

A Response to Naomi Hodgson's 'Voicing the Self: Foucault, Cavell and an Ethics of Citizenship'

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The questions I would be interested in pursuing are as follows:

1. I wonder a little how consistent Naomi Hodgson's 'humanist' reading of Foucault is with Foucault's arguably French Nietzschean anti-humanist discourse. If it is the case that Foucault himself shifted his positions from the earlier anti-humanist Nietzscheanism of his genealogies to his later arguably more humanist stance concerned with a 'care of the self', *parrhesia* and so on, I would like to know how he reconciles—or does not reconcile—these seemingly different meta-philosophical orientations. It seems to me that his de-centring of the subject deprives him of the theoretical means to return to the free care of the self. How is a *re*-centring of the self possible after the *de*-centring of it?

2. Foucault's anti-Hegelian anti-progressivism is obvious, but how can freedom be theorised only through the micro-perspective without a critique of current power structures? I wonder whether it is one thing to sign up to Nietzsche's perspectivism and quite another to expel any kind of 'grand' theory or macro-level enquiry—especially into a concrete set of social, economic, political and other 'powers' (rather than 'power relations' which are surely always already implicit in what we do) and into organised hierarchies that in various ways condition or mould our lives and prospects in society: mentally, physically, financially, educationally, etc. So, it is perhaps surprising that attention has not been given to the economic side of things, nor to socio-political structural constraints, in Hodgson's considerations of freedom and her reflections on the *'polis'* in relation to an ethics of citizenship.

3. Thus, I think the classic distinction between 'freedom from' and 'freedom to' might still be worth attending to (i.e. macro-perspective liberation and the micro freedom).

4. Hodgson's articulation in this paper keeps every argument at the level of form and does not tell us much as to substance (though this might be the kernel of her argument). I am curious to know, however, what kind of society she envisages and how the subject can attain concrete freedom which Hodgson holds is 'the ontological condition of ethics'.

