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Does Gestell 'Correspond Perfectly' to Dispositif?

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# Heidegger and Foucault on modern technology: does *Gestell* 'correspond perfectly' to *dispositif*?

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## ABSTRACT

This article compares Heidegger and Foucault on modern technology, taking its clue from Agamben's claim that *Gestell* and *dispositif* are 'perfectly corresponding' concepts. So far, however, the task of a detailed comparison of *Gestell* and *dispositif* remains unresolved. At first glance, the two terms appear compatible, designating how we moderns began objectifying nature as well as ourselves as manipulatable raw material. Significant for the discussion is Heidegger's and Foucault's contrasting readings of Nietzsche - the 'last metaphysician' versus 'the first genealogist' which present modern technology as humanity's nearly inescapable condition, or as 'functionally indeterminant', evolving in multiple, intersecting, and unexpected ways.

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## 1. Introduction

Foucault once declared: 'I'm simply a Nietzschean!' (Foucault 1989b, p. 471). At other moments, however, he would grant a similarly fundamental importance to his inspiration from Heidegger, or he would say that reading Nietzsche and Heidegger together was decisive for his thinking (Foucault 1989b, p. 470). It is noteworthy that Foucault only rarely made explicit references to Heidegger, and he never wrote a text devoted to Heidegger. Nevertheless, late in his life, Foucault paid a major, unexpected tribute to the German philosopher. In an interview from 1982, Foucault answered a question about the intellectual inspirations for his thinking by saying that Heidegger was an 'overwhelming influence', 'but no one in France has ever perceived it' (Foucault 1988, p. 12). In another interview, on 29 May 1984, a few weeks before he died, Foucault declared:

Heidegger has always been for me the essential philosopher. I started by reading Hegel, then Marx, and I began to read Heidegger in 1951 or 1952; then in 1952 or 1953, I no longer remember, I read Nietzsche. I still have the notes I took while reading Heidegger – I have tons of them! – and they are far more important than the ones I took on Hegel or Marx. My whole philosophical development was determined by my reading of Heidegger. But I recognize that Nietzsche prevailed over him (Foucault 1989a, p. 250).

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The intellectual relationship between Heidegger and Foucault remains disputed. Although Foucault claimed that his ‘whole philosophical development’ was conditioned by his reading of Heidegger, the sparsity of references to the German philosopher across Foucault’s authorship makes it difficult to establish precise connections between the two. Nevertheless, scholars have advanced comparative research, which suggests that Foucault’s work echoes Heideggerian themes, including the modern, objectifying gaze (Shapiro 2003), disciplinary technology (Dreyfus 1996, Ziarek 1998), and biopolitics (Rayner 2001). This article takes as its specific point of departure Agamben’s sweeping claim regarding the ‘corresponding’ concepts of *Gestell* and *dispositif*. Agamben’s claim finds broad support in Foucault’s own, unspecific declarations that Heidegger had an enormous influence on his thinking. Nevertheless, while Agamben notes some overall parallels between Heidegger’s *Gestell* and Foucault’s *dispositif*, he leaves aside the challenge of undertaking a careful comparison of the two concepts. In fact, to the best of my knowledge, no detailed comparison of the two notions is yet available. Instead of making general claims regarding Heidegger and Foucault as like-minded thinkers who reveal how our ‘historical ontology’ or ‘the disclosure of Being’ change from one epoch to another (Dreyfus 1996, Elden 2001), we hence zoom in on the concepts of *Gestell* and *dispositif*. This conceptual pair, I submit, offers a helpful vantage point for deepening the unresolved discussion of Heidegger and Foucault on modern technology. The article’s comparative discussion will seek to establish what Foucault might have meant in more concrete terms when he declared that Nietzsche took him out of phenomenology (which we assume includes Heidegger). The article also explicates in detail the divergent analytical implications for studying technology and power that follow from Heidegger’s philosophy and Foucault’s genealogy.

Let us first briefly define the two terms. In brief, Heidegger invented the term *Gestell* to denote how, with the advent of modernity, our reality is produced for us in an intrinsically objectifying and instrumentalizing fashion. The *Gestell* disposes us to disclose or render our world meaningful as nothing but a reserve of ‘meaningless’ objects awaiting categorisation, quantification, and exploitation. This instrumental attitude is the culmination, argues Heidegger, of the longstanding development of Western metaphysical thinking. For Foucault, the *dispositif* denotes a configuration of power and knowledge constituted in specific historical processes. In 1977, Foucault defined the *dispositif* as a network, which interconnects practices, procedures, techniques, scientific concepts, laws, architecture and more (1980, p. 194). Like *Gestell*, the *dispositif* constitutes a propensity for organizing practises and generating knowledge, disclosing objects under a particular prescriptive light, but the *dispositif* is strictly inseparable from its evolving socio-historic context and has no metaphysical grounding. This article will place emphasis on the analytical implications of the two concepts, rather than on their intellectual history. Towards the end of the article, I situate the conceptual comparison within a broader discussion of Heidegger and Foucault, which considers their different approaches to history, subjectivity, and Nietzsche’s philosophy.

The article falls into four overall sections. The first section briefly reviews the contentious and unresolved debate on the intellectual relationship between Heidegger and Foucault. The second section examines the two key terms, *Gestell* and *dispositif*, emphasising how the *dispositif* gives analytical preference to relationality and socio-historical context, which separates the concept from *Gestell*’s metaphysical grounding. The third section examines Foucault’s distinction between ‘the history of technology’ and ‘the history of

techniques', emphasising the Nietzschean view of techniques as 'functionally indeterminate'. This notion implies that techniques can be appropriated, redirected, and invested with new purposes as they travel over time and space, assumptions that constitute an instructive contrast to Heidegger's *Gestell*. Finally, the concluding fourth section compares the two thinkers around the themes of history and technology, focusing on Foucault's declaration that Nietzsche showed him the way out of phenomenology.

## 2. Heidegger - Foucault's 'essential philosopher'?

Today, the intellectual relationship between Heidegger and Foucault remains unresolved, including their thinking on technology. Some scholars argue that great affinities connect the two thinkers, while others assert that they stand worlds apart. In his seminal works, Hubert Dreyfus (1996) makes the case that Heidegger's being is comparable with Foucault's concept of power, since both being and power structure the way that objects can emerge. The difference between Foucault and Heidegger, suggests Dreyfus, is that Heidegger's philosophy focuses on how we have come to treat nature as object, whereas 'Foucault transforms Heidegger's focus on things to a focus on selves and how they became subjects' (1996, pp. 1–2).

Stuart Elden observes that 'very striking affinities can be found' between Heidegger and Foucault, asserting that 'whilst Foucault – unlike many of the others – does not directly speak of Heidegger, he often speaks in a thoroughly Heideggerian way' (2001, p. 152). Nevertheless, Elden recognizes that not all of Foucault's work is Heideggerian, and that Foucault sometimes undertook an implicit critique of Heidegger. Other prolific commentators arrive at almost the opposite conclusion. Gianni Vattimo argues that even if Foucault's thought could be described as 'a summa or synthesis of Nietzsche and Heidegger', it is 'Nietzsche who dominates, with too little space given to Heidegger's ontological aspirations' (Vattimo 2006, p. 183). Hans Sluga similarly observes that it is most fruitful to read Foucault in Nietzschean terms, insisting that, although Heidegger and Foucault shared a great inspiration from Nietzsche, 'the Nietzsche whom Foucault discovered from his own reading ... is not at all like Heidegger's Nietzsche' (Sluga 2005, p. 222). Sluga suggests that Heidegger's metaphysical interpretation of Nietzsche stands at the farthest distance from Foucault's genealogical use of Nietzsche, revealing itself 'as the sharpest alternative' to Heidegger's Nietzsche (Sluga 2007, p. 118). Timothy Rayner asserts that theoretically, Heidegger and Foucault have almost nothing to say to each other, but adds that theory is not the right way to connect them. Establishing a connection at the level of theory, like Dreyfus does, means 'looking for the wrong sort of relationship' (Rayner 2001, p. 151). On Rayner's account, Heidegger and Foucault wrote in a similar *critical spirit* that aimed for a radical reversal in our experience of the technological life form. Finally, Gilles Deleuze recalls Foucault's well-known declaration that 'Heidegger always fascinated him, but that he could understand him only by way of Nietzsche' (Foucault 1988, p. 113). It is by reading Nietzsche, argues Deleuze, that Foucault escapes phenomenology's 'pacifying' emphasis on meaning, since he recovers force as that which constitutes life. Deleuze concludes that Foucault's genealogy 'is a Nietzschean rather than a Heideggerian history, a history devoted to Nietzsche, or to life' (1988, p. 129). In light of this scholarly division, we must dig deeper into Heidegger's and Foucault's conceptions of modern technology and their implications to better grasp their fundamental similarities and differences.

### 3. *Gestell* and *dispositif*

Scholars like Giorgio Agamben (2009, 2011) and Elden (2001) suggest that Heidegger's and Foucault's thinking intersects clearly in their respective concepts of *Gestell* and *dispositif*. They argue that the two concepts carry parallel significance, since they both designate how modern subjects came to objectify the natural world as well as themselves. Elden (2001), p. 79 argues that *Gestell* and *dispositif* are closely related. He instructively emphasises that when Heidegger used *Gestell*, the term did not simply mean to 'frame something', since *Gestell* more accurately defines the presentation or production of things through the creation of a setting within which things will appear in a particular way. Similarly, Foucault's concept of *dispositif* denotes a configuration of discourses and practices, constituted in specific moments of history, which brings objects to emerge under a particular prescriptive light (Foucault 1980). François Fédier also seeks to align the two terms, suggesting *dispositif* as a translation for the *Gestell*, while giving *Gestell* a more all-encompassing meaning as 'dispositif unitaire de la consommation' (the overall consumption *dispositif*), which he further defines as 'all the prior measures by means of which everything is made available in advance in the framework of a putting in order' (Cassin *et al.* 2014, p. 188).

Agamben asserts that *Gestell* and *dispositif* are equivalent terms from an etymological point of view, since the notion of *Gestell* corresponds to the Latin terms *dispositio* (disposition) and *disponere* (arrange). For Agamben, both terms define how humans are brought to expose the world in the mode of ordering:

When Heidegger, in *Die Technik und die Kehre* (The Question Concerning Technology), writes that *Ge-stell* means in ordinary usage an apparatus (*Gerät*), but that he intends by this term 'the gathering together of the (in)stallation [*Stellen*] that (in)stalls man, this is to say, challenges him to expose the real in the mode of ordering [*Bestellen*]', the proximity of this term to the theological *dispositio*, as well as to Foucault's apparatuses, is evident. (Agamben 2009, p. 12)

However, Agamben extends the notion of *dispositif* to a much larger group of phenomena than Foucault himself did, and he assigns to it an almost universal scope by positing that human beings have been guided by *dispositifs* ever since ancient times: 'I shall call a dispositive literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviours, opinions, or discourses of living beings' (Agamben 2009, p. 17). It quickly becomes clear that Agamben's conceptual intervention happens from the perspective of his own distinctive work on biopolitics and economy. Whereas Foucault uses the term *dispositif* as a tool in his genealogies of specific power-knowledge configurations, Agamben takes the notion to designate the primordial capture of human life by a very broad range of instruments, including language itself:

Not only, therefore, prisons, madhouses, the panopticon, schools, confession, factories, disciplines, juridical measures, and so forth (whose connection with power is in a certain sense evident), but also the pen, writing, literature, philosophy, agriculture, cigarettes, navigation, computers, cellular telephones and – why not – language itself, which is perhaps the most ancient of apparatuses (Agamben 2009, p. 17).

Conceiving of the *dispositif* as more pervasive and ubiquitous than in Foucault's own definition, Agamben arguably brings the term close to Heidegger's *Gestell*. Reminiscent of Heidegger, Agamben broadens his definition of *dispositif* to include the whole set of conceptual and technical devices, which orders all that exists. This broadening stems from what Colin Koopman calls Agamben's 'style of looking', which, contends Koopman, 'has much to do with Agamben's intellectual roots in phenomenology' (Koopman 2015, p. 574). Notable, then, in *Being and Time* (Heidegger 2010), how Heidegger argues that phenomena like tools can only be understood as part of a whole set-up of 'equipment', since tools always exist in a network composed of other tools and institutions.

In his rendering of the *dispositif*, Agamben reiterates his basic division between living beings and *dispositifs*, whereby the latter ceaselessly captures the former. *Dispositifs*, in other words, turn living human beings into subjects. Or, more precisely, it is through the *dispositif* that the human being is at once transformed into a subject *and* an object of power relations (Esposito 2012). We have, writes Agamben, two great classes: living beings (or substances) and dispositives, and between these two, as a third class, subjects. I call a subject that, which results from the relation and, so to speak, from the relentless fight between living beings and dispositives (Agamben 2009, p. 19). On closer inspection, then, Agamben's interpretation contrasts starkly with Foucault in its ontological and universal character. In fact, Agamben goes as far as advancing the surprising claim that Foucault's *dispositif* serves as a substitute concept for universals: 'Apparatuses are, in point of fact, what takes the place of the universals in the Foucauldian strategy' (Agamben 2009, p. 7). This claim is unexpected given that Foucault opened his *Birth of Biopolitics* by an unmistakeable critique of the traditions that deduce concrete phenomena from universals: 'instead of starting with universals as an obligatory grid of intelligibility for certain concrete practices, I would like to start with these concrete practices' (Foucault 2008a, p. 3). We can finally illuminate Agamben's idiosyncratic rendering of the *dispositif* by invoking Deleuze (1992) who sees Foucault's concept as an explicit 'repudiation of universals'. Unlike Agamben, Foucault evades ontological and universal premises, reconstructing his *dispositifs* 'from the ground up' by writing with painstaking attention to the particularities of the historical processes in which they emerge.

In his later work, Agamben (2011) moves on to deploy the *dispositif* in a far-ranging genealogy of the doctrine of *oikonomia* that takes him back to the early Church Fathers and Greek Antiquity. From this vantage point, Agamben shifts his comparative strategy by aligning *Gestell* and *dispositif* genealogically with the ancient Greek word 'oikonomia':

The term Ge-stell corresponds perfectly (not only in its form: the German stellen is equivalent to ponere, that is, to place) to the Latin term dispositio, which translates the Greek oikonomia. The Ge-stell is the apparatus of the absolute and integral government of the world. (Agamben 2011, p. 252)

In this context, we will leave aside this difficult pursuit (however, see Bussolini's (2010) careful exploration of the *dispositif* in Agamben and Foucault). Suffice to say that ultimately, Agamben never actually achieves the promised 'equivalence' or integration of Heidegger's and Foucault's thinking around *Gestell/dispositif*, since he quickly leaves this task in pursuit of his own philosophical and philological project.



#### 4. Relationality and visibility

It is possible to draw a broad parallel between Foucault and Heidegger around the question of how technology makes objects visible in modernity. Recall Deleuze's declaration that *dispositifs* are 'machines that make one see and speak' (Deleuze 1992, p. 160). The idea that the *dispositif* makes certain observations and evaluations more likely than others is anticipated in Heidegger's assertion that *Gestell* organises our disclosure of the world, and, in particular, that things become meaningful to us in their relations to a totality of other things.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger had emphasised how we are practically immersed in the world, where 'useful things always are *in terms of* their belonging to other useful things' (2010, pp. 68, italics in original). In everyday human experience, things tend to show up instrumentally, since the 'being' of a thing, that is, *how* and *as-what* the thing becomes meaningful, happens in terms of its belonging to other useful things: 'writing utensils, pen, ink, paper, desk blotter, table, lamp, furniture, windows, doors, room' (Heidegger 2010, p. 68). This list reflects Heidegger's phenomenological emphasis on our immersive being in the world, in which we reveal things by using them and naming them, and, hence achieve a sense of who we are. There are, of course, significant disjunctions between *Being and Time* and Heidegger's later work, of which the most central is that *Being and Time* sought to establish fundamental ontology of human existence from an ahistorical perspective, which later Heidegger tries to correct.

Heidegger's later writings on technology make the question of power more urgent since he asserts that *Gestell*, 'that setting-upon which sets upon man' (Heidegger 1977b, p. 20), disposes us to render our world meaningful as a reserve of 'meaningless' objects awaiting exploitation. At first glance, the *Gestell* and the *dispositif* resemble each other, insofar as they both order entities such that they come to interrelate and appear in particular ways. Hence, Peter Faria (2017) argues that the two terms are comparable, since they both represent an assemblage of distributed elements. In both cases, this distribution runs through a logic of power, which pushes the instrumentalisation of nature as well as humans to its extreme. *Discipline and Punish* is rich with descriptions of such distributions: practices of training and manipulation of human bodies by means of diverse tools, equipment, and spatial arrangements. Repeated drills for correctly aiming, holding, firing and reloading of rifles means that the soldier and the device are fused into 'a body-weapon, body-tool, body-machine complex' (Foucault 1977, p. 153). Broadly similar, for Heidegger, *Gestell* entails that relatedness – our ways of relating and the ways that things interrelate – unfold according to ordering disclosure, which charges us to perceive all entities as resources. This means that *modern technology is integral to modern relatedness as such*, and therefore, our reality is produced for us in relations that are intrinsically objectifying and calculative.

Emphasising Heidegger's premise of relationality, Krzysztof Ziarek explains that 'technology means here that forces occur in a manner that allows them to bear upon one another technologically, with a view to producing and conforming to a technology, to an array of the various, and interrelated, disciplines of calculability, efficiency, commodification, etc.' (1998, p. 183). Notable in Ziarek's account is the resonance with Foucault's disciplinary *dispositif*, which institutes normalisation as intrinsic to relations spanning society in a 'capillary' manner.



Following Ziarek, the disciplinary norm hence invests diverse institutions by means of adaptable techniques like the examination, hierarchical observation, and the normalising sanction. Pertinent here is Ziarek's claim that for both Heidegger and Foucault, calculation and normalisation do not qualify or influence power relations externally, 'from the outside': 'In both accounts, technology is not something extraneous to force but works through and within forces, shaping and "normalising" them into technologies of power' (Ziarek 1998, p. 180).

While Ziarek is right in arguing that Heidegger and Foucault both view power as integral to relations, he goes too far in asserting that power determines 'the entire field of relations'. Ziarek indeed connects Heidegger and Foucault around this claim: 'They both rely on a similar, "capillary", as Foucault calls it, understanding of power as coursing through and determining the entire field of relations not only on macro but also on microscopic and local' (1998, pp. 173–174). I submit, however, that Foucault articulated power as fluctuating, open-ended, and reversible, which disallows any notion of 'deterministic' power. Importantly, Foucault did not begin his analysis from the premise that the *dispositif* determines the entire field of relations but from the question of how the *dispositif* brings a particular inclination to social relations (Raffnsøe Gudmand-Høyer and Thaning, Raffnsøe *et al.* 2015, p. 191). Where *Gestell* and *dispositif* intersect is that they are not substances; instead, they are both relational and 'insubstantial', since they are defined by the relational effects they produce.

With this in mind however, relationality or relatedness, I contend, means something different in the two notions. Unlike the *Gestell*, the *dispositif* does not cast the world in a kind of general luminosity by way of its prevailing mode of disclosure. The *dispositif* emphasises relationality as its fundamental premise, which means that it creates visibilities from within the relations established between its elements. As Foucault shows in his first lectures of *Security, Territory, Population* (2007), his genealogy brings into focus the inherent relations of each *dispositif* as well as the dynamic interplay through which *dispositifs* evolve in relation to each other. In fact, the first three lectures of the course clearly give emphasis to the interrelations between several *dispositifs* over the description of one single *dispositif*. The fundamental premise of relationality in Foucault's approach becomes clearer, for example, in his analysis of how the object of grain scarcity transforms over time. In outline, Foucault (2007), pp. 35–37) demonstrates that scarcity of grain appears as something entirely different when it is targeted by different *dispositifs*, i.e. law, discipline, or security, and hence becomes part of a specific set of relations (Villadsen, 2021: 477–479). The example of grain scarcity shows that, whereas the *Gestell* casts things in a kind of general luminosity, the *dispositif* renders things visible through a set of specific relations that emerge in a particular historical context. In brief, then, whereas Heidegger's *Gestell* defines the ubiquitous modern mode of disclosure through which natural resources and human capacities appear, Foucault lays out a multiplicity of *dispositifs*, each creating distinct visibilities.

## 5. The 'history of technology' or 'the history of techniques'

Foucault's distinction between 'the history of techniques' and 'the history of technologies' (Foucault 2007, pp. 8–9) is particularly instructive as a contrast to Heidegger's *Gestell*. At first glance, a parallel can be drawn between Heidegger's discussions of specific technical innovations and 'the essence of technology', and Foucault's distinction between 'technique' and 'technology'. We could pursue this comparative path along Heidegger's and Foucault's respective use of technical devices versus *Gestell* and techniques versus *dispositif*. In such a comparison, the latter side of the conceptual dyads, *Gestell* and *dispositif*, would constitute the historical conditions of possibility for the emergence and deployment of devices and technical innovations. As we know, however, Heidegger's interest is not in specific techniques but in grasping 'the essence of technology'. It is here that Foucault's recovery of the emergence and transformation of techniques diverge markedly from Heidegger, since Foucault's Nietzschean genealogy foregrounds the evolving relationship between techniques and technologies. Indeed, Foucault said that 'there is a history of the actual techniques themselves' that the genealogist explores:

For example, you could perfectly well study the history of the disciplinary technique of putting someone in a cell, which goes back a long way. It was already frequently employed in the juridico-legal age; you find it used for debtors and above all you find it in the religious domain'. (Foucault 2007, p. 8)

On Foucault's account, then, the genealogist's task is to trace how a specific technique of punishment was employed for different purposes over time. Such a study may also involve exploring how the use of a technique at some point becomes problematic, such that it must be invested with new justifications if it is not to recede. Foucault continues: So, you could study the history of this cell technique (that is to say, [of] its shifts, [of] its utilization), and you would see at what point the cell technique, cellular discipline, is employed in the common penal system, what conflicts it gives rise to, and how it recedes (Foucault 2007, p. 8)

In these passages, it is hard not to hear an echo of Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morality* (Nietzsche 1994), where Nietzsche advanced his genealogical principle of 'functional indeterminacy'. According to this principle, a custom may endure while its meaning and function are historically 'fluid', which means that the current function of a practice holds no clue to its origin. For Nietzsche, the genealogy of any given entity (concept, practice, technique) is the history of how it has been reinterpreted, or seized by different forces, and put to new functions which override previous functions: 'The whole history of a "thing", an organ, a tradition can to this extent be a continuous chain of signs, continually revealing new interpretations and adaptations' (Nietzsche 1994, p. 51). This genealogical approach rules out ideas of history as logically progressive or naturally evolutionary; instead, declares Nietzsche, 'it is a succession of more or less profound, more or less mutually independent processes of subjugation' (Nietzsche 1994, p. 51). The meaning of punishment is indeed such a history of struggle around interpretations.

Bodies have been beaten and tortured for various other reasons long before the meaning of 'punishment' was assigned to these practices. To prove his point, Nietzsche (1994), pp. 53–54) gives a long list of different functions of punishment throughout

history, and asserts that the first function of punishment was to establish an ‘equivalence’ between the injury caused and the pain inflicted on the offender. The origin of this idea of equivalence, we note in passing, is in the contract between creditor and debtor, the ‘uncanny and perhaps inextricable link-up between the ideas of “debt and suffering”’ (Nietzsche 1994, p. 41), which for Nietzsche constitutes a founding historical relationship for our modern morality. It is striking that Foucault, in his cursory comment on the historical uses of ‘cellular punishment’, mentions that the cell technique was used to punish debtors. Also, noteworthy are the Nietzschean echoes in Foucault’s remarks on punishment as creating a ‘quasi-equivalence’ in potential lawbreakers at the level of interests and that ‘the memory of pain must prevent a repetition of the crime’ (Foucault 1977, pp. 94–95). In brief, starting with punishment, Nietzsche advances his principle that the function of a ‘thing’ is never fixed or inherent but always malleable in a field of force relations and reasserts his view of history as perpetual struggle between forces that intersect or come apart.

Foucault’s analysis of different *dispositifs* in dynamic interplay (Foucault 2007) bears these marks of Nietzsche’s genealogy. Like Nietzsche, Foucault is sceptical of the generally accepted functionality assigned to the phenomena he studies, including those of institutions like the prison, the madhouse, and the psychiatric clinic. Also broadly parallel to Nietzsche, Foucault insists on describing the past struggles and re-appropriations that led to the birth of an institution. It would seem, then, that Foucault took up the genealogical premise of ‘functional indeterminacy’ first coined by Nietzsche, and meticulously deployed it in his analysis of the evolving interplay between *dispositifs*. Note that according to Foucault, a specific technique can become ‘re-appropriated’ by different *dispositifs* and invested with new purposes. Hence, one can study how ‘a technology of security, for example, will be set up, taking up again and sometimes even multiplying juridical and disciplinary elements and redeploying them within its specific tactic’ (Foucault 2007, pp. 8–9). Foucault similarly describes how, over time, the technique of imprisonment was invested with the imperatives of law, discipline, and security in processes of dynamic correlation. Relatedly, consider Nietzsche’s comment on how the usefulness of a ‘thing’ depends on its incorporation into ‘a system of ends’ that will transform and direct it to ‘a new purpose’:

The origin of the emergence of a thing and its ultimate usefulness, its practical application and incorporation into a system of ends, are *toto coelo* separate; that anything in existence, having somehow come about, is continually interpreted anew, requisitioned anew, transformed and redirected to a new purpose by a power superior to it. (Nietzsche 1994, p. 51)

Let us compare, then, the above quote with Foucault’s explication of how a technique changes and becomes ‘perfected’ as it is taken up by *dispositifs*, which continually transform in a ‘system of correlation’:

In reality you have a series of complex edifices in which, of course, the techniques themselves change and are perfected, or anyway become more complicated, but in which what above all changes is the dominant characteristic, or more exactly, the system of correlation between juridico-legal mechanisms, disciplinary mechanisms, and mechanisms of security. (Foucault 2007, p. 8)

The parallels are evident, and yet Foucault breaks with the somewhat schematic oppositions that at times marks Nietzsche’s genealogies. Foucault’s use of genealogy allows for

more complexity insofar as, at a given moment, several *dispositifs* often co-exist in a field of mutual interplay, support, and contestation. This kind of genealogy, insists Foucault, requires detailed empirical description that does not reduce the specificity of the developments in each social domain and each society to an overarching world-view, because ‘things do not necessarily develop in step in different sectors, at a given moment, in a given society, in a given country’ (2007, p. 8).

Importantly, a *dispositif* does not expand by homogenising social institutions; instead, the process is one of transference, adaption, deflection, and resistance. Foucault said that disciplinary techniques ‘have a certain tendency to become “de-institutionalized” [...] the massive, compact disciplines are broken down into flexible methods of control, which may be transferred and adapted’ (1977, p. 211). In this way, Foucault escaped the idea that a *dispositif* simply expands across the social body by granting irreducibility to the level of ‘micro-dispositifs’, which Deleuze (1988), p. 184 terms a ‘diffuse and heterogeneous multiplicity’. Perhaps the nineteenth-century asylums could be seen as ‘micro-*dispositifs*’ that intensify and distribute but, importantly, also deflect psychiatric power. In ‘Psychiatric Power’, Foucault described how, in what he called ‘the asylum *dispositif*’ (Foucault 2006), mental patients deflected psychiatric power by producing excessive symptoms of their illnesses, which challenged the authority of the doctors’ diagnosis. A specific power game hence played out in nineteenth-century asylums around the simulation of hysteria (Foucault 2006, p. 137). Again, we note how Foucault disunites his *dispositif* into a moving set of relations, in which elements, e.g. institutions, become sites of contestation and dynamic struggle.

It would be difficult to carry out the kind of genealogical analysis presented above within Heidegger’s philosophy of technology. That there could be a series of *dispositifs* that appropriate and re-deploy techniques according to specific strategies appears to be ruled out by Heidegger’s anticipation of how *Gestell* prefigures all techniques in accordance with Heidegger’s ‘one-dimensional technological essentialism’, to use Andrew Feenberg’s term (Feenberg 1999). Whereas Foucault sets out to examine how techniques and their effects change, as they are taken up by different *dispositifs*, Heidegger precludes such an analysis, since technical devices serve as illustrations of the world-view that prevails in modernity. This is the case since Heidegger uncovers the fundamental traits of modern metaphysics that express our intelligibility to all types of techniques: ‘Western humanity, in all its comportment toward entities, and even toward itself, is in every respect sustained and guided by metaphysics’ (Heidegger 1982, p. 205). Foucault’s genealogy, which examines *dispositifs* in their historical contexts and evolving social relations, contradicts Heidegger’s typical usage of empirical material as vivid illustrations of the *Gestell*. For Heidegger, modern technology, understood as an objectifying intelligibility, does not appear to have different effects depending on its context of emergence and social usage. Instead, it always brings us moderns to disclose the world in terms of limitless objectification of everything, since, as Heidegger says, ‘nothing can elude this objectification that remains at the same time the decision concerning what must be allowed to count as an object’ (Heidegger 1977a, p. 151).

We can now return to Agamben’s claim and conclude that while the *dispositif* and *Gestell* display certain links between Foucault and Heidegger, they are neither equivalent nor ‘perfectly corresponding’ concepts. First, Foucault’s genealogical move ‘behind’ modern institutions is not comparable with Heidegger’s ontological

difference, since, as Ziarek (1998), p. 173) notes, Foucault does not situate technology at the ‘ontological-historical’ level. Although Foucault and Heidegger share the view that objects of calculation, discipline, and optimization emerge from their historical conditions of possibility, those conditions are conceptualised very differently by the notions of *Gestell* and *dispositif*. Foucault’s genealogical studies of *dispositifs* in their singular emergence, dynamic interplay, and ceaseless transformation contradicts Heidegger’s critique of technology, which situates all ‘empirical’ observations within his history of Western thought. Indeed, Heidegger argues that the *Gestell* refers what it designates back to the innermost history of metaphysics, which still determines our world-view: ‘The reign of the Ge-stell means: man is subject to the control, the demands, and the provocation of a power that is manifested in the essence of technology’ (Heidegger cited in: Cassin *et al.* 2014, p. 188). We recall that, for Heidegger, *Gestell* is a historical phenomenon, which only makes sense on the background of what Heidegger calls the ‘History of being’, a series of frameworks of intelligibility, or ‘sendings’ of being, amongst which *Gestell* is the latest. Heidegger claims that humanity’s destiny is inevitably and fundamentally tied to the *Gestell*, which again is rooted in the culmination of modern metaphysics. In sum, Foucault, like Heidegger, diagnosed the ubiquitous objectification that marks modernity, but he displayed how the historical and social production of technology evolves, not in any uniform, epochal fashion, but in complex dynamics and social struggles.

These underlying complications perhaps explain why those scholars who claim that *Gestell* and *dispositif* are corresponding terms (Elden 2001, Agamben 2009, 2011) have omitted the task of a detailed comparison and integration of the two terms. Ziarek makes a highly pertinent observation regarding the challenge of integrating Heidegger’s and Foucault’s thought, even if the comment does not directly address *Gestell* and *dispositif*. If one were to bring Foucault’s thinking on power closer to Heidegger, argues Ziarek, one must see power ‘as a modality of happening’ (Ziarek 1998, p. 169). Such a shift of emphasis might be possible because Foucault already advocates a relational notion of power. Yet, one would need to dislodge power even more from materiality, conceiving it as an event that transpire among things and bodies:

What would be required here is a rethinking of materiality away from substance and in terms of a poetic bringing forth and materialization. Materiality would be less solidity and substantiality and more an event of bodying, of taking place and shape within the world, both participating in the open context of relations and effected by it. (Ziarek 1998, p. 169)

The integration of Heidegger and Foucault that Ziarek suggests around the *poiētic* quality of the event seems to me, however, to take place largely on Heideggerian territory. Relocating the encounter between Heidegger and Foucault more on ‘the middle ground’ would require that Heidegger’s diagnosis of the prevailing disclosure of the modern age be opened further up by means of genealogical curiosity. For the genealogist Foucault, writing in the late 1970s, such curiosity meant exploring the emergence of *dispositifs*, their interplay, and their transformation in historical processes that are often marked by social struggle.

## 6. Escape from interiority via 'historicising negativism'

Foucault never offered any systematic assessment of Heidegger's philosophy. There are, however, evident traces of Heidegger in some of Foucault's early publications, including his introduction to Ludwig Binswanger's *Dream and Existence* (Foucault 1993) and Foucault's *Mental Illness and Psychology* (Foucault 1976) both published in 1954. Other significant traces of Heidegger's influence on Foucault surface in works from the 1960s, in particular his *Introduction to Kant's Anthropology* (Foucault 2008b) and towards the end of *The Order of Things* (Foucault 1970). At that moment, however, Foucault had dislodged himself from phenomenological ideas regarding the subject's existential experiences, such as finitude and unreason, and instead he identified such experiences as integral to the modern episteme (Palti 2021, pp. 24–25). Indeed, as we are beginning to see, important points separate the genealogist Foucault (i.e. his approach from around 1970 onwards) from Heidegger's philosophy, some of which Foucault indicates in comments scattered across his texts and interviews. Consider the below quote which is one of the few comments that Foucault explicitly directed to Heidegger:

For Heidegger, it was through an increasing obsession with *technē* as the only way to arrive at an understanding of objects that the West lost touch with Being. Let's turn the question around and ask which techniques and practices form the Western concept of the subject, giving it its characteristic split of truth and error, freedom and constraint. I think that it is here where we will find the real possibility of constructing a history of what we have done and, at the same time, a diagnosis of what we are. This would be a theoretical analysis, which has, at the same time, a political dimension. By this word 'political dimension' I mean an analysis that relates to what we are willing to accept in our world, to accept, to refuse, and to change, both in ourselves and in our circumstances. (Foucault 1999, p. 161)

This succinct quote offers rich material for discussing the differences between Foucault's and Heidegger's thinking on modern technology. It contains key points that are essential for establishing how their thought diverge: Foucault wants to replace the constitutive subject, including phenomenology's concern with consciousness, with studies of how the subject is forged out of techniques. And Foucault intends to write a 'history of what we have done', rather than of how we think echoes Nietzsche, as does his invocation of the 'characteristic split' in Western thought of 'truth and error, freedom and constraint' (Foucault 1999, p. 161). The remaining discussion of the article begins from these statements, which are of fundamental significance for comparing Heidegger's and Foucault's thinking on modern technology. The following two sections thus situate our discussion within a broader comparison of Heidegger and Foucault that extends to their approaches to history, metaphysics, and Nietzsche's philosophy.

Heidegger and Foucault both wished to escape the constitutive subject understood as a transcendental ego or self-identical entity, instead emphasising the relational and processual constitution of the subject. They would also share the view that the frameworks and practices through which our subjectivity is given shape are historically changing and constitutive for knowledge. Insofar as the subject is conceived not as a substance but as a *response* to its conditions, Heidegger's and Foucault's thinking could be said to intersect around a 'negative self', which characterises strains of phenomenology that view the subject as 'a process without substratum', to use Michael Theunissen's words (Theunissen 1981, p. 413). Perhaps, then, Heidegger and Foucault



can be aligned in their avoidance of assumptions of a positive self and in their preference for analysing the human subject through its negation, namely in terms of negativities common to us all such as illness, death, or unreason.

However, we soon reach the limits to the comparison, as Foucault indicates when he says that he wants to replace the primacy of the subject with an examination of how the subject is produced in practises and techniques. In other words, unlike the early Heidegger, one finds no attempt to establish a ‘philosophical anthropology’ in Foucault (Theunissen 1981, p. 392). What might be termed Heidegger’s philosophical anthropology in *Being and Time* relies upon the premise that ‘existential experiences’ like angst, death, and boredom may confront us with the nothingness that underlies our world. The key significance of these experiences is to spur us to reflect on our relationship to being, hence recovering our ‘essence’, namely our questioning attitude into how our world becomes meaningful to us. The questions of whether Heidegger, after *Being and Time*, found his notion *Dasein* unsatisfactory, and whether, he ultimately was successful in abandoning the philosophy of subjectivity remains debated. Kieran Durkin thus notes that through Heidegger’s ‘elaboration of his fundamental ontology, a concealed subjectivism breaks through, particularly in the second part of the book’ (Durkin 2022, p. 294). Other differences separate Heidegger and Foucault regarding what modern subjectivism entails and when it emerged historically. Elías Palti notes that instead of ‘a same-self substance’, as entailed in Heidegger’s definition, Foucault identifies the modern subject with ‘a duplicate of immanence and transcendence, subjectivity and objectivity, opening the doors to the emergence of the project of a human science’ (Palti 2021, p. 25). However, if we recognise the movement, whereby early Heidegger first sought to establish the fundamental categories of *Dasein*, but in his later work stressed that being-in-the-world occurs historically, the later Heidegger’s critique of subjectivism through a history of being has a broad convergence with Foucault’s genealogy.

Foucault’s work has sometimes been understood as an extension of Heidegger’s diagnosis of the prevailing objectification in the modern West. However, as Robert Nichols notes, Foucault pursued this theme in ‘specific, concrete cases in which modes of subjectification congealed into rigid typological classifications – the mad, the delinquent, the abnormal, the sexual deviant’ (Nichols 2014, p. 221). For the genealogist, the emergence and transformation of these classifications are almost always inseparable from social struggles. Foucault’s interest in these negative classifications is telling for his overall approach, which refuses to start from any positive conception of the human subject (the human being is defined, e.g. as the only animal that reflects on its own mortality). Foucault instead takes his point of departure in negative conceptions of human existence, which brings him close to Heidegger but ultimately far removed from philosophical anthropology. He says that his enterprise is marked by ‘a historicizing negativism’, ‘since it involves replacing a theory of knowledge, power, or the subject with the analysis of historically determinate practices’ (Foucault 2010, p. 5). Foucault’s genealogical approach avoids the question of interiority, of what the human subject is in its essence, and, instead, inquires into the exterior limits (madness, perversion, deviance) that tell us what the subject is not.



## 7. Foucault's Nietzschean way out of phenomenology

The differences between Heidegger and Foucault has a significant source in their contrasting readings of Nietzsche. Foucault (1989a) himself said that it was Nietzsche who showed him the way out of phenomenology (which I here take to include Heidegger), since Nietzsche paved the way for truly historicising the subject and, specifically, escaping the phenomenological concern with consciousness. Recall that Foucault wished to 'turn the question around' - i.e. presumably, the question of how the subject conveys meaning upon the world - in order to study the historical practices and techniques through which subjects are constituted. In Foucault's words, Nietzsche posed the question 'can a transhistorical subject of a phenomenological kind be accounted for by the history of reason? Here the writings of Nietzsche cause a break, a rupture (*coupure*) for me' (Foucault 1989a, p. 351). Commenting on Foucault's relationship to Heidegger, several scholars argue that Foucault ultimately relied upon Nietzsche in conceiving of history as evolving through continual struggles (Dreyfus 1996, Rayner 2001, Sluga 2005). Foucault anticipated such an interpretation when he declared that reading Heidegger and Nietzsche together was his 'philosophical shock', and that despite his large and underestimated inspiration from Heidegger, ultimately 'Nietzsche prevailed over him' (1989b, p. 250).

Generally, Foucault foregrounds social struggle and domination as opposed to the 'mildness' of Heidegger's appeal for cultivating receptive thinking. Invoking Nietzsche

Against the welcoming mildness of a phenomenon, it is necessary to set the murderous relentlessness of knowledge. But in this work this is never rewarded with access to being or the essence, but gives rise to new appearances, sets them against one another and beyond one another (Foucault 2013, p. 206).

Dispositional analysis displays these Nietzschean premises. Hence, as Foucault explains in his famous definition of the *dispositif* (1980), *dispositifs* emerge from social struggle and 'respond to urgent needs', and the particular visibilities that they create bear the imprint of these struggles and tactical responses.

The commentary literature sometimes ignores that the interview in which Foucault gave his oft-cited definitions of the *dispositif*, 'The Confession of the Flesh' (1980), primarily centres on sexuality. Although general analytical points regarding the *dispositif* have often been drawn from this interview, the fact that Foucault articulated the notion with close ties to his genealogy of sexuality is worth emphasising. Particularly relevant for the point that the *dispositif* emerges from social struggle and responds to 'urgent needs' is that these needs are often needs felt by specific social groups. In Foucault's explanation of the emergence of the *dispositif* of sexuality, he identifies the bourgeoisie as initial instigators. As the bourgeoisie rose economically and politically in the latter half of the eighteenth century, they were concerned to distinguish themselves from other classes. They did so, Foucault notes, by constructing a particular 'sexualized' class body: 'This class must be seen rather as being occupied, from the mid-eighteenth century on, with creating its own sexuality and forming a specific body based on it, a "class" body with its health, hygiene, descent, and race' (Foucault 1979, p. 124). This concern with achieving class distinction constitutes 'the urgent need', as it were, to which the instigating group first responded. Later, from the end of the nineteenth century, the juridical and medical

techniques directed at abnormal sexuality and perversions expanded as the biopolitical concern for the health of the population intensified. This was the moment, recounts Foucault, when the *dispositif* of sexuality, which the privileged classes elaborated in its most complex forms, lost its ties to the bourgeoisie and expanded throughout the entire social body. We note, then, how a 'sexualized' body first emerges from a specific struggle around class distinction and only later becomes the object of the 'anonymous' *dispositif* of sexuality that begins traversing social relations and institutions broadly.

In brief, like Heidegger, Foucault showed that the *dispositif* creates a general propensity in how objects and subjects can appear, but, unlike Heidegger, Foucault foregrounds social conflict and contradiction as integral to *dispositifs*. Schematically, one can say that Foucault's genealogy substitutes Heidegger's double ontology (being versus beings) with a Nietzschean surface field of interacting forces.

Deleuze draws a similar conclusion when he declares that 'phenomenology is ultimately too pacifying and has blessed too many things. Foucault therefore discovers the element that comes from outside: force' (Foucault 1988, p. 113). Notably, Deleuze gives an interpretation of force, or the will to power, that decisively departs from Heidegger. Whereas Heidegger locates the will to power in the 'essence' of modern technology, which is marked by permanently self-surpassing progress, Deleuze finds in Foucault the will to power in terms of ever-evolving tactics and strategies. For Deleuze, the problem with Heidegger's philosophy is that it neglects the play of forces that gives shape to modern technology as our historical ontology. This neglect in Heidegger, notes Deleuze, 'led to the deep ambiguity of his technical and political ontology' (1988, p. 113).

For Foucault, a 'political' strategy of 'receptive dwelling' by which one receives being's unfolding will not do the job, since, as Dreyfus writes, things do not exist 'in their primitive vivacity' (Dreyfus 1996, p. 12). Dreyfus also notes the absence in Foucault of a phenomenological 'background', which is not already pervaded by the play of power relations, since, for Foucault, 'the background practices reveal, as they do in Nietzsche, a constantly shifting struggle' (Dreyfus 1996, p. 19). In sum, situated against the phenomenological tradition, Nietzsche not only showed Foucault the way out of the 'trans-historical subject', but pushed his thinking further away from Heideggerian key assumptions such as the ontological difference, the appeal to 'receptive dwelling', and the quest for interrogating our tacit background practises.

Although Heidegger might be charged of trading in abstract conceptualization, his conception of being could be termed a 'postmetaphysical' one, which seeks to dislodge being from metaphysical frameworks. Heidegger becomes postmetaphysical, argues Vattimo, by taking from Nietzsche the idea that being 'evaporates' into events of becoming. There is, writes Vattimo, 'not just some false image of Being meant to be replaced by a solider, truer one. It is Being that, after Nietzsche, can "reveal itself", in postmetaphysical thought, as not equatable to an object, arche, or foundation, but as a "sending"' (Vattimo 2006, p. 189). The distinction between Heidegger's being as a 'sending' and Foucault's *dispositifs* as products of power struggles is a helpful contrast for this article's purposes. We can add that in Foucault there is no 'sending' to humankind, which the *dispositifs* can either foreclose or be open towards, but, as Foucault's late work on Greek antiquity displays, different *dispositifs* can be more or less conducive for the self's reflexive work upon the self.

Finally, we must contrast Heidegger's metaphysical *reconstruction* of Nietzsche with Foucault's genealogical *use* of Nietzsche. It is certainly possible to place Heidegger and Foucault in a dialogue around central themes in Nietzsche, namely, his approach to thought as historical, his identification of nihilism in modernity, and his anti-humanism. Furthermore, in their respective readings of Nietzsche, Heidegger and Foucault both evade Nietzsche's attempts to ground philosophical doctrines in physiological and psychological mechanisms, as well as assumptions about human beings' psychological nature. As Foucault would do later, Heidegger entirely ignored Nietzsche's biologism, that is, 'his preoccupation with life, blood, the metabolism, digestion' (Sluga 2007, p. 107). However, the interpretative similarities between the two thinkers quickly cease, and instead significant contrasts come to the fore. Reading Nietzsche pre-eminently as a metaphysician, Heidegger largely ignored aspects of Nietzsche's thought that inspired Foucault, including Nietzsche's critique of 19th century European culture, his analysis of Christian asceticism, his interest in Ancient ethics, and, most importantly, his genealogical approach.

Recall Heidegger's critical conclusion that Nietzsche, despite his acute diagnosis of modernity, failed to escape from metaphysics, since his doctrines of will to power and eternal recurrence projected the nature of all beings. These doctrines mostly appear in the posthumously published and controversial collection of late aphorisms, *The Will to Power* (Nietzsche 1968), on which Heidegger almost exclusively based his Nietzsche readings. Hence, 'Nietzsche's metaphysics is not an overcoming of nihilism', argues Heidegger, '(i)t is the ultimate entanglement in nihilism' (1982, p. 203). By projecting the truth of beings as will to power, Nietzsche ends up in a metaphysics of the will, and, as Heidegger sees it, this metaphysical projection ultimately forecloses the question of being. However, there are reasons to suggest that Heidegger himself, especially in his reading of Nietzsche, falls prey, if not to another metaphysics, then to his own version of historical teleology. This is because, in Heidegger's view, Nietzsche had exposed 'the inner logic of Western history', even if he failed to grasp the full implications of this logic. Indeed, Heidegger's choice of words at times convey the impression of history's predestination, since he presents nihilism as 'the fundamental movement of the history of the West', culminating in the modern age. Nihilism, writes Heidegger, 'moves history after the manner of a fundamental ongoing event that is scarcely recognized in the destining of the Western peoples' (Heidegger 1977c, p. 62), and nihilism is 'above all the intrinsic law of that history' (Heidegger 1977c, p. 67). On this point, Vattimo notes that 'Heidegger confers meaning on Nietzsche by showing that the will to power is, so to speak, "the destiny of Being"' (2006: 189). Extending this argument, one could suggest that Heidegger reads Nietzsche's doctrines of the will to power and eternal recurrence not only as metaphysical but also as a kind of historical teleology. This tendency, of course, places Heidegger at a far distance from Foucault's genealogy.

A core contrast between Heidegger and Foucault, then, is their irreconcilable readings of Nietzsche, which involve the question of what is to be understood by Nietzsche's notions of the will to power and the eternal return. Taylor Carman aptly notes that Heidegger does not treat Nietzsche's central doctrines of will to power and eternal recurrence as verifiable theories, 'but as oblique expressions of the modern "technological" understanding of [Being]' (Carman 2020, p. 107). Is the will to power, then, a kind of unifying principle for how being is disclosed in the modern age, or is it a principle of constant differentiation? Here, Deleuze provides an answer, which dislodges Nietzsche's doctrines from Heidegger's philosophy and places them in closer proximity to Foucault.

Deleuze saw in Nietzsche, writes Michael Hardt, ‘a profound betrayal of the primacy of identity and unity’, and, on this account, the will to power is ‘a machine of multiplicities’ (Hardt 2006, p. ix). Furthermore, Deleuze offers an interpretation of the eternal return, which, at least implicitly, can help us distinguish Heidegger’s reconstruction of the concept from Foucault’s usage. This is when Deleuze suggests a twofold definition of the eternal return as a ‘synthesis of diversity and its reproduction’ (a Deleuzian emphasis) and as ‘a synthesis of becoming and the being which is affirmed in becoming’, (a Heideggerian emphasis) (Deleuze 2006, p. 48). Contrary to a metaphysical reading, Nietzsche’s differential thinking leads us to Foucault’s dispositional analytics, which substitutes the essential question of being with the formation of unstable systems of relations, or *dispositifs*, from multiple techniques, tactics, and practises.

Again, I submit, the Nietzschean, differential field of struggle is at centre stage in Foucault’s analysis of *dispositifs* and their interplay. Pertinent here is Sluga’s suggestion that it is most productive to read Nietzsche with a Foucauldian emphasis: ‘In contrast to Heidegger, we would look at Nietzsche not as the last metaphysician but as the first genealogist’ (Foucault 2007, p. 118). In this genealogical reading, the will to power becomes power’s differential productivity. Its results cannot be anticipated or reflected upon in the form of ‘being’s destiny’ in Heidegger’s *Gestell*, since power will produce manifold, unexpected things. Reading Nietzsche’s formula of the will to power in the opposite direction of Heidegger, concludes Sluga, brings us to a Foucauldian conception of power:

Will to power will then come to mean to us as much as the power to power, that is, the power to have, manipulate, and, multiply power. Such a power, when considered genealogically, will prove not one thing but many. We will have to conclude that there is, strictly speaking, no such thing as power but only power relations. These will have different configurations. (Sluga 2007, p. 118)

These ‘different configurations’, I would suggest, are analogous to the *dispositifs*. In broad terms, then, Foucault’s genealogy evacuates the will to power from its cosmological connotation in Nietzsche and its metaphysical reconstruction in Heidegger and instead puts it to work in historical analysis. Or, more precisely: Heidegger finds in Nietzsche a diagnosis of modernity, wherein ‘human constructs of domination’ manifest the value of ‘preservation-enhancement’, whereas Foucault uses Nietzsche to discover a series of ‘human constructs’, or *dispositifs*, propelled by diverse strategies that can never be captured or anticipated with reference to modern technology’s ‘essence’.

Ultimately, it can be concluded that while the *dispositif* and *Gestell* display certain parallels between Foucault and Heidegger, they are far from equivalent or ‘perfectly corresponding’ notions. Whereas Heidegger constantly reminds us of how modern thought carries the forgetfulness of Being, resulting in the generalised, objectifying ‘gaze’ of our culture, Foucault traces the multiple historical trajectories through which ‘the eye of technology’ has come to operate in diverse ways, inextricably bound to our social and political reality.

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