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REVIEW ESSAY

Michel Foucault, *Le Gouvernement de soi et des autres. Cours au Collège de France 1982-1983* (Paris: Gallimard/Seuil, 2008), ISBN: 978-2020658690

Michel Foucault, *Le Courage de la vérité. Le Gouvernement de soi et des autres II. Cours au Collège de France 1984* (Paris: Gallimard/Seuil, 2009), ISBN: 978-2020658706

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The diptych made up of *Le Gouvernement de soi et des autres* (GSA) and *Le Courage de la vérité* (CV) pursues the avenues of thought on Greco-Roman antiquity that had begun to be explored particularly in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*. These lectures—the last that Foucault gave at the Collège de France—were not entirely new if one considers that a well-known extract taken from the inaugural lecture of GSA was published in 1984, in a version reworked by Foucault, entitled “What is Enlightenment?”¹ Moreover, in 2004, *Magazine littéraire* published an extract from the February 16, 1983, session (GSA, 226-230) entitled “Un cours inédit de Michel Foucault.”² Finally, in 1983, Joseph Pearson had published, under the title *Fearless Speech*,³ a series of six seminars given by Foucault at the University of California, Berkeley, which returned to several of the themes explored in GSA and CV. Foucauldian studies have also benefited from a few commentaries inspired by GSA and CV taken from archives at the *Institut Mémoire de l'Édition Contemporaine*

¹ Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?” in Paul Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 32-50. See also Michel Foucault, “Kant on Enlightenment and Revolution,” *Economy and Society*, vol. 15, no. 1 (February 1986), 88-96. These texts were reprinted in various books, sometimes under different titles. For a complete list of reprints see the bibliography prepared by Richard A. Lynch (items # 339 and 351): <<http://www.michel-foucault.com/bibmf/index.html>>.

² Michel Foucault, “Un cours inédit de Michel Foucault. Vivre avec la philosophie,” *Magazine littéraire*, no. 435 (October 2004), 60-61. In his introduction to this text (p. 60), Frédéric Gros mistakenly indicates that this excerpt is taken from the February 23, 1983 lecture.

³ Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, edited by Joseph Pearson (New York: Semiotext(e), 2001). See also the English seminars given by Foucault in Toronto in 1982 available at IMEC (abbaye d'Ardenne, France) under the title “Dire-vrai sur soi-même” (code FCL.128).

(IMEC).⁴ It should be noted that these are the only two lectures whose summaries were not written for the *Annuaire du Collège de France* and which consequently do not appear in the published versions of GSA and CV, as was the case for the other lectures. We must of course once again acknowledge the patient editing work of François Ewald, Alessandro Fontana and Frédéric Gros, which has given a wide audience access to texts that are essential to the understanding of Foucault's work.

GSA and CV are permeated with ideas concerning acting in general, and the action of the philosopher in particular. They offer analyses that are always innovative in terms of the history of ideas and which also find echoes in contemporary society. GSA opens with a debate on Kant and the revolution, which shows that Foucault's last lectures were not simply an exegesis of Greek thought, but that they also sought to show how certain ancient practices contain teachings that are apt to produce alternatives to the current methods of government of the self and of others, with the study of the technique of parrhesiastic veridiction constituting the common thread running through these analyses.

Government of Self and Others

Parrhesia, which is central to GSA (as it is to CV⁵), is a technique of veridiction consisting of "tell[ing]-everything," truth-telling or exercising a frankness of speech that puts the life of the parrhesiast in danger. In GSA, Foucault studies *parrhesia* in the context of government of the self and of others, advocating a return to several ancient sources, among them Socrates, Plutarch, Polybius, Thucydides and, in a more detailed way, Euripides and Plato.

Parrhesiastic frankness of speech is opposed to falsehood and flattery. It is also different from the other means of truth-telling: demonstration (analysis of the rational structure of speech), persuasion (rhetoric), teaching (pedagogy) and discussion (gradual emergence of truth in dialogue); the element of risk for the speaker (GSA, 52-56), the public aspect (GSA, 62) and complete freedom of speech (GSA, 63-64 and elsewhere) are presented as the main distinctive characteristics of *parrhesia*. Moreover, the parrhesiast's lifestyle differs from the modes of existence of the seer, the prophet, the philosopher and the scientist. (GSA, 66 et seq.)

Having established the notion of *parrhesia*, Foucault, in his January 19, 1983 lecture, embarks on a study of Euripides' *Ion*, of which there is practically no trace in

⁴ See for instance Thomas Flynn, "Foucault as Parrhesiast. His last course at the Collège de France (1984)," *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, vol. 12, nos. 2-3 (July 1987), 213-229; Joseph J. Tanke, "Cynical aesthetics. A theme from Michel Foucault's 1984 Lectures at the Collège de France," *Philosophy Today*, vol. 46, no. 2 (Summer 2002), 170-184; Frédéric Gros (Éd.), Michel Foucault, *Le Courage de la vérité* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002); Nancy Luxon, "Ethics and subjectivity: practices of self-governance in the late lectures of Michel Foucault," *Political Theory*, vol. 36, no. 3 (June 2008), 377-402; see also the online journal *Parrhesia*: www.parrhesiajournal.org.

⁵ On *parrhesia*, see also Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), lectures of March 3, 10 and 17, 1982.

the rest of his work. In this play, presented as a truth-telling tragedy, Ion is seeking his true parentage and wishes to return to Athens to exercise *parrhesia*, to obtain the right to speak, to tell everything and thereby to govern. This mythical character has complex origins: his mother, Creusa, his legal father, Xuthus, a non-Athenian belonging to the monarchy, and Apollo, his real father. Ion knows that the citizenship he has derived from Creusa and the inherited power of Xuthus are not sufficient to practise truth-telling and to govern. Foucault clearly underlines this independence of *parrhesia* with respect to citizenship and inherited power: one can be a citizen and hold public position but not be able to govern properly, i.e. exercise *parrhesia* by denouncing the injustice suffered by the weak at the hands of the powerful. Ion is confronted with another problem because the very practice of truth-telling itself is threatened. Euripides is thus a first-hand witness to the decline of good *parrhesia* and the rise of bad *parrhesia* (self-interested speech, corruption, "false truth-telling," etc.) in Athenian democracy. Foucault discusses this alteration of frankness of speech in his February 2, 1983, lecture by constructing the "*parrhesia* rectangle" (*rectangle constitutif de la parrhésia*), which is composed of four elements, one for each of the cardinal points of the rectangle, each equally essential to the exercise of good *parrhesia*: democracy (formal condition), hierarchical games of power in an antagonistic society (condition of fact), truth-telling (condition of truth), and courage (moral condition). In other words, for *parrhesia* to exist, there must be freedom of speech for all, recognition of the relationships of power between governors and the governed, the ability to distinguish truth from falsehood, and the presence of virtuous individuals ready to risk their status and even their lives in the name of truth. After the death of Pericles, "false truth-telling" was probably responsible for the dismantling of the four elements of the rectangle, causing the decline of Athenian democracy.

In the session on February 9, 1983, Foucault moved away from Euripides to talk about *parrhesia* in the Platonic corpus. Plato, in order to overcome the problems resulting from the growth of bad *parrhesia*, proposed to bestow governing power on the "Philosopher King." Visibly, the assignment of this right to the "moral high-ranking city official" ("*haut fonctionnaire moral de la cité*"; GSA, 189) did not convince Foucault, who had already expressed his concern about the Platonic care of the self reserved for the elite and founded on ideal knowledge.⁶ He nevertheless grants Plato the great merit of putting good government of the self before the government of others, thus helping to make care of the self and truth-telling independent of political affairs. There is thus a gradual path from the soul to City affairs: one must learn to behave properly oneself before governing others, to take care of oneself before speaking on behalf of all others, to better oneself before speaking the truth about laws and the constitution. The dual Platonic heritage of *parrhesia* thus comprises a political side, where good management of the City is the ultimate

⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, lecture of January 20, 1982 (first hour).

purpose of care of the self, and an ethical side, where care of the self is a value in itself.

Truth-telling in Athens became a perilous exercise, as the conviction of Socrates shows. This was undoubtedly what incited Plato to go into exile by accepting the invitation of Dion of Syracuse to become an advisor to Dionysius the Younger, who had inherited political power from his father. Plato's political experience is abundantly discussed by Foucault, in particular using the Seventh Letter, in which Plato explains that before grasping the abstract truths linked to the common way of life, it is first necessary to strive to tell the truth about oneself, to improve oneself by practising concrete transformation exercises that Foucault associates with the "reality of philosophy" (GSA, 217-224), a reality that escaped Dionysius (GSA, 227) and which usually escapes tyrants in general. Incidentally, at the beginning of GSA, Foucault addresses a similar reproach to the spiritual and political leaders who maintain humanity in a minority state by exercising tyranny without having first learned to improve their soul (GSA, 33), which can be construed as a self-criticism of his coverage of the Iranian revolution. Foucault explains quite spectacularly the essentiality of practice of self in Plato's dialogues, castigating Derrida one last time as he does so⁷ by underlining that Plato's rejection of writing does not signify the advent of logocentrism but rather criticism of the simply theoretical knowledge of those called upon to govern. (GSA, 234-236)

In the lecture of March 2, 1983, Foucault presents the transformations of *parrhesia* in ancient Greece, from Euripides to Plato, summarizing what had been gained and achieved. He lists a series of four shifts (GSA, 277-281): *parrhesia* is no longer linked only to democracy and becomes a key issue for all political regimes; univocal *parrhesia* becomes ambivalent (good and bad *parrhesia*); the single task of *parrhesia* that consists in governing others and speaking in the democratic public space now doubles with the inclusion of the aspect of government of the self; and, finally, *parrhesia* ceases to be a natural privilege granted to the few and now requires an education as it has become a cultural matter. In the rest of the lecture, Foucault discusses the opposition between rhetorical speech and philosophical speech, elaborates on the subject of the diversion of *parrhesia* from its political function towards philosophical practice, and begins to study the connections between Socratism and Cynicism, which he explored in more detail the following year.

The Courage of the Truth

The first two lectures on CV again talk about the interpretation of *parrhesia*. Foucault first states that articulation between modalities of veridiction, techniques of governmentality, and practices of the self lies at the heart of all his work: "it is basically

⁷ For a brief presentation of the Foucault-Derrida debate, see Alain Beaulieu and Réal Fillion's book review of Michel Foucault, *History of Madness* (London: Routledge, 2006), in *Foucault Studies*, Issue 5 (January 2008), section "Derrida and the Enlightenment."

what I have always tried to do" ("*c'est au fond ce que j'ai toujours essayé de faire*"; CV, 10), assertion of this interest for the correlation of knowledge, power and subjectivation echoing GSA (42, 285), where the relationship takes on ontological value.⁸ CV does introduce a new element, however, in situating *parrhesia* at the very heart of three ontological axes. Foucault also returns to the styles of existence associated with truth-telling—those of the prophet, the wise man and the professor—in a slightly modified version from the one presented in GSA (66 et seq.) with the seer, the prophet, the philosopher and the scientist. These different ways of being have corresponding techniques of veridiction distinct from parrhesiastic truth-telling: unlike the prophet, the parrhesiast speaks on his own behalf and for the present; in contrast to the wise man, the parrhesiast remains active and does not seek to absent himself from the world in order to proclaim its ultimate truth; and, finally, the courage of the parrhesiast distinguishes him from the professor, who does not take any risks, which leads Foucault to ironize his own condition: "Everyone knows, especially me, that one does not need courage in order to teach" ("*Tout le monde le sait, et moi le premier, que nul n'a besoin d'être courageux pour enseigner.*" CV, 24). Thus, the parrhesiast does not seek to evoke destiny in an enigmatic way (prophet), to determine how things should be in an apodictic way (wise man) or to present knowledge in a demonstrative way (professor); his field of intervention is otherwise because he acts on *êthos*; he seeks to transform the living environment. Finally, the first few lectures of CV also talk about the crisis of legitimacy for *parrhesia* at the end of the fourth century and in the fifth century (CV, 34 et seq.) relating to the decline of Athenian democracy, which offered anyone and everyone the chance to say anything and everything they liked. The rest of CV situates the attitudes of Socrates and the Cynics in the context of this *parrhesia* crisis. More specifically, the later lectures of CV discuss the ways of linking care of the self (*epimeleia heautou*) to courage of truth (*parrhesia*) according to Socratic and Cynic principles.

The lectures of February 15 and 22, 1984 were devoted to Socrates—he whose courage to speak the truth eventually led to his death. *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* devoted several developments to care of the self in Socrates. In CV, Foucault innovates when he deplors the fact that very few commentators have proposed a valid interpretation of Socrates' last words: "Crito, I owe a cock to Asclepius" (*Phaedo*, 118a). What meaning should be given to Socrates' final words? In this hermeneutic work by Foucault—a moving work, also, when one considers that he died just a few months later—Socrates is presented first not as a prophet, a wise man or a teacher, but as a parrhesiast, who sets himself the task of transforming *êthos*. According to the Platonic interpretation, which still prevails, Socrates is a wise man who cultivates the immortality of the beautiful soul. By offering a cock to the god of medicine and healing, Socrates wished to thank him for having finally cured his soul from the illness of being united with the body, which consolidates the major

⁸ See also Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits*, vol. IV (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 574-577, 618, 687, 813-814.

Platonic theme according to which the body is a prison for the soul. The problem with this idealistic interpretation, says Foucault, is that there is no immanent trace of condemnation of life in the texts reporting Socrates' thoughts. Taking inspiration from Dumézil and from a passage in *Phaedo* (115b), where Socrates invites men to care for themselves, Foucault maintains that the illness from which Socrates is delivered is not the body inferior to the soul, but rather the absence of courage of truth, which is itself linked to the inability to change and better itself. Thus, Socrates is not delivered from false theories in favour of a higher and nobler knowledge, but is freed from this theoretical quest by having managed to privilege his practical action, his *êthos*. This interpretation does not stop Foucault from considering the Socratic enterprise, and the parrhesiastic one in general, as highly spiritual. In fact, in an interview in January 1984, Foucault actually defined spirituality as an enterprise of self-transformation: "By spirituality I mean [...] the subject's attainment of a certain mode of being and the transformations that the subject must carry out on itself to attain this mode of being. I believe that spirituality and philosophy were identical or nearly identical in ancient spirituality."⁹

The subsequent lectures were devoted for the most part to analysis of the Cynic way of life, which is also viewed as a spiritual and tangible self-transformation coupled with courageous practice of the truth. One senses in these pages, admirable for their considerable philosophical fervour, an approval and even a certain respect for the Cynics' way of life, which goes beyond affinity with Socrates. After all, as Foucault reminds us, Socrates' day ended peacefully in the comfort of his own home, with his wife by his side... The Cynic way of life is more radical, the Cynic parrhesiast demonstrating his courage at all times as well as a frankness that is scandalous vis-à-vis others and dangerous to himself, stripping himself of all superfluous material goods, living on the edge of society like a stray animal with no fixed abode, being more preoccupied with transforming attitudes and ways of being than with acquiring theoretical knowledge. The Cynic person is the greatest awakener of ethical conscience, he for whom veridiction is demonstrated the most directly in his being, Foucault even going so far as consecrating it "universal missionary of humankind" ("*missionnaire universel du genre humain*") and "functionary of humanity" ("*fonctionnaire de l'humanité*" – with a passing glance toward Husserl¹⁰) associated with the "government of the universe" ("*gouvernement de l'univers*"; CV, 277-278).

Quite rightly, Foucault points out that Cynicism has been the subject of very few studies (CV, 164), the philosophical institution maintaining a certain ambiguity (CV, 163) with respect to a lifestyle that could nonetheless be considered a paradigm

⁹ Michel Foucault, in *Foucault Live*, edited by Sylvère Lotringer (New York: Semiotext(e), 1996), 443.

¹⁰ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1970), §7.

of philosophical experience. Foucault fills this gap in part by speculating, among other things and in an instructive way, on the “transhistorical” character (CV, 161) of Cynicism, the continuation of which he sees in certain Christian spiritual movements that encourage poverty, wandering and begging (CV, 168), in terrorist acts that are a scandalous way of telling the truth combined with a self-transformation leading to death—but this courageous fanaticism is also qualified as “delirious” (CV, 170-171)—, in certain nineteenth-century left-wing revolutionary movements (CV, 171-172), as well as in modern art from the end of the eighteenth century, which saw the beginning of a rupture between the marginalized artist and his time (CV, 171-173).

Foucault presents cynicism as giving a new meaning to the Platonic theme of “true life” (“*vie vraie*”; *alêthês bios*). For Plato, true life is a life that is pure, ideal, unitary and unmixed. Cynic *parrhesia* practises the art of transparency well by seeking to hide nothing and to tell everything without fearing the consequences, but it redefines the parameters of this transparency. It is in relation to true life that Foucault proposes to interpret the message received in Delphi by Diogenes of Sinope: “deface the currency.” (CV, 208 et seq.) This prophecy calls for the adoption of a critical stance toward standards, laws and conventions. For Foucault, currency becomes synonymous with the “true life” that the Cynics push to the limit by cultivating the art of paradox. But the attitude of the Cynic is contradictory only in appearance because it is simply reflecting true life in a broken mirror (CV, 214), which sends the philosophers back a deformed and shameful image of themselves, their task and their existence.

Pages 215 and 216 insightfully recapitulate the work accomplished since GSA by identifying three types of courage of truth: in its political form, courage of truth tells the Assembly (Euripides’ *Ion*) and the Prince (Plato in Sicily) what the Assembly and the Prince do not want to hear, as the Socratic courage of truth risks suffering the attacks of those who do not want to know that they know nothing, while the Cynic courage of truth is not happy just to speak in order to change attitudes, but rather provokes scandal by sending back a concrete image (beggar bag, rags, unkempt beard, tubs, etc.) whose principles are accepted theoretically (demonstrating simplicity to improve what is essential), although their corresponding action and truth-telling become intolerable (refusal of daily practices and conventions leading to insults). Is Foucault right to affirm that Spinoza was the last philosopher concerned with true life, that the search for true life was neglected in the last few centuries, somewhat like Heidegger’s presentation of Being as having been forgotten (CV, 217-218)? If so, Foucault sets himself the task of bringing philosophy back to its basic functions: “true life” does not reside only in the transformation of individual attitudes with a view to making an “other life” happen; it is also necessary to push this transformation until an “other world” emerges (CV, 226-228), which is not, Foucault adds, an “other world” transcending this one, but another state of this world. (CV, 288 note) That one of the teachings found by Foucault in ancient

thought consists in taking care of the self in so far as changing the world through “spiritual combat” (CV, 257) led “in this world against the world” (CV, 310) and which “must bring about a change in the entire world” (CV, 264; my translations) is somewhat surprising if one considers that ancient criticism of the universal intellectual established in the name of the specific intellectual seemed to neutralize utopian forces.¹¹ In reality, however, this quest for the “other world” is part of a much wider plan—despite being presented in a fragmented and piecemeal manner in Foucault’s texts—that aims to reform the utopian tradition. A passage in *Birth of Biopolitics*¹² follows a similar line of thought by calling for the creation of liberal utopias whose environment favours minority practices. Such an environment could fall into the category of “other spaces” or of “heterotopias.”¹³

The last lecture of CV outlines what could have been studied the following year and which would have consisted, for example, in showing how the Cynic “missionary of the truth” bridges the gap between the Socratic heritage and certain practices of Christian asceticism, in analyzing the way in which true life gives access to another world in Christianity, and in examining Christian *parrhesia* understood not as courageous and risky truth-telling addressed to men, but rather as a spoken commitment of the soul to God.

Conclusion

GSA and CV are the only lectures that establish links with all periods of the history of Western thinking: with Christian asceticism extending the Cynic tradition of truth-telling by placing it under the banner of confession and felicity (GSA, 330-331; CV, 166-169, 228, 289-310), with the modern philosophy of Descartes, Leibniz, Kant and Hegel, which Foucault accuses of having broken away from the concrete practices of transformation of the self (GSA, 318; CV 218)—however Kant is once again put on a pedestal since Foucault shares his interest in the revolution (GSA, 10-38) and salutes his eclecticism which holds private and public truth-telling together (GSA, 270)—and, finally, with several contemporary philosophers whose names Foucault does not mention, though he does take a stance on the performative utterances (*énoncés performatifs*) of Austin and Searle (GSA, p. 59 et seq.), on Derrida’s deconstruction (GSA, 234-236), and in a less decisive way on the illocutory force (*force allocutoire*) of Austin, Searle and Habermas (GSA, 322), as well as on Heidegger’s Being. (CV, 218) Nietzsche, especially his criticism of the “true world”

¹¹ Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), vol. II, 308 and vol. III, 109.

¹² Michel Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), March 21, 1979 lecture. Foucault said he would return to these thoughts but never did. See also Alain Beaulieu, “Towards a Liberal Utopia. The Connection Between Foucault’s Reporting on the Iranian Revolution and the Ethical Turn,” *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, vol. 36 (2010; in press).

¹³ Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits*, vol. IV (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 752-762. See also: Michel Foucault, *Le corps utopique – Les Hétérotopies*, présentation de Daniel Defert (Paris: Lignes, 2009).

and his invitation to abandon the quest for the “what” to concentrate on “who,” transpires in each page of GSA and CV where Foucault exposes a “theatralization” and a “dramatization” (GSA, 66; CV 234) of frankness of speech that less concerns the Subject than the ways of stylizing the existence, less the Truth than the ways of telling it.

But from a historical point of view, it is primarily Greek thought that interests Foucault. In fact, he often questions and provokes the Hellenists, bemoaning that in two thousand years no commentary has successfully managed to interpret Socrates’ last words (CV, 67-68, 112), underlining also the conspicuous lack of studies relating to the history of Cynicism. (CV, 164) Furthermore, it remains to be seen if the theme of *parrhesia*, which is also little studied (GSA, 45), really is one of the keys to interpreting and understanding how Greek culture evolved. Foucault believes it is and convinces us of this, stating that “up to a certain point” (*jusqu’à un certain point*; GSA, 177) *parrhesia* can be used as an interpretive lens for seven centuries of ancient thought. But what about the Hellenistic studies that hitherto considered *parrhesia* as a marginal, satellite theme? A reader of GSA and CV does not get the impression that Foucault over-interprets the texts. On the contrary, at each lecture we see him patiently commenting on the Greek texts, comparing the terms with the accepted translations, tirelessly seeking the meaning of the words. The Hellenists’ reactions to GSA and CV are as expected.¹⁴ One can imagine that some specialists of Antiquity will protest in order to defend their property, while others will welcome these final works of Foucault that open new avenues for reflection.

All these discussions of the history of ideas must not allow us to forget, however, that Foucault’s aim in writing these lectures was an eminently practical one: to help change attitudes and modify the state of the world in such a way as to encourage transformation of the self and of others. To achieve *this*, Foucault attacks the problem in a way that suits the limits of his duties as professor by proposing, as he often does (GSA, 321-322; CV, 195-196, 262), a new way of envisaging the history of philosophy that is not an analysis of how doctrines are forgotten or progress, but a study of practices of veridiction and styles of existence.

¹⁴ Some works from Hellenists commented on Foucault’s relationship to Antiquity; see for instance: Pierre Hadot, “Reflections on the Notion of ‘The Cultivation of the Self,’” in Timothy J. Armstrong (ed.) *Michel Foucault: philosopher* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 225-232; David H.J. Larmour, Paul Allan Miller and Charles Platter (eds.), *Rethinking Sexuality: Foucault and Classical Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998); Wolfgang Detel, *Foucault and Classical Antiquity: Power, Ethics and Knowledge*, edited by Robert B. Pippin, translated by David Wigg-Wolf (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Paul Allen Miller, *Postmodern Spiritual Practices: The Construction of the Subject and the Reception of Plato in Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 2007). However, none of these commentaries analyses in depth all of Foucault’s works on antiquity, including GSA and CV.

Thus Foucault's aim is not simply practical but also concerns "the present": GSA and CV participate in a "history of the present" by questioning the limits of our own democracies as places deficient in true discourse. In so doing, Foucault's last lectures engage in an underground dialogue with the liberal thought explained in *Security, Territory, Population* and *Birth of Biopolitics*. Freedom of speech must not open the door, as is most often the case, to a festival of opinions that do not change anything, but to a truth-telling that provokes and transforms, starting with the exercise of frankness of speech. Foucauldian democracy does not therefore make tolerance its main goal, but rather encourages a certain form of public intolerance situated in a continuation of the Kantian heritage. (GSA, 36)

GSA and CV contain a rich network of thoughts that, hopefully, can be integrated into future ethical and political debates. They also provide several useful elements in helping to understand Foucault's work internally by continuing certain previous meditations concerning in particular Foucault's relationship to the Enlightenment, revolution, spirituality, ontology and utopian tradition. Perhaps for the first time Foucault elucidates so clearly a figure of resistance to the techniques of domination; the Cynic parrhesiast, universal missionary of human kind, becomes the absolute outside of mechanisms of subjectivation (*asujettissement*). Mastering the art of government of the self, this king of derision acts on the manoeuvring of knowledge/power so that he is in a position to denounce scandalously in order to encourage alternatives to the government of others. This is why certain passages of GSA and CV can give the impression that Foucault is taking a step backward, that he is returning to a pre-disciplinary stage where the parrhesiast and his universal humanism would become sovereign. But this regression is only apparent if we consider the fact that knowledge is secondary to the changes of *ethos* for the parrhesiast who, moreover, remains indifferent to the power of domination (*potestas*) in order to privilege the capacities for transformation (*potentia*).

Palgrave-Macmillan is aiming to publish the English translation of GSA (*Government of Self and Others*) in Spring 2010, and CV (*The Courage of the Truth*) in Spring 2011.

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