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# Subjecting Dasein

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# Subjecting Dasein

## Ladelle McWhorter

"Das 'Subjekt' ist eine Fiktion," Nietzsche declares in aphorism 370 of *Der Wille zur Macht*. There is no such thing as an ego, a unitary center of personhood that can be appraised and approved for its virtue and wisdom or blamed for its premeditated transgressions and irresponsible beliefs. Subjectivity does not exist. Despite Nietzsche's pervasive influence, however, the question of subjectivity—the ontological nature, the ethical status, and the epistemological significance of the human subject—has been a preeminent theme in Continental philosophy for the entirety of the twentieth century. Virtually all Continental philosophers have found it necessary to address the question. Martin Heidegger and Michel Foucault are not exceptional in that regard. Both thinkers take up the question as a central issue in their work; both have a great deal to say about subjectivity and its philosophical place.

On the face of it, however, the two men's conceptions of subjectivity seem quite divergent, particularly when one looks at the earlier work of Heidegger alongside the later work of Foucault. In *Sein und Zeit,* Heidegger undertakes an analytic of Dasein, a systematic phenomenological investigation of individual human existence, while Foucault (in texts such as *Surveiller et punir,* for example) eschews any such overarching ontological project and pluralizes subjectivity to speak of his-

torically emergent subjecti*vities*. (And some would say, as a follower of Nietzsche, he goes so far as to debunk and dismantle subjectivity altogether.) If one reads Heidegger as an existentialist through the French existential movement and Foucault as a Nietzschean iconoclast (especially through North American leftist and feminist commentators), there seems to be no ground of comparison. Heidegger, it would seem, believes in the phenomenological and epistemological primacy of the human subject, while Foucault apparently believes that there is no such thing as the subject at all.

To compare Heidegger's and Foucault's understandings of subjectivity, to stage a critical encounter between them on this issue, the first thing that must be done is to put these two philosophers onto some common ground. We can do that by developing a reading of Foucault that dispels the widely held idea that he repudiates the notion of subjectivity in toto and a reading of Heidegger that does not take the analytic of Dasein to be ahistorical. Only then can we usefully compare the two ways of thinking and see how they contrast and what differing effects they might have.

I will begin, then, with Foucault. In the first section of this chapter I will discuss the ubiquitous claim that Foucault repudiates subjectivity as an analytic category and an ontological reality and will put forth an alternative interpretation of his work. In the second section I will discuss the view—put forward by Kevin Hill, for one—that Foucault's account of subjectivity is a direct reaction against Heidegger's work. Then I will begin to develop a reading of Heidegger that distinguishes between Dasein on the one hand and subjectivity on the other and that takes very seriously the import of temporality in Dasein's constitution— my aim here being to bring out a Heideggerian account of Dasein that is historical in some of the ways that Foucault's pluralized subjectivities are historical. In this section I will move toward a way of reading subjectivity in Heidegger's work that focuses on the effects of his discursive practice more than on the assertions that he makes. It is on this ground, I believe—the shifting and perhaps ungrounding ground of discursive effects—that convergence between the two philosophers can usefully and fruitfully occur. In the final section of the chapter, then, I will stage this convergence by turning to the issue of care, a major theme in both thinkers' writings. I will argue that under the theme of care Heidegger's work moves thinking along some of the same paths that Foucault's work tends to move. Differently put, I will argue that

both thinkers engage in philosophical practices of care that create some similar philosophical effects, that transform the thinking that goes on in, as, and alongside their texts. I will argue that both are caught up in practices of philosophical self-overcoming that move them and their readers beyond such notions as subjectivity as traditionally conceived. Although their differences are great, I hope to show that the consequences of following their very different paths are in some ways remarkably similar.

## The Subject for Foucault

In an interview from the mid-1970s, Foucault discusses his interest in coming to an understanding of the historical emergence of certain categories of human being—such as the madman or the criminal. The emphasis in his discussion, as in his analyses, is not on subjectivity "itself," but rather on history, on emergence and passage; he wants to understand how forms of subjectivities that have not previously existed have come into existence (and how some have passed away). It is in that context that he says:

> I don't believe the problem can be solved by historicising the subject as posited by the phenomenologists, fabricating a subject that evolves through the course of history. One has to dispense with the constituent subject, to get rid of the subject itself, that's to say, to arrive at an analysis which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects, etc., without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history.[1]

It is this passage, above all,[2] that has led so many readers to conclude that Foucault takes Nietzsche literally and maintains that there is no such thing as subjectivity.[3] But it is important to note that here, as elsewhere, Foucault is actually making a much more nuanced and strategic (as opposed to ontological) claim. He is actually saying that to understand the emergence of certain forms of subjectivity in history, we have to refrain from presuming that any aspect of subjectivity stands apart from history and preexists its historical "expression" or formation. History—or more precisely historical forces, networks of power relations—must receive complete analytic priority over subjectivity if we are to take the historical emergence of subjectivities like the delinquent or the madman seriously. Therefore, Foucault's ana-

lytic demotion of subjectivity, far from being the prelude to dismissing subjectivity altogether, is a way of coming to terms with the reality of subjectivities *as they actually occur and as we experience them*. Subjectivity is not dismissed at all; it takes on central importance as the very reason for Foucault's repudiation of ahistorical categories. As he asserts in a 1983 interview, "[I]t is not power, but the subject, which is the general theme of my research."[4]

Nevertheless, many commentators still object that Foucault is effectively eliminating subjectivity not only as a historical constant, but as the individual human agent. For, if there is no center of identity or selfhood that persists regardless of historical change, there is no agent who can initiate thought and action; what appears as subjectivity is in reality just an effect of historical, social, and political forces and so (as is often concluded) cannot ever act freely, independent of such forces. Linda Alcoff writes,

> [I]t is not simply the transcendental notion of subjectivity that Foucault is opposing, that is, a subject that is transhistorical and universal, but the notion of a subject as a being with a kind of primordial interiority that is autonomous or spontaneous in some ontological sense. This is why Foucault says that historicizing the subject is insufficient and that we must dispense with the constituent subject altogether. . . . What his analysis undermines is the conceptualization of the very internal life of consciousness that has been taken, within the Cartesian tradition, to be the ultimate authority, a level of reality about which we can have more direct knowledge than any other and that generates a knowledge least open to interpretation and illusion.[5]

Not only is Foucault opposing a perhaps questionable philosophical formulation of transcendental subjectivity—a Kantian or Husserlian transcendental ego—but, according to Alcoff, he is also opposing the more usual, commonsense notion of subjectivity as my own inner life, my own sense of myself persisting through time, my own consciousness as distinct from the various experiences that I undergo, and my ability to originate action.

It is this last issue that most distresses Alcoff and many other feminist and leftist commentators.[6] If we adopt Foucault's analysis of subjectivity as a pluralized, historically emergent effect of networks of power, we allegedly lose any claim to freedom or responsibility—in short, we lose agency. As I have argued elsewhere,[7] I believe this understanding and consequent criticisms of Foucault result from a tendency

to read passages such as the one quoted above about the role of the concept of subjectivity in various philosophical projects alongside other passages where Foucault is concerned with subjectivities as effects of power. In particular, Alcoff cites an interview from 1983 where Foucault says, "It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word *subject:* subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to [one's] own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to."[8]

Surely the two definitions of the word *subject* that Foucault offers here are uncontroversial. And, while subjection of the first sort does compromise agency, subjection of the second sort is the very basis *for* agency; without conscience or self-knowledge surely responsible decision and action could not occur. What troubles Alcoff and others is the last sentence, wherein Foucault suggests that conscience and self-knowledge are effects of subjugation. If it is the case that power is the source of conscience and self-knowledge, then it would appear that individual selves have no control over their own beliefs and hence their own actions; agency is an illusion.

This conclusion can be avoided, however, if we take very seriously Foucault's account of power. Foucault insists that there is no such thing as power, no entity that stands apart from and causes "its" effects.[9] Power is an event, not a thing. It is not a cause that generates effects external to it. It exists only in its exercise, its occurrence, and it occurs as sets of relations. Within these relations of repeating events, selves (among other beings) form. Selves are events of power and remain always dependent upon repetitions of the power-events that maintain them. Consciences, self-understandings, capacities for judgment and creative practice come to be within these networks of repeating events. Subjugation occurs and subjects emerge, but the power relations that afford these emergences are not therefore external to them. Selves are not constrained by powers external and foreign to them. Relations and networks of power *are* selves, *are* subjects.[10]

The reason many commentators are troubled by Foucault's insistence on seeing subjectivities as "effects" of power is that they fail to revise their conception of power along Foucauldian lines. They persist in understanding power as an entity external to the entities it produces. Therefore they tend to view power as a kind of agent itself, the *real* agent of historical events, one that robs human individuals of their

freedom by controlling their behavior and beliefs. In other words, they fail to make the analytic reassignment that Foucault insists upon; they fail to understand subjectivity as historical and then accuse Foucault of simply eliminating *human* subjectivity while promoting the subjectivity of power.

For Foucault the genealogist, all subjectivity is historically emergent. He writes, "Where the soul pretends unification or the self fabricates a coherent identity, the genealogist sets out to study the beginning—numberless beginnings whose faint traces and hints of color are readily seen by an historical eye. The analysis of descent permits the dissociation of the self, its recognition and displacement as an empty synthesis, in liberating a profusion of lost events."[11] This means, of course, that all subjectivity occurs in and as relations of power. But this does not mean that agency is illusory or that individual selves cannot take responsibility, create new things, or deliberately undertake to change themselves and the world around them. The question for Foucault, then, is: How do such beings with these capacities and others come into existence? How have these beings been effected and how do they effect changes in themselves and others? What relations exist between these beings and the systems of knowledge that they produce and that produce them?[12] These questions are thoroughly historical even while they are also thoroughly philosophical. But because subjectivities are historical, because capacities and self-knowledges differ across different subjectivities, the philosophical questions cannot be addressed outside specified historical contexts. How madmen came to exist and engage in practices of self-transformation is a different question from how homosexuals came to exist and engage in practices of self-transformation. There is no answer to the question of how subjectivity comes to exist for the simple reason that there is no such thing as subjectivity per se. There are only madmen and women, delinquents, homosexuals, citizens, Christians, and so on. But these subjectivities assuredly do exist—or at least have existed—and they can be objects of historico-philosophical (or, in other words, genealogical) investigation.

## The Subject for Heidegger

All of this would seem to make Foucault's work incompatible with Heidegger's work in *Being and Time*. Indeed, Kevin R. Hill has argued that "[t]hroughout Foucault's early 'archeological' works, *Being and*

*Time* occupies a central position as an object of criticism."[13] In particular, Hill argues, Foucault is critical of Heidegger's attempt

> to move beyond the everyday to an interpretation of what Dasein really is (even while Dasein attempts to flee this knowledge), i.e., being-toward-death. This core of our being is intended as an ahistorical feature of Dasein which must enter into any of its comportments whatsoever—indeed, it is meant to be *the* transcendental condition for human existence. (335)

If Hill's assessment of Heidegger's project in *Being and Time* is correct, Foucault's abandonment of transcendental explanation and his complete historicization of human subjectivity is utterly irreconcilable with Heidegger's work—whether or not Foucault deliberately criticizes *Being and Time.*

Hill goes on to discuss Foucault's *Birth of the Clinic,* claiming that "[a]ccording to Foucault, prior to the nineteenth century, the concept of death was radically excluded from the concepts of life and nature as a kind of counter-force, and this conceptual structure made medical pathology an unintelligible enterprise" (335). In other words, Hill maintains, human experience of death has varied through history, so in Foucault's view it cannot serve as a constitutive feature of human existence transcendent to history.

Indeed, to this extent at least, Hill is undeniably correct. Foucault does claim in *The Birth of the Clinic* that death is completely reconfigured and realigned in medical discourses at the end of the eighteenth century,[14] and he goes on to claim that this change in the meaning of death is what gives us moderns our understanding of ourselves.[15] He reasserts this same claim in *The Order of Things* when he argues that the modern episteme, which is now in the process of crumbling, is rooted in death: "Is death not that upon the basis of which knowledge in general is possible?"[16] Death, as we understand it and as it figures into our knowledges and practices, is therefore a modern phenomenon, not a transhistorical one. Furthermore, Hill continues, the analytic of finitude that Foucault criticizes in *The Order of Things* "begins with Kant [and] reaches . . . its consummate expression in Heidegger's *Being and Time*" (337). Thus Foucault's announcement of the death of man is, in effect, also an announcement of the death of the kind of philosophical project that *Being and Time* represents.

While Hill's points are important, and he may well be right that one of Foucault's major targets in some of his work—particularly in

*The Birth of the Clinic* and *The Order of Things*—is the existentialist thought that Heidegger's early writings helped to initiate, the characterization of Heidegger's analytic of Dasein that Hill puts forth is not the only possible interpretation of Heidegger's work, and in fact is not the best interpretation. Far from seeking a transcendental structure or foundation for human being—which is, of course, what Foucault's historicization of subjectivity precludes—Heidegger is seeking a way to think about human existence that does not turn human being into a being-present. An ahistorical characteristic is an ever-present characteristic; it is something that defies temporality or at least that maintains itself in one mode of temporality. Insofar as human being, or subjectivity, has been thought that way, Heidegger's work is destructive of it.[17] Even prior to *Being and Time,* for example in his lecture course from the summer of 1923, Heidegger insists, "Dasein is not a 'thing' like a piece of wood nor such a thing as a plant—nor does it consist of experiences, and still less is it a subject (an ego) standing over against objects (which are not the ego)."[18] The term *Dasein* and the use made of the term *Dasein* are intended to move our thought away from the tradition that seeks transcendental structures. Heidegger writes:

> In choosing a term to designate this region of being and appropriately demarcate it, we have avoided the expression "human Dasein" [human existence], "human being," and will continue to do so. In all its traditional categorial forms, the concept of man fundamentally obstructs what we are supposed to bring into view as facticity. The question "What is man?" blocks its own view of what it is really after with an object foreign to it. (*Ontology,* 21)

And we do not see a departure from this position in *Being and Time.* Heidegger is adamant from the beginning of his analytic of Dasein that "[t]his being . . . never has the kind of being of what is merely objectively present within the world."[19] Just as Foucault announces his opposition to the phenomenological methods that posit an ahistorical subject, Heidegger announces his opposition to the medieval and modern philosophical thinking that substantializes human existence. He opens *Being and Time* with declarations such as this:

> One of our first tasks will be to show that the point of departure from an initially given *ego* and subject totally fails to see the phenomenal content of Da-sein. Every idea of a "subject" . . . still posits the *subjectum (hupokeimenon) ontologically* along with it, no matter how

energetic one's ontic protestations against the "substantial soul" or the "reification of consciousness." (*B&T,* 43)

For Heidegger, as for Foucault, subjectivity is never treated as a substance, a foundation, or an origin, even when it is treated as a central philosophical issue. Hill may want to argue, as does Michel Haar,[20] that Heidegger fails to think Dasein without surreptitiously positing an ahistorical transcendental feature of human existence, and thus he might argue that Heidegger's work differs from Foucault's in its degree of success; but in aim there is more similarity than difference. Both thinkers are attempting to move away from traditional conceptions of subjectivity and into a way of thinking that disciplines itself to history rather than to transcendental truth.

Furthermore, deathliness is not an ever-present transcendental condition for the possibility of Dasein, as Hill apparently would have it. Dasein's deathliness is its possibility for absence, discontinuity, cessation, passage. Dasein's deathliness is its being in history, its lack of eternality or rest in the self-same. Thinking Dasein's deathliness is thinking its nontranscendentality. Heidegger moreover does not posit a *consciousness* of deathliness as a necessary feature or characteristic of Dasein; Dasein is not given to itself as a subject who has deathliness ever before it as an object. Dasein just *is* deathly and ex-ists in that way of being. Awareness of deathliness also occurs, of course; even consciousness of deathliness may occur. But *consciousness* of deathliness or limit or loss is not what makes Dasein Dasein. In no way, therefore, is deathliness an essentially present thing either in Dasein's being or in Dasein's thinking. Dasein *is* as a being who may not be.

It is certainly a mistake to read Heidegger's analytic of Dasein as an analysis of human subjectivity squarely within the tradition of Descartes and Kant. Heidegger's work is not an extension of that tradition; it is a break from that tradition and a critique of it. Nevertheless, Heidegger was never able to finish the analysis he began in *Being and Time.* Despite his intention to work against the metaphysics of presence and to think Dasein against the long reign of substantial subjectivity, he could not fulfill his aim. Otto Pöggeler, among others, claims that the work was bound to fail, "because its point of departure carried within it the necessity of failure."[21] Despite himself, Pöggeler argues, Heidegger was too foundationalist in orientation, too intent upon wanting-to-ground. He starts with Dasein in an effort to secure or found his investigation into the question of being. Dasein's

role in *Being and Time* is to stabilize the *Seinsfrage*, which means Dasein's non-self-identity is perpetually at odds with its function as analytic, phenomenological origin. Pöggeler writes, "Only slowly did Heidegger's thinking relinquish its wanting-to-ground. Experiencing the thrownness of the grounding projection had to be deepened to experiencing the abysmal character of the truth of Being" (130). The problem, according to Pöggeler, lay primarily in Heidegger's use of metaphysical language to undo metaphysical, or representational think-ing. As he struggled with the questions his own work was raising, however, Heidegger's language gradually transformed, which made it possible for him to move beyond the quasi-foundationalist tendencies of the analytic of Dasein.

Nonetheless, Pöggeler emphasizes that Heidegger's early work, for all its flaws, does not come to an end in anticipation of the later work; there are not two Heideggers. *Being and Time* fails only on its own most literal terms. Much more importantly, it also succeeds. Its suc-cess lies in the fact that it serves as a pathway for Heidegger and for Heidegger's readers through a set of fundamental questions toward a different way of conceiving of those questions in particular and of philosophical practice in general. If we read Heidegger's work as a pathway, as Pöggeler suggests, rather than as a set of assertions and arguments, we will experience it in its eventful occurrence as an un-folding. It is this way of reading, I will argue in the next section, that allows Heidegger's work to move with or at least close to Foucault's.

## Care

For Heidegger in *Being and Time,* Dasein is care.[22] Ontically this means that Dasein watches over, protects, repairs, and in general takes care of things and is concerned with and about others and self. All this is be-cause things can decay and break and people can be injured or die. Care bespeaks an alertness to passage and deathliness. But this way of con-struing care does not constitute an adequate understanding of Heideg-ger's ontological claim that the being of Dasein is care. Fundamentally and primordially, care is not a project that Dasein inevitably takes on any more than deathliness is fundamentally and primordially an object of cognition. In Heidegger's terms, Dasein is a being that is always con-cerned about its being; it *is* always as ex-isting. It is a moving toward its own potentiality-for-being (and for nonbeing). Dasein is always ahead of itself, so to speak.[23] It is facticity. Ex-isting is a kind of stretching

along, never resting in self-identity. It is this moving-ahead-of-itself in perpetual non-self-identity that is what Dasein *is*.

In this sense, Dasein *is* care—rather than, say, a subjectivity characterized by care or behaving with care. Dasein as care displaces subjectivity as substance with qualities. Dasein is an ever-non-self-identical ex-isting, "itself" only in ever moving beyond itself. This is Heidegger's claim. But more importantly, it is also simultaneously Heidegger's practice. In the process and effort of thinking Dasein as care, that thinking "itself" undoes itself, becomes nonidentical with itself. In this process, Heidegger is caught up in a movement of thinking that necessarily alters the thinking he is engaged in and the agent of that thinking. Within that movement of thinking, our very Cartesian conception of what thinking itself is must give way. For just as being is no longer thinkable in terms of objective presence, thinking is no longer the activity of subjects. Thus, just as subjects (and objects) are not fundamental in Foucault's thinking through the historical constitution of subjectivities, subjects and objects are not fundamental in this Heideggerian analysis of human existence, and through the course of this movement of thinking, subjects and objects lose their power to order our philosophical world.

Here particularly, in his discussion of care, we see the moving of Heidegger's thinking moving ahead of Heidegger's thinking. *What* he thinks is giving way to thinking such that that particular *what* is jeopardized. The effort to think ex-istence beyond the dictates of the Cartesian tradition eventually pushes itself beyond the questions it first poses for itself in order to get underway. For in this diminishing power of Cartesian subjects and objects, this analytic of Dasein, too, gradually loses its power and urgency. As the movement of thinking that is the analytic of Dasein does its work, it violates its own intentional ground. Thinking Dasein as care was, for it, a way, a path as Pöggeler puts it, beyond Dasein. The analytic of Dasein is an incomplete project, because it is a project of self-overcoming. Hence, not only is *Being and Time* about Dasein as care, but Heidegger's *work* in *Being and Time* essentially *is* care, and it is care that makes the thinking of care as conceived in *Being and Time* inessential.

Nevertheless, here Heidegger's work once again appears to be very different from Foucault's. The last of Foucault's books to be published in his lifetime was *Le souci de soi* (The care of the self), a book about ancient practices of self-improvement or self-cultivation.[24] In

that text and in numerous interviews and lectures given prior to its publication, Foucault discusses various specialized activities that were intended as forms of personal, subjective strengthening or discipline.[25] These practices were not ordinary, everyday concernful "taking care of things," like Heidegger's descriptions of the ontic expressions of Dasein as care. They were *askeses*, extra-ordinary disciplines that people imposed upon themselves to become better—stronger, better able to govern, more alert, more in tune with divinity—than they were before, activities designed to lift individuals out of average everydayness. Furthermore, Foucault seems favorably disposed toward such practices—not the reinstatement of the specific ancient practices that he examines but the creative undertaking that such practices represent.[26] And all of this seems utterly opposed to anything Heidegger would advocate, judging by passages in *Being and Time* such as the following: "The expression 'care for oneself,' following the analogy of taking care and concern, would be a tautology. Care cannot mean a special attitude toward the self, because the self is already characterized ontologically as being-ahead-of-itself" (*B&T,* 180). What Heidegger means by *Sorge*—an ontological determination of the being of Dasein—and what Foucault means by *souci*—a deliberate practice of self-cultivation—seem analytically incompatible.

Yet I want to argue that while the words are differently employed, in fact the *philosophical* practices that Heidegger and Foucault engage in under the rubric of care and especially under the rubric of thinking care are closely allied. As I have argued above, Heidegger is involved in—caught up in—a self-overcoming movement of thinking that fundamentally alters thinking and selves in ways unforeseeable at that thinking's outset. His work is a path without a defined, stable, static destination. In this respect, what Heidegger does is very similar to what Foucault does and advocates doing when he thinks through self-development and self-constitution in disciplinary practices. As I have argued in detail elsewhere, Foucault sees the practice of philosophy itself as a discipline that functions—or at least can function—as a form of care of the self,[27] as he understands that phrase. To make my point, it will be necessary to offer a brief discussion of the phenomenon that he names "normalization" and of care of the self as normalized practice.

Foucault gives an extensive account of the emergence of normalization in *Surveiller et punir (Discipline and Punish)*. He asserts there

that normalization is a form of disciplinary power that is pervasive in present-day society and has been prevalent since the nineteenth century.[28] Normalizing disciplinary power is a set of organizational forces that give shape and meaning to virtually every aspect of the modern world. A fundamental rule within normalizing disciplines is the notion that all living things (and many nonliving things and processes) are developmental in their very nature, and their development can be captured and characterized statistically; it can be "normed." Nowadays the technical experts among us norm almost everything—from intelligence quotients to weather patterns. And all of us analyze things and events and assess them with reference to norms. But norms are not taken to be inviolable givens; we know that processes of development can be influenced and redirected in various ways, and new norms can be created. Normalizing power does not simply determine norms and force individuals to approximate them; it is not primarily prohibitive. Rather, normalizing power establishes norms, reformulates entire developmental trajectories, and uses the developmental power it discovers in all things as a medium for re-creating the world.

Foucault's analysis of normalization often presents such networks of power and knowledge as frightening, insidious, and overwhelming. There is no outside to this way of ordering, no counter-order to which we could escape. "Power is everywhere"[29]; "power *is* 'always already there,' . . . one is never 'outside' it, . . . there are no 'margins' for those who break with the system to gambol in."[30] Since subjectivities are formed in history, in networks of power, our very identities are based on normalizing power/knowledge networks; those networks constitute us and hold us firmly in their grip. But Foucault is no fatalist, despite the bleak picture he paints in *Discipline and Punish* and elsewhere. He is a Nietzschean; he is alert, always, to the movements of self-overcoming within all movements, all events and networks of power.

It is this deep and powerful Nietzschean undercurrent in all of Foucault's genealogical work that offsets the threat of fatalistic despair. All things change; nothing retains its identity through time. "The forces operating in history are not controlled by destiny or regulative mechanisms, but respond to haphazard conflicts."[31] Systems of power/knowledge do not simply subsist; to perpetuate themselves they must repeat themselves in exercise from moment to moment. And thus *there is always the possibility that they will alter, fail, or realign*

themselves—in large ways or in small ones. We may not be able to step outside of normalizing power, but normalizing power is, nevertheless, neither monolithic nor eternal. On the contrary, the relations that produce and reproduce it at every turn are ultimately unstable and changeable. "To say that one can never be 'outside' power does not mean that one is trapped and condemned to defeat no matter what."[32]

Nevertheless, to say that systems or networks of power are changeable is also not to say that those sets of relations are subject to any person's control. How conflict or challenges may affect the networks is not completely predictable. However, we know from history that in some instances at least, human beings have developed ways to alter the selves that they have been made to be within the networks of power/knowledge that formed them. Precisely this was what Foucault was studying when he examined the *askesis* of the ancients, their *techne tou biou,* in the last two volumes of the *History of Sexuality* series, *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self.* These ancient practices of self-cultivation figured as care demonstrate the possibility that human beings can cultivate themselves as forms of subjectivity. They show that there exists the possibility of intentional creative change, even for what Foucault terms an art of life.

Within normalizing networks of power, in particular, this possibility for intentional creativity looms large. Because of the crucial role of the phenomenon of development within normalizing power/ knowledge networks, those networks are especially susceptible to change. Therefore it is possible that we could cultivate selves—types or modes of subjectivity—within normalizing networks of power/ knowledge in ways that may be self-violating and thus could break open a new space for new power/knowledge formations. This is, surely, Foucault's aim when he undertakes analyses of such means of self-cultivation from his own position within a normalized society. By studying and attempting such practices, we can turn the energy of developmental normalization against itself by inciting development not along predetermined, normed lines toward a known goal—as disciplinary power always seeks to do—but along developmental lines themselves. We can engage in developmental self-cultivation for its own sake, embrace normalization without embracing the drive for absolute control that normalization has embodied. In other words, we can honor the path without thought of the destination; we can think

and act with movements of self-overcoming in the absence of a static objective. This is the direction that Foucault's ethical work in the late 1970s and 1980s clearly points—the development of development beyond the normalized category of development. In short, then, and in words other than his own, Foucault's call for care of the self, his call to an art of existence, is a call to engage—philosophically, practically, bodily—in a rejection of the metaphysics of presence in favor of an embodied affirmation of ex-istence.[33]

## Conclusion

As I acknowledged at the beginning of this essay, it may very well seem upon first reading that Foucault's rejection of subjectivity as a primary analytic category and Heidegger's central attention to human experience in his phenomenology of Dasein place these two thinkers in severe opposition. And it is true that their projects are in some respects fundamentally different from one another. A careful reading of both, however, can generate an appreciation for the similarities in their critiques of traditional conceptions of subjectivity and, more importantly, in the effects their work can have on our thinking and even on our embodied experience of ourselves as subjects.

Both philosophers' works effect displacements of subjectivity that can usher in fundamental transformations in thought and life. For Foucault, philosophy is an *askesis*, an exercise of thinking that moves beyond its own ground, that transforms thinking itself.[34] For Heidegger, too, philosophy is an exercise, a movement of thinking that transforms thinking. Regardless of countless differences in emphasis, vocabulary, approach, and simple temperament, therefore, both men practice philosophy as a *way*, a movement that leaves nothing immune from transformation—neither the object of thought, nor thinking's subject, nor the traditions of thinking that set up such categories in the first place. To think with either philosopher is to abandon oneself to movements of self-overcoming that affirm history, passage, and change above stasis and essential identity. However different they may be, these thinkers' paths converge in the nonplace of difference.

## Notes

1. Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977,* ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 117.

2. There are other passages, however, that commentators often cite in this connection. Consider, for example, this statement from an interview in 1984: "[The subject] is not a substance; it is a form and this form is not above all or always identical to itself." 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: MIT Press, 1988), 10.

3. In fact Nietzsche is asserting, quite specifically, that there is no such thing as a unitary Ego. So even his remarks in the aphorisms surrounding #370 need to be seen as something other than a blanket rejection of any notion of human subjectivity or agency whatsoever. It is very important in this discussion to keep careful track of definitions of terms.

4. Michel Foucault, "Afterword: The Subject and Power," in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics,* ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 209.

5. Linda Alcoff, "Feminist Politics and Foucault: The Limits to a Collaboration," in *Crises in Continental Philosophy,* ed. Arleen Dallery and Charles Scott with Holley Roberts (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1992), 71.

6. For an example of a leftist critique of the same sort, see Michael Walzer, "The Politics of Michel Foucault," in *Foucault: A Critical Reader,* ed. David C. Hoy (London: Blackwell, 1986), 61.

7. Ladelle McWhorter, *Bodies and Pleasures: Foucault and the Politics of Sexual Normalization* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), chapter 3, esp. 74–79.

8. Michel Foucault, "Afterword: The Subject and Power," 212.

9. See, for example, Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics," in Dreyfus and Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics,* 219.

10. I have made this point at length in my "Asceticism/Askesis: Foucault's Thinking Historical Subjectivity," in *Ethics and Danger: Essays on Heidegger and Continental Philosophy,* ed. Arleen B. Dallery and Charles Scott, with Holley Roberts (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), 243–54.

11. Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice,* ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 145–46.

12. For this last question, see especially Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in *Technologies of the Self,* ed. Luther Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick Hutton (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 18.

13. Kevin R. Hill, "Foucault's Critique of Heidegger," *Philosophy Today* (winter 1989): 334.

14. See Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic,* trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Vintage Press, 1973), 156.

15. See Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic,* 197, where he writes: "[F]rom the integration of death into medical thought is born a medicine that is given as a science of the individual. And, generally speaking, the experience of individuality in modern culture is bound up with that of death: from Hölderlin's Empedocles to Nietzsche's Zarathustra, and on to Freudian man."

16. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Random House, 1970), 375.

17. For an extended and very helpful discussion of this whole issue, see François Raffoul, *Heidegger and the Subject* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1998).

18. Martin Heidegger, *Ontology—The Hermeneutics of Facticity,* trans. John van Buren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 37. Hereafter *Ontology.*

19. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time,* trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), 40. Hereafter *B&T.*

20. See Michel Haar, *Heidegger and the Essence of Man,* trans. William McNeill (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), esp. xxxiv and 174.

21. Otto Pöggeler, *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking,* trans. Daniel Magurshak and Sigmund Barber (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1987), 144.

22. See Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 178–83.

23. See ibid., 179.

24. Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self,* trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1986).

25. See, for example, Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in *Technologies of the Self,* 16–49; Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress," in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics,* ed. Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 229–52; summaries of the 1982 and 1983 courses at the Collège de France, translated as "Subjectivity and Truth" and "The Hermeneutics of the Subject" in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth,* vol. 1 of *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984,* ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997), 87–92 and 93–106, respectively; and Michel Foucault, "Writing the Self," in *Foucault and His Interlocutors,* ed. Arnold Davidson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 234–47; see also Michel Foucault, *Discourse and Truth: The Problematization of Parrhesia,* typescript of the seminar given by Foucault at Berkeley in 1983.

26. In "On the Genealogy of Ethics" in response to a question about the possibility of returning to techniques of the self like those practiced by the ancients, Foucault said, "I think there is no exemplary value in a period which is not our period . . . it is not something to get back to" (see 234). But he goes on to say in the same interview that the ancient practice of an "art of existence" or "art of life" is something worth developing. He says, "From the idea that the self is not given to us, I think there is only one practical consequence: we have to create ourself as a work of art" (237).

27. See my *Bodies and Pleasures,* 186–92.

28. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 183 ff.

29. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality,* vol. 1, *An Introduction,* trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1978), 93.

30. Michel Foucault, "Power and Strategies," in Gordon, *Power/Knowledge,* 141.

31. Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," 154.

32. Foucault, "Power and Strategies," 141–42.

33. I argued for this reevaluation of normalization at length in my *Bodies and Pleasures;* see especially chapter 7.

34. See Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure,* trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 9.