

ARTICLE

How Parrhesia Works through Art The Elusive Role of the Imagination in Truth-Telling

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ABSTRACT. In his late lectures at the Collège de France, Foucault underpins the pre-eminence of art as the modern site of parrhesia. He omits, however, the aesthetic question: how does parrhesia work through art? A compelling question, firstly, because “truth-telling” seems to be at odds with art as an imaginative process. Secondly, because parrhesia implies a transformation in the listener, while Foucault’s limited notion of discourse precludes transformation beyond discourse. This essay hypothesizes that parrhesiastic art effects a transformation in the imagination, without dismissing this transformation as unreal. As Foucault’s utterances about the imagination are restricted to his earliest publications, this essay features a combined reading of Foucault’s early and late discussions of art. To further analyze the elusive role of the imagination in the late discussions, the essay employs the Deleuzian notion of “dramatization”, an epistemological method that draws on the imagination to escape representational thought. The essay thus aims to demonstrate that parrhesia mirrors the artwork in its intuitive and dynamic relation to truth. Subsequently, it argues that Foucault and Deleuze, respectively proceeding from a limited and an unlimited mode of thinking, come infinitely close in their thinking of art.

Keywords: Parrhesia, art, truth, imagination, dramatization, Gilles Deleuze, Oedipus, Manet.

INTRODUCTION

In his last lectures at the Collège de France, Michel Foucault frequently refers to works of art and literature as sites of *parrhesia*: “in the modern world, in our world, it is especially in art that the most intense forms of a truth-telling with the courage to take the risk of offending are concentrated.”¹ His discussions of Euripides’s tragedies in interaction with the Athenian democracy, or the French impressionists’ provocation of the Paris Salon are but two examples, and the series of works discussed by Foucault can easily be extended with examples from contemporary art. The works of Ai Wei Wei, Banksy and Elfriede

¹ Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth (The Government of the Self and Others 2). Lectures at the Collège de France, 1983-1984*, ed. Frédéric Gros (2011), 189.

Jelinek, for instance, involve parrhesiastic elements, such as bold speech, the courage to confront authority, and the pursuit of a good relation with truth.

Foucault underpins the pre-eminence of art as the modern site of parrhesia by demonstrating that modern art is genealogically related to the classical tradition of parrhesia. What he omits, however, is a consideration of the more aesthetic question: how does parrhesia work through art?² Two aspects of parrhesia make this a very compelling question. Firstly, there seems to be a tension between, on the one hand, parrhesia as “truth-telling” and, on the other, art as a process that involves the imagination. While truth is a leading motif in Foucault’s entire oeuvre, utterances about the imagination are limited to the earliest publications, as will become apparent in this essay. Foucault’s later disinterest in the imagination can be related to his breakaway from modernist avant-garde aesthetics, which he dismissed as thoroughly appropriated by the establishment.³ Additionally, the distinction between truth and imagination may seem less significant if one thinks in terms of discourse. In this essay, I will use insights from Foucault’s early work to shed light on the elusive role of the imagination in parrhesiastic art.

Secondly, parrhesia, as a form of speech that “constantly asserts the difference and force of truth-telling in the political game and which aims to disturb and transform the mode of being of subjects,”⁴ implies a transformation in the listener. This is problematic with regard to Foucault’s limited notion of discourse, which precludes transformation beyond discourse.⁵ The basic assumption of this essay is that the transformation of parrhesia takes place in the imagination, which does not amount to a dismissal of this transformation as false or unreal. Together these two aspects of parrhesia beg the question of how an artwork can articulate an inconvenient truth in such a way that it initiates a process of transformation in the imagination of the beholder.

Parrhesia

Before offering a hypothesis, though, the notion of parrhesia used in this essay must be specified to avoid confusion between its many historical, rhetorical and philosophical interpretations.⁶ This essay concerns the philosophical notion developed by Foucault in his last two lecture-series for the Collège de France, “The Government of Self and Others”

² Other authors who mention this gap are Arpad Szakolczai, *The Genesis of Modernity* (2003), 142, and Julian Brigstocke, “Artistic Parrhesia and the Genealogy of Ethics in Foucault and Benjamin,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 30:1 (2013), 70.

³ Michel Foucault, “The Functions of Literature,” interview by Roger-Pol Droit, June 20, 1975, in *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture. Interviews and Other Writings 1977-1984*, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman (1990), 310.

⁴ Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1982-1983*, ed. Frédéric Gros (2010), 388.

⁵ See e.g. Michel Foucault, *An Introduction. The History of Sexuality* 1 [1976] (1990), 95. See also Fabio Vighi and Heiko Feldner, *Žižek. Beyond Foucault* (2007), 89-90.

⁶ For a historical overview of parrhesia in ancient Greece and the Roman empire, see David Colclough, *Freedom of Speech in Early Stuart England* (2005), 12-37. On the rhetorical device, see Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric. A Foundation for Literary Study* (1998), 337-338.

(1982-1983) and “The Courage of Truth” (1983-1984), and in the lecture-series for Berkeley University, “Discourse and Truth” (1983).⁷

For Foucault, parrhesia is a form of truth-telling in which the speaker articulates his personal or ethical commitment to truth by boldly revealing an inconvenient truth before the other.⁸ As such, parrhesia always involves a clash between two modes of veridiction which require courage from both the speaker and the listener, the latter having to acknowledge the truth and to transform his mode of living. It is important to discern that the cognitive value of the truth assumed by parrhesia does not reside in either intrinsically ‘true’ values or social, economic or political structures, but in the form, style, mode or practice of truth-telling itself. Foucault motivates his investigation of parrhesia from a genealogical and a methodological point of view. Genealogically, he claims that “with the question of the importance of telling the truth, knowing who is able to tell the truth, and knowing why we should tell the truth, we have the roots of what we could call the ‘critical’ tradition in the West.”⁹ He also refers to this tradition as “alethurgy”, the manifestations of truth that are in principle irreducible to any epistemology, as they do not address the question of what makes a true knowledge possible, but that of the ethical transformations of the subject in the act of telling the truth.¹⁰ In *The Courage of Truth*, Foucault analyses the forms in which the individual constitutes himself and is constituted by others as a subject of a discourse of truth. The modern epistemological regime has largely hidden the necessity and means to speak the truth, according to Foucault.¹¹ The aim of his genealogy of parrhesia, as a specific form of truth-telling, is thus to reconnect Western philosophy with its alethurgic roots. The element in parrhesia that interests Foucault particularly is how it “qualifies the other person who is necessary in the game and obligation of speaking the truth about self.”¹² Methodologically, the historical incidents of parrhesia serve Foucault as “chemical catalysts so as to bring to light power relations.”¹³ As the workings of discourse usually go unnoticed, it is only through the clashes with other discourses, when subjects are forced to explicate themselves, that a space opens up in which discursive processes become observable. Parrhesia *as* clash functions as an indicator of the limits of historical discourses. Considering that Foucault’s attempts to reveal discursive limits in the history of Western philosophy are meant to both confront and transform this very history, his genealogical research can be regarded as a form of parrhesia in itself: a

⁷ Translated from the French: “Le gouvernement de soi et des autres” and “Le courage de la vérité”. The Berkeley lectures are published as *Fearless Speech*, ed. Joseph Pearson (2001).

⁸ Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 19-20.

⁹ Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 186. See also Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 33.

¹⁰ *A-lētheia* indicating “the state of not being hidden”, the neologism “alethurgy” (*alēthēs, ērgon*) involves “the set of possible procedures, verbal or otherwise, by which one brings to light what is posited as true, as opposed to the false, the hidden, the unspeakable, the unforeseeable, or the forgotten. . . .” Michel Foucault, *On the Government of the Living. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1979-1980*, ed. Michel Senellart (2014), 7, 19. See also Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 3.

¹¹ Frédéric Gros, “Course Context,” in Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 344.

¹² Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 7.

¹³ Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” *Critical Inquiry* 8:4 (1982), 780.

working on the limits of Western epistemic discourse, and of his own thought as a Western philosopher.

Dramatization

In order to trace and analyse the elusive role of the imagination in Foucault's discussions of parrhesiastic art, this essay analyzes two of these discussions using Gilles Deleuze's method of "dramatization". Deleuze first introduces dramatization in the lecture "The Method of Dramatisation" (1967), which he expounds further in *Difference and Repetition* (1968).¹⁴ In the lecture, he describes dramatization as an epistemological method to escape a mode of thinking that is limited to representation, insofar as the latter reduces examples to their logical, formal possibilities.¹⁵ The method consists in taking a philosophical concept X and avoiding the essentialist question: What is X? Instead one should ask: In which case, with whom, how, how much is X? The series of questions will evoke sensations and intuitions which cannot be adequately represented by the concept. The method reveals that the concepts humans use to think do not follow the logic of representation, in the sense that they do not represent clear and distinct ideas.¹⁶ Instead, these concepts are founded on obscure and/or confused sensibilities and intuitions. Dramatization thus reveals that every concept implies the suppression of these dynamisms: "A concept being given, we can always seek the drama."¹⁷

The process of dramatization takes place in the imagination as the first stage of knowledge and as the capacity to be affected by the sensations and intuitions which are too subtle to be recognized at the latter stages. The fact that the ancient Greek word *drama* literally means "action" indicates that dramatization implies active engagement with the sensations and intuitions which would otherwise be overlooked.¹⁸ As such, dramatization involves an active exploration of the imagination, traversing the space between the concept and, what Deleuze calls, 'the virtual intuitions rooted in the faculty of sensibility'. In doing so, dramatization enables a mode of thinking that is radically creative, as opposed to re-presentational. In this essay, two central notions or "concepts" in Foucault's

¹⁴ Gilles Deleuze, "The Method of Dramatisation," paper presented to the Société française de Philosophie, January 28th, 1967, *Inquietando*, n.d. Translated from the French "Théâtre et philosophie: la méthode de dramatisation".

¹⁵ Sjoerd van Tuinen, Marc Schuilenburg and Ed Romein, "Qu'est-ce que la philosophie? De voorwaarden van het denken volgens Deleuze en Guattari," in *Deleuze compendium*, ed. Ed Romein, Marc Schuilenburg and Sjoerd van Tuinen (2009), 33.

¹⁶ As described by Descartes in *Principles of Philosophy* (1644) I.45, an idea is clear and distinct when it is based on clear and distinct perceptions. A perception is clear if it is "open and present to the attending mind", and distinct if it is precise and separated from other ideas, so that it "plainly contains in itself nothing other than what is clear." *Selections from the Principles of Philosophy of Rene Descartes (1596-1650)*, ed. John Veitch (1901).

¹⁷ Deleuze, "The Method of Dramatisation," 583.

¹⁸ For Deleuze on the distinction between thoughts and actions, see Claire Colebrook, *Deleuze. A Guide for the Perplexed* (2006), 69-70.

discussions of art are dramatized with the aim to demonstrate how his thinking of art relies on the imagination for tapping into the dynamisms beneath the representations.

Although Foucault and Deleuze worked in the same city, were invested in similar topics, and even praised each other's work,¹⁹ their views of how different forms of power structure reality and individuation ultimately run up against each other. According to Peter Hallward (2000), this is because Deleuze seeks to write a philosophy without limits, while Foucault writes a philosophy of the limit as such.²⁰ For Foucault, it is only in the confrontation with limits – the limits, for instance, of experience, language, knowledge, expression, introspection – that thought becomes aware of itself, and that the subject can be “purged” of everything that specifies or objectifies the subject.²¹ Deleuze, however, wants to get rid of the subject altogether, to replace it with a fully “singular” conception of the individual. If Foucault's subject exists only in the medium of relations with others and with itself, and turns ultimately on the confrontation of limits, then Deleuze's singular individual transcends all such relations to create the medium of its own “expression”; the singular recognizes no limits.²² It can take on any form, and will thus never encounter a real other. Transformation or “becoming” is a fundamental principle in Deleuze's thinking, enabled by its immediate relation to the virtual.

Because of this structural difference, a dramatization of Foucault's concepts may seem a violation of his philosophy. However, this essay aims to demonstrate that, although it is true that limits found as well as structure Foucault's understanding of subjectivation, Foucault's “thinking of art”, as developed in the late lectures on parrhesia, is not in the same sense limited, as can be made visible with the method of dramatization. This essay aims to show that Foucault and Deleuze, respectively proceeding from a limited and an unlimited mode of thinking, come infinitely close in their thinking of art. As such, it contributes to the increasingly researched field – especially since the publication of Foucault's late lectures in English – of Foucault and Deleuze Studies.²³

The hypothetical answer to the question of how parrhesia works through art is that the artwork triggers a repetitive process of veiling and unveiling of truth in the imagination. In this process, limits become visible as thresholds for truth to emerge as an endless search through different modes of veridiction. This search, which I designate the “thinking of art”, gives expression to the true life, in the same way as an artwork manifests a truly artistic life. Accordingly, I will argue, Foucault's thinking of art can be considered inherent

¹⁹ On the personal relation between Foucault and Deleuze, see Francois Ewald's “Editorial Foreword” in the edition of Gilles Deleuze's “Desire and Pleasure” [1994], *Globe EJournal of Contemporary Art* 5 (1997); Richard de Brabander, “Foucault,” in *Deleuze compendium*, ed. Ed Romein, Marc Schuilenburg and Sjoerd van Tuinen (2009), 147-160; Nicolae Morar, Thomas Nail and Daniel Smith, “Introduction,” *Foucault and Deleuze*, special issue of *Foucault Studies* 17 (2014), 4-10.

²⁰ Peter Hallward, “The Limits of Individuation, or How to Distinguish Deleuze and Foucault,” *Angelaki* 5:2 (2000), 93.

²¹ Hallward, “The Limits of Individuation,” 101.

²² Hallward, “The Limits of Individuation,” 93.

²³ See, e.g., the recent work of Scott Lash, Judith Revel, Paul Patton, Simon O'Sullivan, and *Foucault and Deleuze*, special issue of *Foucault Studies* 17 (2014).

to parrhesia. It must be noted that Foucault does not omit the aesthetic question of how parrhesia works through art inadvertently. In fact, in his late lectures he repeatedly emphasizes the rough and explorative nature of his ideas, avoiding advancing a philosophical theory of art, truth, imagination or subjectivity.²⁴ By implementing Deleuze's method of dramatization, which is based on such theories, this essay does not aim to make Foucault less Foucauldian and more Deleuzian. By attending to the non-generalisable and without losing sight of how each artwork functions in a specific genealogy, it endeavors to shed new light and generate discussion on the relation between parrhesia and art in Foucault's late lectures.

Outline

The first part of this essay explains why the working of parrhesia through art is problematic with respect to Foucault's view of discourse. It does so by taking a brief survey of the function of art in Foucault's work, concentrating on art's critical potential. In the second and third parts of the essay, two central notions in Foucault's discussions of art are dramatized, analyzing how the imagination is implicated in parrhesiastic art. From the first discussion, on Sophocles's tragedy *Oedipus King* (429 BC) in *The Government of Self and Others*, Foucault's concept of "truth" will be dramatized. From the second discussion, on Édouard Manet's painting *Luncheon on the Grass* (1863) in *The Courage of the Truth*, Foucault's concept of the "basic", as that what is being expressed in art, will be dramatized.

1. THE THINKING OF ART

Retrospectively, Foucault's career can be recognized as consistently devoted to the search for a free subject. However, he has approached this topic on different levels, making the recognition of their overarching coherence less clear at times. Across these levels, the function and critical potential of art would vary, as a brief survey over three levels of analysis in Foucault's research makes clear. First, Foucault's understanding of art and literature on the level of discourse is outlined, based on four texts from Foucault's early career. Subsequently, the virtual absences of art in his work from the 1970s is explained by assuming the level of power. Finally, the return of art in the lectures at the College de France is examined on the level of the subject, highlighting the role of art for the practices through which the subject ethically transforms itself.

Art and Discourse

Quite some time before Foucault introduces his notion of discourse, he already expresses concern about processes of "subjectivation", i.e., the production and ordering of knowledge about individuals that turns them into objects of knowledge and subjects of

²⁴ This approach seems related to the Cynic assertion "[t]hat philosophy not only can, but must have a limited, poor, schematic doctrinal framework." Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 204.

power. It concerns his earliest publication, the introduction to Ludwig Binswanger's *Dream and Existence* (1954), which contains some significant remarks about the imagination in relation to subjectivation.²⁵ Subjectivation harms "the freedom of man in its original form",²⁶ but it can be resisted through the imagination: "to imagine . . . is to intend oneself as a movement of freedom that makes itself world."²⁷ A threat to this form of resistance is that, once the imagination is frozen in a particular image, it becomes inert. To be free, the imagination must keep moving from one image to the other.

Foucault's famous discussion of Diego Velasquez' *Las meninas* (1656) in *The Order of Things* (1966) describes how art can facilitate the movement of the imagination. Even though subjects cannot as a rule escape their *episteme*, the *a priori* that grounds knowledge and its discourses within a historical period, *Las meninas* enables the viewer to experience different epistemic standpoints: that of the sovereign ruler, the depicting artist, and the perceiving subject. Foucault relates these standpoints to the epistemes of, respectively, the Renaissance, Classicism, and Modernity.²⁸ When looking at *Las meninas*, the viewer moves through different epistemes, enabled by art's "analytic of imagination, as a positive power to transform the linear time of representation into a simultaneous space containing virtual elements."²⁹ The "interepistemic" position of the artwork in *The Order of Things* thereby provides a basis for resistance against subjectivation as described in *Dream and Existence*.

The critical function of art is further specified in *History of Madness* (1961). Foucault locates madness outside discourse, indicating that the mad are deprived of their subjectivity. Literature dwells at the limit of discourse, where it is confronted by madness: "By the madness that interrupts it, an oeuvre opens a void, a moment of silence, a question without an answer, opening an unhealable wound that the world is forced to address."³⁰ The void opened up by art may be silent in terms of discourse, but in terms of affect it makes a very strong appeal to the world. The critical function of art is to be sensitive to these wounds, not to heal them, but for them to be acknowledged.

This process is described in more detail in Foucault's essay "Maurice Blanchot: The Thought from Outside" (1966):

When language arrives at its own edge, what it finds is not a positivity that contradicts it, but the void that will efface it. Into that void it must go, consenting to come undone

²⁵ Michel Foucault, "Dream, Imagination and Existence," *Review of Existential Psychology & Psychiatry* 19:1 (1984-1985), 29-78.

²⁶ Foucault, "Dream, Imagination and Existence," 53.

²⁷ Foucault, "Dream, Imagination and Existence," 68.

²⁸ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* [1966] (1996), 14-15; Joseph Tanke, *Foucault's Philosophy of Art. A Genealogy of Modernity* (2009), 18.

²⁹ Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 68-69.

³⁰ Michel Foucault, *The History of Madness* [1961], ed. Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa (2006), 537. See also Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault. Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (1982), 11; Hallward, "The Limits of Individuation," 103.

in the rumbling, in the immediate negation of what it says, in a silence that is not the intimacy of a secret but a pure outside where words endlessly unravel.³¹

Foucault takes great effort to describe everything beyond the edge of language as “pure outside”. When language truly faces this outside it cannot retain its latent state and “stitch the old fabric of interiority back together in the form of an imagined outside.”³² Rather than “the images themselves”, this language involves “their transformation, displacement, and neutral interstices.”³³ Considering the distinction between frozen images and the free movement of the imagination in *Dream and Existence*, it seems plausible to regard the outside as something that can only be sensed in the process of imagining. The work of literature is thus to balance between two risks: the obliteration of its subjectivity on the one hand and becoming a vehicle for the reproduction of discourse on the other.

Foucault seems convinced about the critical potential of art on the level of discourse, but his way of situating art at the limit of discourse is problematic. The use of adjectives such as “rumbling” suggests that the “pure outside” has the power to affect the imagination, to put it into motion, while Foucault’s notion of discourse does not allow for any form of positivity or negativity outside discourse. It seems that affect provides a pre-discursive position as a basis for criticism.

Art and Power

During the 1970s, Foucault’s perspective on subjectivation shifts from knowledge and its discourses to power. Power is not limited to language, but penetrates every aspect of life. Power is “everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere.”³⁴ Frederic Jameson describes Foucault’s notion of power as “a wholly positivist landscape from which the negative has evaporated.”³⁵ Foucault has been heavily criticized for this notion of power, especially by left-wing activists, because it leaves no room for criticism whatsoever.³⁶ Two of his fiercest critics, Jürgen Habermas and Joan Copjec, reasoned that, if criticism requires a free subject, power rules out the possibility of criticism.³⁷

The idea that nothing can escape the consistently positive and immanent phenomenon of power, not even art, explains why Foucault’s publications of the 1970s hardly ever discuss works of art. In an interview with Roger-Pol Droit, published as “The Functions of Literature” (1975), Foucault states that literature is not fundamentally different from

³¹ Michel Foucault, “Maurice Blanchot: The Thought from Outside” [1986], in Michel Foucault and Maurice Blanchot, *Foucault / Blanchot* (1987), 22.

³² Foucault, “Maurice Blanchot,” 21.

³³ Foucault, “Maurice Blanchot,” 23.

³⁴ Foucault, *The History of Madness*, 93. See also Vighi and Feldner, *Žižek*, 88.

³⁵ Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), 323.

³⁶ For an overview of this criticism, see Vighi and Feldner, *Žižek*, 90-93.

³⁷ Joan Copjec, *Read My Desire. Lacan against the Historicists* (1994), 6-7, 10; Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity. Twelve Lectures* [1985] (1987), 294.

the other democratic institutions through which power operates in modern society such as detention, health care and education. The avant-garde and the establishment have completely agreed on the importance of literature; on the one hand it is considered a subversive force, on the other it is taught in all schools and universities with support of the government. Thus contributing to the illusion of freedom of speech, literature reproduces democratic power discourse, resulting in “a very heavy political blockage” for literature as a critical medium.³⁸

The question is whether the imagination, which offered a basis for criticism on the level of discourse, can escape power. The institutionalization of art does not necessarily imply that individuals have lost the capacity to be affected beyond the representations of discourse altogether. The questions of whether the imagination still involves a potential for real creativity and whether art can tap into this potential have not been asked by Foucault on the level of power.

Art and the Free Subject

When art re-emerges in Foucault’s work, the emphasis has shifted from the artwork to the making of art as the manifestation of an artistic life. In the lectures at the Collège de France, he discusses artworks from the ancient up to the modern period, with a heightened interest in ancient tragedy, and from this motley collection of artworks he claims to be gathering an “art of living”.³⁹

The shift in Foucault’s emphasis can be explained by his investigations on the level of power in the previous decade. In 1982, he writes that the goal of that investigation has not been “to analyze the phenomena of power, nor to elaborate the foundations of such an analysis. My objective, instead, has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects.”⁴⁰ Here the investigation of power becomes visible as a sub-study, which must now be integrated into the pending question of the free subject. Evidently, Foucault’s positive and immanent notion of power called for a revision of his idea of criticism.

The first revision prompted by Foucault’s notion of power is that criticism comes from within discourse, as there is no subjectivity possible outside discourse.⁴¹ Foucault pictures this form of criticism as a subject that, in the act of telling the truth, manifests its ethical relationship to the truth, thus explicating the processes of subjectivation enabling its truth-telling. To articulate one’s personal relation to truth can be considered telling the truth about oneself, which is achieved through “care for self” and practiced in the form of “self-technologies”. These practices are not aimed at knowledge of an essential self, but rather

³⁸ Foucault, “The Functions of Literature,” 310.

³⁹ Michel Foucault, “On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress,” interview by Paul Rabinow and Hubert Dreyfus, April 1983, in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (1984), 350; Tanke, *Foucault’s Philosophy of Art*, 190-195.

⁴⁰ Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” 777-778.

⁴¹ Chris Weedon, *Identity and Culture. Narratives of Difference and Belonging* (2004), 19. Cq. Vighi en Feldner, Žižek, 90.

at ethical transformation. Foucault speaks of “subjectification”, a form of subjectivation by which the subject (re)produces and transforms itself as subject.⁴² On this level of the subject, Foucault does not speak of “discourse” or “power”, but of “modes of veridiction”, emphasizing the interrelatedness of truth and speech in the subject. The fact that he mainly uses the plural form (“modes of veridiction”) indicates that multiple modes can be practiced by one subject, society or artwork simultaneously.

The second revision of criticism, or “truth-telling”, prompted by Foucault’s notion of power is that truth cannot be limited to epistemological discourse; it must be “an ‘answer’ to a concrete situation which is real.”⁴³ In order for a subject to speak the truth, it has to put itself to the test of practices, conflicts, and deeds in an “active confrontation with power.”⁴⁴ Here one recognizes parrhesia, the mode of truth-telling that requires the subject to articulate its relation to truth to the other. This revision elucidates Foucault’s earlier dismissal of modern art; not only are the institutions of modern art unsatisfactorily engaged in the search for confrontation, the institutionalization has also forced modern art to organize, specialize, catalogue, in other words subject itself to an epistemological discourse of art, resulting in a separation of art from the truly artistic life.⁴⁵

However, in 1984 Foucault states that art in the modern world is the pre-eminent site of truth-telling. Considered on the level of the subject, art meets both requirements for profound criticism, confronting discourse from within. Foucault reaches this conclusion as a result of his genealogy of truth-telling. He considers that this genealogy is interwoven with the history of Cynicism which, around the nineteenth century, finds a vehicle in the life of the modern artist: “modern art was, and still is for us the vehicle of the Cynic mode of being, of the principle of connecting style of life and manifestation of the truth. . . .”⁴⁶ Modern art, Cynicism and parrhesia are genealogically related in their aim for “[t]he emergence of the true life in the principle and form of truth-telling (telling the truth to others and to oneself, about oneself and about others). . . .”⁴⁷ Where parrhesia manifests the true life, the artwork manifests the truly artistic life:

the artist’s life, in the very form it takes, should constitute some kind of testimony of what art is in its truth. The artist’s life must not only be sufficiently singular for him to be able to create his work, but it must in some way be a manifestation of art itself in its truth.⁴⁸

⁴² Foucault describes this process in “The Ethics of the Concern of The Self as a Practice of Freedom,” interview by H. Becker, R. Fernet-Betancourt and A. Gomez Muller, January 20, 1984, in *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (1997), 281-301.

⁴³ Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 172.

⁴⁴ Gros, “Course Context,” in Foucault, *The Government of Self*, 382-383, 390.

⁴⁵ Foucault, “On the Genealogy of Ethics,” 350.

⁴⁶ Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 187.

⁴⁷ Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 163. See also 235.

⁴⁸ Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 187.

The relation between art and truth-telling can be further clarified by Edward McGushin's (2007) designation of parrhesia as "etho-poetic".⁴⁹ The ancient Greek *poiēsis* refers to the "deliberate fabrication in which the subject employs *technē*, 'craft' or 'art', in order to achieve a determinate outcome."⁵⁰ The prefix *etho-* indicates that this fabrication evolves from the good life, which Foucault, with respect to truth-telling, designates the "true life". A subject that fashions its life in the way an artist creates an artwork cannot regard of its own subjectivity as a static given, because every fashioning will influence its self, *and* the future fashionings by this self. Foucault calls life a "work of art" and a "theatre of truth", because the fashioning of the self is never finished, and the purpose of one's life never determined.⁵¹

Foucault's aim to bring life back into philosophy positions him in the aesthetic tradition initiated by Alexander Baumgarten. Baumgarten's *Aesthetics* (1758) countered René Descartes's reduction of philosophy to logic. Assuming that only clear and distinct concepts could serve as building stones for true knowledge,⁵² Descartes banished the obscure and confused ideas from the realm of philosophy. Baumgarten, by demonstrating that Descartes' distinction was irrelevant to aesthetic judgement, expanded philosophy beyond the Cartesian framework.⁵³ His aesthetics, rather than a thinking *about* art, involved the very thinking *of* art, dictating its own criteria for sound judgment. Similarly, Foucault is not so much interested in the working of parrhesia *in* art as in its working *through* art. The idea that the working of parrhesia through art entails a thinking of art serves as the starting point for the next two parts of this essay.⁵⁴

This brief survey has shown how the different levels of Foucault's research on the different modes by which human beings are made subjects interact. From early on, Foucault formulated aesthetical solutions to epistemic and political problems. His elaboration of power as a consistently positive and immanent phenomenon during the 1970s urges him to search for new ways of freeing the subject in the 1980s. Art again plays a prominent role, although Foucault's attention shifts to *poiēsis*, the making of the work. Whereas *Poiēsis* bridges the gap between the life of the artist and the artwork, it does not explain how the work affects the viewer in such a way that it generates a transformation. Even though a brief survey cannot do justice to the depth and diversity of Foucault's

⁴⁹ Edward McGushin, *Foucault's Askēsis. An Introduction to the Philosophical Life* (2007), xv-xvi.

⁵⁰ McGushin, *Foucault's Askēsis*, xviii.

⁵¹ Michel Foucault, "The Personal Poetic Attitude of a Philosopher," interview by Martin Jay et al., April 1983, in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (1984), 373-380; Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 183, 186-190; McGushin, *Foucault's Askēsis*, 4.

⁵² See Part IV in René Descartes, *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason, and Seeking Truth in the Sciences* [1637] (1649). See also Birgit Kaiser, "Two Floors of Thinking: Deleuze's Aesthetics of Folds," in *Deleuze and the Fold. A Critical Reader*, ed. Sjoerd van Tuinen and Niamh McDonnell (2010), 211.

⁵³ Kaiser, "Two Floors of Thinking," 216-217.

⁵⁴ For an elaboration on this distinction, see Peter Lamarque and Stein Olsen, "Literature, Truth, and Philosophy," *The Philosophy of Literature: Contemporary and Classic Readings. An Anthology*, ed. Eileen John and Dominic McIver Lopes (2003), 352.

multilayered ideas, it enables a more diversified approach to his late discussions of art in this essay.

2. TRUTH IN TRANSFORMATION

In the following parts, two central notions in Foucault's discussion of art will be dramatized. In the first part, the dramatization of "truth" provides insight into the process of transformation triggered by the artwork. In the second, the dramatization of the "basic" responds to the underlying question of how this process involves the viewer's imagination. In both cases the viewer of the artwork corresponds to the subject of the thinking of art.

Between 1971 and 1983, Foucault made no less than six interpretations of *Oedipus King*.⁵⁵ His protracted fascination can be explained by the fact that truth-telling is the very catalyst for dramatic progression in the play. It presents a series of revelations through which the tragic hero Oedipus comes to realize that he has unwittingly murdered his father and married his own mother. Every revelation involves a "confrontation between competing regimes of veridiction,"⁵⁶ as presented by the oracle of Delphi, the prophet Tiresias, Oedipus's brother in law Creon, and a Corinthian messenger.⁵⁷ Once Oedipus discovers his identity, he pierces his eyes, which had prevented him from seeing the truth.

When Foucault discusses *Oedipus King* in 1983, it is in comparison to *Ion*, a tragedy by Euripides which turns out to mirror Oedipus's search for truth. Concentrating on this search, Foucault observes that, although every single revelation brings Oedipus one step closer to the unbearable truth about himself, this progression is not simply linear. He compares the mechanism of Oedipus's search for truth with the fitting together of the two halves of a *symbolon*. This is a broken piece of ceramics, the parts of which are kept by different persons as a means of mutual identification.⁵⁸ Similarly, Oedipus receives different "pieces" of information about his origin, which he has to fit together in order to reveal his identity: "there is the paternal half, and then the maternal half, until the set of these elements reconstitute the whole of the truth."⁵⁹ The fitting together of the pieces can be regarded as a clash of different modes of veridiction which opens an "ethical difference" inside Oedipus, enabling him to speak the truth about himself.⁶⁰ As such, *Oedipus King* manifests Foucault's idea that the confrontation with otherness is crucial to the articulation of truth about ourselves. The editor of Foucault's last lectures, Frédéric Gros, also emphasizes that the hallmark of "the true" for Foucault is otherness: "that which makes a difference in the world and in people's opinions, that which forces one to

⁵⁵ Foucault, *The Government of Self*, 94.

⁵⁶ Gros, "Course Context," in Foucault, *The Government of Self*, 386.

⁵⁷ Gros, "Course Context," in Foucault, *The Government of Self*, 385-386.

⁵⁸ Gros, "Course Context," in Foucault, *The Government of Self*, 385-386; Szakolczai, *The Genesis of Modernity*, 147.

⁵⁹ Foucault, *The Government of Self*, 84. See also 117.

⁶⁰ Gros, "Course Context," in Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 345-346.

transform one's mode of being, that whose difference opens up the perspective of an other world to be constructed, to be imagined."⁶¹

The idea that otherness is the catalyst for truth, which in itself resides in transformation, characterizes Foucault's discussions of art since the 1960s. The reading of *Las meninas* in 1966 already described art as a journey between different epistemic standpoints, and the notion of the *symbolon* was introduced as early as 1971.⁶² What is new in Foucault's 1983 approach to *Oedipus King* is that this otherness is now crucial to speaking truth about *oneself*, in the sense of articulating one's relation to the truth. Foucault emphasizes how "[i]n *Oedipus*, in fact, first of all it is Oedipus himself who brings truth-telling into play. It is Oedipus who wants to know the truth. As sovereign, and in order to restore peace and happiness in his town, he needs to know the truth."⁶³

Why personal commitment is so important to the late Foucault becomes visible from a dramatization of his concept of truth. Deleuze explains that when a concept is dramatized it will fall apart in "two uneven, dissimilar and dissymmetrical 'halves', each one of these halves itself divided into two: an ideal half, plunging into the virtual . . .; an actual half, constituted both by the qualities incarnating these relations. . . ."⁶⁴ This division of the concept Deleuze calls "differentiation"; it is the process by which virtual sensibilities and intuitions split off their ideal counterparts in order to become actual, and it can be made visible by dramatization. The dramatization of the concept of truth Deleuze describes as follows:

Take the concept of truth: it is not enough to ask the abstract question "what is the true?". Once we ask "who wants the truth, when and where, how and how much?" . . . we then learn that the concept of truth in representation is divided into two directions, one according to which the true emerges in person and in an intuition, the other according to which the true is always inferred from something else . . .⁶⁵

Combining both utterances, the actual part of the concept of truth can be inferred from something else, while the ideal part emerges in a person or an intuition. This division resonates Foucault's description of the *symbolon*, the fitting together of which reveals Oedipus' true identity. The actual part infers Oedipus' identity from his parents, but this part only becomes meaningful once it is acknowledged and articulated by Oedipus before the chorus. The ideal part can thus be considered the truth that is manifested in the practice of truth-telling, in *parrhesia*. This ideal part does not represent an essential self, but is the manifestation of an immanent dynamics of transformation.

On first sight, the modes of veridiction in *Oedipus King* do not seem to involve the ideal part of truth. Each time, truth is inferred from something *else*; the oracle and the prophet

⁶¹ Gros, "Course Context," in Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 356. Remarkably, Gros refers to the significance of the imagination for transformation, which Foucault does not.

⁶² Michel Foucault, *Lectures on the Will to Know. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1970-1971 and Oedipal Knowledge*, ed. Daniel Defert (2011), 229-261.

⁶³ Foucault, *The Government of Self*, 84.

⁶⁴ Deleuze, "The Method of Dramatisation," 585.

⁶⁵ Deleuze, "The Method of Dramatisation," 583.

speak on behalf of the gods, the messenger brings news from abroad, and Creon is a brother *in-law*. However, when Oedipus's actions in search for his identity are regarded as self-technologies, then the *anagnōrisis* – the moment of insight reached by the hero, usually in the fifth act – becomes visible as an instance of the ideal part of truth. Oedipus's insight is that, out of the many modes of veridiction he engaged with, there was not one that provided the comprehensive truth about himself, because this truth only emerges in truth-telling as the manifestation of a transformation. This means that the confrontation with otherness, for Foucault, does not only lie in the revelation of an inconvenient truth before the other, but also in the transformation of the subject into an other. This explains why Foucault kept returning to *Oedipus King*; by putting ever new "grids" over the text, he was opening up ever new modes of veridiction.⁶⁶

In the broader framework of Foucault's late lectures, Oedipus's *anagnōrisis* functions as an allegory of parrhesia. Foucault has discussed various vehicles by which elements of parrhesia have been passed down to the modern period, one of them being modern art, as the etho-poetic manifestation of the truly artistic life. However, what becomes apparent in the dramatization of the concept of truth in Foucault's discussion of *Oedipus King* is that not only does the making of art involve elements of parrhesia, but the reception and interpretation of art may involve a process of truth-telling as well. Foucault's many different readings of the play can be considered a series of transformations in which truth is repeatedly veiled and unveiled. This tenacious urge to transform one's thought in lectures and publications may be considered a manifestation of the true life, which is continuously confronting its own limits from within. It is through this repetitive thinking of an artwork that Foucault aims to bring life back into philosophy.

What this life looks like can be inferred from Foucault's reading of the final scene of *Oedipus King*, where Oedipus, after acknowledging the ideal part of truth, gouges out his eyes. As Deleuze states, ideas are cruel, they are "shining points that pierce us,"⁶⁷ condemning Oedipus to "the night of his blindness". Now that Oedipus has become perceptive of the sensations of the ideal world, he no longer needs his eyesight. He can orient himself on intuitions. However, according to Deleuze, the subjects of this world cannot be "formed, qualified and composed" subjects "like that of the Cogito in representation."⁶⁸ They "can only be partial [*ébauches*], not yet qualified or composed, patients rather than agents, alone able to bear the pressure of an internal resonance or the amplitude of a forced movement."⁶⁹ The blind wanderer Oedipus is a partial subject, complemented by other partial subjects:

And what is left to guide him as he passes through this world without shelter or homeland? . . . he has only the voice of his daughters who guide him, and his own voice that he hears floating in the air without being able to place it, not knowing where he is,

⁶⁶ Gros, "Course Context," in Foucault, *The Government of Self*, 385.

⁶⁷ Joe Hughes, *Philosophy After Deleuze. Deleuze and the Genesis of Representation 2* (2012), 51-52. See also Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* [1968] (1994), 219.

⁶⁸ Deleuze, "The Method of Dramatisation," 582.

⁶⁹ Deleuze, "The Method of Dramatisation," 585. See also Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 118-119.

not knowing where it is. And through this wandering, guided only by the exchange of voices between father and daughters, Oedipus returns to Greek soil, where he will find, precisely at Athens, his final resting place.⁷⁰

Foucault's thinking of art does not confront one, but rather an infinite series of limits, which become visible as thresholds to different modes of veridiction, resulting in an endless veiling and unveiling of truth, a continuous process of subjectivation and subjectification. In this process an ideal world opens up, underlying the world of representations. This world is bewandered by partial subjects who know themselves to be interrelated with other partial subjects through their imagination.

3. "A DRAMA BENEATH ALL LOGOS"

In his 1984 discussion of Manet's painting *Luncheon on the Grass*, Foucault describes the way in which the artwork affects the viewer as an "irruption of the basic [*l'élémentaire*]". He discusses this work in the context of the Cynic mode of being, which is manifested, as said, in the life of the modern artist, but also in the idea that art must establish a "violent reduction of existence to its basics".⁷¹ In this part, the notion of 'the basic' will be dramatized to make it visible as the indifference that harbors the process of differentiation.

Luncheon on the Grass shows three figures sitting in a park; two men wearing grey suits seem to be engaged in a discussion, while a female nude looks the viewer straight in the eye. The painting was received by the art critics of the Paris Salon as a provocation. By transposing the well-known composition of Raphael's *The Judgement of Paris* (c. 1510-1520) to the unworthy context of a *cocotte* with two customers in the infamous Bois de Boulogne, Manet had depicted the classical values of the Salon as outdated and hypocritical. This point was further emphasized by Manet's painting techniques; omitting the dark underpainting and refraining from *chiaroscuro* lighting, the flat wide surface of the female body looks far more "naked" than the classical nudes in Salon paintings. The manner in which this nude, traditionally the object of art, gazes steadily into the face of the viewer, lends the finishing touch to what Foucault calls the "great scandal of Manet".

In an earlier lecture on the painting in 1971,⁷² Foucault concentrates on the juxtaposition of "two systems of manifesting light" inside the painting, which he interprets as two systems of representation, meeting in the hand of the right male figure:

so here you have this hand with its two fingers, one finger which points in . . . the direction of the interior light, of this light which comes from above and from elsewhere. And on the contrary the finger is bent, bent towards the outside, on the axis of the picture, and it indicates the origin of the light which strikes here, in such a way that you

⁷⁰ Foucault, *The Government of Self*, 85.

⁷¹ Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 188.

⁷² Michel Foucault, *Manet and the Object of Painting* [2009] (2011), 60-63.

have in this hand-play the fundamental axes of the picture and the principle – at once of linking and of heterogeneity – of this *Luncheon on the Grass*.⁷³

The hand mediates between the two domains of representation, which, as Foucault assumes in 1971, is also the function of art.

What fascinates Foucault in 1984, however, is the nude. He believes nakedness to be the central theme in modern art: “This is the idea that art itself, whether it is literature, painting, or music, must establish a relation to reality which is no longer one of ornamentation, or imitation, but one of laying bare, exposure, stripping, excavation, and violent reduction of existence to its basics.”⁷⁴ Foucault’s interest has shifted from the mediating to the reductive function of art. This reduction involves both an “anti-Aristotelian” and an “anti-Platonic” element. Modern art is anti-Aristotelian in the sense that it “establishes a polemical relationship of reduction, refusal, and aggression to culture, social norms, values, and aesthetic canons.” It is anti-Platonic because, instead of representing transcendent ideas, it articulates “what in a culture has no right, or at least no possibility of expression.”⁷⁵ Foucault understands culture as a “consensus” which “has to be opposed by the courage of art in its barbaric truth.”⁷⁶ In this sense, modern art is the “site of the irruption of the basic”, the basic indicating a realm of obscure ideas that are suppressed by culture. The intensity of these ideas, however, leads to regular irruptions into the realm of culture. In this process, art seems to function as an escape valve or rather as a volcano that discharges the pressure from subterrestrial magma flows on the surface of existence. In terms of parrhesia, art “speaks” boldly for those voices that are structurally unheard.⁷⁷

Foucault’s notion of the basic closely resembles that of the Dionysian, in that it designates the suppression of behavior which is necessary for a culture to regard itself as civilized, or Apollonian. In that respect, it is interesting that Deleuze calls dramatization an “actualization of the Dionysian”. Since dramatization is an epistemological method, Deleuze’s Dionysian designates an aspect of Western *thought*. He relates the Apollonian to the line in Western thought that runs from Plato via Descartes to Kant, and which established a virtually undisputed hierarchy of transcendent ideas (Plato) or concepts (Descartes and Kant) over sensations.⁷⁸ In his lecture on dramatization, Deleuze primarily aims to overthrow the Kantian schema as it builds on Descartes’s claim that philosophy deals exclusively with clear and distinct concepts, rejecting the obscure and confused ideas. Deleuze deems this “clear cut” illusory. He refers to Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), who demonstrated that certain Cartesian concepts, like color, smell and taste,

⁷³ Foucault, *Manet and the Object of Painting*, 62-63.

⁷⁴ Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 188. See also Tanke, *Foucault’s Philosophy of Art*, 182-183.

⁷⁵ See also Foucault, “On the Genealogy of Ethics,” 350; Tanke, *Foucault’s Philosophy of Art*, 151.

⁷⁶ Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 189.

⁷⁷ Tanke, *Foucault’s Philosophy of Art*, 182.

⁷⁸ Kaiser, “Two Floors of Thinking,” 219.

may be clear, but they are certainly also confused.⁷⁹ Similarly, Deleuze argues, Plato's ideas may be distinct, but they are also obscure, that is inaccessible to human thought: "the Idea in itself is not clear and distinct, but on the contrary distinct and obscure. It is even in this sense that the Idea is Dionysian, in this zone of obscure distinction that it conserves in itself. . . ."⁸⁰ Ironically, Deleuze appropriates Plato's idea as a model for the obscure dynamisms underlying representation, which he eventually utilizes to subvert the Kantian concepts: "The clear and the distinct is the claim of the concept in the Apollonian world of representation; but beneath representation there is always the Idea and its distinct-obscure *ground*, a 'drama' beneath all logos."⁸¹

Deleuze's use of the word "ground" (*fond*) is informative with respect to Foucault's concept of the basic. Ground is the indifference harboring the power of differentiation, "the potential of a dissolution of distinctions and forms."⁸² This differentiation Deleuze considers a "drama" because the indifference itself can never become actual. A dramatization of the basic leads to the insight that indifference remains unrepresented in Western thought, while under the surface chaos persists: "The state of this world is well expressed in the image of the murmur, of the ocean, of the water mill, of the swoon or even of drunkenness, which bears witness to a Dionysian ground rumbling beneath this apparently Apollonian philosophy."⁸³

CONCLUSION

The hypothesis that parrhesia works through art by triggering a process of veiling and unveiling truth in the imagination can now be further specified. The dynamics of confrontation and transformation have always been characteristic of Foucault's understanding of art. The heterogeneity of the artwork allowed for the imagination to move freely between different systems of representation, opening and closing perspectives. When Foucault, in his late lectures, speaks of how parrhesia works through art, two additional aspects should be emphasized. Firstly, the working of parrhesia through art implies that the artwork manifests life. Foucault describes this as the truly artistic life of the nineteenth-century artist that expresses itself, through *poiesis*, in the artwork. This artistic process seems to run parallel to the process by which the viewer, in viewing the work, engages in the thinking of art as a philosophical expression of the true life. This etho-poetic truth, a truth in the making, a truth of transformative and life-changing practice, is what Foucault aims to engage with in his thinking of art. Secondly, the thinking of art emphasizes the *immanent* dynamics of truth-telling. Art, in taking its creative force from an obscure and unrepresentable realm of ideas, reflects the process of

⁷⁹ Leibniz, "Meditations on Knowledge, Truth, and Ideas," in *Philosophical Papers and Letters* 1 [1684], ed. Leroy Loemker (1956), 448-449. See also Kaiser, "Two Floors of Thinking," 211.

⁸⁰ Deleuze, "The Method of Dramatisation," 585.

⁸¹ Deleuze, "The Method of Dramatisation," 586. My Italics.

⁸² Kaiser, "Two Floors of Thinking," 207.

⁸³ Deleuze, "The Method of Dramatisation," 586.

speaking the truth about oneself, the 'self' involving one's intuitive and dynamic, that is, unrepresentable relation to truth. One might say that parrhesiastic art taps into a positive and immanent notion of power, as the necessary means for subjectivation and subjectification, opening up a space inside discourse, confronting its limits from within.

Foucault's poetic and immanent notion of truth bears close resemblance to the pure "creating" that Deleuze's calls the virtual. Without losing sight of the fact that Foucault does not aim to advance a philosophical theory of art, it is nevertheless interesting to observe how the theoretical gaps in his thinking of art fill up when it is brought into contact with Deleuze's aesthetics. The dramatization of two central concepts in Foucault's discussions of parrhesiastic art made visible how the creative force of the thinking of art enfolds from an obscure realm underlying the representations. It also exposed the "drama" that the truth itself, as the militant refusal of objectification and subjectivation, can never be specified.

In viewing an artwork, the viewer is confronted with sensations that the imagination cannot imagine or represent. Instead of producing an image, the imagination transforms, enabled by the viewer's tapping into the indifference of the truly artistic life. The viewer grafts his experience onto this life, while the art starts to work in the life of the viewer, for the viewer and the work to become partial subjects in the thinking of art. This intuitive an intense process is visualized by Oedipus's groping search for his native soil and Manet's scandal of the nude. When Foucault speaks of art as the site of truth-telling in the modern world, not only the making but also the viewing and thinking of art can be considered "self-technologies", in which the "self" corresponds to the imagination, as the least specified stage of thought where virtual sensibilities and intuitions enter our bodies, and "technologies" to the exploration of this imagination.

Foucault and Deleuze meet in their anti-Platonic effort to expose the obscure dynamisms beneath the representations because they both combine aesthetics and ethics. Foucault's ethical practices involve an aesthetic exploration of the imagination, while Deleuze's aesthetic approach of sensibility and becoming always imply entering ethical relationships. By reminding Western thought of the whisper, the swoon and the murmur in art, both thinkers show ethical commitment to the aesthetic pursuit to bring life back into philosophy.

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