Truth-Telling in Foucault's "Le gouvernement de soi et des autres" and Persius 1: The Subject, Rhetoric, and Power.[1]

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Creusa: Unhappy Women! Where shall we appeal
> *For justice when the injustice of power*
> *Is our destruction?*
> (Euripides, *Ion* 252-54)[2]

Ion: I pray my mother is Athenian
> *So that through her I may have rights of speech [parrhêsia]*
> *For when a stranger comes into a city*
> *Of pure blood, though in name a citizen,*
> *His mouth remains a slave: he has no right*
> *Of speech* [parrhêsia].
> (Euripides, *Ion* 671-75)

In his 1982-83 course at the Collège de France, "Le gouvernement de soi et des autres," Michel Foucault lectured on the topic of the relation between *parrhêsia*, "truth-telling"—or more literally, "all-telling" *pan-rhêsia*—and the constitution of the subject in relation to historically discrete structures of power. [3] More particularly, Foucault in these lectures traces a fundamental shift that occurs in the way *parrhêsia* is conceived, from the inherited right of democratic speech in the agonistic politics of fifth-century Athens to the honest speech offered by the philosophical counselor to the prince or other instances of aristocratic and sovereign power in the fourth century and the Hellenistic period.

The lectures for this year concentrate on Plato and Euripides, with a lesser amount of attention being paid to Polybius and Thucydides. They pick up on the previous year's interest in the topic of *parrhêsia* as a tool of personal transformation that the philosopher possesses to insure the spiritual health of both his students and the state (Foucault 2001: 232). Where in 1981-82's *L'herméneutique du sujet*, Foucault had examined the concept of the "care of the self" as it was articulated first in Plato's *Alcibiades* and then in the philosophers of the Roman empire, with special emphasis on the Stoics, here he focuses on the genealogy of *parrhêsia* itself. He asks how did it become a technology of the self and thus a means of both resistance and legitimation in the government of the self and of others? In both courses, then, *parrhêsia* is examined as the embodiment of the frank speech of philosophy as opposed to rhetoric and flattery (Foucault 2001: 357-83). It becomes not only a method of giving honest counsel to princes and to those to whom one owes spiritual guidance, but also a guarantor and embodiment of one's own authenticity:

> *I tell the truth; I tell you the truth. And what authenticates the fact*
> *that I tell you the truth is that as the subject of my conduct I am*
> *effectively and totally identical with the subject of the enunciation*
> *that I am when I tell you that which I tell you. I believe that we are*
> *here at the heart of parrhêsia.*
> (2001: 389)

Parrhêsia is thus the means whereby—as well as the manifest sign that—the subject coincides with itself. Truth-telling is not only an instrument to be used in philosophical protreptic but a technology that creates a self defined by the parrhesiastic act.

In tracing the prehistory of the imperial philosophical subject as the speaker of truth, Foucault in 1982-83 seeks to offer a genealogy of philosophy as the practice of critique. He does not claim to offer a history of mentalities or of systems of representations, but a history of thought: an analysis of the "habitations of thought." He traces a set of decisive shifts between fifth- and fourth-century Athens that make possible the concept of

philosophy as a mode of resistance to power and a means of creating and recreating ourselves. This same concept is also epitomized on the cusp of modernity by Kant's "What is Enlightenment." This is also the text that Foucault offers as the exergue to "Le gouvernement de soi et des autres."[4] For Kant, Foucault contends, founded a critical philosophy that could go in two directions. It could move toward an analytic of truth, such as that found in Anglo-American philosophy, or toward an ontology of the present such as that found in Hegel, Nietzsche, and the Frankfurt School. Foucault explicitly locates himself in this latter tradition at the beginning of the course.[5] This self-categorization within the tradition of the "ontology of the present" in turn helps to explain the importance of the concept of "habitations of thought" and the centrality of the discourse of truth in relation to instances of power as a form of critique. For the ultimate topic of these lectures is nothing less than how does philosophy become the way in which truth is spoken to power: what does this genealogy tell us about the relation of philosophy to democratic speech, about the constitution of the subject as a speaker of truth, and about the relation of a discourse of truth-telling to specific instances of power? In short, what are the conditions necessary for the discourse of truth to coincide with the speaking subject?[6]

As such, this course necessarily also seeks to address the question of what is the nature of truth and of the speaking subject in relation to power under present circumstances? This is a question whose urgency should not be underestimated. The ancient garb in which Foucault's interlocutors are dressed in no way indicates that these topics are of purely antiquarian interest. As Jorge Davila has recently put it:

> *I believe that for the present that we are living today one can say*
> *this: Foucault's thought, seen from the perspective of his encounter*
> *with ancient philosophy, is still that of the present moment of our*
> *future in which so many threatening relations of force compel us to*
> *adopt an identity determined once and for all by the commercial*
> *<u>cogito</u>; this present moment is one in which, more than ever, we*
> *must fashion at each moment an ethics of speech in order to always*

have the courage to say the truth.

(2003: 207)

The *parrhêsia* of Euripides, Plato, and the Stoics, then, may not—indeed cannot—be our own. Foucault in no way offers a return to ancient virtue as a panacea to the ills of the modern world. But in tracing the genealogy of the philosopher as one who speaks truth to power we come to possess a new set of tools—a more articulated form of technology—for fashioning a self whose very care and creation will also be a form of resistance (Veyne 1997).

In this paper, I will first give an account of "Le gouvernement de soi et des autres" based on the recordings of Foucault's lectures that are currently housed in the Institut Mémoires de l'Édition Contemporaine.[7] I will, then, follow with a brief reading of Persius' *Satire 1*. This poem provides an apt comparandum for Foucault's account of self-formation. The coincidence is not accidental. First, Persius is a Stoic and is read as such by Foucault in *L'herméneutique du sujet* (2001: 74). Second, the subject of the first satire is the impossibility of truth-telling in the context of Nero's Rome. As such, the poem constitutes an act of *parrhêsia* in the moment that it declares its own impossibility. Third, as a philosophical poem, *Satire 1* allows a special focus on the rhetoric and stylistics of the parrhesiastic act. In its obsessive concern with the relation between stylistic, moral, and political decadence this poem concerns precisely the "habitations of thought" of imperial philosophy, the privileged site of Foucault's focus on the technologies of the self and the aesthetics of existence in *L'herméneutique du sujet* and volume 3 of the *Histoire de la sexualité* (1984).

I. The course.

The central question Foucault poses at the beginning of the course is how truth-telling in the procedures of government can reveal the ways in which the individual constitutes himself as a subject in his relations with himself and others. As an introduction, Foucault cites the case that will occupy much of the course: Plato's relations with Dion (c. 408-353

BCE) and Dionysius the Younger of Syracuse (c. 396-343 BCE), individuals known to us primarily through Plutarch's *Life of Dion* and Plato's own letters. Dion was an aristocratic young man who was related by marriage to Dionysius the Elder, the tyrant of Syracuse (c. 430-367 BCE). Foucault reminds us that Dion had been a talented boy full of the prejudices endemic to his aristocratic milieu. He was led to philosophy through his encounter with Plato, who visited Syracuse for the first time around 384 BCE. Plato, however, angered Dionysius the Elder through his frank speech on the topic that only the just man was happy, not the tyrant. The philosopher was then on the tyrant's orders sold into slavery before eventually being ransomed and set free. After this incident, however, Dion continued to possess the right of free speech (*parrhêsia*) with the elder Dionysius. He was even able to criticize him openly. But in this context, Foucault notes, it is important to remember that Dion was almost the tyrant's social equal, not a mere professor of philosophy like Plato (Plutarch 959 c-960c; Nails 2002: 129-34, 247-48). Twenty years later when the elder Dionysius died, Dion decided that his brother-in-law and heir to the throne, Dionysius the Younger, should have the benefit of Platonic instruction as well in the hopes of developing a philosophic ruler. The second trip, however, came to an end when Dion was exiled for suspected disloyalty, and Plato was asked to leave when he sought to protect one of Dion's friends. Later, he was called upon to reconcile Dion and Dionysius as well as to counsel the latter once more in philosophy, but this merely resulted in a third failed Sicilian expedition (Plutarch 960c-967d; Nails 2002: 131, 135-36, 248-49).

The story of Plato, Dion, and the two tyrants, as Foucault notes, is one that puts squarely before us the central concerns of the course: the relations between truth-telling, power, and philosophy. With this narrative still in mind, Foucault proceeds to offer an initial definition of *parrhêsia* as both the fact and a manner of saying the truth. *Parrhêsia* is not a performative speech act. It requires no special status, as is the case with certain formulas such as, "I now pronounce you man and wife," which is only efficacious if spoken by someone officially recognized as having this power: i.e., a priest, a minister, or a justice of the peace. *Parrhêsia* is potentially open to anyone who is recognized as a speaking subject. It is a formulation of truth in two parts: the enunciation of the truth

itself and the affirmation that one truly believes the truth enunciated. The speaking subject in the parrhesiastic act makes a pact with himself: he links himself both to the enunciation and the act of enunciation. He affirms that he is the subject who tells the truth and that he is willing to suffer the consequences. You have *parrhêsia* when the conditions of telling the truth are such that the fact of telling the truth might well entail negative consequences for those who speak the truth. In the case under discussion, for example, the tyrants had the power to banish Dion, to imprison Plato, and to kill either one of them. *Parrhêsia*, Foucault contends, is the act of free courage through which one links oneself to oneself in the act of truth-telling.

Parrhêsia, however, has a somewhat different sense in a strictly democratic context than it does in the court of a fourth-century Sicilian tyrant. The concept of risk is no longer related to the equivocal status of the counselor in relation to the prince, but rather to the potential consequences of taking a side in the agonistic politics of the democratic *polis*. Foucault therefore concludes his introduction to the course by citing Polybius's definition of *parrhêsia* as the freedom of citizens equally to speak out (*isêgoria*) in a context of equality (*isotês* 2.38).[8] It is the transformation from this sense of *parrhêsia* in the democratic *polis* to that found in the monarchical governments of Sicily, the Hellenistic period, and later imperial Rome that constitutes the fundamental matter under discussion in "Le gouvernement de soi et des autres."

To examine the fifth-century democratic model, Foucault somewhat surprisingly turns initially to the *Ion* of Euripides. More orthodox choices might have been Plato's political theory, which is set in the fifth century and explicitly engages the tensions of *polis* life, Herodotus or Thucydides, or the works of the sophists. Among the plays in the tragic canon, the *Oresteia* and the *Antigone* have often been the object of legal, philosophical, and political reflection, but not the *Ion*. Foucault's emphasis on the *Ion* is not at the exclusion of all else, however. Thucydides's depiction of Pericles will later warrant his serious engagement. Nonetheless, it is the *Ion* that receives the lion's share of his attention, occupying center stage for three weeks. This is a work from the Euripidean canon that has received only minor scholarly notice compared to such mainstays as the

Medea, the *Bacchae* and the *Hippolytus*, and he therefore spends a substantial amount of time simply reading the play and presenting this unfamiliar work to his audience. It is also an unusual text in Foucault's own ancient archive, which in his published work concentrates on medical, scientific, and philosophical texts (Konstan 2002).

Nonetheless, as Foucault acknowledges, and as the quotations at the beginning of this paper demonstrate, the *Ion* is a play consecrated to the topic of *parrhêsia*. Some background is necessary. Ion is not a character from traditional mythology or associated with cult. He appears relatively late in Greek culture as the eponymous ancestor of the Ionians. In contrast to certain other writers, Euripides makes him a native Athenian, the son of Creusa, the daughter of Erectheus, and of Apollo. He is abandoned by his mother, who, after being raped by the god, kept the pregnancy a secret and gave birth in a cave. The whole plot consists in having the true identity of Ion revealed and ultimately confirmed by his mother. Only this will permit him to accomplish his historic mission of founding the four tribes that became the basis of Athenian democracy. Three acts of truth-telling, therefore, form the axis of play for Foucault: the Delphic oracle's initial naming of Ion as the son of Xuthus, Creusa's mortal husband and the tyrant of Athens (ll. 560-40); Creusa and Apollo's avowal of their past acts (ll. 881-906 and 1320-1402); and Athena's political discourse at the end (ll. 1553-1605). The *Ion* is thus from this perspective a dramatization of the difficulty and consequences of speaking the truth.

Foucault at this point refines his definition of *parrhêsia*: it is truth-telling in a situation of agonistic struggle in which not only freedom of speech is permitted but also the freedom of being persuaded or not. This is the political risk of speech; it assumes the possibility of failure and hence of a differential in power. *Parrhêsia*, as the political right of citizens in Athens, moreover, is dependent upon a presumed autochthony, and Xuthus cannot grant *parrhêsia* to Ion because, even though he is the tyrant of Athens, he was not born there. In order that Ion assume the right of *parrhêsia*, which will allow him to ascend to the political summit in Athens and found the four tribes (and hence democracy) and thus also serve as the eponymous hero of the Ionians, *parrhêsia*, now in the sense of a revindication of justice on the part of a weaker party (Creusa), had first to be addressed to

the stronger party (Apollo), and Ion's native Athenian descent vouched safe. The play thus pivots around these two fundamental senses of the term: *parrhêsia* as a political right and hence a defining characteristic of democracy, and *parrhêsia* as a speech of truth-telling by a weaker party addressed to a stronger one.

Thus, Foucault observes, in Ion's central speech (ll. 585-675), that *parrhêsia* is directly linked to those citizens who are in the first ranks, those who have political rights as well as both the ability and the desire to exercise them. The speech includes a classification of the populace into three groups: the *adunatoi* or "powerless" (l. 596); the *sophoi* or "wise," i.e., those who are reasonably well off but do not occupy themselves with the affairs of the city (l. 598); and the *politikoi*[9] (l. 601). The potential parrhesiast is, therefore, even in democratic society, in a situation of inherent risk. The envy of the *adunatoi*, the mockery of the *sophoi*, and the rivalry of the political class confront the man who speaks the truth as he sees it. *Parrhêsia* defines itself within *polis* culture in terms of a dynamic struggle in which one competes for dominance among one's peers by means of holding a true discourse. *Isêgoria*, as cited by Polybius, may be the constitutional right to speak in public, but *parrhêsia* is what permits certain individuals to come into positions of superiority relative to others who possess an equal right to speech. Thus there is a distinction and an overlap between two different problematics, Foucault contends, between *politeia* ("constitution") and *dunasteia* ("power"), between institutional structures and the actual technologies of power and resistance wielded by subjects.

What Foucault says he is seeking to offer here, then, is a genealogy of politics as a form of experience. Proper *parrhêsia* in a democracy, he maintains, is best understood as constituted in terms of the four cardinal points on a rectangle:[10]

    1. *Isonomia* (equality before the law)   2. agonistic society

    3. Truth-telling   4. courage (a moral condition)

To illustrate this point more convincingly Foucault turns to Thucydides's account of the Peloponnesian War, in which he portrays Pericles as the model of *parrhêsia* thus defined. Foucault cites three specific passages. In 1.139-44, Pericles speaks to the Athenian Assembly in response to a demand by the Spartan ambassadors that the Athenians give up their empire. Others had already given their views, and opinion was divided on whether to cede to the Spartan demand or go to war. At this point, Pericles steps forward and offers a powerful rationale for war based on both political principle and pragmatic consideration. His view carries the day. In this instance, Foucault argues, we see all four points of the parrhesiastic rectangle. We begin with divided opinion in a context of democratic *isonomia* (1). Pericles then steps forward to assert his predominance (2) and tell the truth as he sees it (3). This act requires courage because he must persuade the others and he could have failed (4).

In Pericles's funeral oration (2.35-46), he is chosen (1, 4) by his peers to praise the fallen (2, 3). In turn, they are praised for being the courageous citizens of a city characterized by *isonomia* (1) and by the free struggle for distinction through speech and action (2, 4). Here, this act is presented as a reflection of the city that makes *parrhêsia* possible. This reflection in turn counts as the highest praise of those who have fallen in its service.

The third example highlights the inherent risk of *parrhêsia*. Again the speaker is Pericles (2.60-64). The Athenians have turned against him in the face of plague and Spartan depredations. He addresses his reproaches to the population, urging them not to lose their resolve in the face of their misfortunes and to bear the responsibilities of empire (1, 3, 4). He claims that he is inferior to no man, and thereby in fact claims his superiority to most (2).

In all three of these instances, as Foucault notes, the same four basic elements are present, though in different configurations. In passage one, we see the triumph of *parrhêsia*. In passage two, we see the parrhesiastic act as an explicit reflection of its own conditions of possibility. And in passage three, we see the inherent risk of that act in a democratic context: the risk of failure and recrimination.

Indeed, the very democratic pressures that make possible Pericles's good *parrhêsia* can also lead to a situation in which the rectangle is no longer balanced. Isocrates, thus, in *On the Peace* (355 BCE) complains that orators who express opinions contrary to those of the assembly are exiled, ostracized, and sometimes even killed. As a result, he says, one fears to tell the truth and resorts to flattery. This is of course precisely the problem that Socrates complains of in the *Gorgias* as well (500e-501c 502d-503b, 521a-522a). When anyone can talk and all opinions are presumed equal, then no one can assert his superiority without resentment and recrimination. In this environment, democratic *parrhêsia* becomes impossible. Instead of courage, there is only flattery due to fear. A false truth-telling or bad *parrhêsia* produces only its meretricious simulacrum: rhetoric and demagoguery.

Foucault concludes this section on democratic *parrhêsia* by observing that the discourse of truth necessarily introduces a distinction into the structure of democracy.[11] One can have a discourse of truth outside of democracy, but within democracy, it is not just because everyone can talk that everyone can therefore speak the truth. Nonetheless, the discourse of truth is necessary for democracy to continue to exist. There can be no rule by the *dêmos* in a context where people cannot, or will not, take the risk of speaking the truth in an agonistic environment. But the discourse of truth is also always threatened by democracy, by the very pressures to appeal to and manipulate the *dêmos* that are both the conditions of and constant threat to its rule. This paradox, Foucault notes, is as much in evidence in the mediatized politics of today as it was in ancient Athens.

The mention of the fourth-century rhetorician, Isocrates, in turn prepares the way for the next major section of the course, which concentrates on the work of Plato. During the period after both Athens' defeat in the Peloponnesian War and the trial of Socrates, the perception of *parrhêsia* fundamentally changed, Foucault argues. It now appeared to be something ambiguous, where in Euripides's *Ion* it was completely positive. *Parrhêsia* at this time is problematized in all political regimes not just democracies. It is in this context that *parrhêsia* moves beyond being construed primarily as a political act,

according to Foucault, and becomes instead a technology of the self, a means of shaping the soul. Nonetheless, as the course's opening citation of Plutarch on the case of Plato and Dionysius demonstrates, while philosophical *parrhêsia* may become a speech act addressed to the soul, it nonetheless always occurs in a political context.

It is in the fourth century then, Foucault contends, that we see the emergence of the philosopher as parrhesiast whose role is to serve as guide of the city. Plato's ideal city as seen in the *Republic* and the *Laws*, Foucault argues, is precisely a city where the problem of the relation between truth and political organization, between *parrhêsia* and *politeia*, has been resolved. The dominant political concern in this period is less that of defining the citizen who has the right to speak, as in the *Ion*, than of forming the soul of those who would seek to govern both themselves and others. The central contest for this new game of truth is who is best able to hold this discourse of forming the soul, the rhetorician or the philosopher. This crux is what Foucault defines as the Platonic crossroads.

From Foucault's perspective, the whole problem of Platonic philosophy can be articulated in the space between truth and politics. Of central importance to him is *Republic* 557a-b, where Plato describes the passage from oligarchy to democracy and defines democratic man. The essential genesis of democracy is economic, Plato contends, because oligarchs have no interest in avoiding the impoverishment of the population, and this leads to civil war. When the *dêmos* triumphs, the poor share the government and the magistracies. They establish *isonomia, isêgoria, eleutheria* (freedom) and *parrhêsia*. There is now freedom of speech and of action. Each citizen is a political unit with law-making capacity (*autonomia*). If one wishes to persuade the *dêmos* as a whole, however, the result, as Isocrates had observed, is often flattery and demagoguery. Worse yet, according to Plato, the democratic man reproduces these same structures in his soul, with the result that it too is an anarchy of desires with each province claiming the right to self-legislate. In this context, the *logos alêthês* ("true discourse"), which must speak against unreasonable desire and self-love, is rebuffed, and *parrhêsia* no longer exists.

The proper content for a truly Platonic *parrhêsia*, Foucault contends, cannot be found in the contest for the favor of a self-satisfied citizen body, but only in the structures of friendship (*philia*). Thus in *Laws* 694, the Athenian Stranger presents the constitution of the Persians under Cyrus as the golden mean between slavery and freedom. This characterization of barbarian autocracy may seem odd, but even in this context certain traditional themes of *parrhêsia* remain constant: the most able are those who speak and persuade; Cyrus grants complete freedom to address him (risk); and *philia* unites the conquerors and the conquered, the monarch and his counselors. We have then here a modified version of the parrhesiastic rectangle in which *philia* effectively replaces *isonomia*, as the companions of Cyrus compete in truth-telling to persuade him and win his favor.[12]

Another important passage for Foucault is *Laws* 835, on the moral order of the city concerning sexual matters. Plato says that legislation is insufficient to regulate a working *polis*. The citizen body must be appealed to in a spirit of truth and frankness. You need to have choruses and festivals in order to convince citizens to obey the orders of the city. The institutions (*politeia*) alone cannot assure the ascendance of truth. You need a parrhesiast who speaks in the name of reason. Thus, in Plato, Foucault contends, one sees the disjunction of the different aspects of traditional democratic *parrhêsia*. Civic solidarity, a claim to superiority, the action of true speech on souls are all still operative, but their necessary mutual implication is less directly integrated into the very structures of civic life than was the case in the classical *polis*. Moments of truth-telling become actions undertaken by individuals in a context of *philia*, of mutual regard and affection, rather than claims asserted in the public square as part of the very structures that establish that space as public, as a space both constituted by and constitutive of the classical *polis*.

These various and, to a certain extent, competing aspects of *parrhêsia* are perhaps most fully revealed in Plato's letters, according to Foucault. The letters are extremely controversial texts with regard to their authenticity and provenance. Foucault considers 6, 7, and 8 authentic, following Souilhé (1960), but the others as late. All however, he argues, come from a Platonic milieu and are of interest. Letter 5, for example, is a fictive

letter destined for Perdicas the brother of Philip of Macedon answering the question: how is the philosopher able to advise cities with diverse constitutions. The response is that each constitution has its own voice, and when it speaks with that voice the city prospers. This is a far cry from what is normally understood to be the prescriptive rhetoric of the *Republic* and the *Laws*, which are normally understood to outline ideal constitutions for real cities.

Most important for Foucault is the Seventh Letter, which concerns Plato's second and third trips to Syracuse. When Dionysius the Elder had died, Dion asked Plato to come and serve as a teacher to Dionysius the Younger. Dionysius, however, subsequently banished both Plato and Dion, though he later recalled Plato (361 BCE), acknowledging that he had been wrong and pledging that he would recall Dion if Plato came. In the end, however, Plato left without Dionysius having kept his promises (Nails 2002: 131, 136, 248-49). The Seventh Letter is his reply to a request from the friends of Dion for advice after the latter had returned to Sicily and overthrown Dionysius, but was then betrayed and murdered.

The reading of the letters, especially the seventh, is absolutely indispensable to understanding Platonic political theory, Foucault declares, because it is in them that Plato sketches his concept of the political advisor. He offers here not a theory of the ideal constitution, but a rationalization of political practice, of philosophy as counsel. The letter begins with a brief political autobiography and recounts Plato's double disappointment at Athens both with the rule of Thirty, at the end of the Peloponnesian War, and then with the restored democracy, which executed Socrates. Plato concludes from these experiences that at this point in time he neither has the allies (*philoi*), nor the willing community, nor the opportunity necessary to carry out a just political program in Athens. Therefore he has withdrawn from direct political participation and argues that such participation will only be possible when either philosophers becomes rulers or rulers begin to study philosophy (324b-326b).

He continues by recounting that he went to Syracuse the second time to teach Dionysius the Younger because here, it seemed, was the opportunity to have an impact. He had been told that there was young monarch willing to learn, with a friend (Dion) sponsoring him. Plato wanted to show he was not just a man of the *logos* ("discourse"), but also one of the *ergon* ("work, deed"). The philosophical *ergon* as Plato conceived it, Foucault notes, is precisely that which he had seen as central to his reading of the *Alcibiades* the previous year. It was not the imposition of an ideal order but convincing the would-be politician of the necessity of caring for himself in order to have the right and the ability to rule others. As in Plato's encounter with Dionysius, but also Pericles's address to the Athenian Assembly, what is necessary to achieve this project is an act of *parrhêsia*: one must both speak the truth and persuade the other. One must convince the interlocutor, and, through persuasion, one must come to govern the soul of the man who would govern others by teaching him how to govern himself.[13] The central problem in both the *Alcibiades* and the Seventh Letter, Foucault contends, is an anxiety that philosophy should not be confined to the realm of the *logos*, to mere words. Thus one is led to pose the question: "what is the real of philosophy?" "It's the act of truth-telling." "In what way is the truth-telling of philosophy inscribed in the real?" "In its courage to address itself to whomever exerts power." This is the dialectic whereby the philosophical *logos* as *parrhêsia* become also the philosophical *ergon*. Philosophy after Plato, according to Foucault, is not a discourse that tells the truth about truth, but it is the act of speaking the truth to power.

In this vision of philosophy there are two central questions. Under what conditions can a *logos* that claims to be philosophic effectively become an *ergon*, and what does philosophy offer to truth-telling? There are three crucial passages concerning these problems in the Seventh Letter. The first is 330C-331D. Here Plato writes that in order for a discourse of philosophic truth-telling to realize itself, it must be addressed to those who want and are able to hear it. The philosopher, like the doctor, must discuss with his auditor and persuade him if he is to be effective. Philosophy cannot simply be a discourse of violent opposition, but must always be one of persuasion. It must tailor its means to its audience.

The second passage is 340B. For Foucault the passage poses the question "How do you recognize someone willing to listen?" He understands Plato to respond in essence, "You show them what is involved in philosophy, how hard the labor is and what heights are to be attained. If they are real philosophy students, they will redouble their efforts, but if they are effeminate pleasure-loving types or dilettantes, they will drop the pursuit immediately. You show them the *pragmata* of philosophy, that is the practices of philosophy. " There are three principle ones: 1), the acceptance of a *cursus* that the person who undertakes to be a philosopher must traverse and that he recognizes that he cannot live without pursuing; 2) the recognition that he should apply himself to this *cursus* and allow himself to be taken in hand by a guide who will show him the way; and 3) the resolve that he should show endurance and maintain the relationship with his director until such time as the director says he has the strength to continue on his own. Moreover, Foucault notes, the true student of philosophy also demonstrates his choice of the philosophical life style in everyday activities. He manifests this choice in three ways: 1) he is *eumathês*—that is he shows an aptitude for learning; 2) he is *mnêmôn*—he has a good memory and retains his master's teachings; 3) he is *logizesthai dunatos*—capable of reason. These are the forms and capabilities of the soul that must be cultivated if enlightenment is to result. The practice of philosophy is thus a labor of the self on the self, and it is through this labor that philosophy enters the real as an *ergon* rather than simply a *logos*.

The third passage from the Seventh Letter is 341-342 recounting the test to which Plato subjected Dionysius during his third trip to Syracuse to see if he were willing and able to benefit from philosophical training. This passage reveals two important things, first that Dionysius failed this test, i.e., he refused to take up the long road of philosophy: for he believed that he had understood certain important things the first time he heard them and that he was therefore no longer in need of instruction. Second, Dionysius had already written a philosophical treatise based on his previous conversations with Plato, and from this fact Plato concluded that he was incapable of studying philosophy. To want to write

on the most important philosophical questions, especially after only brief instruction, was to show that you had understood nothing concerning those questions.

Foucault notes that a comparison is often made between the Seventh Letter and the end of the Second Letter where there is another refusal of writing. The Second Letter, however, is late and probably neo-Platonic. Here "Plato" says he has never written on the fundamental questions of philosophy and never will, because you do not know into whose hands what you are writing might fall. Foucault argues that this is not at all the basis for the rejection of writing in the Seventh Letter. Here the problem is that philosophy cannot be reduced to *mathèmes*, formulas that can be memorized and reproduced. Philosophy, rather, requires *sunousia* ("association," "intercourse") with the master, so that the lamp of the soul becomes illuminated and can nourish itself from its own oil. Dionysius's sin was to reduce philosophy from an intense interpersonal practice of inquiry and self-regard to a set of formulas, to a handbook.

In fact, Plato's Seventh Letter informs us, there are five elements that allow us to have "knowledge" of things (342). These elements require a constant "rubbing together" (*tribê*) if knowledge is to result, and this *tribê* implies a continuous practice and personal interaction that writing on its own cannot provide. Those elements are: 1) the name of the thing and 2) its definition—these first two elements are heterogeneous to the things themselves; 3) the image of the thing and 4) our formalized knowledge or *epistêmê* of it—the second two elements are lodged in our intellect; and finally, 5) the being of the thing itself. Real knowledge of the thing itself cannot be acquired except through a continual practice or "rubbing together" (*tribê*) of these elements of "connaissance." The practice of a philosophy that will inscribe itself in the real, that will be an *ergon* not just a logos, then, consists in three concentric circles: 1) listening; 2) practice; and 3) knowledge.

This is why writing is refused and why the philosopher will never be a *nomothetês* or "law-giver" (344C). The monologism of the set formula that can only repeat itself regardless of who is questioning it, and to what purpose, is alien to the Platonic concept

of philosophical inquiry. Plato in this passage from the Seventh Letter, therefore, appears to refuse all legitimacy to texts like the *Republic* and the *Laws* where the philosopher seems precisely to take on that role. But Foucault argues that this is a misunderstanding. Instead, he argues that just as Plato makes clear in texts like the parable of the cave and Socrates's great speech in the *Phaedrus* that myth should not be taken literally, that it is not "serious" in the sense of offering a precise denotative description of a reality that exists apart from the discourse that evokes it, neither should the *Republic* or the *Laws* be seen as prescriptions, as offering full-blown constitutions that need simply be applied to produce the desired results. To fall into this kind of naive error is to commit the same mistake as Dionysius the Younger, and to reduce philosophy to a set of *mathêmata*.

Thus, Foucault observes, those like Popper (1963) who cite the *Laws* and the *Republic* as the origin of totalitarian political theory have misunderstood the status of these texts. They neglect Plato's rejection of the figure of the *nomothetês*. The real of philosophy is not found in the imposition of pre-existing answers to urgent practical questions, but in the relations of the self to the self, and it is only through those relations that one then passes to the government of both the self and of others. Politics and a true *politeia* begin with *tribê*, with labor, and a certain relation of the soul to both itself and to an experienced philosophical director who can speak the truth (*parrhêsia*) and guide the soul to its own self-knowledge and self-care.

This is not to say that the philosopher does not also have a role as a political advisor in the more traditional sense, yet even then his practice is strictly prescribed. Thus Plato tells us in the *Seventh Letter* that his role in Syracuse was more analogous to that of a doctor than a lawgiver (331d-333a). He first tried to diagnose the illness from which Syracuse suffered. He discovered that in the cities Dionysius the Elder had conquered, the tyrant had not succeeded in establishing viable constitutions. Consequently there were constant difficulties between Syracuse and the cities under its dominion. The ultimate problem according to Plato was that Dionysius wanted to make Sicily one big *polis*, but he lacked a sufficient number of men in whom he had confidence, sufficient

philoi. And he lacked a model. How could he apply that of the *polis* to something as large as Sicily? He had not thought about scale and proportion.

Insofar as the good doctor is persuasive, Plato gives Dionysius the Younger two examples as a means of convincing him to reflect on the nature of the government he is pursuing: Persia under Darius (benevolent autocracy) and imperial Athens (democracy). The fact that these two systems were opposed clearly shows that the precise form of the constitution was not the most important factor for him. Plato thus tried to persuade Dionysius to change the fashion in which he governed from that used by his father, by looking at alternative models, taking them as a basis for reflection. Like a good doctor, he put his patient on a political regimen: 1) give each of the cities in Sicily their own constitution; 2) link the cities with one another and with Syracuse, as well as with the prince, through laws and a federal constitution; 3) create a sense of solidarity through a common enemy, the Carthagenians. He also prescribed the following regimen for Dionysius as an individual: 1) to work on himself so as to become *sôphrôn* ("of sound mind, moderate"); 2) to become harmonious with himself just as the cities are harmonized with one another. Plato, using the same frank speech, in turn, gives this very advice to the friends of Dion. They have to show that they are more subjects to the law than those they conquer. To do this they need a theoretical and moral formation. If they are educated in this way, then they can make use of the two resources that all those who govern must have access to: 1) fear; and 2) respect or shame (*aidos*). The key to any constitution's success is thus to be found in the relation of self to self among those who would govern. That is the basis of effective power (336c-337b).

With this realization, we are at a key point in the history of *parrhêsia*. From the moment when *parrhêsia* consists of guiding the souls of those who possess power, and not simply of giving one's opinion in a democratic context, the question is posed: who is the parrhesiast, who is qualified to be a parrhesiast? Democratic *isêgoria* and *isonomia* are no longer of primary importance in the court of the tyrant. This shift is marked in the fourth century. This is also the moment when there arises a clear split between philosophy and rhetoric, the latter being disparaged as the art of flattering either the

rabble or the despot. Philosophy presents itself as the sole discourse that can distinguish true from false. Thus it alone possesses a monopoly over *parrhêsia*.

This split between rhetoric and philosophy is evident in Plato, as Foucault notes. He thus begins the final part of the course by examining the opening lines of the *Apology* (18a). Socrates's adversaries never say anything but untrue things. But they have the capacity to convince others, even Socrates. Nonetheless, Socrates also has a certain art of speaking, but it is not the same. He is the man who speaks the truth without any *tekhnê*. This is his first time before the court, thus he is going to use a different fashion of speaking from the rhetorical norm and may well sound strange, like a foreigner. As Foucault notes, this disclaimer is in fact a *topos*, and is often found in speeches that were in fact written by logographers or professional speechwriters like Lysias. In Socrates's case, however, this speech truly is his own discourse (at least as Plato presents it). "This true speech is effectively a stranger to this court because it is the language I use every day." Socrates simply says what comes to mind. His is a language in which he says what he thinks,[14] a language of faith in his beliefs and in their justice. These characteristics go together. They possess a unity that is that of *parrhêsia*, as Foucault observes. The *Apology* is not simply a sincere discourse, but a true discourse. It is artifice therefore, Foucault observes, that introduces untruth into human language. Language in its unadorned state is the closest to truth. Rhetoric, however, is a constructed language. These assertions, as we shall see, will become particularly problematic when we deal with Persius's stylized Stoic *parrhêsia* in the second portion of this paper.

At *Apology* 31c-32, Foucault notes, Plato addresses Socrates's political role. How can he be a man who tells the truth, and yet never give his opinion in the Assembly? Socrates's answer is, "If I had put my hand to political affairs, I would have long since been killed and thus would have been useful neither to you nor to myself" (31d9-e1). Athenian democracy, then, in Socrates's words no longer has a place for the parrhesiast. Socrates's famous tutelary *daimôn* had warned him not to exercise his *parrhêsia* in political matters. The two times he had become involved in politics he had been forced to refuse to do things that he thought were unjust. This happened both under the Thirty and during the

restored democracy, and this alienation of both factions explains why he is on trial now. Socratic *parrhêsia* is thus no longer that defined by the *Ion* and Pericles. It is not the citizen's right, whereby the individual asserts his superiority or whereby the weaker party demands justice from the stronger. This new form is a philosophical *parrhêsia*. It plays its role in relation to politics but not in politics per se or the courts.

This shift is Foucault's main point for the course. In the fourth century, a certain division has been introduced into the heart of *parrhêsia*. What concerns the newly self-conscious discipline of philosophy is not questions of justice and injustice, such as would have occupied the attention of political leaders like Pericles, but justice and injustice as they are committed by a subject. The philosophical question is not that of politics but of the subject in politics, not who is a citizen, but how the citizen forms himself. Socrates did not content himself with speaking about justice, but he refused to commit the unjust acts that were asked of him. Philosophical *parrhêsia* is not simply a *logos*, but also an *ergon*.

This same opposition between rhetoric and philosophy visible in the *Apology* can be seen in the *Phaedrus* as well. Foucault argues that Socrates's great speech is to be understood as a true discourse. It is a true praise of true love, which is paradoxically presented through a series of myths and fables. According to Foucault, the central questions of the dialogue, which famously closes with a discussion of writing and rhetoric after opening with three speeches on love, are: what is the true *tekhnê* of the *logos*, and what is writing's relation to it?

Plato, Foucault observes, uses *logos* both for oral discourses and written ones. The *Phaedrus* is not, he contends, a dialogue on logo- and phonocentrism, as Derrida argues (1972).[15] The *Phaedrus* is explicitly not about the suppression of writing in Foucault's view: for where Phaedrus says that Lysias is only a *logographos*, a man of writing, Socrates responds that what is at stake is *not* the difference between writing and orality. He continues by arguing that there is nothing wrong with writing speeches per se. The problem is when one speaks, whether in writing or orally, how do we distinguish between good and bad speeches on love or any other topic (257b-258d).[16] Phaedrus, after some

additional dialectical interchange, assents to the idea that for a speech to be good, the person who delivers it must be someone who knows the truth. But Socrates is not satisfied with this. Rhetoric on this model, Foucault maintains, is conceived of as an add-on, an ornament. Knowledge of the truth is not a precondition of true speech. It is not given in advance to the person who speaks. Rather it should be a constant and permanent function of discourse. The art of rhetoric is nothing other than *psychagogia* ("the leading of souls"). Dialectic or the interpersonal pursuit of truth is this real art. The tricks of rhetoric found in the manuals are only valuable to the extent that they are subordinated to the dialectic (260d-266c). There is in fact always a double demand of dialectic (the knowledge of being) and *psychagogia* (the knowledge of the soul), which are two faces of the same coin (277b-c). It is by the movement of the soul that one comes to know being, and it is through knowing the nature of being that one knows the nature of the soul. Thus, Foucault argues, the main function of Socrates's great speech in the *Phaedrus* is to serve as an example of a true discourse and so to anticipate the content of the final part of the dialogue by showing the link that exists between access to the truth and the leading of the soul (*psychagogia*).[17]

In summary, there were, then, Foucault declares, two key moments in Athenian *parrhêsia*: the Periclean, where there was not yet a division between rhetoric and *parrhêsia*; and the Socratic in which *parrhêsia* becomes equated with the practice of philosophy. It is in this second moment that the opposition of philosophy to rhetoric and flattery appears. This change is also linked with the decline and eventual disappearance of democracy. Ancient philosophy thus becomes the parrhesiastic practice par excellence. Foucault continues by arguing that the portrait of the Cynic in Epictetus *Discourses* (3.22) reveals the ideal image of the ancient philosopher as parrhesiast: an individual whose sole protection is his *aidos*. He is ready to say the truth at any moment. Moreover, modern philosophy, in so far as it sees its role as critique, represents a return to this parrhesiastic tradition, and it is this return that is emblematized in Kant's text on *Aufklärung*.

Rhetoric as an autonomous practice of truth-telling, then, is not able to coexist with philosophy in the Socratic tradition. The *Gorgias* represents this opposition to rhetoric (and hence to the Periclean model) in perhaps its purest form. The philosopher, according to this dialogue, alone is the parrhesiast. Thus at 480a Socrates explcitly poses the question: what is rhetoric? None of the other characters in the dialogue has a good answer. Socrates argues that it is really flattery, the self-serving discourse of speakers trying to woo and wheedle the popular audience. By contrast, he contends that fine speeches have only one legitimate use: telling the truth in the service of justice, i.e., *parrhêsia*. The best use of rhetoric, then, would be to accuse yourself of wrongdoing before the law and through conviction and punishment to change oneself. The important thing is not to escape from the injustice of others, but to avoid acting with injustice. Rhetoric, on this view, is at best a handmaiden to philosophy.

Philosophy, however, does not represent an unchanging truth before which one is called to account for oneself. Indeed, at *Gorgias* 486, Foucault argues, it becomes clear that Platonic *psychagogia* is not judicial. It does not arraign the subject before the law, but, as Socrates says to Callicles, in so far as philosophy seeks to lead the soul, it becomes the means whereby the subject tests itself against itself through intercourse with others. In this testing function (*elegkhos*), what the subject of philosophy needs is not a confessor or enforcer but an interlocutor who has three qualities: *epistêmê* (knowledge), *eunoia* (good will), and *parrhêsia*. Such a person can put one's soul to proof in the same way a touchstone tests coins for their metal content. Socrates says that Callicles, the host of Gorgias and fierce advocate of the power and necessity of rhetoric, is in fact such a person. "You can show me my ignorance, and I will correct myself if I'm not a coward or lazy. If I am, then you will abandon me to my vices." The truth criterion in this game of *elegkhos* is *homologia* or agreement between the parties. Philosophy's mode of existence is, thus, question and answer, not fine speeches. This is the *tribê* of which the Seventh Letter speaks. Dialogue is justified as a constant testing of the soul. *Elegkhos* is a practice, not a form of speculation. Thus, on this reading, the Platonic *logos* is shorn of its transcendental and metaphysical dimensions. Philosophic *parrhêsia* is what links the master to the disciple in their interpersonal dialectic. As such, it is opposed to the earlier

Periclean example, in which one individual claimed ascendance over the others by means of asserting the truth in a democratic context.

Philosophy, thus, in the Platonic moment constitutes itself not just as *logos* or discourse, but also as a practice of self-testing (*elegkhos*) and self-fashioning, or care of the self (*epimelia heautou*), that is dependent on the courage to tell the truth in a persuasive manner (*parrhêsia*). In this fashion, philosophy creates itself as the discourse that can tell the truth to power through the courage to test the subject's own self-relation, and its consequent ability to govern itself and others, once it has come an understanding and mastery of its soul. This is precisely what is at stake in philosophical *parrhêsia*, as Foucault had shown in the previous year's reading of the *Alcibiades*. Thus the shift in the definition of *parrhêsia* from the Periclean and Euripidean moment to the Platonic, and the self-conscious constitution of ancient philosophy as a practice separate from rhetoric and flattery, which accompanies the decline of Athenian democracy, is what makes the construction of philosophy as critique possible, and hence of philosophy as a practice of enlightenment. The Socratic answer to the Kantian question, *Was ist Aufklärung*, is therefore, according to Foucault, that which makes it possible for us to reclaim *parrhêsia* as both a technology of the self and a modern democratic practice.

2. *Persius* Satire 1*: The Dandy and the Game of Truth.*

For who at Rome does not—ah, if I can say it—but I can say it then
Since I have looked to our old age and how harsh our life is,
Yet we play around like children with leftover nuts,
though we have the air of Dutch uncles. Then, then—forgive me (I don't
want to, but I can't help myself) I have an aggressive spleen—I crack up.
(Persius 1.8-12)

Am I forbidden to mutter? not even quietly? not in a ditch? nowhere?
Even so, I'll dig a hole here. "I have seen, I myself have seen, little book: Who does not
have ass's ears?"

(Persius 1.120-22)

In the one hundred ten lines that separate the interrupted question in the first quoted passage, "who at Rome does not?" from its final conclusion, "Who does not have ass's ears?," we have some of the strangest, most difficult Latin in the entire classical canon (Knoche 1975: 132-34). Persius, the avowedly Stoic satirist (Ramage 1974:119; Knoche 1975: 131), who seeks to speak the truth about stylistic and moral decline in Nero's Rome, and who under the conditions of a paranoid regime that saw the forced suicides of such literary giants as the novelist Petronius, the epic poet Lucan, and the Stoic philosopher, Seneca the Younger, steps forward as a satirical parrhesiast. He is the one who dares to speak the truth and run the risk of imperial and popular disapproval, and ultimately even death. This young man, who died at twenty-seven of a stomach ailment before his work was published sought to speak true words that would be heard as such and acted upon (Coffey 1976: 99). Yet to do so he could not simply speak what came to mind, as Socrates claims to do in the *Apology*, or even subordinate style to substance as Plato advocates in the *Phaedrus* and the *Gorgias*. Rhetoric, in the sense of the deliberate artistic arrangement of language to produce a given effect, is not here subjected to philosophy, but in this poetic context it constitutes the core of the philosophical claim. Persius's use of language is not the mere instrument of his claim to truth, but its very substance.

The exact coincidence of speaker and statement that Foucault posits as the heart of *parrhêsia* in both its Platonic and later Stoic incarnations can only be achieved in Persius at the price of a radical stylization of both, and of their consequent separation from any necessary, extra-textual referent. This was a Latin that nobody spoke. Its dense set of allusions, highly compact and grotesque images, and frequent deliberately mixed metaphors almost immediately necessitated the production of a commentary to assist its ancient readership, which nonetheless was large and varied (Knoche 1975: 136-38; Coffey 1976: 116). Persius's Latin was all but completely divorced from the refined conversational idiom of Horace's satires, which the latter had labeled *sermones* or "talks." This estrangement was a deliberate choice. Persius self-consciously refuses to

offer us a composition in which the joints or articulations (*iuncturae*) pass "lightly beneath the strictest thumbnail" (1.64-65), here borrowing a Horatian metaphor for an ideal smoothness of versification (*Ars Poetica* 292-94). Instead, he seeks something that "scrapes tender ears with biting truth" (1.107-08). He offers not the Horatian ideal of the *callida. . . iunctura* or "clever juxtaposition" (*Ars Poetica* 47-48), but that of the poet who is *iunctura callidus acri*, "clever at the harsh juxtaposition" (5.14). Persius proposes to renew a Roman poetry that has becomes effeminately smooth, proffering in its stead a diction of masculine abrasion. In place of a weightless mythological flotsam that floats on our lips like a bubble of spit (1.104-05), Persius offers for the serious "reader who burns with a well-steamed ear" a stern antidote, "something boiled down, concentrated," *aliquid decoctius* (1.125-26).

This final image is an exemplification of the poetry of concentration and harsh juxtaposition that Persius offers as the epitome of his own parrhesiastic practice. It presents not simply the unvarnished truth, but a bizarre disintegration of bodies and subjects that calls each into radical question before their own factitious and constructed nature (Henderson 1993: 137). The reader who burns (*ferveat*)—whether from desire, fever, or both—has a distillation of comic, poetic truth (*aliquid decoctius*) poured into his ear by means of reading these satires aloud, as was the ancient practice.[18] The reader's ears have been steam-cleaned (*vaporata*), perhaps in response to the fever with which he burns, or perhaps by the very boiled down essence that constitutes this poetry. At any rate, the heat of the liquid poetry, now concentrated to medicinal strength, is transferred to both the ear that receives it and the overheated reader who at once burns with desire for this rough treatment and with the fever that necessitates it.

The corrupt world of fluid effeminacy in which straightforward speech had become impossible, in which the parrhesiast can only speak in a highly figured and catachretic style, can perhaps best be exemplified in a single striking scene in which the satirist describes a typical poetic recitation. In this passage, the fevered ear desires not the medicine of strong truth, but the poetry of passive sexual penetration. The ear becomes the asshole, and poetry a means of sexual invasion that effeminizes at once the sender and

the receiver (Bramble 1974: 41-42, 72-79, 84, 95; Morford 1984: 36; Freudenburg 2001: 172). In this, it is doubly perverse, since as Foucault perhaps more than anyone else has taught us—though he was not the first to notice—the axis of penetration in Roman sexual relations was also that on which relations of domination and of gender were normally articulated.[19] The reciting poet is described as at once fastidiously groomed, with an excessive, effeminate care, and possessed of a quavering eye, indicative of sexual exhaustion (Bramble 1974: 76-77). Every orifice in this scene—eye, ear, mouth, and asshole—becomes a locus of possible sexual penetration, even as it performs the seemingly impossible task of emasculating others (Freudenburg 2001: 163-67):

> *scilicet haec populo pexusque togaque recenti*
> *et natalicia tandem cum sardonyche albus*
> *sede leges celsa, liquido cum plasmate guttur*
> *mobile conlueris, patranti fractus ocello.*
> *tunc neque more probo videas nec voce serena*
> *ingentis trepidare Titos, cum carmina lumbum*
> *intrant et tremulo scalpuntur ubi intima versu.*
> (1.15-23)

[Of course, you will read these things to the people, freshly combed in a new toga, and finally starched white with your birthday sardonyx, seated on high, you will have limbered your supple throat with fluid warbling, sexually spent with an ejaculating eye. Then you would see huge old-time Tituses all aquiver in a hardly decent manner, their voices quavering as the poems enter their loins and as their most private parts are tickled with trembling verse.]

In such a world, what can truth-telling be? Simple speech has become all but impossible. Even the question, "who at Rome does not have ass's ears?" cannot be directly posed when every ear has become an anus. Such ears must be thoroughly scraped (*radere*,

1.107), steamed (*vaporata*, 1.126), and cleansed with a discourse that is not simply true in some simple, unproblematic sense of corresponding to either the speaker's intention or to an extradiscursive reality, but one which is distilled, boiled down, and concentrated into its medicinal essence (*aliquid decoctius*, 1.125).

Yet these very images of astringency are themselves constantly in danger of being converted into their opposites. The discourse, which scrapes those ears in the salutary tradition of Roman satire and Greek Old Comedy (1.107-125), is portrayed with the same verb (*rado, radere*) as that used but a few lines earlier of an effeminate speech that has been shaved to a fine rhetorical balance by an impotent *rhetor*, unable to defend even himself when drug before the bar (1.85-91). Moreover the image of scraping and scratching the ear is precisely that found in the verb used to describe the penetration of the audience's ears and assholes by the verse of our perverted poet. *Scalpo, scalpere* means in the first instance "to scrape, scratch or abrade," hence scalpel, and only secondarily to "tickle." The images of liquidity found in *aliquid decoctius* and *vaporata* recall the perverse poet's *liquido plasmate* ("fluid warbling"), and are linked throughout the poem and the whole corpus with images of effeminacy, perversion, and sexual penetration (Morford 1984: 36; Gowers 1993: 182-83; Miller 1998).

The parrhesiast in this context is neither the democratic citizen of the Athens of Pericles and Euripides, nor the Platonic counselor, nor the Socratic plain speaker who stands in opposition to the rhetorical contrivances of his opponent. Yet Persius clearly portrays himself as one who dares to utter the truth, and one who claims a Stoic lineage that traced its descent directly from Socrates himself. He is beyond doubt a practitioner of *parrhêsia*, but also one whose extreme self-stylization puts him squarely in line with the figure who occupies the central portion of Foucault's text on *Was ist Aufklärung*, the great apostle of modernity: Baudelaire. The Symbolist poet in many ways stands in an analogous relation to Foucault's argument as Persius does to our own. For Baudelaire, the modern world is characterized precisely by its critique of the actual, by its transfiguration of the present as epitomized by the practices of the painters of modern life and of the dandy. "Transfiguration . . . is not the annihilation of the real, but a difficult

game played between the truth of the real and the exercise of freedom; 'natural' things become 'more than natural,' 'beautiful' things become 'more than beautiful'" (Foucault 1994a: 570). Similarly, for Baudelaire, the dandy is not a fop, but a species of ascetic, a kind of modern Stoic or monk who pursues a deliberate aesthetics of existence with self-imposed rigor. "The asceticism of the dandy makes of his body, his comportment, of his sentiments, of his existence, a work of art" (Foucault 1994a: 571). The authenticity achieved by the Stoic parrhesiast and by the Baudelairean dandy is a self-coincidence that comes as the telos of a certain stylization of existence, a certain *technê biou*, that stands as a critique of the surrounding falsehood, as a resistance to hegemonic power. It is deployed not in the name of a pre-existing truth, but in the name of a truth that is created in the act of its enunciation. It is not the passive reflection of what is, but the active distillation—and hence transfiguration—of what is into *aliquid decoctius*, into an essence, an art that stands in opposition to prevailing structures of imperial, aesthetic, and erotic power (compare Sharpe 2005: 113-14).

> *The poems of Persius reproduce in mimetic form an absolutism in*
> *despite of civic power-relations as seen from the perspective of the*
> *Roman élite: [these poems act] out a scene of mastery, the fantasy-*
> *ideology of an absolute control of Self as the boundary and*
> *teleology of human freedom.*
> (Henderson 1993: 127)

The heart of this Stoic *parrhêsia* is, then, precisely a very "difficult game played between the truth of the real and the exercise of freedom," i.e., a form of transfiguration.

The problem is, of course, to determine how it is that Persius's opponents, the poets of meretricious effeminacy, are any less transfigured, any less dandified than Persius himself. At what point does the strong medicine of Stoic satire cease to scrape the ears and begin to tickle the loins? When does the carefully crafted rhetoric of the acris iuntura, "the harsh juxtaposition," become the "shaved antitheses" of the empty rhetor? I do not want to claim that these oppositions in their ultimate undecidability therefore are

meaningless, but as oppositions they do necessarily deconstruct themselves. Each position is predicated on that which its seeks to exclude or subordinate, and this cannot be neglected.

If philosophical *parrhêsia*, as Foucault rightly claims, is predicated on the opposition between philosophy and rhetoric presented in the *Apology*, the *Phaedrus*, and the *Gorgias*, and yet the possibility of effective truth-telling, as Persius reveals, is dependent upon a stylization of that language that can only be called rhetorical, then how can this opposition remain fully meaningful? By the same token, if the heart of *parrhêsia* is, as Foucault argues, the claim that "what authenticates the fact that I tell you the truth is that as the subject of my conduct I am effectively and totally identical with the subject of the enunciation that I am when I tell you that which I tell you" (2001: 389), then how can the subject of the enunciation also be one that is always in the process of creation and stylization, that like the dandy is "he who searches to invent himself" (Foucault 1994a: 571)? What is the nature of an identity that is only identical with that which constantly posits it? With what is it identical? Is there not a circularity here? Finally, if in the history of *parrhêsia*, we trace also the history of philosophy as critique, of philosophy as the ontology of the present, as *Aufklärgung*, then what is the truth that is told, what is the object toward which our critique is directed?

The answer to these questions is at least two fold. On the one hand, the questions themselves point to the necessary limitations of Foucault's project: for the genealogy of the teller of truths is always also the genealogy of their fabrication. The genealogy of the philosopher, as the practitioner of an art and a labor, is also the genealogy of the philosopher as the writer and fabulist. As such, it is also the genealogy of the irreducible remainder that the practice of a certain game of truth must always set itself against and that Derrida so carefully ferreted out in his reading of the *Phaedrus* and its problematization of writing, the *pharmakon*, and the possibility of a true *logos*.

On the other, the truth that is told and the subject that speaks it are precisely what authenticate themselves in the act of their enunciation. What Foucault traces is precisely

the way in which a very "difficult game played between the truth of the real and the exercise of freedom" articulates itself, the way in which the subject neither creates itself out of whole cloth, nor pre-exists the moment of its creation in the act of self-enunciation. The truth that is told at any moment, then, is precisely the history of this complex dialectical game of co-constitution played between the subject, the real, and the truth it speaks. Rhetoric, flattery, and passivity are denounced in the name of tribê, not because they either necessarily disregard the truth or because they can be distinguished from the act of truth-telling in a rigorous formal sense, but precisely because they assume the pre-existence of the truth, of a real that in some way is simply out there, and toward which one can assume a purely instrumental and manipulative attitude. They assume the same relation to the truth as Dionysius the Younger when he presumed to write a philosophical treatise, and thus to reduce the complex and multileveled dialectical creation of truth between philosopher and student to a set of formulas. As such they represent the sclerosis of power, the institutional hardening and self-replication that the philosophical parrhesiast, the Stoic poet, the philosopher of enlightenment, and the dandy all seek to criticize and resist, each through their own unique acts of self-creation in relation to the changing truth of the real.

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[1] I owe a great debt to Chuck Platter who read and commented on the current paper for his *epistêmê, eunoia*, and *parrhêsia*. In the words of Socrates, "You can show me my ignorance, and I will correct myself if I'm not a coward or lazy. If I am, then you will abandon me to my vices."

[2] I cite Willetts' translation of the *Ion* throughout (1992). My reference text for the Greek is that used by Foucault, Parmentier et Grégoire (1965). All other translations are my own unless specifically noted.

³ For a discussion of the concept, see Flynn (1991). For Foucault's knowledge of Philodemus's surviving treatise *Peri Parrhêsias* at a time when it had yet to be translated into any modern language, see Foucault (2001: 372) and Konstan (2004: 27). Philodemus's text is now available in English (Konstan et al.: 1998). For the changing meanings of *parrhêsia* from classical Athens to the Hellenistic period, see Konstan (1996).

⁴ See from the same period, Foucault's short text "Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?" "[Enlightenment is] the principle of a critique and of a permanent creation of ourselves in our autonomy" (1994a: 573).

⁵ Tapes of these lectures are available for consultation at the Institut Mémoires de l'Édition Contemporaine. Direct quotation is not permitted pending the publication of the official transcript, which is currently being edited. What follows then will necessarily be summary and interpretive. I want to thank the staff of the Institut for providing me with access to the tapes in the summer of 2004. They are a group of extraordinary and dedicated professionals.

⁶ For an important reading of Foucault's relation to Kant and the concept of "critique" as a "technology of the self," see Sharpe (2005).

⁷ See endnote 4.

⁸ Foucault's primary focus when speaking of the democratic *polis* is fifth-century Athens, although Polybius's concern is the Achaean league of the second century BCE. Foucault does not claim direct continuity, but also does not worry over much about the messiness of the chronology. He retains a tendency to examine matters in terms of structuralist synchronies rather than delve into the frequently multiform realities of actual diachrony. See Walbank (1957: 221-22).

⁹ This is not the word used by Euripides and thus represents a Foucauldian coinage.

¹⁰ This formulation, of course, is very reminiscent of Greimas (1987: 48-62).

¹¹ For an important Aristotelian meditation on this same paradox or, better, productive tension, see Frank 2005.

¹² Foucault never explicitly makes this comparison, but see the importance of *philia* in Aristotelian "democratic aristocracy" (Frank 2005: 138-80).

[13] The masculine pronouns are a faithful reflection of the androcentric world of Greek politics and to a large extent, although not exclusively, Greek philosophy.

[14] This recalls the claim in the 1981-82 course that the parrhesiastic speaker coincides with himself.

[15] On the relation between Foucault's reading of Plato's refusal of writing and his ongoing debate with Derrida, see Miller (2005).

[16] While making an important point, Foucault does not deal with the myth of Theuth.

[17] This seems at minimum reductive since it completely marginalizes both the speech's erotic content and its metaphysical basis.

[18] Although the separation of eyes from ears in the reading process is bizarre to say the least and presumably designed to signal a contrast with the ass's ears mentioned but a few lines above.

[19] The bibliography here is quite extensive. See Dover (1978); Foucault (1984a: 56, 82-96, 232-37; 1984b: 82-85, 116-17, 217-66; 1994b: 714); Wiseman (1985: 10-14); Parker (1997); Walters (1997).