foucault must therefore make room for both the notion of power and a certain degree of agency. The ontological reading presented here can reveal, I believe, the manner by which some kind of balance between the two may be attained.

IV. Power and Agency

The late Foucault's emphasis of care alongside his effort to resituate agency vis-a-vis power, point to a tangible, and to my mind worthy, ethical stance which strives to identify a path between the passivity characteristic of rigid structuralism and the self-creating subject. By accentuating care, Foucault enables the subject to assume responsibility without violating the other's integrity. Interestingly, William Connolly reaches a similar conclusion. He says that the ethic of care "acknowledges the need to limit its own self-assertion so that other faiths can count for something too." While I appreciate Connolly's endeavor to articulate an ethics that promotes respect for the other, I believe that he bases Foucault's ethics of care on a mistaken ontological reading. Connolly claims that according to Foucault "Nothing is fundamental.... Therefore almost everything counts for something."(52)

This reading, as I understand it, is based on Foucault's insistence that power is not merely a negative, but a constitutive force. "We must cease once and for all," he tells us, "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."(53) While this conception of power indeed entails that nothing is fundamental, it deemphasizes the ontological perspective which highlights the subject's agency and the idea that freedom is the condition of possibility of power.

By contrast, I have argued that Foucault's notion of care of the self means relating to oneself as free, and it is precisely this way of relating to one's self--not merely a notion that nothing is fundamental--which spurs a care for the other.

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Foucault's example of the tyrant who is a slave to his appetites and therefore does not care for others is persuasive. This reading takes into consideration Foucault's writing from the late 1970s, first, by pointing to the condition of possibility of power:

there is no face to face confrontation of power and freedom which is mutually exclusive (freedom disappears everywhere power is exercised), but a much more complicated interplay. In this game freedom may well appear as the condition for the exercise of power (at the same time its precondition, since freedom must exist for power to be exerted, and also its permanent support, since without the possibility for recalcitrance, power would be equivalent to a physical determination).(54)

Second, through the analysis of the care of the self, this reading stresses Foucault's claim that each person has the possibility "to make his life into an oeuvre."(55)

Yet, to be tenable, this reading would have to indicate how agency can coexist with Foucault's notion of power. Once more Heidegger's insights are helpful. In *Being and Time*, he suggests that Dasein is "constantly 'more' than it factually is." Heidegger, as is well known, distinguishes between factuality and facticity, where the former is some kind of inventory, a "list of contents of its Being." Dasein can never be fully defined or captured by factuality. Facticity, on the other hand, has to do with Heidegger's depiction of Dasein as a "thrown projection," a depiction which seems to reverberate in Foucault's later understanding of the subject.

"As thrown," Heidegger explains, "Dasein is thrown into the kind of Being we call 'projecting'." By "projecting" Heidegger does not mean that Dasein is an autonomous being, totally free to choose or make plans into the future in the sense of "arranging its Being." Not only is Dasein invariably more than it factually is, but "Dasein always has understood itself and always will understand itself in terms of possibilities." The emphasis here is on understanding, where understanding, as potentiality-for-Being, "has itself possibilities, which are sketched out beforehand within the range of what is essentially disclosable in it."(56) We see that Dasein is thrown into the world, into an existing situation which already has concrete possibilities. These are not logical possibilities as one might think of when discussing choices in an abstract manner; rather, as David Couzens Hoy points out, the possibilities that Heidegger is referring to "come with limitations."(57) Heidegger defines these concrete possibilities and limitations as Dasein's facticity. Dasein, as a thrown projection, is always already "determined by facticity," he says. Yet, even though Dasein is thrown into the world, into its facticity, it is thrown concernfully, as care.

When asked, in January 1984, about his conception of human agency, Foucault attempted to depict some kind of balanced relationship: "I would say that if now I am interested, in fact, in the way in which the subject constitutes himself in an active fashion, by the practices of self, these practices are nevertheless not something that the individual invents by himself. They are patterns that he finds in his culture and which are proposed, suggested and imposed on him by his culture, his society and his social group."(58) The Foucauldian subject has gained agency, yet at the same time it is always situated within a web of constraints, and therefore cannot be conceived as an entity autonomous of power relations and background practices. As seen from his statements concerning freedom, the subject is no longer considered to be a product of power relations in the sense that it is identical with what power produces, an artifact. The subject always maintains a difference. Not only in the structural sense where the difference is a consequence of its relation and position vis-a-vis the other units within the structure, but also in an ontological sense where the subject, whose condition of possibility is freedom, is never fully determined. Similar to the depiction of Dasein as that which is constantly more than it factually is, Foucault no longer portrays the subject as a mere effect of power, nor does he attribute an essence to it, but rather implies a repositioning of the subject within a never settled location situated between passivity and activity.

Using Heidegger's ontology to read Foucault's later work enables us to make room for agency without relinquishing Foucault's notion of power. The idea that the subject can never be fully determined undermines the belief that power, as both a constraining and constituting force, is antithetical to agency. Examining the two philosophers together also contributes, I believe, to our understanding of Heidegger. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to show the advantages of reading Heidegger from Foucault's vantage point, it seems to me that several of Heidegger's philosophical insights gain political concreteness when linked to Foucault's empirical analysis. Foucault's depiction and investigation of mechanisms of power--whether they be linguistic or physical--are concrete manifestations of what Heidegger calls Dasein's facticity.

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By way of conclusion it is important to note that this reading inevitably changes our conception of the relation between ubiquitous power and the subject, and calls for a reexamination of the contested power-truth relationship. It also brings into relief statements that appeared to be contradictory. For instance, in the History of Sexuality Volume One, Foucault states: one is not "inside" power, while, within a few sentences he asserts that resistance can exist only in the strategic field of power relations.(59) On the basis of our ontological discussion such ostensible contradictions can be resolved. Humans are beings-in-the-world, beings that are always within an existing web of relations, within a context of background practices. Resistance to a given set of constraints or modes of production can occur only in the ambiance of power and in this sense there is no exit from power. "Power is already there," he says, "one is never outside it, ... there are no 'margins' for those who break from the system to gambol in."(60) From an ontological perspective, however, humans are free, and this ontological freedom which can be construed as the condition of possibility of the subject cannot be taken away by means of power--it is not a property that can be limited, constrained or molded by the web of power relations. Rather, it is the condition of possibility of power itself. Foucault, I believe, is referring to this ontological level when he says that one should practice freedom.

(* I would like to thank Fred Dallmayr, John Reiger, and Polity's anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions. In addition, I wish to acknowledge the financial support provided during the summer of 1997 by the University of Notre Dame's Department of Government and International Studies.

(1.) Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," appeared as an Afterword in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, Michel Foucault Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 212 (emphasis added).

(2.) Particularly Michel Foucault, The Order of Things, (New York: Vintage, 1994). Also interesting is James Bernauer's interpretation of Foucault on this issue, Michel Foucault's Force of Flight (London: Humanities Press International, 1990).

(3.) Thomas McCarthy also claims that Foucault's conception of the subject changed, yet he concludes that Foucault ends with a self-constituting subject, rather than a middle notion balancing agency and structure. "The Critique of Impure Reason, Foucault and the Frankfurt School," Political Theory 18 (August 1990): 437-69.

(4.) Michel Foucault, "The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom" in The Final Foucault, ed. James Bernauer and David Rasmussen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988).

(5.) Arnold I. Davidson, "Archaeology, Genealogy, Ethics," in Foucault, A Critical Reader, ed. David Couzens Hoy (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 221-34. As I understand it, the first period--archaeology--ends with The Archaeology of Knowledge, around 1969, and the second period--genealogy--ends following the publication of the first volume of The History of Sexuality, in the late 1970s. Davidson's differentiation between the periods corresponds with the three axes Foucault mentions in the introduction to the Second Volume of the History of Sexuality: the formation of sciences (savoirs), systems of power, and forms with which individuals recognize themselves as subjects. The History of Sexuality, Vol. 2 (New York: Vintage, 1990), 5.

(6.) Foucault's critics include Charles Taylor, "Foucault on Freedom and Truth," in Couzens Hoy, Foucault, A Critical Reader, 69-102; Edward Said, "Foucault and the Imagination of Power," in Couzens Hoy, ed. Foucault, A Critical Reader. 149-156; Nancy Fraser, "Foucault on Modern Power: Empirical Insights and Normative Confusion," Praxis International (1981): 272-87; and Harold Weiss "The Genealogy of Justice and the Justice of Genealogy: Chomsky and Said vs. Foucault and Bore," Philosophy Today, (Spring 1989): 73-94. For Foucault's defenders, consult William Connolly, "Taylor, Foucault, and Otherness," Political Theory 13 (August (1985): 365-76; Paul Patton, "Taylor and Foucault on Power and Freedom," Political Studies, 37 (1989): 260-76; Thomas Durum, Michel Foucault and the Politics of Freedom (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996); Andrew Lamb, "Freedom, the Self, and Ethical Practice According to Michel Foucault," International Philosophical Quarterly 35 (December 1995): 449-67; and Brent L. Pickett, "Foucault and the Politics of Resistance," Polity, 27 (Summer 1996): 445-66.

(7.) Charles Taylor, for example, says that "Foucault wants to explain the modern notion of individuality as one of [technology's] products," in "Foucault on Freedom and Truth," 75. William Connolly states that Foucault's "Power produces the subject that becomes not a mere fiction of theory and law, but a real artifact," in "Taylor, Foucault, and Otherness," 371. Leslie Thiele states that in Foucault's opinion "power traverses and produces subjects" in "Foucault's Triple Murder and the Modern Development of Power" Canadian Journal of Political Science 19 (June, 1986) 257. Harold

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Weiss points out that "Foucault views the subject or 'human nature' as constituted, whether discursively, institutionally, or autonomically," in "The Genealogy of Justice and the Justice of Genealogy," 77. Paul Patton claims that "it has been one of Foucault's constant theses since Discipline and Punish, that power creates subjects," in "Taylor and Foucault on Power and Freedom," 264. In Michel Foucault and the Politics of Freedom, Thomas Dumm says that Foucault exposes the "techniques through which individuals are produced," 71, see also 101.

(8.) Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1993), 139. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Vintage, 1980), 117.

(9.) Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 31, suggest that, according to Foucault, the Kantian understanding of the human subject creates three major paradoxes: Man is considered "1) as a fact among other facts to be studied empirically, and yet as the transcendental condition of the possibility of all knowledge; 2) as surrounded by what he cannot get clear about (the unthought) and yet as a potentially lucid cogito, source of all intelligibility; and 3) as the product of a long history whose beginning he can never reach and yet, paradoxically, as the source of that very history."

(10.) One should note that often Foucault does not distinguish clearly between the concepts individual and subject, and uses them alternately. Unless I am quoting Foucault or one of his commentators I will restrict myself to the term "subject."

(11.) Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 74; Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 170.

(12.) Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 200ff.

(13.) C. Colwell points out that the flaw of the panopticon model is that the gaze is centralized, while in the ideal structure the gaze is fragmented. Power, according to Foucault, is not located in one identifiable site. "The Retreat of the Subject in the Late Foucault," *Philosophy Today* (Spring 1994): 56-69.

(14.) Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 212.

(15.) Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 184, 186, 192.

(16.) One commentator suggests that, according to *The Order of Things*, "the class of sentences that can be uttered in a specified time and place is not determined by the conscious wishes of the speakers. The possibility of being true-or-false does not reside in a person's desire to communicate. Hence the author himself is irrelevant to the analysis of the conditions of possibility." Ian Hacking, "The Archaeology of Foucault," in Couzens Hoy, *Foucault, A Critical Reader*, 32.

(17.) Thomas Flynn, "Foucault as Parrhesiast," in Bernauer et al., *The Final Foucault*, 114. John Rajchman, *Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 10, points out that Flaubert "perhaps first exemplifies the 'antibourgeois' aims of modernist literary culture, for he envisaged a new aristocracy of letters opposed to the 'revolt of the masses' and to the idea of progress, to the journalism, sentimental magazines, and middle brow culture which was mining the language and keeping the great writer from his sovereignty over it."

(18.) Connolly, "Taylor, Foucault, and Otherness," 371.

(19.) Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1 (New York: Vintage, 1990), 157.

(20.) In his recent book *The Ethos of Pluralization* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), Connolly promotes an ontological reading of Foucault which stresses the notion of care. I take up this treatment later.

(21.) Michel Foucault, "Truth, Power, Self: An Interview with Michel Foucault," in *Technologies of the Self*, ed. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 14.

(22.) "Two Concepts of Liberty," in Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 118-72.

(23.) Dumm, *Michel Foucault and the Politics of Freedom*, 41.

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(24.) Dumm, Michel Foucault and the Politics of Freedom, 78, 101-02.

(25.) Dumm, Michel Foucault and the Politics of Freedom, 108.

(26.) For example, Dumm suggests that according to society the delinquent "comes close to being the emblematic figure of freedom" which "puts the most elemental aspect of freedom on the margins of a social order that claims freedom as its most important value." This, he says, contributes to an "impoverished political imagination concerning freedom" for it marginalizes and segregates the most free elements in society (Michel Foucault and the Politics of Freedom, 111-112). Rajchman, who also wrote on this issue, disagrees. He says: "Foucault advances a new ethic: not the ethic of transgression, but the ethic of constant disengagement from constituted forms of experience, of freeing oneself for the inventions of new forms of life" (Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy, 37). The subtle difference between the two commentators is, of course, crucial.

(27.) Patton, "Taylor and Foucault on Power and Freedom," 266, 276.

(28.) Foucault would have probably said that by using the word "liberty" in the title of both the chapter and the book, Berlin assumes some kind of essential nature which needs to be liberated. Foucault, "The Ethics of the Care of the Self as a Practice of Freedom," in Bernauer et al., *Final Foucault*, 2-3.

(29.) I do not claim that Foucault became a Heideggerian in his final years; he had his own agenda, insights and innovations. However, I do think that reading Foucault's later work through Heidegger helps make his claims more coherent. One should note that in his last interview Foucault claimed: "For me Heidegger has always been the essential philosopher." A number of sentences later he adds: "My entire philosophical development was determined by my reading of Heidegger. I nevertheless recognized that Nietzsche outweighed him" (interview with Foucault conducted by Gilles Barbedette and Andre Scala in Michel Foucault, *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman [New York: Routledge, 1990], 250). There is a considerable literature discussing the relation between Foucault's and Heidegger's work. Neil Levy points out that most of this literature focuses on Foucault's critique of Heidegger in *The Order of Things*, and his relationship to the early Heidegger in "The Prehistory of Archaeology: Heidegger and the Early Foucault," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 27, (May 1996), 158. Some claim that the relationship between Foucault and Heidegger is lax, most notably Jacques Derrida, who accuses Foucault of having "never confronted [Heidegger] and, if one may say so, never explained himself on his relation to him," in "Desistence," which appeared in P. Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 17; quoted from Levy, "The Prehistory of Archaeology: Heidegger and the Early Foucault." Paul Rabinow asserts that Heidegger is concerned with truth as being and truth as destiny, while Foucault is concerned with truth as *techne* and truth as presence, in "Modern and countermodern: Ethos and epoch in Heidegger and Foucault," in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. Gary Gutting (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). On the other side of this debate are scholars like Rajchman who claims that Heidegger "is surely the central philosophical influence" on Foucault, in *Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy*, 18. In the aforementioned article Neil Levy illustrates that Foucault's criticism of objectification and subjectification is rooted in his reading of Heidegger, and Hubert Dreyfus discusses the relationship between Heidegger's Being and Foucault's power, in "Being and Power. Heidegger and Foucault," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 4 (1996): 1-16.

(30.) Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism & Humanism* (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1973), 28.

(31.) Sartre, *Existentialism & Humanism*, 29

(32.) In his critique of Sartre, Heidegger claims that a reversal of the relation between essence and existence still conceives being in its traditional sense, as presence. Heidegger wants to distinguish between beings as presence and Being. See Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), 213-66.

(33.) Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in Krell, *Basic Writings*, 330.

(34.) Martin Heidegger, *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Athens: University of Ohio Press, 1985), 93.

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(35.) Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 205.

(36.) Heidegger, *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, 93.

(37.) Martin Heidegger, *Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit: Einleitung in die Philosophie*, (Gesamtausgabe vol. 31), ed. Hartmut Tietjen (Frankfurt. Main: Klostermann, 1982), 303. This passage is quoted in Fred Dallmayr, *Polis and Praxis* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984), 121. Heidegger, *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, 9, translation slightly altered.

(38.) Dallmayr, *Polis and Praxis*, 114.

(39.) Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 220, 221, 225. Already in *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1, he suggests that "where there is power, there is resistance." See 95.

(40.) Foucault, "The Ethics of the Care of the Self as a Practice of Freedom," in Bernauer et al., *Final Foucault*, 12.

(41.) Jurgen Habermas makes a similar claim in his essay "Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present," in Couzens Hoy, ed. *Foucault a Critical Reader*, 103-08. A number of years later Thomas McCarthy reaches the same conclusion. He says: "Viewed from the perspective of critical social theory, Foucault's later framework of interpretation lies in the opposite extreme from his earlier social ontology of power. Then everything was a function of context, of impersonal forces and fields, from which there was no escape--the end of man. Now, the focus is on those `intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct but also seek to transform themselves ... and to make their life into an oeuvre"--with scant regard for social, political and economic context. In "The Critique of Impure Reason, Foucault and the Frankfurt School," 463.

(42.) Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 2, 93.

(43.) Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in Martin et al., *Technologies of the Self*, 22, 25.

(44.) It is interesting to note that Heidegger mentions Seneca in his discussion of the ontological history of care. He quotes Seneca saying that the good of human beings is fulfilled by care. Yet Heidegger also asserts that if "one were to construct the expression `care for oneself' ... this would be a tautology." Care, he says, "cannot stand for some special attitude towards the Self." Unfortunately, I cannot, in this context, discuss the difference between Heidegger's and Foucault's notions of care. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 243 and 237, respectively.

(45.) Foucault's discussion of Seneca is problematic. Seneca asks us to seek our soul, a soul that is upright, good and great. Yet, we have seen that Foucault rejects the notion that taking care of the self amounts to taking care of one's soul, particularly a soul-as-substance. Another, perhaps greater, problem is that in his discussion concerning the care of the self Foucault uses the Stoics as his major reference. Hannah Arendt has pointed out that Stoicism represents "an escape from the world into the self which, it is hoped, will be able to sustain itself in sovereign independence of the outside world" in *Men in Dark Times* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1993), 9. While Arendt's assessment of Stoicism is probably over-conclusive, it would have been beneficial if Foucault, who rejects quietism or any form of escapism, had addressed this disturbing aspect of Stoicism. One should, however, remember that *The Care of the Self* was part of a work in progress cut off by Foucault's premature death.

(46.) Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 3 (New York: Vintage, 1990), 86, 87-88.

(47.) Foucault, "The Ethics of the Care of the Self as a Practice of Freedom," in Bernauer et al., *Final Foucault*, 10-14. See also Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 2, 80-81.

(48.) Foucault, "An Aesthetics of Existence," in Kritzman, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, 49.

(49.) Sartre, *Existentialism & Humanism*, 48-49.

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(50.) Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 2, 5-6.

(51.) Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 290; Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1, 95.

(52.) Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization*, 40. The claim that "nothing is fundamental" is taken directly from Foucault, who in an interview called "Space, Knowledge, and Power," states: "Nothing is fundamental. That is what is interesting in the analysis of society...." In *The Foucault Reader*, ed, Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 247.

(53.) Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 194.

(54.) Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 221. As noted earlier, Foucault makes a similar claim in the *History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1, 95-97.

(55.) Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 2, 139.

(56.) Elsewhere Heidegger says that "In its projection [Dasein] reveals itself as something which has been thrown. It has been thrownly abandoned to the 'world,' and falls into it concernfully." *Being and Time*, 185 and 458 respectively.

(57.) David Couzens Hoy, "Heidegger and the Hermeneutic Turn," in Guigon, *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, 179.

(58.) Foucault, "The Ethics of the Care of the Self as a Practice of Freedom," in Bernauer et al., *Final Foucault*, 11.

(59.) Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1, 95-96.

(60.) Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 141.

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