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# Foucault, disciplinary power, and resistance to the phenomenology of victimization

Part 2

*Foucault, poder disciplinar e resistência à fenomenologia da vitimização*

*Parte 2*

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## Foucault, disciplinary power, and resistance to the phenomenology of victimization - Part 2

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**Summary.** Introduction. 1. Critical questions about resistance. 2. Genealogy and Resistance to the *Phenomenology of Victimization*. 3. The ecstasis of disciplinary power and resistance to the *phenomenology of victimization*. 4. Conclusion: the *phenomenology of victimization*, resistance and contextualized liberation.

### ABSTRACT

In Part 1, the text explores victimization through phenomenology and ontology, identifying four key moments: the creation of subjectivity, the types of subjects disciplinary power creates, perpetual visibility, and the regime of Truth. Part 2 examines resistance to ontological victimization, questioning the possibility and nature of resistance within Foucault's framework.

**Keywords:** Victimization; Disciplinary Power; Subjectivity; Resistance; Ontology

### RESUMO

Na Parte 1, o texto explora a vitimização através da fenomenologia e ontologia, identificando quatro momentos-chave: a criação da subjetividade, os tipos de sujeitos que o poder disciplinar cria, a visibilidade perpétua e o regime da Verdade. A Parte 2 examina a resistência à vitimização ontológica, questionando a possibilidade e a natureza da resistência dentro do quadro de Foucault.

**Keywords:** Vitimização; Poder Disciplinar; Subjetividade; Resistência; Ontologia

### RESUMÉN

En la Parte 1, el texto explora la victimización a través de la fenomenología y la ontología, identificando cuatro momentos clave: la creación de la subjetividad, los tipos de sujetos que crea el poder disciplinario, la visibilidad perpetua y el régimen de la Verdad. La Parte 2 examina la resistencia a la victimización ontológica, cuestionando la posibilidad y la naturaleza de la

resistencia dentro del marco de Foucault.

**Keywords:** Victimización; Poder Disciplinario; Subjetividad; Resistencia; Ontología

## RÉSUMÉ

Dans la Partie 1, le texte explore la victimisation à travers la phénoménologie et l'ontologie, identifiant quatre moments clés : la création de la subjectivité, les types de sujets créés par le pouvoir disciplinaire, la visibilité perpétuelle et le régime de Vérité. La Partie 2 examine la résistance à la victimisation ontologique, en questionnant la possibilité et la nature de la résistance dans le cadre de Foucault.

**Keywords:** Victimisation; Pouvoir Disciplinaire; Subjectivité; Résistance; Ontologie

## RIASSUNTO

Nella Parte 1, il testo esplora la vittimizzazione attraverso la fenomenologia e l'ontologia, identificando quattro momenti chiave: la creazione della soggettività, i tipi di soggetti creati dal potere disciplinare, la visibilità perpetua e il regime della Verità. La Parte 2 esamina la resistenza alla vittimizzazione ontologica, mettendo in discussione la possibilità e la natura della resistenza all'interno del quadro di Foucault.

**Keywords:** Vittimizzazione; Potere Disciplinare; Soggettività; Resistenza; Ontologia

## Introduction

In Part 1 of, *Foucault, Disciplinary Power, and the Phenomenology of Victimization and Restorative Justice*, we investigated the happening of victimization from a phenomenological and ontological perspective. The goal was to locate and analyze how victimization occurs through the phenomenology of subjectification and becoming an individual. This analysis identified four ontological moments in the happening of victimization. First, the originary *moment/happening* of the *phenomenology of victimization* is found in the very fabrication of subjectivity itself. *Being* the object and vehicle of disciplinary power is the ontological opening of *victimization*. The second moment in the *phenomenology of victimization* is found in the particular *types* of subjects that disciplinary power creates. The Enlightenment as discourse and the disciplinary power that flows through it fabricates subjects/individuals that are economically well trained, productive, efficient, and politically obedient and docile. The third moment in the *phenomenology of victimization* occurs in and through a condition of perpetual visibility and the formation of panoptic consciousness. This being *visible* as the condition of possibility for one's material and social subjectivity is an ontological dimension of one's *Being*. The most dramatic example of the *phenomenology of victimization* as ontological *visibility* is the creation of panoptic consciousness—the creation of a form of consciousness that victimizes itself by making itself perpetually visible. The fourth moment in the *phenomenology of victimization*, and the reason why Disciplinary Power works, is that Disciplinary Power creates subjects and holds them in a “regime of Truth.” In Part 2 of the investigation, we explore how individuals resist the happening or phenomena of ontological victimization. Given Foucault's account of the fabrication of subjectivity, is it possible for individuals to resist and dis-entangle “themselves” from this webbing of victimization? Moreover, given Foucault's account of the fabrication of subjectivity, “who” is it that resists?

### 1. Critical questions about resistance

One of the most controversial aspects of Foucault's account of Disciplinary Power and subjectivity, and my reading of the *phenomenology of victimization*, is the question: Is it possible to resist the *phenomenology of victimization* and its ontological implications? Given Foucault's account of the ubiquity of Disciplinary Power and the fabrication of subjectivity—the *phenomenology of victimization*—critics of Foucault are dubious of his claim that resistance to

Disciplinary Power and ontological victimization are possible. Foucault's critics raise two questions about his account of resistance: First, *how* does one resist? Second, *who* Resists? The first question—the *how* of resistance—concerns the actual dynamics and operation of resistance. If Foucault is correct that “power is coextensive with the social body” and that there are “no spaces of primal liberty between the meshes of its network,” then *how* is resistance possible? (Foucault, 1980, 142). Honi Fern Haber asks, “how are the subjects of disciplinary and normalizing power regimes able to break out of the constraints of power? What tools do they have that are not already co-opted by (codified within) those very power regimes they are trying to resist?” (Haber, 1994, 103). Given Foucault's account of power and the totalizing way it constitutes, defines, and regulates subjects, it does not seem possible to articulate a language, perspective, or account of things that is not already co-opted by Disciplinary Power. If the subject is both the effect and vehicle of power, *how* does one resist?

The second question—*who* resists—emerges in response to Foucault's account of the decentered subject. Foucault's claim that “we should try to grasp subjection in its material instance as the constitution of subjects” has led many to believe that there is no self or positions of agency from which resistance to ontological victimization can be mobilized (Foucault, 1980, 97). For example, Isaac Balbus claims “subversive subjectivity cannot be explained within the framework of a discourse for which subjectivity and subjection are correlative terms” (Balbus, 1998,152). On this account, resistance is impossible because there is no subjective agency from which the self can counter the hegemonic meanings and value claims of Disciplinary Power and the *phenomenology of victimization*. I argue that cogent responses can be given to these critical questions about resistance, and I believe that these responses can transform our understanding of the *phenomenology of victimization* and how we liberate ourselves from its more coercive and harmful effects. I will use each of these challenges as a way of explicating Foucault's account of resistance. However, before responding to each of these challenges to Foucault's account of resistance, it is useful to situate his account of resistance in the broader context of his methodology.

## 2. Genealogy and resistance to the *phenomenology of victimization*.

Before discussing specific modalities of resistance, we must say a few

things about Foucault's methodology. Foucault's account of resistance to the *phenomenology of victimization* begins in his creative appropriation of Nietzsche's method of genealogy (Foucault, 1977). Genealogy is a way of reading texts that critically examines the historical origins and truth claims of metaphysical–philosophical, theological, scientific–narratives. All metaphysical narratives share two characteristics. First, despite radical differences in the content of their narratives, all metaphysical narratives claim that an objective condition exists—understood as a realm of pure ideas, God, or natural and biological laws—that provides the conditions of possibility for our nature and moral truth. In addition, all pure ideas, accounts of God, or natural laws possess two fundamental qualities—they are timeless and changeless. Second, all metaphysical narratives claim that human beings possess a special faculty—understood as reason, the soul, or natural characteristics—that enable them to intuit, know, or connect to the objective realm. As comprehensive accounts of reality, human nature and moral purpose, metaphysical narratives provide a story of the origins, natures, and ends of human beings, and they ground these accounts in a timeless and changeless Truth. The object of all metaphysical narratives is to guide human beings towards a greater understanding of the Truth of humanity; and all metaphysical narratives share the belief that a deeper understanding of the Truth will improve the personal, moral, and political dimension of human life. Genealogy challenges both characteristics of metaphysical narratives—that an objective condition exists and that human beings possess access to it. Equally important, genealogy is suspicious of the metaphysical claim that seeking the Truth is morally beneficial to human beings.

As a method of reading texts and engaging ideas—doing what Nietzsche called effective history—genealogy seeks to undermine the metaphysical assertion of the timeless and changeless origin of ideal signification, human beings, or the teleology of ultimate ends. “Where the soul pretends unification or the self fabricates a coherent identity, the genealogist sets out to study the beginning. . . . The analysis of descent permits the dissociation of the self, its recognition and displacement as an empty synthesis” (Foucault, 1977, 145-6). Where metaphysical narratives attempt to locate the pure origin and moral truth of subjects in God, rational self-awareness, or the health of the human body and mind, genealogy exposes contested historical accounts, textual distortions, conceptual manipulations, accidents, and exercises of power. The purpose of genealogy, Foucault argues, is “to fight power-effects characteristic of any discourse that is regarded as scientific [or metaphysically true]” (Foucault, 2003, 9). The intention of the genealogist “is to destroy the primacy of origins, of unchanging truths” (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983,

108-9). By challenging concepts like God, reason, or natural laws, genealogy constitutes a critical attitude and emergent mode of resistance toward the entrenched claims of metaphysical narratives.

Animating Foucault's genealogy and resistance to the *phenomenology of victimization* is Nietzsche's claim that thinking, speaking, and acting are inescapably agonistic. For Nietzsche and Foucault, speaking, writing, and acting are expressions of power that operate in an agonistic field of conceptual and material relations of power. Speaking, writing, and acting are inherently agonistic because language, and the way language serves to signify thoughts, actions, and even the body, is a human creation that (necessarily, and often violently) opens the space of meaning and values. There are no pure words, values, or practices through which human beings express their rationality, Truth, or health. Every word, value, and practice expresses an assertion of power that mobilizes the agonistic contest of meaning and value. At the "origin" of consciousness, the self, our values and our freedom are agon. As modes of resistance, writing and critique express the agonal spirit of the subject's desire and ability to counter the hegemonic claims to Truth and to assert one's own meaning and values.

Genealogy, and the resistance it mobilizes, is essential to Foucault because genealogy recognizes the subject's own role within the webbing of Disciplinary Power and ontological victimization. As Dryfus and Rabinow write, in genealogical analysis "the investigator is no longer the detached spectator of mute-discourse monuments. Foucault realizes and thematizes the fact that he himself is involved in . . . and to a large extent produced by the social practices he is studying. . . Foucault introduces genealogy as a method of diagnosing and grasping the significance of social practices from within them" (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983, 103). Genealogy and critique are ways of reading texts and of learning how to live and become free within them. For Foucault, genealogy entails becoming aware that consciousness and subjectivity are a text, and resistance entails learning how to re-imagine and rearrange one's subjectivity and possibilities within the text. Foucault's account of resistance to the *phenomenology of victimization* empowers the subject to rearrange and re-signify his or her conceptual, material, moral, and political space. As Foucault writes, "I . . . propose, as a very first definition of critique, this general characterization: the art of not being governed quite so much" (Foucault, 2003, 265). Resistance is art of disentangling ourselves from the *phenomenology of victimization*.

### 3. The ecstasis of disciplinary power and resistance to the phenomenology of victimization:

The most important aspect of Foucault's account of resistance is his claim that resistance is simultaneous with Disciplinary Power. He writes,

There are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised; resistance to power does not have to come from elsewhere to be real (1980, 142).

And,

Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power. . . .

Hence there is no single locus of great refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary (1990, 95-6).

Disciplinary Power and resistance are not independent capacities or co-ordinates of possibility. There are no objective expressions of power that escape the possibility of resistance, and there is no conception of action against Disciplinary Power that draws its force from a source or agency that is beyond Disciplinary Power. Power and resistance are entangled in the very creation/happening of meaning, subjectivity and moral purposes. Moreover, the *joining* of power and resistance constitutes the narrative and material (con)text of our subjectivity, our bodily practices, and the movement of history itself. Subjectivity and history are the products of the irreducible conceptual and material relation between, and the temporal movement of, power and resistance. This is why, for Foucault, there is no essence of revolt, no objective soul that authorizes the act of refusal, and no pure law of revolution.

#### A. The *How* of Resistance to the *Phenomenology of Victimization*:

After identifying the entanglement of Disciplinary Power and resistance, Foucault locates what he calls the multiple sites of resistance and how they operate. He writes:

[There are] a multiplicity of points of resistance. . . . These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network. . . . [T]here are a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case . . . by definition, they can only exist in the strategic field of power relations (1990, 95-6).

As a disclosive *and* transformative capacity, Disciplinary Power linguistically and materially opens the historical space of meaning and activity, while simultaneously guaranteeing the possibility for its own fragility and contingency by giving rise to multiple points of resistance. These multiple sites of resistance occur at the site of the creation of words, meanings, values, the fabrication of subjectivity, and the consolidation of hegemonic discourses.

The first moment of resistance is opened in and through the assertion and movement of signification, words, and language. As a nominalist, Foucault argues that signs, words, and meaning have no objective foundation and are highly contingent, and mobile. “Resistances,” Foucault writes, “do not derive from a few heterogeneous principles. . . . They are the odd term in relations of power; they are inscribed in the latter as an irreducible opposite” (1990, 96). In order to mobilize Foucault’s account of resistance at the site of the word, I will appropriate Derrida’s notion of *differance*. Derrida coins the term *differance* to describe how he understands the creation and movement of signification, language, and the experience of subjectivity itself. *Differance* refers to the spatial and temporal movement of differentiation and deferral that occurs in the creation and use of words, language and subjectivity. Derrida argues, a view Foucault will generally acknowledge, that no word has meaning in and of itself, but rather each sign and word serves as a marker of signification. Furthermore, the meaning of each sign is generated by the difference between it and other words. Derrida writes: “the signified concept is never present in and of itself, in a sufficient presence that would refer only to itself. Essentially and lawfully, every concept is inscribed in a chain or in a system within which it refers to the *other*, to *other* concepts, by means of a systematic play of differences” (Derrida, 1982, 11). A word’s meaning and usage is further codified by its juxtaposition with, or relationship to, other words in a structural and temporal chain regulated by the rules of grammar. Signs, words, and meaning are generated in and through a historical field of semiotic force relations. According to Foucault, this play of signs, words, definitions, and values becomes morally and socially organized, hierarchical, and hegemonic through the exercise of metaphysical discourses.

However, given the inherently contingent, mobile, and differential nature of signs, words and meaning, no metaphysical theory of language

can ever fully arrest the play of differences and the nearly infinite possibilities of signification and meaning that *differance* mobilizes. While Disciplinary Power opens and conditions the subject through language and material practices, the subjects or institutions that speak the discourse of Disciplinary Power never fully master or control the words, meanings, and language they speak. As Judith Butler writes,

[D]iscourse [words and language] has a history that not only precedes but also conditions its contemporary usages, and . . . this history effectively decenters the presentist view of the subject as the exclusive origin or owner of what is said. What it also means is that the terms to which we do . . . lay claim, the terms through we insist on politicizing identity and desire, often demand a turn *against* this constitutive historicity (Butler, 1993, 227).

Resistance to Disciplinary Power and the *phenomenology of victimization* is opened and made possible because each sign, word, and definition is inherently heterogeneous, unstable, and caught up in a (historically) more or less fragile chain of re-signification. There is an inescapable, ultimately anarchic, contingency to language that keeps it open, mobile, and contested. It is in these seams (the absent-present trace of the other) of linguistic fragmentation and the multiplicity of possibilities that this opens that resistance to disciplinary norms and ontological victimization is mobilized. Learning how to exploit the contingency of language, meanings and values in order to destabilize the hegemonic and abusive effects of Disciplinary Power is the first moment of resistance to the *phenomenology of victimization*. By cultivating resistant consciousness and subjectivity, individuals can learn how to begin the process of dis-entangling themselves from the on-going happening of victimization by speaking in a way that destabilizes the meanings and expectations of Disciplinary Power. This awareness and practice provide a critical tool of resistance against the first and originary *moment/happening* of the *phenomenology of victimization* that is found in the very fabrication of subjectivity itself.

A second site of resistance to *ontological victimization* is opened in and through the consolidation of metaphysical discourses and the creation of, and struggle over, the Truth. As a set of knowledge claims and practices that purport to reveal the Truth of the human mind and body, The Enlightenment Discourse and the Disciplinary Power that derives from it, establishes a regime of Truth. However, as Foucault argues, Truth, “is not outside power, or lacking in power. . . . Truth is a thing of this world. . . . Each society has its

regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true" (1980, 131). By asserting a regime of subjective, moral and scientific Truth, The Enlightenment Discourse and the Disciplinary Power it produces simultaneously create a field of marginalized and disqualified knowledge systems. Resistance to power and the "tactical reversal" of power also emerges from the creation of marginalized, forbidden, and disqualified systems of knowledge and practices.

As Colin Gordon writes,

[t]he strategically coordinated apparatuses of power which Foucault identifies do not have the status of a trans-historical law [the emergence of the prison, sexuality, and the scientific experts that grow up with and through them]. . . . They constitute an inherently fragile structure and their instruments and techniques are always liable to forms of re-appropriation, reversibility and re-utilization not only in tactical realignments from 'above' but in counter-offensives from 'below'. . . . Thematic implements of power-individual conscience, norms of sexuality, the security of a population-have been and are constantly being 'turned round,' in both directions" (Gordon, Afterword in *Power/Knowledge*, 1980, 255-6).

The relation between more dominant and less dominant discourses and modes of knowledge and practices are not anchored in an objective hierarchy, but are rather a result of constantly shifting strata of linguistic, conceptual, and moral force relations. The presence of difference (irreducible opposite) and the conflict inherent in relations of power ensures that power can't be complete in its effects and makes hegemonic discourses vulnerable to being co-opted, re-signified, and deconstructed.

The fact that words, discourses, and social practices produce the conditions of their own resistance, are agonistically contingent, and forever beyond the mastery of the institutions that operationalize them and the subjects they seek to fabricate presents the promise that a particular regime of Truth can always be resisted by writing against it, by inventing new words, and by redefining the context in which one thinks and lives. We must, therefore, begin to think of language, speaking, and acting as modes of contestation and combat. Foucault writes, "[d]iscourse battle and not discourse reflection . . . . Discourse—the mere fact of speaking, of employing words, of using the words of others . . . .—this fact is in itself a force. Discourse is, with respect to the relation of forces, not merely a surface of inscription, but so-

something that brings about effects (Foucault, 2003, XX).” Discourse is not a neutral exchange of rational ideas in a power free context. Words and ideas are tools of disclosure *and* weapons in the struggle for meaning. Language serves as “a weapon of power, of control, of subjection, of qualification and of disqualification” (Foucault, 2003, XX). Thinking, speaking and acting, therefore, ought to be seen as conscious and active struggles against the various metaphysical theories that define, organize, constrain, moralize, and normalize individuals. Critique, Foucault argues, can be “an instrument for those who fight, those who resist and refuse what is. Its use should be in processes of conflict and confrontation, essays in refusal. . . . It is a challenge directed to what is” (Foucault, 2003, 256). Resistance to ontological victimization operates in this way because the Truth is a mobile army of metaphors and subjectivity, and politics are the arenas in which the struggle for Truth is fought. Understanding that the Truth claims of the Enlightenment Discourse are simply assertions of power, fragile, and contestable constitutes a powerful tool of resistance against the fourth moment in the *phenomenology of victimization*—Disciplinary Power’s capacity to create subjects and hold them in a “Regime of Truth.”

## **B. The *Who* of Resistance to the *Phenomenology of Victimization*:**

In addition to identifying sites of resistance in the movement of language and the creation of subjugated modes of knowledge, we are still faced with the question of *who* it is that resists. Critics of Foucault argue that because the self is thoroughly constituted by discursive and material practices, there is no individual agency upon which to mount resistance. If there is no deep self that exists beneath or beyond the effects of power, they argue, there can be no agency capable of mounting resistance. “Should it be said,” Foucault writes, “that one is always ‘inside’ power, there is no ‘escaping’ it . . . because one is subject to the law in any case? . . . This would be to misunderstand the strictly relational character of power relationships” (1990, 95). The fact that power is always-already there, that one “can never be ‘outside’ power,” does not mean that one is condemned to rehearse one’s disciplinary inscription (Foucault, 1980, 141-2). According to Foucault, subjects are not, as Habermas claims, “standardized products . . . of some discourse formation . . . [just] individual copies that are mechanically punched out” (Habermas, 1987, 293). There are three issues to consider. First, fabricated subjects are capable of resistance. Second, the relational character of power and the

presence of multiple discourses within our historical context insure the existence of a great diversity of forms of subjectivity. Third, the contingent and idiosyncratic ways individuals respond to the inscription of Disciplinary Power enables the proliferation of resistant subjects.

The first issue concerns the ability of historically constituted subjects to resist disciplinary formation. Isaac Balbus writes, “the . . . intention to identify knowledge/power complexes as objects for deconstruction presupposes a subjectivity that is not an effect of these complexes” (Balbus, 1998, 152). Foucault’s critics mistake the claim that there is no objective self with the claim that there is no conscious space or ground from which one can resist. Derrida captures the postmodern view of subjectivity well when he writes:

I have never said that the subject should be dispensed with. Only that it should be deconstructed. To deconstruct the subject does not mean to deny its existence. There are subjects, ‘operations’ or ‘effects’ of subjectivity.

This is an incontrovertible fact. To acknowledge this does not mean, however, that the subject is what it *says* it is. The subject is not some meta-linguistic substance or identity . . . it is always inscribed in language (Derrida, 1984, 124).

Following Derrida, Foucault also denies that the subject is a metaphysical substance. “I do believe,” Foucault writes, “that there is no sovereign, founding subject, a universal form of subject to be found everywhere” (Foucault, 1988, 50). However, to say that there is no metaphysical subject, or to say that the subject is always inscribed in language, does not mean that the subject is “no-thing.” As Foucault writes, “I believe that . . . the subject is constituted through practices of subjection, or, in a more autonomous way, through practices of liberation [resistance]. . . on the basis . . . of a number of rules, styles, inventions to be found in the cultural environment” (Foucault, 1988, 50-1). For Derrida and Foucault, the subject is both an empirical being (an incontrovertible fact), and a movement of linguistic and material relations. As a disclosive, and transitively self-reflective agent existing within an inherently contingent, temporal movement of linguistic and textual relations, the subject always possesses the capacity to alter and direct the conditions of his or her own possibilities. Therefore, to deconstruct the subject, according to Derrida, or to recognize and resist the presence of Disciplinary Power, according to Foucault, is not to dissolve the subject or deny its existence, but rather to resituate it in a field of power relations. Resistant modes of consciousness and subjectivity are opened, formed, and strengthened by

becoming aware of this condition of being.

Second, resistant subjectivity occurs because of the relational character of power. The relations of power that constitute our historical context are characterized by the presence of multiple discourses and strategies (economic, moral, social, familial) in perpetual struggle and conflict. This agonism is the defining characteristic of the subjective, moral, and political field of experience. The subjects produced by these multiple, sometimes conflicting, sometimes overlapping discourses, will express a diversity of subjective stances in the webbing of power. As Heller writes, “[a]ll social relations produce, in Foucault’s opinion, structurally incompatible subject-positions. . . . Power does indeed have a determinate opposite: *other forms of power*. Because subjectification necessarily produces subject-positions with irreconcilable material and symbolic interests, the power exercised by subject-position X will always be opposed by the power exercised by subject-position Y” (Heller, 1996, 99). It is precisely the presence of multiple subjectivities and the *relational* character of power that ensures that subjects are not condemned to rehearse the meanings and values of a particular metanarrative. Depending on where one is within the disciplinary matrix (and this temporal-spatiality is always undergoing change), one will be formed by and resistant to different forces.

The third issue concerns the inevitably unique ways that individuals respond to the inscription of disciplinary norms and expectations. Because subjectivity possesses no objective center and is fabricated by a diversity of linguistic, discursive, and material strategies, the self is in constant formation and counter-formation. This is what Foucault means by the de-centered subject. It is in this webbing of relations of power that Foucault locates the *fact and resistance* of the de-centered subject. As a disclosed individual—a subject called into being as Butler would say—the subject is someone *as* someone (Butler, 1993, 225). And, while the subject must rehearse important aspects of his or her own fabrication as the cost of remaining a social being, the way in which disciplinary discourses and practices construct subjects and the ineluctably contingent ways subjects respond to the inscription of power produce a multiplicity of subject positions and personalities. Individuals are formed by multiple discourses and by varying degrees of intensity, and individuals will express unique and idiosyncratic responses to the conceptual and material practices that attempt to inscribe disciplinary norms and expectations on their minds, bodies and practices. “To the extent that gender [sexuality, normality, morality, etc.] is an assignment,” Butler argues, “it is an assignment which is never quite carried out according to expectation, whose

addressee never quite inhabits the ideal s/he is compelled to approximate” (Butler, 1993, 231). The fact that resistance is immanent in power implies that human beings are neither completely moldable nor the possessors of a natural or metaphysical teleology. Foucault’s account of resistant subjectivity occupies a sort of middle space between being thoroughly pliable beings (no resistance is possible) and the bearers of an objective essence. Resistance is a form of permanent activity because power is always operating to shape and direct one’s possibilities. Technically speaking, for Foucault, all forms of subjectivity are inherently resistant.

Moreover, contrary to the claim that awareness of the ubiquity of power and the absence of a metaphysical ground will lead to forms of nihilism, knowledge that one’s subjectivity has no metaphysical ground is an opportunity for the subject to positively create and form one’s own self-grounding. Recognizing that there is no objective necessity governing one’s identity and purpose ought to liberate and encourage one to become who he or she wants. This awareness can create an incitement to conscious modes of resistance. Self-conscious acts of resistance are ways individuals think and act in order to reimagine and create their own identities. Appropriating Nietzsche’s view of the self as a multiplicity of competing desires and interests, Foucault argues that the subject is a *form* animated by multiple discursive and material influences, “and this form is not primarily or always identical to itself” (Foucault, 2003, 33). The particular *form*—what Nietzsche called style and what Butler calls a structured invisibility—de-centered subjectivity takes will, for Foucault, express the self-conscious shaping of the multiplicity of subjective possibilities and the play of power relations. “In each case, one plays, one establishes a different type of relationship to oneself” (Foucault, 2003, 33). The goal of resistance, Foucault writes, is “to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality that has been imposed on us” (Foucault, 2003, 134). Awareness of one’s entanglement in the relations of power and the willingness to speak, value and act in ways that redefine oneself and one’s context constitutes active modes of resistance against the *phenomenology of victimization*.

Recognizing that forms of resistant consciousness and subjectivity are opened in the very fabrication of consciousness and subjectivity themselves provides resistance to the second and third moments in the *phenomenology of victimization*. The Enlightenment Discourse and the Disciplinary Power that flows through it fabricates subjects/individuals that are economically well trained, productive, efficient, and politically obedient and docile. Resistant consciousness and subjectivity enable individuals to actively decons-

truct elements of their subjectivity—their meaning, values, and practices—that are the sources of their victimization. Recognizing that subjectivity in an aesthetic phenomenon incites individuals to reimagine and redefine their meaning, values and practices. In addition, cultivating resistant consciousness and subjectivity enables individuals to alter the dimensions of the third moment in the *phenomenology of victimization* that occur in and through a condition of perpetual visibility and the formation of panoptic consciousness. Reimagining and redefining how one is *visible* alters how one lives within and experiences panoptic consciousness.

#### **4. Conclusion: The *phenomenology of victimization*, resistance and contextualized liberation.**

While resistance to the *phenomenology of victimization* is possible, we must always remember that these modalities of resistance can never “objectively” liberate the individual from Disciplinary Power. Foucault is skeptical of any account of resistance that views resistance as tools in “objective” liberation. “I have always been somewhat suspicious of the notion of liberation, because if it is not treated with precautions and within certain limits, one runs the risks of falling back on the idea that there is a human nature or base that, as a consequence of certain historical, economic, and social processes, has been concealed, alienated, or imprisoned in and by mechanisms of repression” (Foucault, 2003, 26). On Foucault’s account, resistance and the process of dis-entangling ourselves from the manifestations of *ontological victimization* are not zero-sum relationships with Disciplinary Power. “[T]here is no face-to-face confrontation of power and [resistance] freedom which is mutually exclusive (freedom disappears everywhere power is exercised), but a much more complicated interplay” (Foucault, 2003, 139). Foucault insists that there is no outside of discourse or power, and therefore, no objective liberation from the happening of victimization in the traditional sense. For Foucault, liberation from the *phenomenology of victimization* is found in the permanent resistance to the operation of Disciplinary Power.

Like resistance, therefore, Foucault’s account of liberation from the *phenomenology of victimization* is simultaneous with the happening of Disciplinary Power. Paradoxically, the conditions of freedom are part-and-parcel with the subjectification of the individual. Insofar as the individual is constructed through discursive practices, he or she is disclosed in this linguistic moment. It is the opening of this space and movement that constitutes the conditions of possibility for relative liberation from the structures of *ontological victimization*. “In this game freedom may well appear as the condition

for the exercise of power (at the same time its precondition, since freedom must exist for power to be exerted, and also its permanent support, since without the possibility of recalcitrance, power would be equivalent to a physical determination)” (Foucault, 2003, 139). If Disciplinary Power were wholly pervasive, if no resistance were possible, it would no longer be power but a form of determinism. Resistance to, and liberation from, the happening and expressions of *ontological victimization* are, for Foucault, opened in the multiple possibilities of response that the contingencies of language and subjectivity that are inherent in Disciplinary Power. Every operation of Disciplinary Power creates a variety of contingencies and possibilities. Liberation from Disciplinary victimization is a certain mode of activity, a sort of self-conscious resistance to forms of subjectification and Disciplinary Power. “Rather than speaking of an essential antagonism, it would be better to speak of an ‘agonism’—of a relationship which is at the same time reciprocal incitation and struggle; less of a face-to-face confrontation . . . than a permanent provocation” (Foucault, 2003, 139). Foucault’s account of resistance to the *phenomenology of victimization* entails recognizing that one is always-already existing—thinking, acting, and exercising choice—in a discursive field of power relations and multiple possibilities. Freedom, therefore, entails a posture one assumes in the webbing of power relations. Leslie Thiele writes, “[r]ecognition of one’s entanglement in the web of power/knowledge . . . is a form of liberation itself” (Thiele, 1990, 908). As acts of resistance against the *phenomenology of victimization*, writing, critique, refusal, and invention constitute the process by which one attempts to redefine the field of possibilities and meaning, all the while acknowledging that such acts are themselves made possible by the operation of Disciplinary Power.

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