

4 Subjectivity

I have tried to get out from the philosophy of the subject through a genealogy of the subject, by studying the constitution of the subject across history which has led us up to the modern concept of the self.

–Foucault (PT 176)

In this chapter, I begin by exploring Foucault’s turn towards the subject, defending Foucault’s own claims for the continuity of this approach with his earlier work, explaining Foucault’s attitude towards the subject, before going on to look at the relation of the subject to power in Foucault. I argue for Gilles Deleuze’s (1986) Nietzschean reading of Foucault on power and the subject, debunking other readings, primarily Judith Butler’s, as based in misreading pronouncements by Foucault about *contemporary* subjectivity as being general claims pertaining to subjectivity *per se*, and as conflating Foucault’s approach to subjectivity with Jacques Lacan’s account of the formation of the subject, and with Althusser’s concept of interpellation.

THE TURN TOWARDS THE SUBJECT

The status of the subject in Foucault’s thought is a vexed issue. Despite this, there has been no really thorough attempt to analyse Foucault’s usage of the term; this lack perhaps contributes to the vexation. Much in the same way as no-one has really focussed on the theme of power in Foucault, while dozens have written about it in a tangential way, so too with the question of the subject we find works whose titles promise a comprehensive treatment of the theme, but which in fact do not contain one.¹ As with power, the most systematic account we have is to be found in a journal article by David Weberman, in this case “Are Freedom and Anti-Humanism Compatible?”

For our part, we have a specific purpose in looking at subjectivity, namely to understand what role Foucault assigns for the subject (ontologically) in relation to power. This entails dealing with the issues of what exactly Foucault conceives the subject to be, and whether this conception changes across his intellectual career.

Foucault was, for a time, as we have seen, simply, infamously anti-subjectivist, excluding any notion of the subject from his work. To this extent, there is an undeniable shift when Foucault starts talking about the subject, and indeed becomes preoccupied by it. As we saw, Foucault’s initial work

on power is an extension of the project of decentering theoretical analysis away from the subject, putting forward an account of power as essentially subjectless, as having dynamics of its own which are ill-understood or overlooked by those caught up in its strategies.

However, it is actually at the point where Foucault starts talking about power that he begins to reintroduce the subject and subjective phenomena in his writing. Foucault introduces *Discipline and Punish* as “a history of the modern soul” (DP 23), in marked contrast to his previous preoccupation with the abstract rules for the production of discourse. This trend becomes more noticeable in *The Will to Knowledge*; in dealing with sexuality, Foucault can hardly ignore the subjective, and the final two volumes of *The History of Sexuality* see the subject, or rather the self, take centre-stage.

This is not the picture which is usually drawn of Foucault’s turn towards the subject. It is generally seen as a rather sudden turn, made around 1980, rather than the gradual shift throughout the ’70s which I am positing. It is frequently alleged, moreover, that Foucault backtracks on his antisubjectivism, being forced latterly to concede the existence of a subjectivity he denied or pronounced dead. Slavoj Žižek (1999, 253), for example, characterises Foucault’s manoeuvre as a reversal on the question of the subject, from saying that we can only understand power by bracketing the subject, to reinstating the subject as essential. This argument builds on the criticism of Foucault’s work, levelled since the 1970s, that he ignores the normative and the ethical, the subject and freedom: since Foucault in his final work starts talking about ethics, the subject and freedom in as many words for the first time, critics have interpreted this as an admission of defeat on Foucault’s part, in which he is forced at last to acknowledge the necessity of the humanist concepts he so long bracketed, thus proving that his earlier thought was baseless relativism.

Such allegations are immensely important for our purposes, since if they are correct it would indicate some kind of rupture in Foucault’s thinking about power, and indeed his repudiation of his earlier views concerning power. Now, we have already addressed the issue of Foucault’s alleged relativism about truth (in Chapter 1), and the alleged rupture in his political thought in his turn towards the micropolitical perspective (in Chapter 3). In this part of the book then, we will consider the introduction of a positive concept of the subject in Foucault’s thought, and how this relates to his views on power.

Foucault himself, far from presenting his new focus on subjectivity as a novel turn in his thought, tends rather to see it retrospectively as fundamentally in continuity with his earlier work. In the 1984 interview, one of Foucault’s last, “The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom,” for example, he understands his archaeological investigations precisely as analyses of the relation between the subject and truth, despite that these two notions were not problematised as such at the time:

I have tried to find out how the human subject fits into certain games of truth, whether they were truth games that take the form of a science . . . or truth games such as those one may encounter in institutions or practices of control. This is the theme of my book *The Order of Things*, in which I attempted to see how, in scientific discourses, the human subject defines itself. (EW1 281)

Indeed, as early as 1978 Foucault identifies subjectivity as having always been central to his project:

Everything that I have occupied myself with up till now essentially regards the way in which people in Western societies have had experiences that were used in the process of knowing a determinate, objective set of things while at the same time constituting themselves as subjects under fixed and determinate conditions. For example, knowing madness by being constituted as a rational subject; knowing economics by being constituted as the laboring subject. (RM 70–71)

Now, Foucault (EW1 282; UP 6), in “The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom” and in the second volume of the *History of Sexuality, The Use of Pleasure (L’usage des plaisirs)*, does nevertheless identify a “shift” in his thinking about the subject, but this shift is effectively a change of focus, the third that his work has undergone, the first being the move to concentrating on discourse, the second that towards power, and the third, now, towards the subjective. This does not imply that the subjective perspective is exclusive of the analysis of power, any more than the analysis of power excludes the analysis of discourse; rather, the three are complementary while remaining irreducible to one another.

It is my position (Kelly 2004b, 97) that Foucault’s oeuvre is unified not by a single line of argument so much as by a single problematic, which is how Deleuze described his own work to Foucault (EW2 343). Foucault ultimately sees the problematisation of the relationship of truth to subjectivity as the animus for all his work—even though description of it in these terms is new—and the problematisation of power as one moment in this broader problematisation. It is not surprising or suspect that he retrospectively reassesses the meaning of his earlier work, nor should this reassessment be taken as diminishing or renouncing that earlier work. Foucault is famously opposed to the presumption of coherence of a thinker’s oeuvre—that Foucault ultimately claims coherency for his own could thus be interpreted as hypocrisy, but I would suggest that in fact it indicates that Foucault actually does believe coherence to be there, in spite of his lack of an attempt to ensure his works cohered into a whole.

In his last interview,² which took place mere months after the above-quoted “Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom,” Foucault does nevertheless criticise his earlier thinking about subjectivity:

In the *History of Madness*, in *The Order of Things*, and also in *Discipline and Punish*, many things that were implicit could not be rendered explicit because of the way in which I posed the problems. I tried to mark out three types of problem: that of truth, that of power, and that of individual conduct. These three domains of experience can be understood only in relation to each other and only with each other. What hampered me in the preceding books was to have considered the first two experiences without taking into account the third. By bringing this last experience to light, I had a guiding thread which didn't need to be justified by rhetorical methods by which one could avoid one of the three fundamental domains of experience. (DE2 1516; cf. FL 465–66)

This admission of the importance of the individual is then the same type of change in Foucault's thought as occurred with the introduction of power and the political, the addition of a new "domain of experience." First, Foucault dealt with truth, but then he realised that one could not understand truth without looking at power. Ultimately Foucault has decided that this approach too was insufficient because it excluded subjectivity, but only insofar as that exclusion prevented him from spelling out what should have been spelt out. Now, while we should recognise that omissions are important to the meaning of a text, the deficiencies of the earlier methodologies do not mean that we have to repudiate the works which used them in light of this late realisation of Foucault's. Foucault is claiming only that there was something in those works that is not said, not something true which is actively denied nor something false that is asserted. To correct this deficiency, one must simply read Foucault's earlier work with an eye to the subjective dimension which is missing. This might seem to repudiate outright the endeavour of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, a book of methodology that advocated the quasi-structuralist bracketing of as much as possible outside an immediate domain of study. However, Foucault doesn't explicitly rule out the usefulness of this method in his late work; rather, he merely takes the line that the method did hamper him in "the preceding books," which might be read to mean *The Will to Knowledge, Discipline and Punish* and "The Order of Discourse," and not the *Archaeology* which came before those; Foucault could consistently maintain that the hermetic analysis of discourse as such still has its uses, just as he was quite explicit when doing that hermetic analysis that that was not the only valid approach.

I am wary, however, of the concept of "domains of experience," used for the first and only time by Foucault in the above-quoted passage. It does not really seem to describe its referents accurately: it seems odd to define "truth" in terms of experience, and downright inaccurate to describe power in this way—while power necessarily entails experiences, whether something is or is not power is a matter of the experiences involved—and even personal conduct isn't ordinarily defined experientially. If anything, these look like domains of *practice*. While they of course all involve experiences,

it is their characteristics as particular types of practice, not their experiential qualities, that differentiate them. In the introduction to *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault writes, I think more accurately, of “three axes that constitute” (UP 4; my emphasis) experience; see also the original version of that preface, in which Foucault (EW1 202) again calls them axes, and also very clearly makes the appropriate link to practices: “The study of forms of experience can thus proceed from an analysis of ‘practices’” (EW1 201).

We can I think write the precise notion of a “domain of experience” off as an anomaly, while defending the substance of the claims Foucault is making, because the text of this final interview is peculiarly unreliable. Foucault was ill by the time of the interview, in a terminal decline indeed, and too ill thereafter to be able subsequently to proofread the edited version of the interview prior to publication as was his usual habit. Rather, it was edited by Daniel Defert, who could not of course edit it for theoretical content as Foucault would have done himself; the interview is therefore subject to a disclaimer in *Dits et écrits* (DE2 1515). As we shall see, there are several more anomalous statements made by Foucault in this interview.

Foucault’s correct general point across all the quoted sources is that he had raised three types of questions, in three different stages in his career, and that there are reciprocal relations between these domains, which are necessary to understanding one another. It is also important that, along with the concept of the subject, Foucault is here reintroducing the concept of experience, and saying that it is necessary to look at the experiential dimension—which is of course precisely what is ordinarily called the “subjective” dimension—of truth, power and conduct to understand them.

THE ONTOLOGICAL STATUS OF THE SUBJECT

Foucault has certainly not back-tracked on an ontological position about the subject in any case, since he never *denied* the subject’s existence, but rather only bracketed it as a consideration. He never thought that the subject could be reduced to a position produced by discourse. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault (AK 92–96) acknowledges the role of the subject in the enunciative function, in the form of the “enunciating subject” (AK 95) and as implied by the statement “in determining what position can and must be occupied by any individual if he is to be the subject of it” (AK 96). Foucault is clear that this subject defined by the statement is not all there is to the subject, but rather simply the subject taken from the perspective of analysis of the statement: “I wanted not to exclude the problem of the subject, but to define the positions and functions that the subject could occupy in the diversity of discourse” (AK 200). In “What is an Author?,” another classically anti-subjective, archaeological text, Foucault says that the subject “must be stripped of its creative role and analysed as a complex

and variable function of discourse” (LCP 138), but this does not mean that all the subject is a function of discourse; rather, it merely lays out a way of analysing its discursive role: “suspicions arise concerning the absolute nature and creative role of the subject. But the subject should not be entirely abandoned” (LCP 137).

In Foucault’s last exploration of the nature of discourse as such, “Truth and Juridical Forms” (*see* Chapter 1), Foucault begins looking at the subject itself. Now, Foucault of course takes an anti-subjectivist position here to go with the Nietzschean epistemology he is espousing: “If it is true that between knowledge and the instincts . . . there is only discontinuity, relations of domination and servitude, power relations, then it’s not God that disappears but the subject in its unity and its sovereignty” (EW3 10). We might then expect Foucault here to take the tack that Nietzsche, at his most extreme, takes of simply decrying the subject as a “mere fiction” (GM I:13). For all his Nietzscheanism, however, Foucault never explicitly takes such a stark position himself. The project Foucault sets himself in 1973 is rather the positive one of “*reworking* the theory of the subject” (EW3 2; emphasis added).

Chauncey Colwell (1994, 56) makes the point that “it is important to remember that Foucault does not announce the “death” of the subject. The subject has not gone the way of God, man or the author.”³ In fact, Foucault himself never actually announced the death of anything: “The Death of the Author” was an article by Foucault’s sometime companion Roland Barthes (*see* Macey 1993, 81–82), not Foucault himself, although that essay was an influence on him, and one he appears to endorse (DE1 821); the death of God was announced by Nietzsche and Foucault never explicitly endorsed it (cf. RC 85); and Foucault never even pronounced man dead, but rather vaguely threatened him with extinction at the end of *The Order of Things*, and contemporaneously declares that we are “the last man in the Nietzschean sense,” which implies that man is indeed *not* yet dead.⁴ The important, Nietzschean gesture Foucault does make in all these cases is to identify the subject, man, and the author as each being an “invention of recent date” (OT 386).⁵ This does not mean that they do not exist: on the contrary they are the real product of just the sort of battles of impulses that Nietzsche describes.

In “The Ethics of the Concern for the Self as a Practice of Freedom,” Foucault outlines his basic position towards the subject clearly:

Perhaps I did not explain myself adequately. What I rejected was the idea of starting out with a theory of the subject—as is done, for example, in phenomenology or existentialism. . . . What I wanted to show was how the subject constituted itself, in one specific form or another. . . . I had to reject a priori theories of the subject in order to analyze the relationships that may exist between the constitution of the subject and games of truth, practices of power, and so on. . . . [The

subject] is not a substance. It is a form, and this form is not primarily or always identical to itself. (EW1 290)

In common with a whole generation of French intellectuals, Foucault reacted against the orthodoxy of phenomenological philosophy, and particularly its popular French derivative, existentialism (see RC 88). Phenomenology classically, in the works of its originator, Edmund Husserl, taught that the only proper way to approach knowledge was to start with one's own immediate perceptual experience and move out from there. Thus the subject is a blind-spot, or, in the phrase of some phenomenologists, a "hole in being" (Sartre 1958, 624). Thus it is not open to question.

Now, Husserl's pure phenomenology was in itself in France less popular than the philosophy of Husserl's pupil, Martin Heidegger. Heidegger (1962) attacked Husserlian phenomenology for its Cartesianism, for failing to account for the fact that the subject was "always already" engaged in the world, and that as such our concrete activities and social engagements are already woven into the structure of our perception. In France, this critique was carried forward by Foucault's sometime teacher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1967), who had his own direct engagement with Husserl's work, which was very influenced by Heidegger.

Even Heidegger's early work that was so influential in France still begins with Dasein,⁶ which, while it was supposed to be a radical alternative to the constituent subject by considering people in their primordial, historical engagement with the world, still meant starting with the human being, even if very differently from the traditional philosophy of the subject. This problem can be seen clearly in Merleau-Ponty's (1967) Heideggerian phenomenology, wherein the place of Dasein is taken by the "body-subject," an embodied version of the subject.⁷ Foucault, for his part, takes things a step further:

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 the subject within a historical framework. (PK 117)

That quote comes from a 1977 interview. At that point, Foucault is on the cusp of the "return to the subject" diagnosed by some commentators. I think that we can in this passage see the coherence in this "return": Foucault is still talking about "dispensing with" the subject, as anti-subjectivist as ever, but he identifies this precisely with accounting for subjectivity *qua* historical phenomenon—a project, indeed, that he had already staked out in 1973.

Once Foucault starts dealing with the subject, particularly as he starts to study ancient sexuality in his effort to fulfil his *History of Sexuality* project,

Foucault finds himself compelled to fall back on concepts, such as that of experience, that he has long eschewed, because the new subject matter makes it impossible to bracket them from his inquiry. Béatrice Han (2002, 187) argues that this constitutes a “regress to a prephenomenological perspective,” in that Foucault is now deploying phenomenological methods without the whole methodological apparatus of phenomenology to back it. *Pace* Han, however, Foucault has in fact not become interested in the phenomenological perspective of the subject itself at all, but rather in experience qua what is historically constituted, as subsidiary to practices.⁸ Foucault’s problematisation of subjectivity in his late work embraces subjective experience because it is not really possible to examine the subject’s relation to itself without making reference to experience, but he does it by taking subjective experience into consideration from the point of view of practices and technologies, and still does not accept the contents of consciousness as of primary importance.

Even Mark Olssen (1999, 34) errs in saying that “during the 1980s . . . Foucault . . . came to see the self, though constituted by power, as developing a new dimension of subjectivity which derived from power and knowledge but which was not dependent on them”: Foucault does not “come to see” this so much as simply he does *come to be interested in* it—his previous work did not deny the *existence* of the subjective dimension, just the analytical need to include it.

NOMINALISM AND THE ONTOGENESIS OF THE SUBJECT

Foucault is not interested in looking for the origin of the subject: “my problem was not defining the moment from which something like the subject appeared, but rather the ensemble of processes by which the subject exists with its different problems and obstacles and across the forms, which it still hasn’t finished traversing” (FL 472). Foucault calls what he does the “history of the present” (DP 31): it is contemporary subjectivity he is concerned to understand, thus *how* we have been made to constitute ourselves as subjects, rather than *when* this process first began.

However, in his final interview Foucault does make a rather strident comment pertaining to the history of the subject:

Since no Greek thinker ever found a definition of the subject, never looked for one, I would simply say that there was no subject. Which doesn’t mean that the Greeks didn’t strive to define the conditions of an experience, but it wasn’t an experience of the subject; rather it was of the individual, insofar as he sought to constitute himself through self mastery. (FL 473)

The great attraction of Foucault’s approach here is its “strict nominalism,” which is precisely the position Garry Gutting (2003) imputes to the

Late Foucault, which would then follow Nietzsche in saying that the subject is just a word applied to give an appearance of unity to something manifold. If we want to be strictly nominalist, we must say that the subject appeared when the concept of the subject did.

However, Foucault does not elsewhere use the word “subject” so cautiously: in his 1981 and 1982 Collège de France courses, “Subjectivity and Truth” and *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, and in the final volume of *The History of Sexuality, The Care of the Self (Le souci de soi)*, Foucault clearly and repeatedly uses the word “subject” in reference to the Greeks. In view of this, the position Foucault takes in his final interview might seem to represent a deathbed shift in what he considers as constituting a subject. The idea that, after writing books and giving lecture courses explicitly on ancient subjectivity, Foucault might suddenly in his last interview adopt a new view about subjectivity is far-fetched, however. One should again bear in mind the relative unreliability of this interview as a reliable reflection of the nuances of Foucault’s position.

More likely then, Foucault is simply making the point that there is a more recent way of relating to ourselves called the subject, but that the Greeks thought differently. However, this did not stop Foucault from problematising the Greeks’ discourses anachronistically according to our concept, much as he was doing at the same time with the notion of “government” (see Chapter 3).

Notwithstanding the final interview, Foucault is not a nominalist about the subject, but rather a realist. The best example of this realism is Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* position on the soul, something even more apparently unreal than the subject: for Foucault it “exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently around, on, within the body by the functioning of power that is exercised on those punished” (DP 29). This insistence on the reality of something so paradigmatically immaterial is typical of Foucault’s materialism of the incorporeal, a realism which asserts the reality of all things, whether conventionally “material” or conventionally “immaterial.” It is not nominalism, however, because the soul is not simply a matter of the use of the word “soul,” but rather something produced at a certain juncture by certain practices, which historically is linked to use of the word “soul,” but is certainly not historically coextensive with it.

Compare the way Foucault speaks about ancient sexuality in a 1982 interview:

Our distinction in sexual conduct between homo- and heterosexuality is absolutely irrelevant to the Greeks and Romans. This means two things: on the one hand that they would have lacked the notion, the *concept* of the distinction, and on the other that they wouldn’t have had the experience of it. (DE2 1105; cf. FL 363)

Here, Foucault implicitly distinguishes between having a concept of something and having an experience of it. Certainly, our conceptual framework

must play a role in constituting and ordering our experience, but it does not follow that if we have an experience we *must* have a corresponding concept, even if our experiences are bound in some way to affect our conceptual life. Now, the ancients lacked homosexuality both as a conceptual category and as an experience. Foucault's extensive application of the notion of the subject anachronistically in talking about the ancients implies that they had an experience corresponding to subjectivity, without a corresponding concept. As Althusser (1994, 128–29) has it, “Even if it appears under this name (the subject) only with the rise of bourgeois ideology, above all with the rise of legal ideology, the category of the subject . . . is the constitutive category . . . whatever its historical date.”⁹ Thus, the moderns problematised and named the subjectivity already experienced by the ancients: “classical antiquity never problematized the constitution of the self as subject; inversely, beginning with Christianity, there is an appropriation of morality through the theory of the subject” (FL 473), although here I am persuaded by Balibar's (1994) argument that such a problematisation, while it might have begun with Christianity, certainly did not take the form of a theory of the subject till the modern epoch.

SUBJECT(IVA)TION

The question for us is thus one of the constitution of the real subject with respect to power. Foucault coins his own term for the constitution of subjectivity, namely “subjectivation” (the word is written identically in English and French, though it is sometimes translated into English as “subjectivization”),¹⁰ defining subjectivation in his last interview as “the process by which one obtains the constitution of a subject, or more exactly, of a subjectivity, which is obviously only one of the given possibilities for organising self-consciousness” (DE2 1525; cf. FL 472).

Foucault does not invent this term until 1981 or 1982, however. Prior to that, Foucault simply uses the existing French words *assujettissement* and, much less frequently, *sujétion*. These two French words are ordinarily synonyms: while *sujétion* derives from the noun *sujet*, “subject,” and *assujettissement* from the verb *assujettir*, “to subject,” *assujettir* itself derives from *sujet*; hence, both can be accurately rendered in English by the word “subjection.” These two French words and this English word all have broadly the same connotations, in that they usually mean “subjugation,” but literally mean to make something into a subject. That is to say that usually the subject into which we are made in “subjection” is taken to be the passive subject, the test-subject, the subject of the king, rather than the active philosophical or grammatical subject, hence the need for a new word to refer to the constitution of subjectivity.

In *The Will to Knowledge*, Foucault explicitly uses the term *assujettissement* to mean “constitution as ‘subjects’ in both senses of the word” (VS

81; cf. WK 60). Thus, in Foucault's usage, "subjection" signifies the process of becoming subordinated by power as well as the process of becoming a subject," as Butler (1997, 2) puts it,¹¹ although in point of fact it is only *assujettissement* which Foucault endows with this special definition—where he used *sujétion* contemporaneously, for example in a 1976 paper, it was in a more common-or-garden sense, simply to imply subjugation (DE2 1012). Confusingly, Foucault's *assujettissement* is in fact itself sometimes translated into English as "subjugation." I shall henceforth use "subjection" to translate *assujettissement*.

Subjectivation, in contrast to subjection, only refers to our constitution as subjects in one sense, namely the active one, even if this constitution is not possible in practice without also being constituted as a passive subject.

Subjection in the Foucaultian sense is a more recent phenomenon than subjectivity per se, hence than subjectivation. In the full *Will to Knowledge* passage about *assujettissement*, Foucault speaks of

an immense labour to which the West has submitted generations in order to produce—while other forms of work ensured the accumulation of capital—the subjection of men, meaning their constitution as "subjects" in both senses of the word. (VS 81; cf. WK 60)

Before this labour, Foucault says in 1982,

where we moderns understand "subjection [*assujettissement*] of the subject to the order of the law," the Greeks and Romans understood "constitution of the subject as final end for himself through and by the exercise of the truth." (LS 304 ; cf. HS 319)

Note here that Foucault not only uses the word "subject" when referring to the ancients, but actually describes their own way of understanding things using the term: the constitution of the subject in some sense was there prior to subjection.

Foucault invokes the polysemy of the word "subject" again in the part of "The Subject and Power" that he wrote in English, saying, "both meanings [of subject] suggest a form of power that subjugates and makes subject to" (EW3 331). This however implies that this is only one possible form of power, the implication being that there are forms of power that do not perform this dual role. Although the modern form, or "technique," of power is unnamed, Foucault is referring of course precisely to the new productive power that we described in Chapter 2. Thus, we may link subjection precisely to modernity.

Judith Butler (1997, 83) has contributed to misinterpretation of Foucault here by running the concepts of subjection and subjectivation together, indeed using them interchangeably, believing "subjectivation" to be "a translation of the French *assujettissement*" (Butler 1997, 11),¹²

when in fact the word is Foucault's own neologism. Butler (therefore) sees a single account of subject(iva)tion in Foucault extending back to *Discipline and Punish*, where Foucault also used the term *assujettissement*, even though at that stage he does not mention the word as having any dual meaning, or connotation of positive subject-formation.¹³ As Béatrice Han (2002, 117) points out, in *Discipline and Punish*, in contrast to *The Will to Knowledge*, Foucault is talking about subjection in the sense of simple investment by power.

Indeed, all Foucault's talk of subjection is in fact an attempt to bracket everything from subjectivity but the influence of power. In *Society Must Be Defended*, for example, Foucault is interested in subjects, but only from the point of view of a power which manufactures them:

A theory of domination, of dominations, rather than a theory of sovereignty . . . means that rather than starting with the subject (or even subjects) and elements that exist prior to the relationship and that can be localized, we begin with the power relationship itself, with the actual or effective relationship of domination, and see how that relationship itself determines the elements to which it is applied. We should not, therefore, be asking subjects how, why, and by what right they can agree to being subjected [*assujettir*], but showing how actual relations of subjection [*assujettissement*] manufacture subjects.¹⁴

The problem here, as with *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, is that people take Foucault to be *reducing* subjectivity to a mere effect of structures—then of structures of discourse, now of structures of power-knowledge. In neither case is this true: rather, Foucault's interest is in showing *the extent to which* subjects are the effects of discourses or power by bracketing the relative autonomy of the subject. In the mid-'70s, Foucault is focussed on a binary choice between the theory of sovereignty and the theory of domination, between the notion of the subject as politically *constitutive* and the notion of the subject as politically *constituted*. Ultimately, he will acknowledge that something more reciprocal and complex is going on: subjects are creating themselves like pearls around the foreign particles of power.

BUTLER, FOUCAULT, AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

Butler (2002, 18) does perceive the shift and, moreover, understands that this shift is towards reflexivity. The point of the shift in Foucault's thought is, however, missed by her, since she misses the subjection/subjectivation distinction. She moreover misunderstands what subjectivity is for Foucault. No doubt this is not without good reason, since Foucault is hardly clear about his meaning. Indeed, for this reason, I cannot claim finality for my own (mis)understanding, although I do hope to refute Butler's.

Butler reads Foucault alongside his contemporaries, Jacques Lacan and Louis Althusser.¹⁵ Now, Butler does this quite deliberately, for the purpose of producing constructive confluences, to historicise psychoanalysis on the one hand, and to bring Foucaultian insights into developmental psychology on the other. I agree with Slavoj Žižek (1999, 257) that Butler's work is much more than just an "eclectic monstrosity," but Butler's own thought is outside my remit here; I am interested merely in what she has to say about Foucault, which is quite inaccurate, at least insofar as it is an interpretation of Foucault. Butler's work is in any case frequently read as such, including by Žižek (1999), despite his awareness that Butler differs from Foucault, and by Saul Newman (2004). Addressing Butler's account also serves the useful purpose of distinguishing Foucault from psychoanalysis, on the one hand, and from his old mentor Althusser, on the other.

Butler uses Althusser and Lacan together with Foucault, alongside Freud (whom one can scarcely avoid when talking seriously about Lacan), Hegel and Nietzsche, in *The Psychic Life of Power*, in an analysis of the effects of power on the psyche. Foucault does not himself talk about the psyche—certainly not as such—but the attempt to understand the psychic effects of power using Foucault's work on power is surely not illegitimate.

However, Butler, in her conflation, diminishes certain differences between psychoanalytic accounts of the subject and Foucault's account. Now, Foucault (HS 189) says that he can "see only two" people who have posed the question of the relation between subjectivity and truth in the twentieth century (up to that point in 1982, of course, and excluding, presumably, himself): Lacan and Heidegger. Foucault sees himself as following Heidegger. This does not make his approach the correct one apropos of Lacan's; rather, Lacan's concept of the subject is inscribed within a different framework, and therefore means something different, although that does not imply that there is a *contradiction* between the two approaches.

Foucault analyses the subject in terms of technologies and practices of the self: for Foucault, subjectivity means the historical relation of the self to itself. Foucault follows Heidegger here in opposing an historical and practical approach to Husserlian pure phenomenology, but goes further than Heidegger in historicising the subject. Lacan also defines himself against the phenomenological, subject-centred view of subjectivity, but with reference to the anti-subjective perspective given by Freudian psychoanalysis, in which the subject itself does not understand its own, unconscious basis. Though there is no *incompatibility* between these two approaches to the subject, there is little common content, since a psychoanalytical analysis of subjectivity is not about understanding its historicity, but rather about revealing its universal structure. What Butler tries to take from Foucault as central to her own thesis is the notion that power produces the subject, combining this with the psychoanalytical account of childhood development to show the biographical production of subjects

by power. There is nothing wrong with this, except insofar as Butler's account of Foucault is wrong: what Butler calls "subjectivity" is not what Foucault means by the same name, and Foucault does not simply believe the subject is produced by power.

Mark Olssen (1999, 31) characterises the difference between Foucault and Jacques Lacan on the subject thus:

For Foucault, the subject is constituted not by language, as Lacan would have it, but through many different types of practices. Some of these individualizing practices are discursive (author function); others are institutional.¹⁶

Butler (1997, 11) clearly takes up this Lacanian perspective in *The Psychic Life of Power* insofar as she contends that "the subject is the linguistic occasion for the individual to achieve and reproduce intelligibility, the linguistic condition of its existence and agency." Butler links subjectivity with the grammatical subject, with the ability to self-ascribe, and hence to form a conception of oneself. For Foucault (EW1 277), on the other hand, "it is not just in the play of symbols that the subject is constituted. It is constituted in real practices."

INTERPELLATION

In contrast to Foucault's relation to Lacan and psychoanalysis, which he read and respected, but did not use, Foucault in his 1970s thinking about the subject, as in his thinking about materialism, does to an extent reprise Althusser's celebrated essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," published in 1970, as Warren Montag has capably demonstrated in his "The Soul is the Prison of the Body." Althusser paves the way for Foucault in treating subjectivity positively as something historically-constituted, but the rejection by Foucault of the Marxist framework in which Althusser works is at the root of a crucial difference.

Althusser (1994, 129) understands the subject in terms of "interpellation," a concept he introduces in the "central thesis" (Althusser 1994, 128) of "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." Althusser (1994, 130) identifies interpellation with "hailing," which is to say direct communication from others to us which makes us recognise ourselves. Althusser is widely interpreted here as in some sense producing a Lacanian account of the subject, particularly given his reference to "mirrors" (Althusser 1994, 135), which is seen as appropriating Lacan's (1994) theory of the mirror-stage. However, if Althusser does mean to be Lacanian, he has missed the point of Lacan's thesis; as Terry Eagleton (1994, 216) points out, Althusser's "subject" corresponds not to Lacan's "subject" at all, but in fact to Lacan's "ego."

Moreover, Althusser (131) himself downplays the presentation of subjectivity in terms of hailing: “For the convenience and clarity of my little theoretical theatre I have had to present things in the form of a sequence, with a before and an after, and thus in the form of a temporal succession. . . . But in reality these things happen without any succession.” Being hailed does not constitute so much as bring us to recognise our already-existing subjectivity. Althusser’s (132) overall perspective is different to Lacan’s: Althusser is concerned with society, not the psyche, and therefore primarily sees subjectivity qua social rather than psychic phenomenon; “That an individual is always-already a subject, even before he is born, is nevertheless the plain reality, accessible to everyone and not a paradox at all.” The implication here is that subjectivity is a matter of one’s relative position in society, not a psychic state. This clearly diverges from accounts of subjectivity such as Lacan’s or Butler’s, which try to understand subjectivity as something created in infants, which is then foundational to the personality of the individual thus-created. Althusser and Foucault do not deny the creation of individual personalities through childhood experiences; it is simply that this is not the kind of thing they refer to when they use the word “subject.”

For Foucault, subjectivity is constituted specifically in connection with certain precise, historically-constituted “experiences”: “at the very moment in which this object, ‘madness,’ took shape, there was also constructed the subject capable of understanding madness” (RM 65); there is a “reciprocal constitution of a subject” (RM 67), conjunct with “certain well-known historical processes” (RM 66), that goes along with the constitution of madness as an object of knowledge. Here, I have quoted from a 1978 account; in 1984’s “The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom,” Foucault maintains a similar position:

You do not have the same type of relationship to yourself when you constitute yourself as a political subject who goes to vote or speaks at a meeting and when you are seeking to fulfill your desires in a sexual relationship. Undoubtedly there are relationships and interferences between these different forms of the subject; but we are not dealing with the same type of subject. In each case, one plays, one establishes a different type of relationship to oneself. And it is precisely the historical constitution of these various forms of the subject in relation to the games of truth which interests me. (EW1 290–91)

Foucault here differs from Althusser in seeing the subject as something that is constituted from actual, already-existing people in the play of socio-history. This might seem an unimportant difference, but it is based in the deeper difference that for Foucault “one establishes a relationship to oneself,” even if in both accounts what this relationship is is determined not primarily by our own inclinations but rather by social conditions. Guillaume

Le Blanc (2004, 48) points out that where Althusser talks of “ideology interpellating concrete individuals into concrete subjects,” Foucault talks about “the way a human being turns him- or herself into a subject.”¹⁷

This is not to say that Althusser conceives of people as purely passive in the face of subjection. Althusser (1994, 136), like Foucault, makes the point that “subject” has both active and passive senses. For Althusser, the subject is necessarily an active participant in producing its own interpellation: “The individual is *interpellated as a (free) subject in order that he shall . . . (freely) accept his subjection. . . . There are no subjects except by and for their subjection*” (Althusser 1994, 136; emphasis in original). Subjectivity appears as something affirmative, as freedom, but which we are forced to choose, even before we are born.

As Warren Montag (1995, 70) points out, Foucault makes a similar point: “The more you . . . submit to those in power, then the more this increases your sovereignty” (LCP 221). However, Foucault is here clearly talking about a particular strategy, endemic to humanism, which produces certain *types* of “subjected sovereignties,” not about subjectivity in general. When Foucault talks about self-constitution of the subject, on the other hand, he is not talking about “attachment to subjection,” but rather a broader phenomenon. In short, our attachment to subjection is a feature specific to modern subjectivity, as Butler (1997, 102) realises in locating “attachment to subjection” as a corollary of disciplinary power. Foucault talks about an internalisation of power brought about by specific disciplinary mechanisms, paradigmatically the panopticon:

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously on himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (DP 202–3)¹⁸

Foucault (EW3 331) maintains this view in “The Subject and Power,” the best part of a decade later, where he invokes the polysemy of the word “subject”; the active sense is here cashed out as being “tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge.”

Althusser links subjectivity essentially to ideology. For Althusser, this, somewhat idiomatically, means an essential link to the *state*.¹⁹ Foucault is of course strictly opposed to the concept of ideology, and moreover sets out pointedly to distinguish himself from Althusser’s state-centric view of the political,²⁰ while still recognising in modern subjectivity the way in which institutions operate to produce modes of subjectivity.

Despite these differences between Althusser’s position and Foucault’s, Butler understands Foucaultian subjection on the model of Althusserian interpellation (while also understanding the latter on a quasi-Lacanian linguistic model). Her conflation here proceeds via the substitution of

Foucault's "power" for Althusser's "ideology," giving us a subjectivity constituted inevitably by power. In Butler's conception, there is, moreover, no ability to wield power without subjectivity (Butler 1997, 12–13). Subjectivity is essentially, then, for Butler coextensive with both power and language. So, Butler ultimately identifies power with language, as Catherine Mills (2003, 261) has pointed out.

Such an identification may be denied from two directions in Foucault's work.

Firstly, there is manifestly power, qua actions upon actions, that is non-linguistic; as we saw in Chapter 3, communication in some form is (for Foucault) necessarily implicated in power relations, but it is not necessarily linguistic. Conversely, much communication and language is not a matter of intentional action on the action of another, so not actually an instance of power. Butler does not make these distinctions, and hence conflates power with affect, and thence with language and subjectivity.

One suspects that Butler's interpretation of Foucault is based in a reading of *The Will to Knowledge*, Foucault's major case study of power, in which power happens to appear as indissociable from discourse, due to the nature of the object of study, sexuality, being such that power and discourse are indissolubly intertwined in it. However, even sexuality qua "regime of power" does not operate at a purely discursive level. Rather, it is institutionally-based. One key institutional basis of sexuality is confession, which, albeit a discursive practice, is a practice first and foremost. The confessional is an exemplary case of Foucaultian power, since it is an action, and one which is induced by others; Foucault characterises confession as "all these voices which have spoken so long in our civilization—repeating the formidable injunction to tell what one is and what one does" (WK 60). It is this injunction, carried out by actual individual priests, and indeed more recently by psychoanalysts, on other people, that is the action upon actions.

Secondly, on a Nietzschean conception, power ought to be older than language, since language is itself invented as a move in a game of power. Similarly, it ought to be older than subjectivity, since the struggle of wills to power is the law of life in general for Nietzsche, not just of humanity.

Now, Butler does acknowledge that power comes prior to subjectivity, but only biographically, in that individuals are moulded by power and thus become capable of power of their own. However, when read in non-biographical chronological terms, Butler's thesis becomes circular: if agency is created by power, but power stems from agency, whence does either of them come? The Nietzschean notion of power, in contrast, by conceiving of power as force, points back, ultimately, palaeo-ontologically, in a Schopenhauerian way, to the origins of life in physical forces. Subjectivity in the biographical case can be formed by every infant's pre-existing competing drives under the influence of the network of power relations. Of

course, for Foucault, unlike for Nietzsche, these questions of the order of invention of power, subjectivity and language are not important. Yet, the ontological order of contingency of these things is implicitly there, power for Foucault being a prerequisite of subjectivity and language, something which does not require either of them to occur, but without neither of them could be possible.

INDIVIDUAL, BODY AND SOUL

“Foucault occasionally tries to argue that historically *juridical* power—power acting on, subordinating, pre-given subjects—*precedes* productive power, the capacity of power to form subjects,” claims Butler (1997, 84). Foucault certainly does claim that juridical power precedes productive power, and that subjectivation precedes subjection, but this does not mean at any point that there is power acting on a “pre-given” subject in Foucault: the idea of a pre-given subject, which might be found in phenomenology, is completely foreign to Foucault. Butler, operating from her perspective in which subjectivity and subjection are mutually implied, seems to read Foucault’s notion of a subject that precedes subjection as being a nonsense, and hence disregards it.

Where does the subject come from? We have been arguing that it effectively *creates itself*; we need to ask how this is possible. It is not a matter of a pre-existing *individual* creating subjectivity by acting on him- or herself, since for Foucault (PP 56) individuality is an even more recent phenomenon than subjectivity: “We cannot say that the individual pre-exists the subject-function.” Foucault is clear that prior to the emergence of Christian “pastoral power,” which was the first power in which authority took a direct interest in the everyday doings of the flock, indeed in the very thoughts behind their actions, there was “not yet an individualising society” (DE2 549).

The term “individual” of course carries an etymological implication of indivisibility. For Foucault, however, the “individual” is no such thing:

It is . . . a mistake to think of the individual as a sort of elementary nucleus, a primitive atom or some multiple, inert matter to which power is applied, or which is struck by a power that subordinates or destroys individuals. In actual fact, one of the first effects of power is that it allows bodies, gestures, discourses, and desires to be identified and constituted as something individual. The individual is not, in other words, power’s opposite number: the individual is one of power’s first effects. The individual is in fact a power effect, and at the same time, and to the extent that he is a power-effect, the individual is a relay: power passes through the individuals it has constituted. (SD 29–30)

As with the subject, however, Foucault asserts that the individual is therefore nonetheless *real*:

The individual is no doubt the fictitious atom of an “ideological” representation of society; but he is also a reality fabricated by this specific technology of power that I have called “discipline.” (DP 194)

So, from what is the individual fabricated? The answer is simple and obvious, given Foucault’s Nietzschean political ontology: it is made from the animal existence and drives that precede the existence of the individual; Foucault’s

hypothesis is that the individual is not the given thing upon which power pounces and exerts itself. The individual, with his characteristics and identity, in his attachment to himself, is the product of a power-relation which exerts itself on bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires and forces. (DE2 36–37; cf. PK 73–74)

Now, Nietzsche’s view is unambiguous that the body is not only the basis upon which the subject is constructed, but the actual agent of its construction: “The creative body created spirit for itself, as a hand of its will” (Z 1 “Of the Despisers of the Body”). The body works on itself, then, via the will, to make itself a subject: “It was the body that despaired of the body—that touched the ultimate walls with the fingers of its deluded spirit” (Z 1 “Of the Afterworldsmen”).

There has been a good deal of contention about what Foucault thinks about the body. This contention focuses around two passages in his work: one of these, the *Will to Knowledge* passage in which Foucault offers the body as a “fulcrum” for resistance, will be dealt with in Chapter 6; at this stage, we will consider the meaning of Foucault’s claim in *Discipline and Punish* that “the body itself is invested by power relations” (DP 24).

I read these remarks naïvely: the body, as we would ordinarily understand it, as what Foucault (PP 56) calls a “somatic singularity,” is grasped by power: “Power relations have an immediate hold on it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs” (DP 25).

Baroque views on this issue predominate in Foucault studies, however. Butler (1997, 89–90; 2002, 13), for example, ponders how it is possible for power to take hold of something that it also produces, how the body can be both a material substrate and the production of power relations. Well, as I see it, there is simply no paradox here; rather, the pre-existing, material body is straightforwardly marked by power: the body of course does not depend on power for its existence *per se*, but nevertheless power is responsible for making it what it is. Foucault details in *Discipline and Punish* particularly the way physical training is a part of disciplinary power, and

this, Foucault argues, determines the way the body behaves, through practised movements which become second nature, through practices which become habitual (DP 128). Now, this would actually entail an alteration to the physical structure of a pre-existing body: muscles grow, bones warp through repeated exercise, while the body is otherwise determined by other environmental factors and of course, primarily, by genetics. There is hence no great ontological puzzle here.

In the same movement, power creates the soul: the soul “exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently around, on, within the body by the functioning of power that is exercised on those punished” (DP 29). The soul in *Discipline and Punish* is not subjectivity, nor even a precursor to Foucault’s concept of the subject. Rather, it is for Foucault something highly specific produced by disciplinary power, which, unlike previous technologies of power, is not content to punish the body directly, but rather seeks to punish and tame the soul, which it paradoxically produces through its control over the body. Hence, Foucault is not strictly nominalistic here, since the soul (or at least *this* soul) is not supposed to have existed in previous centuries when the notion of a “soul” was in use, and indeed would seem to exist in a situation in which the word “soul” is often not used at all—the prison today is much more likely to be accompanied by a less metaphysical vocabulary.

Discipline is focussed on the body to the extent that Foucault (WK 139) calls it “anatamo-politics.” However, while power is, on Foucault’s definition, a matter of occasioning actions, the concept of action in Foucault is not purely corporeal: “thought, at the level of its existence, in its very dawning, is in itself an action” (OT 328). It is manifestly possible for power to primarily target not the body, but the mind, to try to produce ideas. Of course, we can say that there must be physiological corollaries to any shift in thought, but it is then just as true that there must be a psychic upshot of any corporeal effect.

THE FOLD OF POWER

The body is, however, no more a monadic basis for our selves than is the individual. For Nietzsche, the body is itself *already plural* (see Hoy 2004, 47–53),²¹ Foucault argues that there are sub-individual animal drives and forces in this exchange with Jacques-Alain Miller in 1977:

FOUCAULT: We all fight each other. And there is always within each of us something that fights something else.

J.-A. MILLER: Which would mean that there are only ever transitory coalitions, some of which immediately break up, but others which persist, but that strictly speaking individuals would be the first and last components?

FOUCAULT: Yes, individuals, or even sub-individuals.

J.-A. MILLER: Sub-individuals?

FOUCAULT: Why not? (PK 208)

While the subject, or the individual, can be a pole of a power relation, so too must sub-individual forces be. If individuals and subjects were originally born out of power, then it must have been the machinations of these forces that produced them. The one reader of Foucault who thinks of subjectivation in these terms, in terms of the power between sub-individual forces, is Gilles Deleuze.

In a passage (already quoted above) from “The Ethics of Care for Self as a Practice of Freedom,” Foucault speaks of not being interested in locating “the moment from which something like the subject appeared.” Unlike Foucault, Deleuze does locate this moment, in his chapter on subjectivation in his book on Foucault. He locates it as occurring in ancient Greece. We might say then that, although the Greeks did not have a concept of the subject, they were still the first people to have *something like* subjectivity.

Deleuze (1988, 100) expresses this origin by saying, “the Greeks are the first doubling.” Deleuze’s “doubling” is a doubling of power: while power relations already existed prior to the Greeks, the Greeks were the first to turn power relations back on themselves. The Greeks invented self-mastery, “power that one brought to bear on oneself,” as Foucault (UP 80) himself deems it. This peculiar relation to the self, of power of self over the self, is, according to Deleuze, what Foucault means by “subjectivity.”

Deleuze (1988, 101) gives this explanation as to why subjectivity emerged first in Greece: “As moral codes here and there execute the diagram (in the city, the family, tribunals, games, etc.), a ‘subject’ must be isolated which differentiates itself from the code and no longer has an internal dependence on it.” Greek society required that individuals dominate themselves in order to dominate others—it is the Greek ruling class then, the free men addressed by the Greek philosophers, who were the first subjects. That is not to say that they were the first to conform to the model of the sovereign subject of modern philosophical imagination, but rather were subjects “only as a derivative or the product of ‘subjectivation.’” Deleuze says, parenthetically, that “if we do not regard this derivation as being a new dimension, then we must say that there is no subjectivity among the Greeks” (Deleuze 1986, 108; cf. Deleuze 1988, 101). Note that this does not logically imply the converse claim that if we regard it as being a new dimension, we must say there is subjectivity among the Greeks: while Giorgio Agamben (1998, 119) claims that Foucault sees subjectivity beginning with Christianity, hence that there is no subjectivity among the Greeks, he nevertheless identifies subjectivity with the action of self on self.

This is an arguable point: as we have seen, Foucault does see the theory of the subject first emerging with early Christianity, and denied that the Greeks had subjectivity, but of course copiously uses the notion of subjectivity in talking about the practices of the ancient Greeks, which

is, I have argued, only explicable if he thought that the Greeks *did* have subjectivity.

Foucault does not himself explicitly identify the action of self on self with subjectivation. However, Deleuze's interpretation would seem to be singularly compatible with Foucault's late claims that subjectivation is a matter of self-relation, and also with his great preoccupation with the theme of the activity of self on self, particularly relating to the ancients. It moreover explains Foucault's application of the word "subject" across historical periods. It is certainly an invaluable interpretation for our purposes, moreover, since it specifically understands subjectivation as a mutation of power relations.

THE SELF AND POWER

Slavoj Žižek (1999, 251) charges Foucault with seeing in the ancients a "myth of a state 'before the fall' in which discipline was self-fashioned, not a procedure imposed" from outside. The implication is clearly that, in the terms we've developed here, while Foucault talks about modern subjection as a matter of power producing the subject, Foucault talks about Greeks as people who were, via their exemplary ethical procedures, beyond such baseness.

Now, Foucault does suggest, plausibly enough, that there is something about power today which makes it far more concerned with people's very subjectivity than power used to be. This comes with power's increased sophistication, its increasing intensity which penetrates ever deeper into our self-relation. But this does not mean, as Žižek (1999, 253; emphasis in original) argues it does for Foucault, that "disciplinary power mechanisms can constitute individuals *directly*, by penetrating individual bodies and *bypassing the level of 'subjectivization.'*" Rather, it works precisely by influencing people in their own self-reflexive subjectivation. While power does, for Foucault, work directly on the body, this is precisely work on the body itself, not the whole work of constituting the individual.

While subjection can hardly be thought to bypass subjectivation, subjectivation must always have been a relay for the influence of others, power qua actions upon actions, as demonstrated in the Greek pedagogical techniques, in which some men influence others to subjectivise themselves.

Foucault's mode of approach to the subject changes as he starts to study ancient texts relating to subjectivity. The ancient Greek texts were preoccupied, Foucault discovered, with something called *epimeleia heautou*, which he translated as *le souci de soi*. This phrase has normally been translated into English as "the care of the self," but alternative renderings are possible: *de* can be rendered as either "of" or "for," *soi* can be rendered as "self" or "oneself," and, most significantly, *souci* can be rendered as either "care" or "concern." This problem of translating *souci* from French is almost exactly

the same as that of translating Heidegger's key term *Sorge*: while these words would normally be translated into English as "care," this word has unduly positive connotations in English. "Caring for oneself" seems to connote "being nice to oneself," or "caring only for oneself," suggesting a self-indulgence absent from the Greek concept. On the other hand, "concern" is unduly negative, carrying connotations of being *anxious* about oneself. Of course, "care" can also have negative connotations, hence phrases like "carefree" and "without a care in the world" (translatable by the French phrase *sans souci*, and the German *ganz ohne Sorge*), in which care is cast as something one does *not* want to have. Neither translation being perfect, the important thing is to grasp that we are talking about a practice of reflexive power relations, which encompasses *both* care and concern, both about and for both oneself and the selves of others.

It is the auto-relation which is the focus for Foucault's later interest in the subject. We can now retrospectively understand subjection as people being induced by power to relate to themselves in certain ways, to subjectivise themselves in certain ways. In the earlier period, Foucault is, no doubt inadequately, preoccupied with the way in which subjectivity is politically constructed, not with the way the individual relates to him- or herself politically as a relay or (partial) consequence of this process. This approach was obviously apposite when studying the prison, and even when Foucault turns to studying sexuality, he studies it from this "domination" perspective. Foucault can later define "the *mode of subjection (mode d'assujettissement)*," however, as "the way in which the individual established his relation to the rule and recognizes himself as obliged to put it into practice" (UP 27); although the individual is responsible for establishing his/her relation to the rule, this does not preclude this relation itself from being conditioned by power, and it's rather obvious that the rule itself has to do with power.

The subject is not created *by* power as Foucault has been interpreted as saying by both supporters, primarily Butler, and critics, such as Axel Honneth (see Lemke 1997, 112), alike. Rather, it is the self that creates the subject in its relation *to itself through power* (and of course with a fundamental relation to truth, as Foucault would no doubt remind us). That is not to say that there is not a considerable degree of determination by power in subjectivation—there is—but this is only possible because *the self-relation is itself a power relation*. It is a form of conduct of conduct, and thus is part of the general network of power relations which is power, but nevertheless is specifically a relation of self to self, not a relation *simply* of external power over internal subjectivity, but rather the relay by which we can be induced to act upon ourselves by external forces.

Butler (1997, 6) realises the Nietzschean dimension to subjectivation: "If, in a Nietzschean sense, the subject is formed by a will that turns back upon itself, assuming a reflexive form, then the subject is the modality of power that turns on itself; the subject is the effect of power in recoil." Here, Butler is entirely right, except that in her account, this is a subsidiary stage:

power acts on us, and only thereafter do we have the ability, the power to create ourselves. She is correct indeed also that power does act upon us from without to encourage our creation of subjectivity: this is, I would argue, a major function of early childhood pedagogy. Nevertheless, it is the power of our sub-individual forces which are not created by power which is at stake: their prior relations to one another are acted upon from without. We are not unresisting *tabulae rasae* prior to power affecting us, but systems in struggle, a struggle into which outside forces intervene. “Foucault’s fundamental idea is that of a dimension of subjectivity derived from power and knowledge without being dependent on them,” as Deleuze (1988, 101) puts it. Peter Dews (1989, 40) rightly points out that “the obvious paradox of a reflexive account of self-construction is that the self must already exist in order to construct itself.” Butler embraces this paradox as such, but really, at least for Foucault, there isn’t one: the self is constructed by and from pre-existing sub-self forces.

Foucault’s notion of government—in the broad sense in which he uses it in “The Subject and Power,” at any rate—is signally important here. Government means both the conduct by others of our conduct, and our own conduct of both our own practices and the forces within us. The fold of power, reflexive power, is implied in Foucault’s late conceptualisation of power as government, which includes self-government alongside the government of others, and not, moreover, as distinct from one another, but rather as parts of a single practice and a single network of power relations; our ability to govern ourselves is fundamentally linked to our ability to govern others.

Care of the self includes our control of ourselves through mediate mechanisms, such as the control of diet and the scrupulous use of drugs. We can speak here of “self-discipline” and “self-control”: government of the self is a matter of discipline and control, not the free play of power with oneself, an asymmetrical relation with oneself, paradoxical though that idea might be. Indeed, one might say in a Freudo-Nietzschean vein that the will is required to take up the role of master in respect of the drives. This is not a role of domination, necessarily, nor does it simply allow the drives free reign—in short, it is a role of *government* over the self. Foucault does not, that I am aware of, specifically forbid self-domination, but Foucault’s general attitude towards domination might be taken to imply that he thinks self-domination might call for some kind of self-liberation. An absolute psychic liberation is quite clearly ruled out, however, and such a thing would indeed be a psychopathology.²² It’s quite clear though that Foucault does want to move away from the modern subjection in which subjectivity is constituted primarily from without, and towards the broad form of ancient subjection, in which the individual subject is responsible for taking care of his or her own subjectivity, in coordination with and with help from others. If power is the conduct of conduct, and the relationship to the self is a conduct, this implies the possibility, for example, of trying

to conduct someone to be internally healthy, to have a good relation with him- or herself. With Butler, we must note that there is a role for power, if a less monolithic one than she imagines, in the formation of subjectivity in childhood: parents and others purposively act on children so as to elicit subjectivity, although much of this childhood inculcation of subjectivity also occurs *pace* Butler not by power relation but by simple enculturation, mimicry and the like (just as primal psychic traumas, paradigmatically the separation of the infant from the mother, will occur with or without the intentional involvement of the parent in a power relation).

There are techniques, indeed entire technologies of the self (*see* EW1 224–25 for Foucault’s quadripartite typology of technologies), which are, like the technologies of power, invented at a certain point and thereafter may be available to people to learn to apply. Our subjectivation is a group of power relations caught up in the great network of power relations, and indeed in its strategies. What we see in the subject is essentially the same kind of stable integration of power relations as in society, and, moreover, is part and parcel of that stable social integration.

RESISTANCE TO SUBJECTIVATION

A clear consequence of his conception of subjectivation is that subjectivity is for Foucault not something to be resisted, as some commentators seem to think, such as Jon Simons (1995, 30), who says, “Within the scope of his oppositional politics Foucault portrays the conditions of possibility of what we are, of our subjectivities, as constraining limitations to be resisted.” Foucault’s methodological anti-subjectivism does not amount to an attempt, or even the advocacy of an attempt to actually rid ourselves of subjectivity. We must not fall into the trap of believing that subjectivity is something from which to liberate ourselves. This is not because power is inevitable: although power is inevitable, since power exists without subjectivation, resisting subjectivity is not a way to resist power *per se*. Rather, we do not need to liberate ourselves from subjectivity because subjectivation is not a form of domination.

Weberman (2000, 263) is more strident than Simons in positing “desubjectivation” as a “strategy” to “escape forms of subjectivity altogether” advocated by Foucault. However, Weberman’s cited source, a quotation of Foucault from Halperin (1995, 94), does not itself make “desubjectivization” look like a strategy for escape at all. Foucault is there speaking of the desubjectivising experience of anonymous sexual encounters in the bathhouse. Such encounters have no potential to escape subjectivity *altogether*, since they are only a temporary suspension, and cannot be the whole of a life. They are rather a moment of temporary release to be sought and savoured. This is not to say that it is impossible, or even ultimately unlikely, that a kind of society will emerge in which subjectivity is more lastingly

abolished, but this would be several major ruptures removed from our own. Since subjectivity is, remember, a reality based in practices beyond the mere concept of the subject, it is not something that can easily be superseded, say by mental or lexical effort. Rather, for the moment, Foucault is himself clear that “we have to promote *new forms of subjectivity* through the refusal of this kind of individuality that has been imposed on us for several centuries” (EW3 336; emphasis added).

It’s true that Foucault does on one occasion call for the rescindment of the norm of the *individual* as a means to its concrete abolition:

Do not demand of politics that it restore the “rights” of the individual, as philosophy has defined them. The individual is the product of power. What is needed is to “de-individualize” by means of multiplication and displacement, diverse combinations. The group must not be the organic bond uniting hierarchized individuals, but a constant generator of de-individualization. (EW3 109)

While, as we have seen, the individual is something different and more recent than subjectivity per se for Foucault, and while it is thus something that is connected to the subjection that Foucault obviously in a sense condemns, Foucault does not in general follow this anti-individual line. The quoted passage comes from the introduction written by Foucault for the English translation of Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus*. Here Foucault is doing an exegesis of their thought, outlining what he thinks is a central principle expounded in the work he is introducing. The fact that Foucault says this here then really does not imply that Foucault himself believes it. This Deleuzian demand for de-individualization follows the logic that individuality is something pernicious imposed on us; such harking after an authentic existence is quite alien to Foucault’s thought.

By contrast, in “The Subject and Power,” Foucault lauds recent struggles that “assert the right to be different and underline everything that makes individuals truly individual” while simultaneously attacking “everything that separates the individual, breaks his links with others, splits up community life”: “These struggles are not exactly for or against the ‘individual’; rather, they are struggles against the ‘government of individualization’” (EW3 330).

That to which Foucault does advocate resistance is *identity*. Now, David Weberman (2000, 263), among others, claims that Foucault wants us to develop “new ‘identities,’” but Weberman in fact here cites the passage we have already mentioned in which Foucault advocates “*new forms of subjectivity*” (EW3 336; emphasis added); he does not here mention “identity” as such. Butler (1997, 84) for her part sees individuals as “formulated” through “discursively constituted ‘identity,’” which would mean that identity and individuality are coextensive, but Foucault (EW1 166) is himself ambivalent about the concept of identity, only using the word a couple of

times, and then in a pejorative sense, in contrast to “form of subjectivity,” which for Foucault is a perfectly neutral expression.²³

Weberman (2000, 264) does correctly make the core point, however, that “there are no paths to selfhood or subjectivity that lie outside of power. Subjectivity is an unavoidably *political* affair.” As Foucault (SD 29) says, as early as 1976, individuals “are in a position to both submit to and exercise this power . . . they are its relays.”

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. Examples: Deborah Cook’s *The Subject Finds a Voice: Foucault’s Turn Toward Subjectivity* is a collection of essays about Foucault, only the last of which focuses on the subject; Dirk Daiber’s *Subjekt—Freiheit—Widerstand—die Stellung des Subjekts im Denken Foucaults* addresses the themes of madness and power in Foucault, and a large part is actually about Levinas; Malte Brinkmann’s *Das Verblassen des Subjekts bei Foucault* is a chronological survey of Foucault’s thought which finishes with *The Will to Knowledge*, and so does not deal with the material in which Foucault talks most about the subject.
2. I refer to this interview simply descriptively as Foucault’s “last interview” because its publication title, “The Return of Morality” (*Retour de la morale*), was added by the journal and is a particularly misleading title, since Foucault does not posit any such return. Moreover, as we shall see, it is my argument that this interview is an exceptionally dubious source precisely because it was Foucault’s last.
3. Amy Allen (2000) has very thoroughly argued that the widespread reading of Foucault as pronouncing the subject dead has been the animus for most of the severe criticisms that have been levelled at him, further claiming that most of Foucault’s disciples have also incorrectly perpetuated this understanding of Foucault as radically anti-subjectivist (though this latter claim is rather less well-supported).
4. And even to the extent that he does menace man with an imminent demise in *The Order of Things*, Foucault (RM 122–23) later admits that this was precipitous, brought about by conflating the event of man’s death in the human sciences with his demise in terms of “general cultural experience,” which is indeed not yet in progress.
5. God of course is a rather more ancient invention.
6. Although in Heidegger’s later work, which according to Foucault was the most influential on him, this subjectivism does disappear.
7. Deleuze (1988, 108) claims that Merleau-Ponty himself thought he had taken the phenomenological theory of the subject as far as it could go. This is all the more interesting considering Merleau-Ponty’s interest in structuralism.
8. My portrayal of Foucault here accentuates his divergence from phenomenology, although there is a lot of good work which correctly points to continuities, including Johanna Oksala (2005), Stuart Elden (2001), Dirk Daiber (1999) and Andrea Roedig (1997), to mention just the monographs.
9. Foucault (PP 57) agrees that the individual emerges with the rise of the bourgeoisie.
10. John Johnstone in *Foucault Live*, for example, uses the “subjectivization” translation. This less-used translation is technically correct: because *subjectivization* is the noun from the French verb *subjectiver*, which in English is “subjectivize” (there is no verb “to subjective” in English), the English noun should be “subjectivization.”
11. Balibar (1994, 8) points out that the word “subject” itself results from a “play on words” on the Latin terms *subjectum* and *subjectus*—although, as he points out, comparable experience emerges also in Germanic languages

where this particular verbal play is not operative, so it is not crucial to the emergence of (a concept of) modern subjectivity as such.

12. David Couzens Hoy (2004, 70) also makes the same error.
13. Warren Montag (1995, 72) uses *Discipline and Punish* references to subjection in exactly the same way as Butler in this respect.
14. SD 45, modified by the addition of French words in brackets and the rendering of *assujettissement* as “subjection” rather than “subjugation” as David Macey has it; see DS 39 for the original French.
15. This pair have some affinities themselves, and some personal contact (Althusser 1993, 186–89).
16. See also Saul Newman 2004, 154.
17. Le Blanc references the quoted passage from Foucault as being from *Discipline and Punish*, namely p. 298 in a French edition. There are two editions of *Discipline and Punish* in French, and this reference does not seem to point to either. The line is nevertheless present in “Le sujet et pouvoir” (DE2 1042—my thanks to Emmanuel Pehau for this reference), the French translation of “The Subject and Power,” from whence (EW3 327) I draw the formulation given in my translation of Le Blanc. For Le Blanc, in fact, the problem of the transformation of people into subjects by power relations is the same in Althusser and Foucault, with the way in which the transformation is effected left mysterious: he simply overlooks the fact that for Foucault the agent of this transformation is the human being him- or herself, whereas for Althusser it is “ideology.”
18. This is still “action upon actions,” though, since there are initial actions which are undertaken specifically to inculcate the belief that one is currently under surveillance, even though the actual relation of surveillance which the victim/patient perceives is not really there: “a real subjection is born mechanically of a fictitious relation” (DP 202).
19. “*The category of the subject is constitutive of all ideology only in so far as all ideology has the function (which defines it) of ‘constituting’ concrete individuals as subjects. In the interaction of this double constitution exists the functioning of all ideology*” (Althusser 1994, 129; emphasis in original). These claims are specific to Althusser and not strongly implied by historical materialism; my point is rather simply that Foucault will differ in some way from any Marxist account of subjectivity.
20. Cf. Foucault’s (PP 16) rejection of the notion of the “state apparatus.”
21. On Deleuze’s (1983, 40) Spinozist reading of Nietzsche, the body becomes something highly generalised in this regard: “What defines a body is this relation between dominant and dominated forces. Every relationship of forces constitutes a body—whether it is chemical, biological, social or political. Any two forces, being unequal, constitute a body as soon as they enter into a relationship.”
22. I would venture to suggest that self-domination and total self-liberation could perhaps be mapped to neurosis and psychosis respectively.
23. Butler (1997, 86) seems to be implying that Foucault uses the word “identity” in a passage in *Discipline and Punish* in which he does not.