

# Foucault and Binswanger

## Beyond the Dream

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This essay deals with the role played in the early development of Foucault's thought by Ludwig Binswanger's project of *Daseinsanalyse* ("existential analysis"). It is well known that there is an important biographical connection here. But given its existential-phenomenological character, Foucault's interest in *Daseinsanalyse* is generally seen as what Alan Sheridan called a "false start," a juvenile pre-history of the real Foucault, and thus as lacking any philosophical import with regard to his later work.<sup>1</sup> However, notwithstanding that Foucault did reject *Daseinsanalyse*, that view is incorrect. On the contrary, I submit that what Foucault specifically rejected was not phenomenology per se, but rather the methodological framework of genetic phenomenology—and that this rejection was motivated precisely by the inadequacy of that framework for addressing normative concerns with subjectivity.

Recognition of this situation is important for two related reasons. First, it can help to clarify the overall continuity of Foucault's *oeuvre*, inasmuch as it suggests that the apparent normative concerns of his final works stem from a longitudinal axis. Second, it reveals a potential philosophical complementarity between Foucauldian accounts of the "historicity of forms of experience" and phenomenology, inasmuch as the latter acknowledges that even at the genetic level it remains transcendently naïve if it fails to come to terms with the external horizons of experience. In other words, it suggests that Foucault's work can be read as extending, rather than rejecting, phenomenology's transcendental concern with subjectivity.

My essay has four sections. I first (1) introduce Foucault's relation to Binswanger, and then

(2) clarify what Foucault found philosophically significant in *Daseinsanalyse*. I then (3) consider the methodological limits of the latter and how this relates to Foucault, and by way of conclusion (4) I discuss this with particular reference to Binswanger's case of "Ellen West."

### 1

Along with others such as Karl Jaspers and Eugène Minkowski, Binswanger was a pioneering figure in phenomenological-existential psychiatry, and his project of *Daseinsanalyse*—which he developed mainly in the 1930s and 1940s in the context of his directorship of the family-based Bellevue clinic on Lake Konstanz in Kreuzlingen (Switzerland)—is a major landmark in this field.

It is well-known among Foucault scholars that there is at least an historical connection here, as Foucault's first (at least non-pseudonymous) publication (1954) was a lengthy introduction to Jacqueline Verdeaux's French translation of Binswanger's 1930 article "Traum und Existenz"—a piece which, it should be noted, Binswanger himself, approached by Verdeaux, selected for translation.<sup>2</sup> He made this choice presumably because, in addition to being relatively non-technical (it was originally published in a literary review), it represented the first step in the formulation of *Daseinsanalyse*, the single most important source for which—the *Daseinsanalytik* of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*—had appeared in 1927. Basically, already drawn to Husserlian phenomenology as essential to proper psychiatric insight, Binswanger saw in Heidegger's work—especially the notion of being-in-the-world [*In-der-Welt-Sein*]<sup>3</sup>—a crucial

new way to interpret holistically the immanent structure of styles of existence that would otherwise be reduced to psychopathology. The fullest expression of *Daseinsanalyse* appeared later in *Grundformen und Erkenntnis menschlichen Daseins* (1942), a work that Binswanger supplemented with a detailed case study of a patient known as “Ellen West” (1944/45).

Length aside, Foucault’s was no mere introduction. Rather, as he made clear, it was an attempt to use Binswanger’s article as an incisive point of entry into *Daseinsanalyse* as a whole—in effect, (although he did not say so explicitly), a radical effort to root out its “unthought.” And he construed this project precisely as Binswanger himself had characterized it, namely, as anthropology qua (unified) science of “man”—or qua (what might be called) “science of subjectivity,”<sup>3</sup> where subjectivity, approached under the aegis of “existentiality” [*Existenzialität*], is understood existentially as a certain mode of situated transcendence.<sup>4</sup>

In this way, what Foucault called the “basic sense” of Binswanger’s anthropological project implies that it defies traditional disciplinary lines.<sup>5</sup> As he put it in the Introduction, his intent was “to present a form of analysis which does not aim at being a philosophy, and whose end is not to be a psychology; a form of analysis which is fundamental in relation to all concrete, objective, and experimental knowledge; a form of analysis, finally, whose principle and method are determined from the start solely by the absolute privilege of their object: man, or rather, the being of man, *Menschsein*”<sup>6</sup>—this latter being a key term in Binswanger’s thought.

Foucault’s view was reflected in the epigraph from Kierkegaard’s *Postscript* that Binswanger placed at the start of “Dream and Existence” (and elsewhere besides): “Above all, we must keep firmly in mind what it means to be a human being.” But it was more the case for Binswanger that the imperative here is to keep asking “what it means to be a human being”—the *Menschseinsfrage*, as it were. As he claimed in the article itself, “the question [as to] who ‘we human beings’ actually are, and what we are, has never been given less of an answer than in our

own time, and today we stand again at the very beginning of a new questioning regarding this we.”<sup>7</sup> In the studies of mania (“flight of ideas”) and manic-depression that Binswanger published shortly after “Dream and Existence”—the first application, so to speak, of *Daseinsanalyse*—this anthropological orientation—and its contempt for traditional boundaries between normal and pathological—was explicit. “It is our opinion,” he wrote, “that ‘manic-depressive insanity’ does not teach us anything anthropologically new about ‘humans,’ but rather that it gives us, in a clearer and more conspicuous form, an answer to the question [as to] ‘what a human being is’ [*was der Mensch ist*].”<sup>8</sup> Binswanger’s work thus directly addresses Kant’s “fourth”—and, according to the Jäsche Logic—fundamental question for philosophy—at least, as Kant put it—“in [the] cosmopolitan sense,” namely, *Was ist der Mensch?*<sup>9</sup> And concerning this path of anthropological interrogation, Foucault—who was already lecturing on Kant’s *Anthropology* (a text which he would later translate with an introduction)<sup>10</sup>—expressed the view that Binswanger’s work represented “the royal road.”<sup>11</sup>

Foucault thus had a profound interest in Binswanger. The notes from the Introduction to “Dream and Existence” make reference to several other of Binswanger’s works, and Daniel Defert reported that Foucault owned “carefully marked copies of all of Binswanger’s major articles and books.”<sup>12</sup> Apparently, Foucault had even translated some of these,<sup>13</sup> including a case history of schizophrenia published in 1945 (the case of “Ilse”), the title of which carried a contrast that could easily be seen as significant for Foucault: “*Wahnsinn als lebensgeschichtliches Phänomen und als Geisteskrankheit*” (“Madness as Life-Historical Phenomenon and as Mental Disease”). Foucault visited Binswanger at his clinic at Kreuzlingen,<sup>14</sup> possibly multiple times, as well as at his summer residence,<sup>15</sup> and he also entered into a correspondence with him. It was in a letter to Foucault that Binswanger commented quite favourably on Foucault’s text: “Your essay is for me a life-historical event [*ein lebensgeschichtliches Ereignis*]”<sup>16</sup>—although Foucault’s radicalization of his position was not lost on him.<sup>17</sup>

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Conversely, in later reflecting on his reading of Binswanger, Foucault noted that in looking for some “counterbalance” to “the traditional grids imposed by the medical gaze,” “these superb descriptions of madness as fundamental, unique, incomparable experiences were, most certainly, decisive for me.”<sup>18</sup>

Foucault’s first book, *Maladie mentale et personnalité* (1954),<sup>19</sup> a short text for students that was written at the behest of Althusser for a series edited by Jean Lacroix, also included a number of significant references to Binswanger, all of which remained in the drastically revised (and re-titled) edition of 1962—although as we know, Foucault had and always retained an extremely negative—even hostile—attitude toward that work.

## 2

It is, no doubt, largely for this and corollary reasons that this earliest period is usually given very short shrift in the literature on Foucault—if it is even mentioned at all. It is typically seen along the lines of what Alan Sheridan called a “false start,”<sup>20</sup> a sort of juvenile pre-history of the real Foucault. Standard periodizations of Foucault’s work begin in 1961 with *History of Madness*, and proceed thence to define periods of “archaeology” and “genealogy,” followed by a final period, centring on the subsequent volumes of *The History of Sexuality* which, dealing with “practices of the self” or “ethics,” could be labelled “the return of the subject” (or something to that effect).

But as is well known, there are difficult questions concerning, not necessarily the overall “unity” of Foucault’s work, for that may be a misplaced idea, but rather the consistency of archaeology and/or genealogy with that work of the final period. For what Amy Allen called the “anti-subjective hypothesis”—consisting in the belief that “the point of Foucault’s archaeological analyses of discourse and his genealogical analyses of power/knowledge is to attack, undermine, and eventually eradicate the concept of the human subject”<sup>21</sup>—in other words, to participate in the (structuralist) “death of the subject”—is a widely subscribed reading (whether positively or nega-

tively) of Foucault. Yet on the surface, at least, this seems scarcely compatible with Foucault’s later turn to the self and issues of ethical subjectivity. Connected to this interpretive problem are the larger questions of the practical and normative consequences of the “anti-subjective hypothesis” with respect to the viability—or even the very possibility—of moral and transformative agency. For if subjectivity is nothing but an effect of anonymous regimes of power/knowledge, then it would seem that Foucault’s project precludes any possible grounding for even minimally autonomous forms of ethical and political resistance to those regimes.

Now, I don’t think that this is the case. Rather, I think that Foucault’s characterization of his project as “a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects”<sup>22</sup> is accurate—that his abiding concern was with “the relations between the subject, truth, and the constitution of experience”<sup>23</sup>—which is to say, as Foucault did indeed say, that “the subject” was all along “the general theme of [his] research.”<sup>24</sup> It is just that his is a project of transcendental critique. As such, it is focused on conditions of possibility. But in contradistinction to the universalism of Kantian transcendental critique, Foucault’s aims to come to terms with the social, cultural, and especially historical conditions of possibility—in a word, the historical a priori—of modern subjectivity.<sup>25</sup> As he wrote at the end of “What is an Author?” this sort of critique asks: “under what conditions and through what forms can an entity like the subject appear in the order of discourse? What position can it occupy, what functions does it exhibit, and what rules does it follow in each type of discourse?”<sup>26</sup> It is, as Allen argued, a matter of treating subjectivity as explanandum and consequently bracketing it out methodologically (Allen herself doesn’t put it that way) from any explanatory (that is, constitutive) role.<sup>27</sup> “Foucault’s archaeological and genealogical works should not be understood as attempts to eradicate the concept of subjectivity; on the contrary, they are attempts to specify the discursive and non-discursive practices that make a particular . . . conception of subjectivity possible,”<sup>28</sup> and this in a way, Allen claims, that

allows for coherent sense to be made of the later concern with (constitutive) “practices of the self.”

This is generally correct, I think. I would, however, take issue with Allen concerning how she frames her conclusion: “this way of reading Foucault holds out the possibility of a new understanding of Foucault’s philosophical project, one which emphasizes the continuity between the *three* periods . . . of his work,”<sup>29</sup> that is, in a way that stretches back “almost [to] the very beginning of his philosophical project.”<sup>30</sup> For I would contend that Foucault’s earliest, pre-archaeological period also fits into this continuity, and, what’s more, that it may be necessary to include it therein. For it is by no means immediately clear just how the interpretive shift that Allen suggests will result in “a conception of a subject that hints at the possibility of new and potentially liberating modes of subjectivity.”<sup>31</sup> With this in mind, I would rather take literally Foucault’s statement that the later return to the subject was a matter, as he said, of “reintroducing the problem of the subject that [he] had more or less left aside in [his] first studies.”<sup>32</sup>

Béatrice Han called that a “curious understatement.”<sup>33</sup> This is because it seems to contradict Foucault’s unambiguous rejection of any approach—paradigmatically, phenomenology—that remains committed to a constitutive notion of the subject. But this view is inattentive (or oblivious) to what it was that Foucault had found so interesting in Binswanger’s *Daseinsanalyse*. Most generally, this has to do with Kant, and the relative priority between the *Critiques* and the *Anthropology*—of universality and finitude within the transcendental theme. Is it the case, as Kant is standardly read, that the latter is to be grasped in terms of the former? Or is it rather the case that the *Critiques* themselves need to be founded in a critical anthropology that discloses the ontological finitude of *Menschsein*? This latter view is along the lines of Heidegger’s claim that the essence of Kant’s philosophical project lay in the attempt to ground metaphysics through a disclosure of its “inner possibility” in “the subjectivity of the human subject,” and that “the grounding of metaphysics is [thus] a questioning

with regard to the human being, i.e., Anthropology.”<sup>34</sup>

Now, despite Foucault’s late claim that, for him, Heidegger was “the essential philosopher,” and that his “entire philosophical development was determined by [his] reading of Heidegger,”<sup>35</sup> this view of Kant is not quite the line he follows. He did not, that is, take up anthropology as an analytic of finitude lying on this side of the empirical-transcendental divide. It is thus not just the sense of the transcendental that gets reworked in Foucault, but the sense of the empirical as well. And he was drawn to consider the point of their connection—the point where, as Merleau-Ponty echoed Husserl, the empirical and the transcendental *sich einströmen*, where they flow into one another. Such is exactly what the young Foucault perceived in Binswanger’s *Daseinsanalyse*. As he wrote in the Introduction to “Dream and Existence,” Binswanger, rejecting any a priori distinction between them, “outflanks the problem of ontology and anthropology by going straight to concrete existence, to its historical content and development. From there, by way of an analysis of the structures of existence . . . he moves continually back and forth between the anthropological forms and the ontological conditions of existence. He continually crosses a dividing line that seems so difficult to draw, or rather, he sees it ceaselessly crossed by a concrete existence in which the real limit of *Menschsein* and *Dasein* is manifested. . . . It is a matter, for [Binswanger], of bringing to light, by returning to the concrete individual, the point at which the forms and conditions of existence mutually articulate.”<sup>36</sup> It is because Binswangerian “existentiality”—that is, the existential a priori—is in this way orthogonal to the Heideggerian distinction between the existential and the existentiell that *Daseinsanalyse* can maintain a coherent, non-aporetic commitment to a concrete sense of constitutive subjectivity.

Here some brief comments concerning Binswanger’s relation to Heidegger are necessary—comments which, as far as I know, go against virtually every reference to Binswanger in the Foucault literature. For these tend to gloss *Daseinsanalyse* as in effect simply the applica-

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tion of Heidegger's thought to the psychopathological domain. Whereas in fact, notwithstanding an enormous intellectual debt,<sup>37</sup> Binswanger's work—under the contrary influence of Martin Buber, for example, as well as Karl Löwith's important early critique of Heidegger—differed in certain fundamental ways from what Heidegger was doing. As Binswanger himself once put it, *Daseinsanalyse* is based on “a productive misunderstanding” [*eine produktive Mißverständnis*] of Heidegger's *Daseinsanalytik*.<sup>38</sup> Basically, whereas Heidegger approached Dasein in strictly ontological terms, Binswanger's approach was, as we have seen, anthropological—something which, as made explicit in the Zollikon seminars, was wholly anathema to what Heidegger was doing. Rather than just on the general structures of “being-in-the-world” interpreted in terms of “care” [*Sorge*], Binswanger focused on what he termed particular “world-designs” [*Weltentwürfe*], the articulation of *Eigen-*, *Mit-*, and *Umwelten*, that are as much a function of “love” [*Liebe*], understood as an irreducible dimension of intersubjective co-existence that is, in an existential sense, “beyond” the world [*über-die-Welt-hinaus*]. Indeed, criticizing the narrowness and inadequacy of Heidegger's account of existence as simply *In-der-Welt-Sein*, and extending it into an account of *In-der-Welt-Über-die-Welt-hinaus-Sein* (“being-in-and-beyond-the-world”), is in effect the principal task undertaken by Binswanger in *Grundformen und Erkenntnis menschlichen Daseins*, and it lies at the very heart of his *Daseinsanalyse*. This “misunderstanding” of Heidegger—which, in addition to Buber and Löwith, also reflects the earlier influence on Binswanger of Husserl<sup>39</sup>—centers Binswanger's work on a notion of “encounter” [*Begegnung*] and gives it a robust dialogical and intersubjective orientation that differs radically from Heideggerian phenomenology. It is this view of existentiality as “being-in-and-beyond-the-world” that enables Binswanger to maintain a coherent commitment to a concrete sense of constitutive subjectivity.

Even this coherence, however, has its limits. Binswanger's is, after all, a phenomenological project. Above I used the term “bracketing out” deliberately to indicate the family relation between phenomenology and Foucauldian archaeology and genealogy as radical reprises of transcendental critique. The key point of contact concerns a profound methodological problem afflicting phenomenology at its very core, namely, that its definitive reliance upon the self-evidentness of intuitional givenness renders it congenitally incapable of undertaking a critical interrogation of the socio-historical horizons within which (that is, against the background of which) this self-evidentness is experienced. Without such an interrogation phenomenology would be left (in Husserl's terms) “transcendentally naïve”—yet it is a task that phenomenology's methodological commitment to givenness renders it incapable of discharging. It cannot get beyond the level of “genetic phenomenology,” and thus necessarily remains limited within the framework of egological self-temporalization (*Lebensgeschichte*).<sup>40</sup>

We can see this in Foucault's first book—which is accordingly divided into two parts. (It was primarily the second part that Foucault rewrote.) The first part deals with “the psychological dimensions of mental illness,” and it is here that we find the references to Binswanger. Foucault presented phenomenological psychology as the proper culmination of psychology. For since “the way in which a subject accepts or rejects his illness . . . constitutes one of the essential dimensions of the illness,”<sup>41</sup> it is necessary to understand pathological experience “from the inside.”<sup>42</sup> Fundamentally, as he put it in an historical survey of psychology published in 1957, the coherence of the discipline necessitates that it be founded upon an “existential analysis of the way in which human reality is temporalized, [how it is] spatialized, and how it projects a world.”<sup>43</sup> This prioritizes precisely the sort of phenomenological psychopathology practiced by Binswanger, which is at root “a matter of restoring . . . both the experience that the patient has of



his illness . . . and the morbid world on which this consciousness of illness opens, the world at which this consciousness is directed, and which it constitutes.”<sup>44</sup>

*Qua* world, the “morbid” world of mental illness serves as the background condition of possibility for the inner history of the illness itself.<sup>45</sup> But at the same time, “it is never an absolute that abolishes all reference to the normal.” Rather, “the sick consciousness always opens out with a double reference, either to the normal and the pathological, the familiar and the strange, the particular and the universal, or wakefulness and dreaming [*l’onirisme*].”<sup>46</sup> How, then, Foucault asks, does such a world relate to the ‘normal’ world? Fundamentally, it is as a matter of abandonment or detachment—or more generally, of alienation. Whereas—and here Foucault cites an important invocation of Heraclitus that Binswanger makes in “Dream and Existence”<sup>47</sup>—the “normal” world is the single world of common wakeful life, Heraclitus’ *koinos cosmos*, the “morbid” world is a “private world”—Heraclitus’ *idios cosmos*—that results from a process of *Verweltlichung*. Foucault leaves this term untranslated, but we could call it “*mundanization*”—by which is meant a disintegrative collapse that “abandons the subject to the world as to an external fate.”<sup>48</sup> It is the loss of the dimension of existence “beyond” the world. “The nucleus of [mental] illness lies in this contradictory unity of a private world and an abandonment to the inauthenticity of the world.”<sup>49</sup>

But Foucault did not stop there. Even if in 1954 he positioned Binswanger’s phenomenological anthropology at the apex of psychology, he did not think that psychology was the whole story. Even then he recognized the need to carry the analysis further. As he wrote at the beginning of the Introduction to “Dream and Existence,” it is necessary “to situate existential analysis within the development of contemporary reflection on man,” and, by following—i.e., taking further—“the inflection of phenomenology toward anthropology,” to show “what foundations have been proposed for concrete reflection on man.”<sup>50</sup> It is a matter of accounting for the enigmatic

*Verweltlichung* of mental illness in terms of the world itself.

This is addressed in the second part of the book, and herein lies the rupture between the two editions. On the one hand, in the first edition Foucault looked toward the “external and objective conditions” of the world, in effect laying out a Marxist materialist account of mental illness in terms of the alienating structural contradictions of modern society.<sup>51</sup> This left the book hanging on a disconnect between a phenomenological anthropology and a materialist social history.<sup>52</sup> It is with respect to this that Foucault later recollected: “I wondered whether, rather than playing on this alternative, it would not be possible to consider the very historicity of forms of experience.”<sup>53</sup> As he had written in 1957, the possibility of psychology does depend on an existential-analytical basis, but also a return to “what is most human in man, namely, his history.”<sup>54</sup> (*Geschichte*, not just *Lebensgeschichte*.)

Thus, on the other hand, the revised second part offers what amounts to a summary of *History of Madness*. Here the concern is with psychopathology as “a fact of civilization”—not the socio-economic conditions that would cause mental illness in some (in principle) universally true and ahistorical sense, but rather the historically specific cultural and discursive conditions in virtue of which madness has been pathologized as such, and the subsequent institution of normalizing disciplinary practices. The work thus no longer seeks “the root of mental illness” through “a reflection on man himself,”<sup>55</sup> but rather in “a certain historically situated relation of man to the madman and to the true man.”<sup>56</sup> The overall task changes accordingly from an attempt to situate personal existence socially, to one of situating (phenomenological) psychology and its attendant concepts (e.g., mental pathology) in its historical context. As the revised first part concludes: “Is there not in mental illness a whole nucleus of significations that belongs to the domain in which it appeared—and, to begin with, the simple fact that it is in that domain that it is circumscribed as an illness?”

It was this additional level of self-critique that Binswanger’s phenomenology lacked. For

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Foucault, then, the problem with *Daseinsanalyse* is that it operated uncritically within the parameters of normalcy of the modern world. But this world is not *the* world. It is, rather, a historically specific and contingent world, and this must be taken into account, if one's perspective is not to suffer an insupportable transcendental naïveté.

No less important than identifying this line of criticism is recognizing Foucault's work as a corrective generalization of *Daseinsanalyse*—the historical generalization of existential apriority. Archaeology and genealogy respond to the methodological impasse of phenomenology by articulating the historical horizons of its experience and thus providing a critical perspective on the forms of subjectivity that are operative within it. This need not replace phenomenology, but rather can be seen as situating it in a way that allows for a more complete and critical fulfillment of the common radical transcendental thematic—and this in a way that can maintain a non-aporetic commitment to a concrete sense of constitutive subjectivity.<sup>57</sup>

By way of analogy with *Daseinsanalyse* as therapy, then, “one can think of later Foucault as practicing genealogical therapy on the madness of modernity. He is trying to historicize . . . the closed, normalized view we have of ourselves as . . . subjects in order to ready us for the possibility of a new interpretation of the human self that could take up currently marginalized practices, thus opening up our world rather than shutting it down.”<sup>58</sup> In short, the hints and gestures toward liberation and disalienation that are sensed in Foucault's later work especially point back to the normative spark that animated the *Daseinsanalytische* account of existentiality with which he originally engaged. As Foucault once wrote in a Nietzschean vein: “Historical sense has more in common with medicine than philosophy. . . . Its task is to become a curative science.”<sup>59</sup>

#### 4

The issues that I have been discussing are in many ways crystallized in Binswanger's case of “Ellen West.” This is a well-known but controversial case study published by Binswanger in 1945 of an intelligent, creative, idealistic,

revolutionarily-minded Jewish woman suffering from anorexia, who, after two failed analyses and several suicide attempts, ended up in Binswanger's care. By means of a “hermeneutic exegesis [of her life] on the ontic-anthropological level,” he ultimately diagnosed her as suffering an incurable sort of schizophrenia: basically, he thought that there were existentially irreconcilable rifts between her *Eigenwelt* and her *Mit- und Umwelten*. Her mortification of her body was an expression of this. Her dreams and desires were could not be rooted concretely. “Ellen's being-beyond does not begin and end in being-in-the-world [but] in a return to Nothingness.”<sup>60</sup> “Nowhere does her existence find a loving shelter, nor can it anywhere lay hold of its ground. This means that her existence is threatened by its own nothingness.”<sup>61</sup> Her authentic self-realization thus required her corporeal de-realization. Binswanger thus consented to her leaving the sanatorium, fully confident—correctly, as it turned out—that her suicide was inevitable. And, indeed, she poisoned herself just days later. Binswanger infamously argued that this was an “authentic suicide,” that it was “the fulfillment of the life-meaning of this existence,”<sup>62</sup> and he consequently regarded this case as methodologically important for understanding *Daseinsanalyse*.

Historically, though, this case has been the focus of a variety of criticisms, (albeit without access to original documentation), including malpractice,<sup>63</sup> “psychic homicide,”<sup>64</sup> misdiagnosis (concerning eating disorders),<sup>65</sup> misogyny, and anti-Semitism.<sup>66</sup> Such criticism has led some to suggest that *Daseinsanalyse* represents a kind of “therapeutic nihilism.”<sup>67</sup> Recently available archival material has given rise to renewed scrutiny and criticism of the case.<sup>68</sup> This exceeds the scope of the present essay. But what is germane is that in the 1950s Foucault endorsed Binswanger's diagnosis, in both the Introduction to “Dream and Existence”—where, indeed, death and suicide form a *leitmotiv*—as well as in both editions of *Maladie mentale*. What are we to make of this?

We can relate this to the question of “the death of the subject.” While there is something like “the death of the subject” in Foucault's archaeological

and genealogical works, that is just a mistaken view of the “bracketing out” of the subject. And this sort of “de-subjectivation” is geared toward the goal of a less “alienated” realization of subjectivity. There is something truly like “the death of the subject” in Foucault—but unexpectedly, it is in the earliest period, and it is manifested in the case of Ellen West. This shows simultaneously the radical nature but also the pitfalls of Binswanger’s project *as* phenomenological. The subject’s death—her suicide—is accepted as “authentic” and inevitable solely and precisely because of the inherent methodological limitations of the genetic phenomenological framework. Ellen West was aspiring to constitutive subjectivity—in an important sense she is “the subject”—but the structural obstacles of the modern world that underlay her alienation and

oppression were beyond the ken of Binswanger’s perspective. The inauthenticity and impossibility of her existence are real enough, but a more radically “curative” view is possible through a more radically historical analysis. Taken naïvely, her case shows that subjectivity is a dream, and that “death is the absolute meaning of the dream.”<sup>69</sup> But a more complete transcendental analysis would show that we can wake up, surpass the primacy of the dream, and find real happiness in the order of expression by engaging subjectivity as “an ethical task and an historical necessity.”<sup>70</sup> Unexpectedly, then, it is precisely through the archaeological and genealogical work that many have indicted in “the death of the subject” that Foucault may actually contribute something quite valuable to saving it.<sup>71</sup>

#### NOTES

1. Alan Sheridan, *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth* (London: Tavistock, 1980), 195.
2. Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, trans. B. Wing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 44; David Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault: A Biography* (New York: Pantheon, 1993), 59.
3. Susan Lanzoni, *Bridging Phenomenology and the Clinic: Ludwig Binswanger’s “Science of Subjectivity”* (Dissertation, Department of the History of Science, Harvard University, 2001). Cf. Mitchell G. Ash, *Gestalt Psychology in German Culture, 1890–1967: Holism and the Quest for Objectivity* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 11; Louis Sass, *Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought* (Harvard University Press, 1994), 329.
4. See Ludwig Binswanger, *Ausgewählte Werke*, 4 vols, eds. M. Herzog, H.-J. Braun, and A. Holzhey-Kunz (Heidelberg: Roland Asanger, 1992–94), 1.214.
5. Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits I: 1954–1975* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 94.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Binswanger, “Traum und Existenz” [1930]. In *Ausgewählte Werke*, 3:98.
8. Binswanger, *Ausgewählte Werke*, 1:141.
9. In the *Jäsche Logic* (1800) Kant summarizes “the field of philosophy in [the] cosmopolitan sense” in four questions: What can I know? [*Was kann ich wissen?*] What should I do? [*Was soll ich tun?*] What may I hope for? [*Was darf ich hoffen?*] What is a human being? [*Was ist der Mensch?*] Kant says that the first question is answered in metaphysics, the second in morals, the third in religion and the fourth in anthropology. But crucially, he adds that all of this can be included under anthropology because all of the questions “relate to anthropology.” *Lectures on Logic*, trans. and ed. J. M. Young (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 538.
10. See Foucault, *Dits et écrits I*, 22.
11. *Ibid.*, 95.
12. James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 73.
13. See Foucault, *Dits et écrits I*, 21.
14. Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault*, 60.
15. Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, 45–46.
16. Binswanger to Foucault, 10.5.1954. Cited in Max Herzog, *Weltentwürfe: Ludwig Binswangers phänomenologische Psychologie* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), 118.
17. As Binswanger put it: “your essay is for me a life-historical-event, for I have lived through the time when the dream had the greatest difficulty securing its right to scientific investigation, whereas now it is virutally triumphant and existence in the sense of wakeful experience is already nearly disparaged.”

#### FOUCAULT AND BINSWANGER



18. Duccio Trombadori, *Colloqui con Foucault* (Cooperative editrice, 1981). Cited in Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, 47.
19. The chronological order in which Foucault respectively composed this work and the Introduction to Binswanger's article is not clear.
20. Sheridan, *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth*, 195.
21. Amy Allen, "The Anti-Subjective Hypothesis: Michel Foucault and the Death of the Subject," *The Philosophical Forum* 31 (2000): 114.
22. Michel Foucault, "Afterword: The Subject and Power," in Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Between Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 208.
23. Michel Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977–1984*, ed. L. D. Kritzman, trans. A. Sheridan et al. (New York: Routledge, 1990), 48.
24. Foucault, "Afterword: The Subject and Power," 209.
25. See Kant, "What is Enlightenment?"
26. Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. D. F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 137–38.
27. "There is nothing particularly disturbing about the death of man. It is just a particular case—or if you like, one of the visible forms—of a much more general death. I do not mean by it the death of God, but that of the subject, of the Subject with a capital S, of the the subject understood as the origin and foundation of knowledge, Freedom, Language, and History" ("La naissance d'un monde," in *Dits et écrits i*, 816).
28. Allen "The Anti-Subjective Hypothesis," 125.
29. *Ibid.*, 126–27, my emphasis.
30. *Ibid.*, 125, my emphasis.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Foucault Live: Interviews, 1966–84*, ed. S. Lotringer, trans. J. Johnston (New York: Semiotext(e), 1989), 329.
33. Béatrice Han, *Foucault's Critical Project: Between the Transcendental and the Historical*, trans. E. Pile (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 10.
34. Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 5th, enlarged edition, trans. R. Taft (Indiana University Press, 1997), 144.
35. Michel Foucault, "Final Interview," *Raritan* 5 (1985): 8.
36. Foucault, *Dits et écrits I*, 95.
37. See in particular Ludwig Binswanger, "Die Bedeutung der Daseinsanalytik Martin Heideggers für das Selbstverständnis der Psychiatrie" [1949], in *Ausgewählte Aufsätze und Vorträge*, vol. 2 (Bern: Francke, 1955), 264.
38. Binswanger, *Grundformen und Erkenntnis menschlichen Daseins* [1942], *Ausgewählte Werke*, 2:4.
39. On Husserl and love, see R. Philip Buckley, "Husserl's Rational 'Liebesgemeinschaft,'" in *Research in Phenomenology* 26 (1996): 116–26, and Ullrich Melle, "Edmund Husserl: From Reason to Love," in *Phenomenological Approaches to Moral Philosophy: A Handbook*, ed. John J. Drummond and Lester Embree (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002): 229–48.
40. This is precisely the primary issue in Trân Đức Tháo's work, *Phénoménologie et matérialisme dialectique* (Paris: Minh-Tân, 1951).
41. Michel Foucault, *Maladie mentale et personnalité* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954), 56.
42. *Ibid.*, 53.
43. Foucault, *Dits et écrits I*, 164.
44. Foucault, *Maladie mentale et personnalité*, 55–6.
45. *Ibid.*, 68.
46. *Ibid.*, 60–61.
47. Binswanger, *Ausgewählte Werke*, 3:112–15.
48. Foucault, *Maladie mentale et personnalité*, 69.
49. *Ibid.*, 69. For Binswanger, the aim of therapy is thus to establish new intersubjective bonds that overcome such "detachment from life" and thereby liberate the person from captivation in/by his subjective realm. The therapist is a link between individual idiosyncrasy and the shared intelligibility of the public world. Her task is to help free the patient "from out of blind isolation, out of the idios cosmos . . . thus from mere life in his body, his dreams, his private inclinations, his pride and his exuberance, and to illuminate and liberate him for the ability to share in the koinos cosmos, the life of genuine fellowship (*Koinoinia*) or community" ("Über Psychotherapie" [1935], *Ausgewählte Werke*, 3:215f.).
50. Foucault, *Dits et écrits I*, 93.
51. A project that Joseph Gabel had already commenced and would later express in terms of a "socio-pathological parallelism"—a global theory of psychic and social alienation. See Joseph Gabel, "La Réification: Essai d'une psychopathologie de la pensée dialectique," *Esprit* (October 1951): 459–82; *La conscience fausse: Essai sur la réification* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1962).

52. A situation that mirrors the structure of Trân's *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism*.
53. Cited in Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, 47–48.
54. Foucault, *Dits et écrits I*, 165.
55. Foucault, *Maladie mentale et personnalité*, 2 [*l'homme lui-même*].
56. Ibid. [*l'homme fou ..l'homme vrai*].
57. Cf. Han, *Foucault's Critical Project*, 11.
58. Hubert Dreyfus, Introduction to Michel Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology*, trans. A. Sheridan (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), xxxix.
59. Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, and History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 156.
60. Ludwig Binswanger, "Der Fall Ellen West: Eine anthropologisch-klinische Studie" [1944/45], *Ausgewählte Werke*, 4:278.
61. Ibid., 280.
62. Ibid., 295.
63. Carl R. Rogers "Ellen West and Loneliness," *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry* 1 (1961): 94–101; R. D. Laing, *The Voice of Experience* (London: Allen Lane, 1982), 53–62; John Maltzberger et al., "The Case of Ellen West Revisited: A Permitted Suicide," in *Suicide & Life-threatening Behavior* 26 (1996): 86–97.
64. David Lester, "Ellen West's Suicide as a Case of Psychic Homicide," *Psychoanalytic Review* 58:2 (1971): 259–60.
65. Kim Chernin, *Obsession: Reflections on the Tyranny of Slenderness* (New York: Harper Collins, 1981), 162–77; Liliane Studer, "Ellen West (ca. 1890–ca. 1924): 'Das Leben lastet wie eine Wolke auf mir,'" in *WahnsinnsFrauen*, ed. S. Duda and L. F. Pusch (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1992): 226–54.
66. Abigail Bray "The Silence Surrounding 'Ellen West': Binswanger and Foucault," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 32 (2001): 125–46. Cf. Roger Frie and Klaus Hoffmann, "Binswanger, Heidegger, and Antisemitism: Reply to Abigail Bray," *ibid.*, 33 (2002): 221–28, and Bray "A Question of Indifference?—Reply to Frie and Hoffmann," *ibid.*, 228–32.
67. Lanzoni, *Bridging Phenomenology and the Clinic*, 267; cf. 271.
68. See Albrecht Hirschmüller, "Ludwig Binswangers Fall 'Ellen West': Zum Verhältnis von Diagnostik und Übertragung," *Luzifer-Amor* 29 (2002): 18–76; Hirschmüller, ed., *Ellen West: Eine Patientin Ludwig Binswangers zwischen Kreativität und destruktivem Leiden* (Heidelberg: Roland Asanger, 2003); and Naanah Akavia, and Albrecht Hirschmüller, eds., *Ellen West: Gedichte, Prosatexte, Tagebücher, Krankengeschichte* (Heidelberg: Roland Asanger, 2007).
69. Foucault, *Dits et écrits I*, 123.
70. Ibid., 147.
71. An earlier version of this essay was presented at the 2009 meeting of the Society for Existential and Phenomenological Theory and Culture, on a panel organized by Chloë Taylor and Bettina Bergo.

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