SOCRATES AND THE COURAGE OF VERIDICTION ACCORDING TO FOUCAULT

NORMAN K. SWAZO*

ABSTRACT

Foucault's lectures on "the courage of truth" include a discussion of Plato's *Laches*, in which the master-craftsman/apprentice mode of teaching and learning is examined as a way of learning virtue (*arête*). Thus, it seems virtue can be taught and learned according to the model of *poiēsis*, despite the discussion in Plato's *Meno* questioning this claim. Socrates's *elenchus* apparently leads to the one option that virtue is acquired through practice, i.e., *phronēsis*. '*Poiēsis*' is, of course, not equivalent in concept to '*phronēsis*', in which case the option presented in the *Laches* and that considered in the *Meno* leave ample room for further examination. Foucault recognized as much. Thus, for Foucault, Socrates is exemplar of what he calls the "ethical formation" or "making" of the self, i.e., ēthopoiēsis, thus seemingly linking the practice of ethics to *poiēsis* rather than to *phronēsis*. But, is this a correct formulation? Foucault denominates Socrates "the parrhesiast" (speaker of truth) *par excellence*, yet Socrates claims he lacks knowledge (*epistemē*). What "truth" about virtue might Socrates speak if spoken in complete ignorance (ágnoia) while believing (thus, not knowing) that "knowledge is virtue" and "virtue is knowledge"? Here I engage Foucault's interpretation with a view to answering whether he is correct to think of virtue as ēthopoiēsis rather than as *phronēsis*, and what this entails for self-governance.

Keywords: Foucault, the courage of truth, Plato, Socrates, *phronēsis*, veridiction

* North South University, Dhaka, Bangladesh norman.swazo@northsouth.edu

> …in antiquity, ethics as the conscious practice of freedom has revolved around this fundamental imperative: "Take care of yourself" *[soucie-toi de toi-meme]*.
>
> Foucault, *Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth* (20 January 1984)

There is an interpretive question in the philosophy of classical Greek antiquity about the relation of *poi sis* to *phron sis*. The former is often understood with reference to the techniques of craftsmanship, to "*knowing how* to do" something, thus a kind of *technē*. The latter, however, is linked specifically to practical wisdom essential to action (*praxis*) in the context of virtue (*arête*), thus also a kind of "*knowing how* to do" something. For Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, the formation of the ethical self as "good person" is essential to the realization of truth and justice in the *polis*. But how this is so requires some clarification such that one may ask: Which is essential to this ethical self-formation—*poi sis* or *phron sis*?

Michel Foucault provides interpretative insights relating to resolution of this question, according to his concepts of *epimeleia* (care of self), *ēthopoi sis* (ethical formation of self), and *parrh sia* (speaking the truth). But, moving beyond Foucault's analysis, it is argued here that the task of ethical formation of self is more properly that of the *spiritual formation* of the self (i.e., the constitution [*politeia*] of the *psychē*) that Plato presented in *The Republic*. Thus, it is proposed here that, while *ethopoi sis* and *phron sis* are essential elements of self-formation if knowledge is, indeed, the ground of virtue, one speaks more correctly in terms of the concept of *autarcheia* (a concept combining the dual meaning of self-governance and self-sufficient rule). To see how this is so, I engage Foucault's lectures given at the College de France in 1983-1984, when Foucault engaged a theme denominated "the courage of truth."[1] This requires attention to Plato's *Laches* as well as the *Meno* to sort out the question at issue for Foucault. In both these dialogues the question whether virtue can be taught is at the center of the dialectic. This question underscores the task of the interlocutors speaking the truth and having the courage to do so, despite prospective negative consequences.

'*Parrh sia*', Foucault tells us, originates in "political practice," but then the word subsequently moved into use in the sphere of "personal ethics" with attention to "the formation of the moral subject," the practice Foucault calls, "the government of oneself and others."[2] But, to speak simply of government of self and others does not quite state the point of the primary

1 Michel Foucault. *The Courage of Truth*, ed. Frédéric Gros, trans. Graham Burchell (Palgrave: Macmillan, 2011).

2 Ibid, 8.

conceptual commitment, viz., *to privilege the significance of self-governance* in the political order, and only then (and, thereafter, *on that basis*) to undertake considerations related to the government of (rule over) others. Here one may consider the concept of *autarcheia* even though Foucault does not, such that one may then appreciate (as Plato understood) that self-governance is the foundation and justification of legitimate rule over others, i.e., holding public office such as in the assembly of the Athenian *polis* according to which one rules and is ruled in turn.

"The parrhesiast is the person who tells all," says Foucault, such being the practice of one who is formed as a moral subject. Despite a pejorative sense attached to the word, Foucault describes the positive sense of '*parrh sia*' to be: "telling the truth without concealment, reserve, empty manner of speech, or rhetorical ornament which might encode or hide it."[3] Foucault, however, is not satisfied with this basic description and adds to it. Thus, *parrh sia*, understood as an act that discloses the truth, requires:

> first, the manifestation of a fundamental bond between the truth spoken and the thought of the person who spoke it; [second], a challenge to the bond between the two interlocutors (the person who speaks the truth and the person to whom this truth is addressed). Hence this *new feature* of *parrh sia*: *it involves some form of courage*, the minimal form of which consists in the parrhesiast taking the risk of breaking and ending the relationship to the other person which was precisely what made his discourse possible. In a way, the parrhesiast always risks undermining that relationship which is the condition of possibility of his discourse.[4]

Thus, one committed fully to the practice of self-governance manifests in his speech his inviolable and unwavering commitment to the truth, doing so with the courage (*andreia*) to disclose it (thus, as the adage states the point, "to have the courage of his convictions"). His resolve is to champion the truth, even at the cost of friendship if that relationship cannot endure this disclosure. In short, there can be no "true" governance of the self without this commitment to the truth.

This commitment is manifested in discursive action, in the love of discourse (*philólogos*) such as Socrates always undertakes in his use of the dialectic with his interlocutors, the

3 Ibd, 10.

4 Ibid, 11 (italics added).

frequency of his *elenchus* moving one and all—in friendship—from *complete* ignorance (ágnoia) to *refutation* of *false* belief (*pseudes*), from there to *conscious* ignorance (i.e., one admits to one's ignorance and is prepared for inquiry), upward to *true* belief (*orthodoxía*) and, eventually, through the apprehension of the Forms (*eide*) to knowledge (*nó sis* and *epistem*). But, curiously, if, as Foucault observes, "there is no question of saying anything other than what one thinks," then what one *thinks* to be the truth may be *mere opinion* (allowing here even for "correct" opinion, *orthodoxía*) rather than *knowledge* (*epistem*) [in the sense of a proposition that is said to be certain or apodictic or otherwise understood as justified true belief, i.e., a belief for which one can give reasons]. It seems one cannot defensibly argue then that, opinion (*doxa*) is to count as truth (*al theia*), given that opinion is subject to both appearance (*phainómeno*) of truth and semblance (*eíd lon*) of truth, both of which divert away from the truth. However, in view of Socrates's disposition of the dialectic, saying what one thinks is in the service of the transition from ignorance to knowledge, the transition made evident in the elenchus.

It is also curious that, in Foucault's view, the parrhesiast speaks yet "leaves nothing to interpretation." One must be clear here whether this means (a) as a matter of the parrhesiast's *intent* or (b) as a matter of the *conclusion* of his inquiry. Contemporary philosophical hermeneutics (such as articulated by Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricouer) understands truth always in relation to method and, thus, truth as always *productive* of novel insight, consequent to a "fusion of horizons" of understanding (e.g., that of the two interlocutors). Thus, truth is here an outcome (production) of a hermeneutic movement, interpretive throughout, rather than being merely "reproductive" in the sense of reproducing in text or in speech what represents the mind of the author or individual parrhesiast engaged in the disclosure of truth. Foucault does not address this feature of the production of truth during the course of this lecture.

Moreover, for Foucault, the spoken word has its "prescriptive value" so as to engender a "principle of conduct" that is to be accepted by the interlocutor. But, what is the authority of this principle, assuming this to be a principle of moral conduct having normative force? At issue is the right and duty of practical reason (*phron sis*) to insist the truth be disclosed, in contrast to any "contesting" opinion. The "prescription" to disclose the truth is given when the parrhesiast directs himself to individuals: "to tell individuals the truth of themselves hidden from their own eyes, to reveal to them their present situation, their character, failings, the value of their conduct, and the possible consequences of their decisions…[He] discloses

or helps [his interlocutor] to recognize what he is."[5] Foucault presupposes some settlement on the legitimacy of the parrhesiast's own conduct in the setting of the interlocution, a legitimacy grounded in the authority of his own rationality.

The foregoing questions are of philosophical interest in sorting out Foucault's commitment to the claim that Socrates is the parrhesiast par excellence. There are, then, four problems to be engaged here:

1. The epistemological problem of *doxa* (as appearance and semblance) that diverts us from the truth that resides fully only in knowledge (*noēsis*, *epistemē*).
2. The hermeneutic problem of the supposed absence of interpretation in the parrhesiast's discourse when he speaks the truth;
3. The problem of the legitimation of a moral principle that governs the interlocution; and,
4. The problem of presence or absence of *technē* or ēthopoiēsis as the mode self-formation with its acts of self-governance.

Accordingly, in what follows I engage each of these questions in turn with a view to ascertaining whether Foucault's position is to be sustained or otherwise undermined. In doing so, I consider his remarks in the lectures from the College de France on the courage to truth, remarks in his *The Order of Things*, and *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*.

I. THE PROBLEM OF DOXA AS SEMBLANCE (EID LON)

Dóxa, opinion, is by definition not knowledge *per se*, i.e., not the *no sis* or *epistem* in the way either Plato or Socrates construes the concept. What is problematic with all opinion is that it can (and often does) divert from the truth, even when, as correct opinion (*orthodoxía*), it might approach the truth. All opinion is situated according to its reference to a site (*topos*) of being, which for any human includes the mixture (*methexis*) that involves (1) acts of perception (of the body as *sóma*) and (2) acts of intellect (that involve the soul, *psych*). This referential context of signification or meaning (to use an expression from Heidegger) is, as Francis Cornford puts it, "the world of *eidola*," which, understood in terms of the relation of

5 Ibid, 19.

appearance to reality, is the region intermediate between non-existence (not being) and full reality (being).[6]

In the *Sophist* (239c-240b), e.g., Plato presents the concept of *eíd lon* in terms of two elements—likeness (*eikon*) and semblance (*phantasma*).[7] Thus, opinion is a likeness (image) to the truth, but also a diversion from the reality of the truth through its semblance. One who offers an opinion does so only because the object of his opinion is appearance (*phainómeno*) and not reality. The latter is first and foremost an "intelligible place," (*tópos no tos*) and properly the object of knowledge. Thus, *no sis* contrasts to sensory perception (*aesth sis*). In this sense, opinion can "mix" the false (*pseud s*) with the true. Importantly, in this sense an individual can have skill (*techn*), possessing "an art of creating 'semblances'" such as a sophist is presumed to have (*Sophist*, 239d)—and which Socrates exposed through the method of the dialectic, his elenchus contraposed to that of rhetoric.

Because the sophist has this *techn* , the fear is: "he will readily take advantage of our handling our arguments in this way [i.e., creating semblances] to grapple with us and turn them against ourselves" (*Sophist*, 239d). The fear (or the feigned fear that is actually duplicity among those who are his accusers) among the Athenians is that Socrates is himself such a person, a sophist who has the skill of "making the weaker argument the stronger" and who does so in a way such that he "confine[s] his question to what can be gathered from discourse." In the contrast of rhetoric and dialectic one can see the difference in application of the skills—rhetoric, as used in public, in the assemblies that engage the affairs of the *polis* (*ta politika pragmata*); and dialectic which, as a method of inquiry and discovery such as Socrates employs it, avoids the public domain in favor of a privately delivered discourse.

One may assert, as Foucault argues, that Socrates functions in his discourse as parrhesiast. However, we are not permitted by the texts under examination to conclude that Socrates delivers us "the truth," e.g., about knowledge of virtue, such that one can then assert Socrates possesses that knowledge. We can conclude that he delivers to us—through the mediated engagement of these matters in dialogue with others—what at most may be correct opinion or true belief (what is "likely" true). Both of these, however, are deficient in what is asserted precisely because of the concealing effect of the *methexis* that characterizes such discourse unavoidably. The text of Plato's *Apology* makes this clear, when Socrates *supposes* that neither he nor the politicians he examines knows anything really beautiful and good and *confirms*

6 Francis M. Cornford. *Plato's Theory of Knowledge* (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1957), 203.
7 Francis Peters. *Greek Philosophical Terms: A Historical Lexicon* (New York: NYU Press, 1967).

that he *neither knows* nor *thinks that* he knows. His superiority to the politicians, poets, and artisans is evident in that he makes no claim to have the knowledge they claim to have, even as he also does not have their ignorance, i.e., the error of thinking that they know. One concludes, then, that Foucault seems to expect too much, therefore, if the parrhesiast is one who tells the truth "without concealment." Socrates may work to disclose the truth without "rhetorical ornament." But, that is not to do so without concealment, given the difference between knowledge and opinion in concept and function.

II. THE PROBLEM OF INTERPRETATION

Foucault asserts that there is no question but that the parrhesiast says what he thinks and, thereby, leaves nothing to interpretation. Is this a reasonable assertion? Under conditions of discourse such as noted above, to leave nothing to interpretation seems utterly impossible. If one takes the instruction of Gadamer (following Heidegger) concerning the historicity of human understanding, which instruction is reasonable indeed, then any engagement of discourse *must be* interpretive, *because of* the prejudice or fore-understanding that one brings to the discourse unavoidably. Socrates himself has his prejudices in understanding, evident in the propositions uttered in the dialectic, even if they are presented as questions subject to acceptance or rejection. Even if one admits the doctrine of recollection (*anamn sis*) that Plato presents to allow for the possibility of true belief (as the "remembrance" present in recognition) if not knowledge (cognition), any such recollection has its own prejudices of understanding (albeit, the possibility of recollection is limited according to the Platonist ontological and corresponding epistemological distinction of transcendent and visible realms). These prejudices, however, are to be taken here as something *positive* rather than negative (the latter expected in a hermeneutics of suspicion). But, there can be no automatic disclosure or unconcealment of the truth that is merely a reproductive installation from remembrance of things past.

As Gadamer puts it concerning the understanding of a text (and thus even of oral discourse such as occurs in the dialectic), in the chapter of *Truth and Method* entitled, "Elements of a Theory of Hermeneutic Experience":

> A person who is trying to understand a text [discourse] is always projecting. He

> projects a meaning for the text [discourse] as soon as some initial meaning emerges in the text [discourse]. Again, the initial meaning emerges only because he is reading the text [engaged in the dialogue] with particular expectations in regard to a certain meaning. Working out this fore-projection, which is constantly revised in terms of what emerges as he penetrates into the meaning, is understanding what is there.[8]

This is what happens in the dialogue, such as is represented in Plato's *Laches*: (a) Socrates, Nicias, and Laches each has his initial meaning in the discourse about virtue; (b) each projects his meaning as represented by his questions and assertions of belief; (c) each has expectations that are given in the guiding questions posed; and (d) their understanding is constantly under revision through the dialectic and elenchus in play. Initial projections are revised, and the substance of understanding is disclosed through ongoing modifications that involve revised interpretations.

Prejudice here includes any assortment of opinions, both true beliefs and false beliefs, both having their "distraction" in the context of the given projections of meaning that are exposed and disposed in the dialectical engagement of interlocutors. As Socrates understands from his counsel concerning the logical and moral duty of self-examination (i.e., not to be in contradiction with oneself), and as Gadamer puts it, one who engages the task of understanding as interpretation has "explicitly to examine the legitimacy—i.e., the origin and validity—of the fore-meanings dwelling within him." There can be no legitimate claim to knowledge so long as this does not occur, given that *doxa* and even *orthodoxía* occur often enough as distractions from the truth that is ultimately to be expressed as *epistem* . To "break the spell of our own fore-meanings" is nothing other than to overcome what we initially engage as *eíd lon*, as *phantasma*, the "semblance" that distracts from the truth precisely because what is in fore-meaning may be merely what one "imagines" or falsely "believes" the truth to be.

When he interrogates the veracity (and thus the authority) of ancestral Greek custom, Socrates is doing nothing other than laboring with his interlocutor to overcome "the tyranny of hidden prejudices" that makes Athenians of his day "deaf" to "what speaks to them" *in their tradition* even *against* that tradition. This is especially evident in what they misunderstand about the gods and the inadequacy of Homeric virtues grounded in poetic discourse. Both are of concern to Socrates in his quest to understand and possess knowledge of virtue in contradistinction to what ancestral custom posits as true. Socrates's pursuit of knowledge of

8 Hans-Georg Gadamer. *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 267.

virtue presupposes a concept of truth as correspondence (*homoíosis*), i.e., *veritas est adaequatio.* Thus, whatever is stated in proposition necessarily is to be justified by its correspondence to the object of reality, the latter having no *methexis* of the apparent (reading here both *phainómeno* and *eíd lon*) along with the real. Hence, Foucault's claim that a parrhesiast leaves nothing to interpretation cannot reasonably apply to Socrates. Yet, Foucault does claim that Socrates is parrhesiast par excellence. Is there some other way to grant Foucault this claim?

Consider Foucault's *The Order of Things*, at the outset of which he admits that his reading of Borges was such as to have "shattered…all the familiar landmarks of [his] thought," a passage of text that left him "laughing a long time, though not without a certain uneasiness" that he found "hard to shake off."[9] Surely, this is a moment of interpretive crisis for Foucault—his own "fore-meaning" or prejudices are engaged by alterity in meaning. He cannot but engage it for a productive (not merely reproductive) outcome in meaning, in which his own horizon of understanding is at play. A passage in the "Preface" to Foucault's text here allows us some further clarification of the point:

> The fundamental codes of a culture—those governing its language, its schemas of perception, its exchanges, its techniques, its values, the hierarchy of its practices—establish for every man, from the very first, the empirical orders with which he will be dealing and within which he will be at home. At the other extremity of thought, there are the scientific theories or the philosophical interpretations which explain why order exists in general, what universal law it obeys, what principle can account for it, and why this particular order has been established and not some other. But between these two regions, so distant from one another, lies a domain which, even though its role is mainly an intermediary one, is nonetheless fundamental: it is more confused, more obscure, and probably less easy to analyse. It is here that a culture, imperceptibly deviating from the empirical orders prescribed for it by its primary codes, instituting an initial separation from them, causes them to lose their original transparency, relinquishes its immediate and invisible powers, frees itself sufficiently to discover that these orders are perhaps not the only possible ones or the best ones; this culture then finds itself faced with the stark fact that there exists, below the level of its spontaneous orders, things that are in themselves capable of being ordered, that belong to a certain unspoken order; the fact, in short, that order *exists*.[10]

9 Michel Foucault. *The Order of Things*, (New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis e-library, 2005), xvi-xvii.
10 Ibid, xxii.

Whereas the category of "fundamental codes" is the equivalent of tradition such as the ancestral custom of 5th century BCE Athens, the challenge to empirical orders is a challenge to the authority of extant tradition. It is in this sense that one understands Socrates to make use of the dialectic and contribute thereby to the loss of original transparency in those codes that guide understanding and practice, to engender the confusion that antecedes clarification, thus to provoke thought in the direction of other possibilities of saying and doing. As Mark Blasius puts it in his introductory note to Foucault's lectures of 1980, lectures that "trace the genealogy of the self," central to this task is "a continuous analysis of one's own thoughts *under a hermeneutic principle* of making sure they are really one's own…"[11] This is what Foucault calls the "technology of the self"—referring to techniques that are performative and thereby productive, modifying and transforming the self (one's body, one's thoughts, and one's practices, all subject to the effect of such self-examining performances).

Most important, for Foucault, in line with his understanding of the goal of ancient Greek philosophy (i.e., ethics) in contrast to the goal of modern philosophy (i.e., theory) is that these technologies (be they judicial, administrative, or ethical—the distinction of which is entirely one of interpretation) are to be employed "toward the discovery and the formulation of the truth concerning oneself."[12] Such truth is not a given. It requires both discovery and formulation. Both cannot be done without a commitment to the postulated hermeneutic principle that is a quest for authenticity in the sense of authentic selfhood and self-governance (both to be understood as ownership of self) and, hence, to the interpretive process engaged thereby.

Moreover, when Foucault characterizes the act of discovery with reference to Stoic practice and says this is "not at all a question of discovering the truth hidden in the subject" but, instead, "a question of recalling the truth forgotten by the subject,"[13] this very distinction (as a proposition within Foucault's discourse) is itself an *interpretive* result and not utterance of a transparent truth. Likewise so—whether the practice under review proceeds from one such as the Stoic sage in his application of principles of conduct; or the Christian penitent in his confession for the correction of sin; or Socrates in the disclosure of his character in the dialectic that transforms both interlocutors; or Foucault in his clarification of these technologies of self-examination against the modern philosophical privileging of Cartesian

11 Mark Blasius. "Introductory Note," to Michel Foucault, "About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self: Two Lectures at Dartmouth", *Political Theory*, 21, No. 2 (1993), 198-227, 199; italics added.

12 Ibid, 204.

13 Ibid, 207.

subjectivity. One must say this even if contrary to Foucault in his assertion that, "the self in all those exercises is not considered as a field of subjective data which have to be interpreted."

Foucault's analysis has the consequence of countering the Platonist (and, therefore presumably, the Socratic) epistemological commitment to truth as *homoíosis*. He sees, for example, a consultation between Seneca and Serenus working with a concept of truth "not defined by a correspondence to reality but as a force inherent to principles and which has to be developed in a discourse."[14] The truth that Socrates is expected to disclose, as parrhesiast, then, cannot be one of correspondence to a *tópos no tos*. Yet, this is precisely what is not undermined in Foucault's analysis of *parrh sia*. Of course, one is to concede that there is no explicit intellectual relation of Foucault to the method of philosophical hermeneutics advanced by Gadamer. We may have a legitimate point of contestation here then, i.e., one that vindicates Foucault's characterization of the parrhesiast as one who discloses *without* interpretation. It may be argued that Foucault's focus on "governmentality" has to do with elucidation of *practices* and not the elucidation of *meaning* per se. But, this focus does not remove the interpretive ground from the task of evaluation of practices and their effects, especially if one's focus (such as with Foucault himself) is on the "archaeology" of the order of things. Granted, Gary Wickham argued that one must consider Foucault and Gadamer to sustain a basic difference, Foucault excluding from his work any Gadamerian concern for meaning and interpretation.[15] Yet, Wickham allows, in the end, that while the two approaches "cannot be brought into any simple conjunction, it also means they cannot be simply opposed either."[16]

One may argue reasonably that Foucault's own approach in *The Order of Things* is essentially that of Gadamer: working to *unconceal hidden prejudices* in the process of producing knowledge or truth. That is to say, Foucault in his own work sought to disclose "rules of formation" that were "unknown to…the naturalists, economists, and grammarians…to define the objects proper to their own study, to form their concepts, to build their theories," rules he "tried to reveal" at the level of the "archaeological."[17] Indeed, in characterizing 'knowledge' Foucault claimed that it has among its roots "hermeneutics," to be understood "…(as the re-apprehension through the manifest meaning of the discourse of another meaning at once

14 Ibid, 209.

15 Gary Wickham. "Foucault and Gadamer: Like Apples and Oranges," *Chicago-Kent Law Review*, 76 (2000), 913-943.

16 Ibid, 943.

17 Foucault, *The Order of Things*, op. cit., xii.

secondary and primary, that is, more hidden but also more fundamental)."[18] What is "hidden" in the Socratic dialectic is hidden to both interlocutors. As such it must be wrested from concealment under the condition of each earnestly seeking "to tell the truth." But, the success of the dialectic is measured not only in the declaration of the truth, such as in that proposition Socrates asserts in holding that, "knowledge is virtue." Quite importantly, the success is measured also in the precursor to such a proposition, e.g., in Alcibiades's concession spoken in the face of Socrates's elenchus, when Alcibiades says, "But by the gods, Socrates, I do not know at all what I am saying…." Alcibiades *discovers* his "anxiety" about himself in his ignorance, *recognizes* that he is answering "with unwilling contradictions," *seemingly* to understand then that he does not know what he thought he knew at the outset of the discourse with Socrates. In short, one cannot do without the interpretive component of the dialectic in use.

III. THE PROBLEM OF LEGITIMATION OF MORAL PRINCIPLE

Foucault advances a moral principle of discourse, when he says that, the parrhesiast is *obligated* to tell individuals the truth of/about themselves that is hidden from their own eyes. This is to reveal to them their present situation, their character, failings, the value of their conduct, and the possible consequences of their decisions. This is what Socrates does again and again, manifest, as noted above, in the case of the young Alcibiades. The question here, of course, is: What authorizes one to accept this principle as a *normative* principle belonging to discourse such as occurs in an interlocution? Presumably, it is the authority of the truth that is to be disclosed in discourse. This appeal to moral principle is an appeal to a rule that, as Foucault would likely say following what he says in *The Order of Things*, comes into play "in the very existence of such discourse."

The operative assumption is that Socrates himself would also have to fulfill some "conditions" for his dialectical exercises to have *value* and *practical application* in the interlocution. However, important to the point of conditions of discourse, as Thomas Flynn remarked, is that, "What was expected in the case of telling the truth about oneself was that the other likewise be a truth-teller, not a flatterer or a coward."[19] Further, those engaged in the dialectic must also be truthful in the sense of admitting to their ignorance (*ágnoia*), thus, moving from *complete* ignorance to *conscious* ignorance (as Jowett translates 110a of *Alcibiades 1*). This is why Socrates teaches Alcibiades at the point of recognition of his ignorance: "you do not go astray about what you don't know, *as long as you know that you don't know.*" (italics added) This is the foremost rule to be observed in thought and in deed if there is to be a successful disclosure of the truth; for, one who would rule others must first of all govern well "what is in himself." Self-examination, in the sense of Socrates's constant counsel to the Athenians, is the basis of sustained self-governance.

The quest for knowledge of virtue simply fails where interlocutors are not committed to the same goal. Flattery and cowardice detract from the possibility of disclosure. This is true for interlocutors such as the young Alcibiades (in his proposed conduct of affairs of state, flattery of *hoi polloi*—consequent to Alcibiades being a lover of "popularity," which is not the same as ruling) and the politician Anytus (associated with cowardice, in "running away" from the stronger argument advanced by Socrates). Alcibiades presumes, at eighteen years of age, to know better than the Athenians what is and what not "just" (*díkaios*) so as to be able to advise them on political affairs. Anytus is moved to anger against Socrates when he should rather be angry with himself for his failure in the discourse; yet, he leaves Socrates with an indubitable warning against continued use of his dialectic. Later (as presented in Plato's *Apology*) he becomes one of the main accusers in Socrates's trial.

Further, the moral principle operative here must indeed *regulate* the discourse. In putting forward the obligation of the parrhesiast as stated above, Foucault is stating how Socrates's language functions. Socrates's quest for knowledge of virtue functions such that his words have "propositional value," i.e., the words are meaningful only in the setting of a proposition that has or lacks truth-value. The interlocution tests and then resolves upon some value or lack of it—i.e., the proposition is certainly true; probably true; doubtful; objectionable; or false. Socrates, in short, does not merely "indicate" when he interrogates his subject matter in the setting of the dialogue; he "judges" the veracity of the words in use within the propositions articulated by the interlocutors, thereby either accepting or rejecting an opinion rendered. But, if Socrates judges the truth-value of a given proposition so as to end with it being rejected, hence to suffer the consequence of the elenchus, what is the basis of this judgment in one who claims complete ignorance?[20] Is this evidence of Socrates's

18 Ibid, 407.
19 Thomas Flynn. "Foucault as Parrhesiast: His Last Course at the Collège de France (1984)", *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 12 (1987), 213-229.
20 David Sedley, *Plato: Meno and Phaedo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. xvi), describes

own *ēthopoi sis* in Foucault's sense, Socrates thus ethically formed consequent to (a) his own self-examination and (b) acts of *anamnesis*? This assumes here, of course, that Socrates's ethical formation is not the consequence of his having been "taught" in the sense of another "imparting" his goodness precisely because this other is skillful in teaching (*didaktik arête*).

When he is presented as the *parrhesiast* par excellence, Socrates is understood to combine and represent in himself, as Thomas Flynn put it, that which distinguishes him from the sophist who is mere rhetorician: "Socrates's authority early in the dialogue [*Laches*] is based on the *harmony* that is perceived between his *logos* and his *bios*", Foucault discerning here both "a metaphysics of the soul [*psych*]" (which is ontological) and "a stylistic of life [*bios*]" (which is aesthetic) that entail "two concepts of truth-telling."[21] Importantly here, as Flynn observes, Foucault allows the "interrelation" of these two concepts to be "flexible and nuanced." Hence, any interpretation of the Socratic dialectic in operation cannot but include both concepts of truth-telling. Further, the moral rule or principle that regulates the dialectic between interlocutors has both its ontological and aesthetic elements in the intended ethical formation of the self. This is why, e.g., in his dialogue with Alcibiades, Socrates insists that Alcibiades answer not only truthfully but also beautifully. For Socrates, *ēthopoi sis* is at once a manifestation of truth and beauty, as is any work of "art." But, how is one to conceive the "product" that comes about as a result of this act of master craftsmanship?

The idea here involves the ethical formation of the self so as to present oneself as an instance of what Foucault calls self-government. I shall instead use the expression 'self-*governance*,' thereby to introduce an important conceptual distinction that is more to the point of Foucault's intent. Hence, I speak of self-governance according to the Greek word, "*autarcheia*". As noted at the outset, the point of this distinction is to recall the strict sense of "spiritual" *politeia* (the *politeia* of the *psych*) that concerned Plato in *The Republic*. This concept is *contraposed* to the constitutional order of everyday political life that is evident in the "government" of Athens (i.e., the *politeia* of the Athenian *polis*). Thus, the "opinions" about

this as "Meno's paradox," i.e., "at (80d) [of the *Meno*] he proceeds to propound his paradox…presented as a problem merely about Socrates' predicament: how can Socrates either determine what he is going to look for or recognize it if he should happen to find it, given that he does not know at all what it is? It is Socrates himself who then converts this into a universal dilemma about inquiry (80e): 'A person turns out not to be able to search either for what he knows or for what he doesn't know? For he wouldn't be searching for what he knows, since he knows it, and someone like that, at least, has no need to search; nor would he be searching for what he doesn't know, since in that case he doesn't even know what to search for."

21 Thomas Flynn. "Truth and Subjectivation in the Later Foucault", *The Journal of Philosophy*, 82 (1985), 531-540, at 537.

Socrates rendered by the interlocutors in the *Laches* are suggestive of the courage (*andreia*) that is required in self-governance, consistent with Socrates's propositions concerning the unity of the virtues: "Conjoined to the 'true life,' one without dissemblance or compromise, indifferent to the past or the future, this art of truth-telling yields a certain style, a beautiful life whose traces can be an object of admiration for others."[22]

But, in fact, there is more than admiration here; for, the dialectic should be transforming insofar as it has its effect *upon the soul*. And, the interlocutors ("eager to be most beautiful") are hence called upon to perform, in speech and in deed, as lovers of the soul, having care of that which is the seat of self-governance, seeking to discover and disclose its *innate wisdom* (understanding, from *Theaetetus 145e5*, that *sophía* and *epistem* are essentially the same). In this sense only, then, one appreciates the authority of the moral principle that Foucault advances in his characterization of Socrates as parrhesiast: *Only if*, as Socrates tells Alcibiades, one can impart goodness to the citizens—i.e., move them from ignorance to knowledge, from vice to virtue, thus from the need for external rulers (árchontes) to that of inner rule, *autarcheia*—can one truly manage the business of the *polis* (*ta politika pragmata*) "correctly and beautifully." This can occur, however, only if one possesses such goodness; and this is so both for imparting goodness in private and in public. But, in the end of Socrates's dialectic with his interlocutors, it seems we are left always inconclusive about the question whether, in and through his dialectic, Socrates ever discloses his own innate wisdom so as to thereby disclose, without doubt, the *knowledge* that is virtue. Since Socrates allows that one may be formed in intellect from one's own effort at discovery rather than from being taught, then Socrates's own *ēthopoi sis* depends on his inquiry through self-examination or through dialogue with others.

IV. THE PROBLEM OF TECHNĒ IN SELF-GOVERNANCE

Foucault's commentary raises a fundamental question here that recurs to the ancient Greeks and, in particular, to the debate whether virtue is teachable. In Foucault's initial comments this amounts to accounting for whether governance of the self—understood as care (*epimeleia*) of the self—can be an effect of technique (*techn*). That is to ask: Is the parrhesiast himself a master-practitioner who transmits what he knows to one who engages him in the

22 Ibid, 538.

interlocution as apprentice and thereby subsequently also becomes a practitioner sharing in the knowledge transmitted? Foucault writes: "The technician, who possesses a *tekhn* , has *learned* it, *and is capable of teaching it*, is someone obliged to speak the truth, or at any rate to formulate what he knows and pass it on to others…"[23] If, indeed, the knowledge of the technician is linked "to a whole weight of tradition," as Foucault says, then this seems not identical to the idea of *self*-governance in the sense of *autarcheia* I have in mind. I submit that *autarcheia* is to be contrasted to Foucault's concept of *epimeleia* so as to emphasize not merely care of oneself but a care that depends on *actual governance of oneself.*

I propose, in fact, that Foucault's emphasis on care of self as informed by Greek thought is a response to his negative assessment of modernity's shift from practice (*poi sis*, *praxis*) to theory (*theoría*). Further, it is in his formulations of the technologies of self-government that he contraposes (a) the simultaneous right and duty of the individual to (b) the power and authority of modern collectives such as the nation-state or other collective dogmas manifest in sundry institutions.[24] That is evident in his decision, in the practice of his own philosophy, not to identify himself as part of a "we." Thus, he says: "But the problem is, precisely, to decide if it is actually suitable to place oneself within a 'we' in order to assert the principles *one* recognizes and the values *one* accepts; or, if it is not, rather, necessary to make the future formation of a 'we' possible by elaborating the question. Because it seems to me that the 'we' must not be previous to the question; it can only be the result—and the necessarily temporary result—of the question as it is posed in the new terms in which *one* formulates it."[25] Thus, as Benjamin Jowett says in his introductory remarks to the *Alcibiades 1*, knowledge of self is the first step in the practice of virtue, hence Plato's admonition *gn thi sauton*. And, what matters for Socrates in this admonition is to know first of all that one is ignorant. What matters to Socrates, Jowett reminds, is to awaken in others their consciousness of their own ignorance, thus what he calls their "conscious ignorance" in contrast to "complete ignorance". In that way they may begin their journey from the inadequacy of *aesth sis* to *no*ēsis.

23 Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 24, italics added.

24 Paul Allen Miller, in his essay "The Art of Self-Fashioning, or Foucault on Plato and Derrida," *Foucault Studies*, No. 2, May (2005), 54-74, at p. 56 writes: "Foucault sought to elaborate an ethics founded not on the juridical, authoritarian, or disciplinary structures of modernity, but on what he refers to as an "art" or "stylization" of existence. The purpose of this stylization was not self-absorption, but to offer new means of resistance to the normalizing structures of the market, scientific and social institutions, and the state. An ethics and aesthetics of existence, founded on the history of subjectivation, was in part to be a means of resistance to the commodified, sexualized, and normalized subject of capitalist modernity".

25 Michael Foucault. *Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth*, ed. P. Rabinow, trans. R. Hurley et al., Vol. 1 (New York: The New Press, 1997), 114-115; italics added.

Foucault thus shifts focus from knowledge *per se* to care. His focus on ē*thopoi sis* is, I submit, actually not to highlight the master craftsman/apprentice relation. It is, instead, to emphasize what he calls the "*tekhn tou biou*" which, as an "art of living," requires an *ask sis*, i.e., "training of the self by oneself."[26] He thereby identifies the "ethopoietic function" with Plutarch, asserting, "it is an agent of the transformation of truth into ē*thos*." In short, "*Al theia* [i.e., truth as unconcealment] becomes ēthos."[27] One understands here, of course, that Socrates's interlocutions are often in the service of self-examination and against the authority of the tradition that is Athenian received ancestral custom. Through his dialectic, tradition becomes questionable; and, the authority of that tradition is challenged from the ground of the truth that is to be disclosed so that one can then distinguish false belief from true belief.

Such, e.g., was the position of Socrates in his challenge to the Homeric literary, religious, and political legacy in which the poets, politicians, sophists, and craftsmen were immersed. While the public realm of the *polis* is one, as Aristotle held, of equals sharing in ruling and being ruled in turn, Socrates did not quite fit that mode of political practice. His engagement of his interlocutors occurred primarily (and deliberately so) in private rather than in public. As Foucault puts it, "One must leave politics to take better care of the self."[28] Socrates's care of self (*epimeleia*) is not grounded in the standard that relates ruler to ruled in the setting of this or that constitution (*politeia*) of government. Rather, his conduct is grounded in a different standard, that which I denominate *autarcheia*, a word that calls to mind both the concepts of *self-rule* and *self-sufficiency*, both identified by the word, *autarchos*, both concepts grounded in that *no*ēsis that is given and disclosed to oneself and others as the innate wisdom issuing from *anamnesis*. Properly understood, then, a parrhesiast is one who is decidedly *autarchos*.

But, of course, it may be said then that Foucault reasonably distinguishes the parrhesiast from the mere technician, thus to clarify that "the parrhesiast brings into play the true discourse of what the Greeks called ēthos."[29] The *veridiction*—true discourse—of the parrhesiast is first and foremost a matter of ethics, a disclosure of the ethical, both of the *tó*pos of ethics and the substance of ethical practice in Socrates's sense of the practice of virtue. This disclosure cannot but be personal rather than collective. However, if it is personal rather than collective, then it is not first of all authorized by the weight of ancestral tradition. Rather, as exemplified by Socrates, the authority of ancestral custom is challenged and rejected, even as Socrates

26 Foucault, "Self Writing," *Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth*, 208.

27 Foucault, "Self Writing", *Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth*, 239.

28 Ibid, 235.

29 Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 25.

privileges the authority of his own rationality. In short, if the *parrhesiast* discloses the ethical as a matter of truth, as Foucault intuits, then *the first duty* of the *parrhesiast* is *to disclose the truth in the service of self-governance (autarcheia).* Such is Socrates's foremost duty while engaging his interlocutors in the dialectic.

As Foucault says in interview in May 1984, morality "concerns the search for the truth and the relation to the others" manifest as a "work of reciprocal elucidation."[30] Dialectic is an act of friendship, not an act of polemics. Socrates is never a polemicist who seeks a merely logical victory by intentionally "making the weaker argument the stronger" to the detriment of the truth (as was claimed in the informal charges Socrates reviewed in the *Apology* 18a-20c). Rather, as Foucault posits, if one *knows* the truth one is *transformed* thereby. That is the point of the dialectic from its inception: It begins in showing to the other his ignorance, the first step in self-transformation, a movement of the *psych* from complete ignorance to the conscious ignorance that is the ground of possible *epistem* . The performance of this duty of self-governance cannot but occur with evident courage (*andreia*) in the face of any and all danger to the self, up to and including death, as happened with Socrates. That is, the parrhesiast may die in vindication of the truth he discloses. This is so even though, as Foucault acknowledges, "the subject who tells the truth is constituted *for himself* and *for others*,"[31] such being the ineradicable relational freedom of individuals in the *polis*; for, it is clear that these relations are structured according to the particular form of government (*politeia*) established, be it a proper form or a deformation (e.g., when monarchy becomes tyranny in contrast to benevolent dictatorship, or when aristocracy becomes either mere oligarchy or plutocracy with manifest failure of distributive justice, etc.).

In this understanding of the individual's relational freedom within a given *politeia*, one is faced with the central difference posed by both Plato and Aristotle: the difference between the good *citizen* and the good *man*. The virtue of the two is potentially and very probably (although not necessarily) different, especially in the setting of the "democracy" of 5th century BCE Athens. The difference, indeed, is such as Foucault observes (citing Aristotle's position in *The Politics*): The singularly good *man*—who, like Socrates, is likely to suffer ostracism in a setting of democracy, where the questionable interests of "the many" (*hoi polloi*) are dominant—is reasonably to be (i.e., *should be*) privileged over those of the good *citizens*. To what extent? "We cannot apply ostracism to them [i.e., one cannot reasonably exile any man who manifests

30 Foucault, *Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth*, 111.
31 Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 28, italics added.

himself in the character of a good man]; we cannot even apply to them the laws which are valid for everyone else [which means they do not fall readily into the distinction of ruler/ruled]." "Even more," Foucault adds, "we have to submit to them, to obey them, and give them a place, and a place which, really, in its formulation, has Platonic echoes, since *it involves giving the place of king in the city to those men who are wiser than others*."[32] Foucault here states the fundamental point of the difference: "In short, when, with Aristotle, an attempt is made to give the best possible justification for the laws and rules of democracy, we see that democracy can give only one place to moral excellence, a place which itself embodies the *refusal* of *democracy*. If there really is someone virtuous, let democracy disappear and let men obey this man of virtue, this man of ethical excellence, like a king."[33] Clearly, there is a problem here, if indeed the recommendation is to dissolve democracy in favor not of monarchy but of the benevolent dictatorship often associated with Plato's *Republic*. The question, however, is whether this really is what either Plato or Aristotle truly intends, i.e., whether *the good man* (again, in contrast to the good citizen) who manifests *arête* is to assume the political office of "king" (*basilaeus*) and thus work to constitute a functional political order (*politeia*) in the form of a benevolent monarchy to the exclusion of democracy (in the sense of the all too frequent "ignorant" rule by *hoi polloi*). The answer seems to be "no," for reasons to be provided as follows.

Taking Socrates as example, we can agree with Foucault that, "democracy is not the privileged site of *parrh sia*, but the place in which *parrh sia* is most difficult to practice."[34] The misology and antipathy Socrates faced in Athens is evidence of that, as is his eventual prosecution, conviction, and capital punishment. But, importantly, I argue that this does not then lead to the consequence Foucault identifies, which he states to be "another type of political structure" (reading here *politeia*, as a constitutional order), which is then to be construed as the privileged site for veridiction—especially *not so* if the very concept of *politeia* becomes suspect when confronted with the veridiction of the parrhesiast. I argue here that this concept does indeed become suspect, relative to the following rationale.

Plato's discussion of justice in *The Republic* is not readily understood to emphasize the distinction made between (1) the *politeia* of the *psych* and (2) the *politeia* of the collective order. Yet, this distinction is entirely to the point of the dialogue. This is the key point of contestation in which ēthos (the referent being the individual) is pitted against *polis* (the

32 Ibid, 51-52, italics added.
33 Ibid, 52; italics added.
34 Ibid, 57.

referent here being the collective that is constituted): When the parrhesiast functions and performs in the setting of any *politeia*, including the setting of democracy ruled by *hoi polloi*, then the legitimacy of the concept of *politeia* as a structural basis of political organization becomes suspect. When the parrhesiast confronts and challenges the authority of the *politeia* itself, the assertion of his veridiction is such that he relates first and foremost to the individual interlocutor as *moral* subject. Only secondly does he relate to the individual as citizen (thus as *political* subject) of a particular *politeia*. Indeed, the authority of the concept '*politeia*' becomes suspect to the point that *a different mode of thinking* enters the scene of contestation, thus to undermine and displace the traditional commitment to politics (*ta politika*). It is often understood that politics is grounded in the concept of constitution (*politeia*), i.e., the "structure" of a political association (*koinonía*). But, Foucault's concept of *epimeleia* (as active care of self) and my concept of *autarcheia* (as "self-sufficient self-rule," as introduced here) shift the focus from the institutional/constitutional order to the practice of self-governance. Both concepts thus concern *the form of the ethical* in contrast to *the form of the political*. The distinction is expectedly exemplified by the parrhesiast, in his unique function of disclosing the truth; for, it is in this way that he *gives an account of himself* (*didonai logon*) first and foremost as moral subject.

Hence, we are properly instructed by Plato's emphasis on the spiritual *politeia* of the individual that was "writ large" in the literary structure of *The Republic* but which was, nevertheless, the principal focus of that dialogue[35] (a focus long neglected in standard interpretations of this dialogue and Plato's supposed political theory). Foucault is therefore correct to identify one essential correlation: "we move from the *polis* to the *psukh* [*psych*] as the essential correlate of *parrh sia*." With this movement from the *polis* to the *psychē* we find the objective of veridiction: Properly performed, veridiction produces the formation of the individual's ēthos. But, then, it is not only the *psych* of the parrhesiast that is addressed here. If Foucault is correct, then all individuals the parrhesiast engages in interlocution are addressed with a view to *their* formation as *moral* subjects, i.e., with a view to that ēthopoiēsis that is *most properly their own* (one can think here the Heideggerian sense of '*eigentlich*', 'authentic') and which is their "duty" in the sense of care of the soul, what Foucault calls *psukh s therapeia*.

Foucault sees the relationship of self-governance (in the sense of formation of the moral subject, thus ēthos) and government (*politeia*) in terms of a fundamentally necessary

35 See here, Norman K. Swazo, "Contemporary Politics: Crisis of Infirmity", *Man and World* [current journal title: *Continental Philosophy Review*], 19 (1986), 203-223.

commitment to truth-telling (*al theia*)—i.e., "irreducible and irreducibly linked to each other." But, I emphasize in argument here (in a way Foucault does not) that, despite this linkage, the site (*tópos*) of ēthos, i.e., the *authentic/autarchic* individual, is surely to be privileged over that of *politeia*, i.e., the form of government that privileges the distinction and separation of ruler/ruled and which does so without even recognizing the moral and political validity of one who resides in the *polis* as *autarchos*. Such was Socrates's status even though the Athenians did not understand this; and thus, as Plato decried, they committed a sin against philosophy, against truth, in sentencing Socrates to death.

The parrhesiast, then, is first and foremost committed to *self*-formation, to *his own moral constitution*, grounded as he is in the truth he seeks to install first *for himself*, and then only in consequence of his *parrh sia* to be installed in his interlocutor. In other words, the parrhesiast as *authentic/autarchic* practitioner of his ēthos, his ēthopoiēsis, manifests that relational freedom[36] according to which self-responsibility is the ground of mutual (interdependent) moral responsibility. This relational freedom occurs outside the domain of public affairs (*ta politika pragmata*), e.g., as practiced in the assemblies (*d mosia*) and courts of Athens. Thus, *al theia* and ēthos are mutually interlinked in the person of the parrhesiast, even to the point of antagonism and exclusion (i.e., *refusal*) of the power of *politeia* over the parrhesiast who lives as *autarchos* amidst the *pragmata* of the *polis*. In short, the parrhesiast privileges the ethical over the political, privileges the formation of the moral subject over the formation of the political subject, privileges the formation of the good man over the formation of the good citizen—but doing so in the interest of sustained justice in the *polis* writ large. Such is the privileging, then, of one who presents himself as self-sufficiently self-ruling (*autarchos*) over one who immerses himself in the public domain according to his assignment in the *polis* as either ruler or ruled.

Referring to Plato's *Apology* and to Socrates' claim presented in that text that he does not engage in public discourse in the assemblies, in short that he does not engage in politics in the usual sense of that word, Foucault asks why Socrates did not engage in politics.[37] It seems the general answer is to be found in the claim that, as Foucault puts it, it is impossible to perform "the parrhesiastic role properly, fully, and thoroughly when one is dealing with political institutions."[38] And this, Foucault tells us, is due to the risk incurred—in Socrates's case, viz.,

36 For one account of 'relational freedom' opposed to a concept of freedom as "radical independence" or autonomy, see Bernard P. Dauenhauer, "Relational Freedom," *Review of Metaphysics*, 36 (1982), 77-101, https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/20127794.pdf, accessed on 11 December 2017.

37 Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 75.

38 Ibid, 77.

the risk of death; for, as Socrates asserted (*Apology*, 31d): "If long ago I had devoted myself to politics, I would have lost my life long ago." But, more precisely, again as Foucault clarifies, it is not the risk of death itself that removed Socrates from politics. Instead, it is *the disutility of death* that leads Socrates to avoid politics and to engage the Athenians individually in private.

That is why we have the paradoxical stance stated in *The Apology*, according to which a man ought not to calculate his chances of life and death when engaged in the pursuit and disclosure of the truth. Rather, he (and, therefore, Socrates himself) "must consider solely whether he is conducting himself as a man of courage or as a coward."[39] His courage is his assurance that he shall not abandon his post in the face of danger and thus certainly not abandon it in the face of death. Death, in short, has no utility when the quest is simultaneously to establish justice and to disclose the truth, especially when that quest is undertaken among those who are ignorant of virtue and who, immersed in the *polis* with commitment to the extant form of *politeia*, practice their politics having already privileged the distinction of ruler and ruled *in total ignorance of the very possibility of self-governance* in the sense of *epimeleia* and *autarchos*. For Socrates, both justice and truth are essential to the individual's prospective realization of his moral excellence (*arête*). The parrhesiast must, accordingly, have courage *for* the truth, even to the point that he suffers death while speaking truth to power.

The fundamental question here, then, is: How does the individual install himself, not as a political subject immersed in the daily politics (*ta politika pragmata*) of the *d mosia* but, as a moral subject concerned with truth and justice, even if against the customary practices of the governing *politeia*? Here the individual ēthos (in the sense of a set of practices) is unavoidably contraposed to the usual practices of politics, to the extent that the latter do not coincide with the requirements of the individual's responsibility to manifest his *arête*. For Socrates (*Apology*, 38a), the unexamined life is not worth living. But, that fact in and of itself does not dictate to any individual that he therefore choose death, as if death resolves either one's ignorance or one's error, especially when the formation of the moral subject is at issue consequent to a self-examination yet to be undertaken. Self-governance (*autarcheia*), if it is to be had, proceeds from, and is sustained by, self-examination (*exetasis*) that entails care of one's soul (*epimeleia*). Hence, despite (a) his quest for veridiction but leaving us mostly with negative refutation, despite (b) his counsel to the Athenians he engaged in interlocution, the fact is that *Socrates's own unequivocal declaration of the truth* is left unstated. It is, therefore, yet in question for us who are his distant interlocutors. For, it is unclear from all of Plato's dialogues that Socrates

39 Ibid, 85.

demonstrates to others his *epistemē*, i.e., unclear that he himself possesses *more* than correct opinion (*orthodoxía*). Nowhere is it settled even that Socrates has opinion that amounts at least to *justified true belief*, in which case it is unclear how Socrates can have the *no sis* that is involved in *anamnesis*, unless he reserves it in silence.

V. SOCRATES AS PARRHESIAST: IS FOUCAULT CORRECT?

Given the foregoing discussion I conclude that Foucault is correct to point to Socrates' statements in the *Crito* to state that, "it is the truth that determines what is just and unjust. So we should not follow the opinion of everybody…"[40] This is the same opinion given in the *Alcibiades 1* (110e) insofar as *hoi polloi* cannot be good teachers for lack of knowledge of the just and the unjust. However, if we are not to follow everybody's opinion, whose opinion are we to accept and follow—again, assuming here that we are able to *identify* a "correct" opinion, an opinion that at least approximates the truth even if it is yet equivocal? Foucault asks: "[If] we wish to be concerned about ourselves, if we want to care of 'that part of ourselves, whatever it is' and avoid its destruction and corruption, what should we follow? It is necessary to follow the truth." As a merely formal declaration, that assertion is unproblematic. But, precisely *what* the truth *is*, so as to *disclose* it *unequivocally* is problematic [keeping in mind here that Socrates expects that those who know do not differ in what they know (*Alcibiades 1*, 111b)].

Granted, the parrhesiast's counsel is meaningful and compelling only to the extent that indeed he speaks the truth. *A pari*, Socrates' counsel to the Athenians is morally and politically compelling *only* to the extent that indeed *he* speaks *the truth*, even if this is interpreted by his interlocutor as a subversion of the authority of ancestral custom. Even today it can be said, reasonably so, that one's counsel in any setting of the political is compelling only to the extent that one speaks the truth. One cannot take the opinion of the many at face value or as guide to the formation of oneself as moral subject, whatever else that opinion entails for one's formation as political subject of a given *politeia*. Yet, if it is *necessary* to follow the truth, as Foucault says, compliance with this standard is surely exceptionally difficult (to say the least), even when the opinion to be had is that of the few or the one (as with Socrates). The truth, when it is had, is unequivocal in what it discloses to human understanding. Yet, human existence, as the

40 Ibid, 104-105.

object of *aesth sis* and *orthodoxía*, is fully equivocal. Human affairs are confounded daily by ignorance, error, and semblance. Answers to fundamental questions thus inevitably amount all too often to "likely" stories rather than having the status of demonstrably apodictic truths.

Faced with equivocal life, faced with equivocal answers to fundamental questions, one immersed in the politics of the day may then surrender to either epistemological skepticism or misology, unless one is prepared to engage the epistemological task that is central to all veridiction. But, one who takes on the task of veridiction cannot reasonably surrender to either skepticism or misology. He *must* speak the truth, *to displace the false* that manifests itself in ignorance, error, and semblance. The interlocutor's moral responsibility first and foremost *for his character* (which is to say, for his ēthos) remains a duty even if he is ignorant, in error, or subjected to a semblance he may not even recognize to be such. He must not be satisfied with "likely stories". However, *homología*—mutual agreement about what is engaged by reason, a commitment to good discourse against bad/false discourse—is not necessarily agreement about the truth, although that is the aspiration. When he engages his mission in the service of the god Apollo, going to individuals in private to instruct them about the importance of care for their souls, Socrates does so because he *believes* them to be either ignorant or in error about matters that affect their souls. What is not immediately evident in the interpretation of the Platonic text is to what extent Socrates's discourse and his actions are in fact a contest with *semblance* (*eid lon*). That is clearly an abiding concern; for, the Athenians are confused about Socrates and the sophists. They are unclear who *appears* to be a good man but *is not* and who *appears* to be a wicked man but *is not*. Hence, it is the combination of ignorance, error, and semblance that requires Socrates to engage the Athenians in private rather than in public, in the following sense.

In the *Apology*, Socrates debates with Meletus and presents an argument about whether Socrates corrupts the young men of Athens intentionally (thus out of ill will) or unintentionally (thus as mere error). Socrates makes clear the requisite consequential action: (A) If it is true that he corrupts the young intentionally, then indeed this is *a matter of law*; and, Socrates should be brought to the court where guilt or innocence is adjudicated and punishment rendered accordingly as a public matter, thus as a matter of politics as usual (*ta politika pragmata*). But, (B) if it is true that Socrates corrupts the young men of Athens unintentionally, then it is Meletus's responsibility—*as a moral subject* and not as a political subject—*to instruct Socrates in private*, since this is a matter of morality and not law. In short, Socrates contraposes the legal/political subject and the moral subject in his own person, the

requirement of justice to be disposed accordingly.

However, the point here is not really Socrates' guilt or innocence (Socrates says in the *Theaetetus* (151d) that he does not remove silliness from men out of ill will). The point is instead that of Socrates's ethical relation to the many (*hoi polloi*) in Athens, who are immersed uncritically in the distinction of ruler and ruled and practice their politics according to the dictate of the extant *politeia*. Do the many really *not* corrupt the young men of Athens, contrary to Meletus's opinion that all except Socrates improve the young? And, if indeed it is true that the many do corrupt the young men of Athens, do they do so intentionally (i.e., as a matter of ill will) or unintentionally (out of ignorance, error, or semblance)? Socrates's answer, manifest in his own actions, is that the many do corrupt the young of Athens, but *they do so unintentionally*, in which case Socrates does what justice requires of a moral subject: *He instructs the Athenians*—especially those who claim they have knowledge—*in private*; and he avoids all counsel to the public via the usual assemblies and the courts since that is a political act.

There is a well-known problem here, however. How is it that Socrates performs as a parrhesiast, himself supposedly declaring the truth as Foucault says, when, contrary to this presumption, Plato has Socrates assert (e.g., *Theaetetus* 149b) that he is first and foremost only *midwife* to the truth? (Or, on the contrary, is there a paradox to be explained, viz., that Socrates actually does not meet the criteria for intellectual midwifery (maieutics) and thus cannot really be an intellectual midwife?)[41] That is, Socrates works as midwife to *truths that are not his own* but which are to be delivered through dialectical engagement with the mind of the other, be he poet, statesman, craftsman, or young man of Athens. If he is successful in his practice of midwifery—the practice of dialectic representing the intellectual struggle for delivery of the truth, just as the midwife struggles for a live birth delivery—then Socrates delivers a live birth rather than a stillborn. But, what is delivered is not his own. Socrates says, in the *Theaetetus*, that he himself is unproductive of wisdom (*sophía*); and, moreover, that there has been no offspring of his mind (*psychē*) of the kind, and so he does not know anything that others know (or, as the case may be in the interlocution, claim to know but do not know).

Hence, Socrates can deliver a live birth *if and only if* the interlocutor (*not* Socrates) is possessed of the truth ("pregnant") that is being sought. And, in that case, *it is the interlocutor* and not Socrates who has the potential of being the parrhesiast. The interlocutor declares either the truth or what appears to be the truth, the disclosure of which is facilitated by

41 See here, R.G. Wengert, "The Paradox of the Midwife", *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 5 (1988), 3-10.

Socrates' method of dialectic practiced as maieutics. The same point is made in *Alcibiades 1* when Socrates clarifies that, whatever is being said between him and Alcibiades, it is the latter who is the speaker. For, the general principle, Socrates asserts, is that when there's a question and an answer, the one saying things is the one who answers (113a) and so declares what is true, seemingly true, or false. One would have to conclude, then, contrary to Foucault's estimate of Socrates's discourse, that veridiction is not identifiable to Socrates himself. It is, if it is to be had at all, properly that of his interlocutor. It seems that in none of the dialogues does one find the interlocutor successfully delivered of the truth. Therefore, it is doubtful whether veridiction (such as Foucault construes it) is plausible in the context of the *politeia* of 5th century BCE Athens—certainly not to be given by *hoi polloi*, seemingly not by the individual interlocutor who claims to know and is then shown not to know according to Socrates's elenchus.

But, it may be, as Foucault rightly suspects, that it is in Plato's *Laches* that one is to find some resolution to this ambiguity. In this dialogue, Socrates asks, "Who are our teachers?" and he clarifies immediately that this means, "What is virtue?" This linkage underscores the central epistemological question: Can virtue be taught? The example given here is Laches himself, who is "quite sure that he knows what courage is, *if he could only tell*" (italics added). And, indeed, this is the key question: Can any Athenian "tell" in the sense of delivering an *infallibly true* answer, i.e., a veridiction? Here we have Socrates having the opportunity to practice his midwifery, with Laches *believing* himself possessed of the truth about courage ("For I fancy that I do know the nature of courage")—*if only he could tell*, if only he can declare it, if only he can speak the truth, if only he can deliver it: "but, somehow or other," Laches says, "she has slipped away from me, and I cannot get hold of her and tell her nature". In short, Laches may himself be the parrhesiast in this interlocution as he seeks to speak the truth about courage, about what improves the youth, which means about how they are to be instructed so as to become virtuous. Thus, the opening assumption here is that virtue (initially only in the sense of courage, which Socrates holds to be part of virtue) can be taught.

Laches opines that, "every one who is occupied with public affairs…[is] apt to be negligent and careless of their own children and their private concerns." 'Public affairs' here is, in the (transliterated) Greek, "*ta t n all n pragmata*," the latter understood (as noted earlier) to be the usual engagements in the public assemblies and thereby distinct from private affairs. Yet, if one is truly concerned for the improvement of youth, including one's own, then one ought not to be either negligent or careless about their instruction in virtue, even if one is

mostly engaged in the public affairs of the *polis*. This is, of course, the point of Socrates' life mission exercised in private. In the *Laches*, Socrates is asked to offer his "opinion" in a way such as to make a decision about the truth, given the disagreement about the value of this or that art that teaches courage. They have need of an arbiter. But here, as elsewhere in other dialogues, Socrates first asks whether it is the opinion of the majority that is to be accepted; and, he argues so as to show that this opinion is not to be preferred over the opinion of the one who is trained and exercised under a skillful master. It seems, then, we have here another reference to the master-craftsman/apprentice relation such as underscores Foucault's concept of ēthopoiēsis. The standard of decision is clear: "a good decision is based on knowledge and not on numbers"—the knowledge had by one and not the opinions had by *hoi polloi*. Yet, one must be careful not to fall into error or to succumb to a ready semblance in the interlocution: One who is trained and exercised under a skillful master, yet has only opinion (*doxa*), diverts from the standard that is knowledge (*epistem*).

Accordingly, the task is to determine who has this knowledge. Here the art to be had is a matter of knowledge and practice, and derives from "the best teachers" of the art. The "knowledge" under examination here is *techn* , a craft, or knowledge in the sense of "knowing how." The question to be decided is whether the knowledge of virtue (in this case, proper care for the soul of the youth) is to be gained from the knowledge and practice of *techniques* as *taught* by the best of *craftsmen*. The practice of virtue, then, is, on this point of view, a matter of knowing how, as with any craft transmitted from master to apprentice. However, this matter, Socrates opines, is to be decided according to the end (*telos*) or purpose in view. One who professes to teach virtue must demonstrate first *in his own person* that he has accomplished the end or purpose in view. He must show that he himself is a master craftsman. One who professes to *teach* virtue, then, must *be* virtuous, demonstrating through his own actions the unity of his knowledge and practice of virtue. He must show that he accomplishes in himself the end or purpose of *being* virtuous, which is to say also, show that he is *really* (and not apparently) a good man. The "proof" must be evident both in the master and the apprentice who is taught the craft, if indeed it is to be demonstrated that virtue can be taught.

But precisely here is posed the problem of Socrates himself; for, he says, "I am the first to confess that *I have never had a teacher of the art of virtue…*" This claim coincides with that in the *Meno* where he tells Meno he has never met anyone in Athens who knows what virtue is (that would, of course, include the sophists who claim to know virtue and to be able to teach it, as in the case of Meno). More important to the interpretive task here, Socrates admits,

"and to this day I have never been able *to discover the art myself…*" Socrates here points to two ways in which the truth of virtue may be garnered: (1) through being taught, or (2) through self-discovery consequent to self-examination. Given his own testimony (and taking it to be *a declaration of truth*, a veridiction and not a statement made in ignorance, in error, or in semblance), one may reasonably conclude that Socrates is (a) neither himself a master of virtue nor (b) an apprentice to a master having knowledge of virtue. On this line of argument it is not true that Socrates has knowledge of virtue so as to disclose the truth of that virtue. Socrates cannot, then, be the parrhesiast who discloses the truth of virtue (i.e., the truth that belongs to virtue and the truth about virtue). I submit: Foucault's proposition that Socrates is parrhesiast par excellence is then unsupported on this line of argument.

Socrates allows, however, that he and his interlocutors Nicias and Laches may yet themselves discover "such skill" if they have no ready teacher. Hence, *as a general rule, any one person can himself discover the skill according to which the soul is improved, even if he has no ready teacher of that skill.* This is a salient claim that signals a special condition of epistemological discovery. Knowledge of virtue is thus not essentially, not necessarily, a matter of a master-apprentice relationship. Hence, it is not a matter of an imparted *techn* . And, *if* an individual does discover that skill, *then* he can improve his own soul thereby, thus demonstrating *in his own conduct* the evidence that is the performance of his knowledge. Said otherwise, as Laches puts it, a man who discourses on virtue opens himself to a comparison between his words and his performance. One expects that there should be found here a harmony and correspondence between the words professed and the deeds performed. Such is the first manifestation, the first disclosure, of the truth about oneself.

Accordingly, the evidence of knowledge of virtue is not in the saying but in the doing, not in the word but in the deed. Measuring Socrates's conduct, his deeds—without having knowledge of Socrates's words—Laches attests to "free and noble sentiments" being "natural" to Socrates. Here we must consider then, whether, despite what he says about himself to the contrary, Socrates has indeed *discovered* virtue such as to attest to it *through his interlocution*, i.e., through the skill that is the dialectic, so as, thereby, to *perform* it and hence manifest the harmony of his words and deeds. His sentiments are both free and noble not by nurture (i.e., from being taught by another who is already master), but "by nature". Virtue may then be known either in its *origin* (*archê*) or in its *end* (*telos*) (i.e., in the purpose accomplished or manifested in the given individual). But, if so, then is this *a matter of self-discovery*, i.e., a matter of *discovery of a skill one gives oneself*, if Socrates is not himself conscious of his own conduct so as to be able to *declare himself* a virtuous man?

Consider: Laches is prepared to discuss the matter with Socrates on condition: "Socrates must be willing to allow that he is a good teacher…" If Lysimachus be understood (by those of us engaged with interpretation of this text), at issue here is not whether Socrates is a good teacher; instead, whatever he is to "teach," Socrates must "find out *from Nicias and Laches*" what *they* want to know. In short, again, the knowledge is to be had *from the pupils*, not from the teacher, *not from Socrates*, although it is granted initially that Socrates *may qualify* as a good teacher. This is what remains to be demonstrated in the practice of the dialectic with or without the result of elenchus. Thus, Socrates guides the discourse without himself professing to deliver this knowledge. In guiding the discourse, in the sense of his own intellectual labor, Socrates performs as a midwife, helping to deliver the truth sought, i.e., the knowledge of virtue. The discourse is about *how* "the gift of virtue may be imparted" to the sons of Laches and Nicias "for the improvement of their minds". The answer to this question depends, however, on whether those immersed in this discussion "first know the nature of virtue." But, if they do not know the nature of virtue, then they should at least *presume* that they know—such is Socrates' recommendation. That is in and of itself a rather curious counsel, since to presume that one knows is to believe that one knows even if one does not really know. To presume one knows when in fact one does not know is a faulty ignorance at best and hubris at worst, since it seems it is better to be conscious of one's ignorance and to claim as much. After all, in the *Meno* Socrates speaks of his complete ignorance, although he actually is better off for his conscious ignorance—knowing that he does not know. Whatever they in the *Laches* know or presume to know, they must be able to tell, to declare, to speak; and what they know or presume to know must be true in declaration rather than false. They must, in short, be (or aspire to be) parrhesiasts—speaking the truth, performing acts of veridiction—*if only they could tell.*

Midwifery, in the usual sense of the word, is a craft, a skill, a *techn*; and Socrates' midwifery, in the figurative sense, must be such that Socrates *can say* and *say truly* whatever he delivers in in his own word. But more so, Socrates must *show* through his performance in the dialectical engagement of his interlocutors that he is a master midwife, which is to say, that *he is a master dialectician. If* (1) he is a master of the dialectic, (2) exercising the dialectic is the performance of a craft, and (3) Socrates relates to his interlocutor as a master relates to an apprentice, *then* the outcome (*telos*) *must be* that the pupil engaged in dialectic subsequently and consequently *shows himself* in due time to be a master dialectician. And, yet again, having

become a master dialectician and performing accordingly, this same pupil must then transmit that skill to others, the skill transmitted whenever he engages others in discourse, whatever the theme of inquiry but especially about virtue. The method of dialectic as employed by Socrates is a means of examining what others know or presume to know. However, *prior* to transmitting that skill to others, following the rule of practice, *the master dialectician must first examine himself*, being clear about what he knows and what he presumes to know, even if, in the end or *in medias res*, he declares his complete ignorance or his conscious ignorance. It is in this sense that the master dialectician may be said truly "to know himself" (*gn thi sauton*).

A master dialectician must be able to put forward *his questions* to the novice *in a masterful way*, not putting the question badly, as Socrates says. But, given the initial answers from his interlocutors, Socrates admits that sometimes he gets a bad answer precisely because he puts the question to them badly. That is to say, on some occasions Socrates' technique of dialectic is admittedly flawed. Similarly, if the midwife's technique is flawed during the mother's labor, there may be no live birth; there may be a miscarriage; or, a birth with complications caused to the newborn through a negligent or faulty technique. That is, it might well turn out to be a live birth, but one that shows a harm or injury done from the poor exercise of the midwife's technique. And, clearly, since it is highly unlikely that a midwife engages in the craft with malice aforethought, i.e., with the intention to do harm in the performance of the craft, therefore if harm is done, it is unwilling, unintentional. Harm or injury done is a consequence of either ignorance or negligence, though it is to be expected *as a matter of* course—which is to say, as a matter of habitually good practice—that the good midwife causes no harm at all.

Accordingly, if Socrates's dialectical skill is flawed in his effort to assist Nicias and Laches in the discovery of the knowledge of virtue, then there will be no knowledge to be had. That is, they will not be delivered of *their* knowledge; or, at best, they will be delivered of a correct opinion (*orthodoxía*) only, this being the most to be had through the assistance of the midwife. But, "the most" to be had here, despite it not being "the best," is nonetheless to be taken as something *good*; for, it is surely better to have *correct* opinion than to have either no opinion or a false opinion. For example, when he engages Laches about the meaning of 'courage' Socrates asks: "What is that common quality, which is the same in all these cases, and which is called courage?" Laches shows that he understands Socrates' query about 'common quality' to mean "the universal nature;" and Socrates then agrees that this is indeed a *correct* understanding of the question which then allows for a prospectively correct answer. A correct opinion approximates, but does not yet satisfy, Socrates; so that, courage cannot be only "a sort of endurance of the soul" (Laches' first answer to the question). In short, whatever the example in question, the point applies to the philosophical task of discovering an answer to a question.

Hence, Socrates clarifies that the "principle of endurance" applies especially to the dialectical process: In the same way an athlete must have endurance in the performance of his sport, so those involved in the dialectic of discovery must have endurance in the performance of the dialectic even if it involves elenchus. Whoever speaks in this regard must have "reason on his side" if there is to be agreement among the interlocutors, of course; and, where reason is lacking on one side but present on the other, then there is both opportunity and duty of the one with reason to instruct. Socrates in present case instructs by way of *his opinion*, given as such, thus: "For *I say that* justice, temperance, and the like are all of them parts of virtue…" (italics added) According to the rules in the performance of the dialectic, Laches and Nicias are either to agree with Socrates or to set him right on this point, i.e., to accept this opinion as correct (thus, as *orthodoxía*) or to alter it such that the opinion eventually delivered into agreement is correct; for, Socrates admits to having only opinion (*doxa*) about virtue but not knowledge (*epistem*) of virtue. Importantly, if he admits to having opinion, those in dialogue must assess whether the opinion is that of complete ignorance (thus not knowing whether it is true or false) or of mere conjecture (being possibly true, possibly false), or correct opinion such that one can give reason for belief (thus, a justified true belief).

But, it is salient to the argument under review that, to the extent he admits to an opinion and shares it, Socrates is not thereby *in that moment* performing in the role of midwife. Instead, he is manifesting his own "pregnancy" of mind. And, to keep to the analogy, (a) his own prospective live birth of "truth" is evident, presumably, where there is reasonable agreement with the interlocutor or (b) stillborn delivery is evident, presumably, where there is a refusal of the opinion and instruction must be provided to remove the false opinion. But, by the end of the *Laches*, Socrates is clear that he possesses no knowledge of the matter in which both Nicias and Laches seem to be ignorant. He shares their perplexity while welcoming the opportunity to share in the same education that is to be given to the youth, *assuming a good teacher is to be found*. This is the same situation one encounters in Socrates's engagement of Meno, where both are reduced to perplexity without resolution.

Yet, precisely here the unsettled presumption is nonetheless that virtue can be taught, although it is unclear throughout this discourse whether the knowledge of virtue is a matter of *techn* in the strict sense of a master-apprentice relationship and the instruction that occurs in that mode of teaching. More important, we are left with the question whether it is correct

to begin the quest for knowledge of virtue by trying to find a good teacher in the sense of someone other than oneself who is already a master. Indeed, the argument may well turn here, in an important way, i.e., with Plato's doctrine of *anamn sis* now having its centrality in the resolution of the matter at issue, whatever the dialogue under examination. The assumption (thus, the opinion) with which the *Laches* concludes, is therefore, simply incorrect. The epistemological task is not to find a teacher of virtue in the sense of the master-apprentice model. Instead, the epistemological task for one seeking to understand the nature of virtue is *to examine himself* consistent with *his own power of recollection*, thereby to "discover" and in this way to "disclose" (un-cover, un-conceal) the truth (*al theia*) of virtue. The "teacher" then is not some other person who is a learned master, but one's own *logos*, one's own rationality; and this *logos* is first and foremost a rationality that which belongs to recollection. Assuming one recollects and discloses the truth, then one's duty is to engage others *in private* (and not in public) with a view to a mutual disclosure of the truth of virtue, just as Socrates, Nicias, and Laches attempt in their private encounter, despite the initially wrong assumption that they must find a teacher.

The foregoing view is supported by the text of the *Meno* (80d). There Meno asks Socrates directly how he proposes to search for the nature of virtue when *he does not know at all what it is*, and when seemingly *he cannot even recognize it if he does discover it* precisely because he does not know it. Here *re*-cognition is grounded in cognition, recognition being the recollection of knowledge. Thus, knowledge, if it is to be had, is first and foremost a matter of *anamn sis* and not *techn* , such as was presupposed by Nicias and Laches as they sought a teacher for their sons. They have the task of recollection of virtue if they desire to become virtuous, given that "knowledge is virtue" in the dual sense that one must have knowledge (*eidénai*) about virtue and one having knowledge is thereby virtuous. However, if the outcome of the dialectic such as employed by Socrates in the process of recollection yields at best correct opinion or justified true belief, then the truth sought is subject to some further or ongoing process of justification. This justification of belief, presumably, is the possible certification of the truth that belongs to the dialectic. Until there is a certification from the dialectic, the belief is merely opinion and cannot approach to knowledge (*no sis*) as such. Socrates understands that the interlocutors must move from *perception* of the many particulars of the visible world (i.e., *aesth sis*) to the intellectual insight (*nous*) of the unity of form (*eidos*). That is the proper object of the soul, if knowledge is to be had.

Conclusion

In light of the foregoing line of reasoning, Foucault is correct to argue that the Socratic *parrh sia*:

> does not consist in questioning someone on his antecedents, as it were, in the lineage of tradition which enables knowledge to be handed down, nor does it consist in questioning him, downstream as it were, on the works he has performed thanks to his expertise. He will be asked *to give an account of himself*, that is to say, *to show the relationship between himself and logos (reason).* How do things stand with you and *logos*, *can you justify yourself*, can you give the *logos* of yourself? It is not a question of competence [in the sense of being a master of a craft], it is not a question of technique [mere *techn*], it is not a question of teachers [other than oneself], or of works [in the sense of the products of technique]. Of what is it a question? It is a question—and the text [the *Laches*] says this a bit further on—of *the way in which one lives* (*hontina tropon te z*).[42]

To give an account of oneself (*didonai peri heauto logon*) is the essential function of the interlocution in the intellectual labor of dialectic. It is not merely to engage a concept, e.g., justice or courage, for the sake of some discursive conceptual understanding. Instead, the interlocutor gives an account of himself through the interlocution—an account of what he knows and does not know, of what he opines as correct or as false opinion, of the presence or absence of ethical formation (ēthopoiēsis), of his moral excellence (*arête*) as one who takes care of himself (*epimeleia*) through his practices, and who in his practices is self-sufficiently self-ruling (*autarchos*) as a moral subject, whatever his political formation (i.e., whatever his commitment to the public affairs as dictated by the particular *politeia* in which he is daily immersed). One gives this account in one's practice of freedom: for, as Foucault answers in interview, "what is ethics, if not the practice of freedom, the conscious *[rijlkhie]* practice of freedom?"[43]

Giving an account of oneself in this sense, then, is the way in which one demonstrates one's intellectual capacity for recollection of virtue, for recognition of the unity of virtue, for (re)discovery of the virtues in their unity and harmony, and thereby for disclosure of what

42 Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 144 [italics added].

43 Foucault, "The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom," *Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth*, 284.

cannot be "taught" but, instead, what must be disclosed and practiced in and as *a dialectic of the self*. This dialectic, undertaken as the self-examination that is the daily counsel of Socrates to all whom he engages in dialogue in private, constitutes (in the sense of "spiritual *politeia*") the ēthos of self-governance. And, this ēthos stands to be disclosed as an account (*logos*) of the individual as potentially a "good man," always in contrast to an account of the individual who discloses himself merely as a "good citizen" engaged in the public affairs (*ta politika pragmata*) of the *polis*. If one is a good man, then he qualifies to be a good ruler: "And the good ruler is precisely one who exercises his power as it ought to be exercised, that is, simultaneously exercising his power over himself. And it is the power over oneself that thus regulates one's power over others."[44]

It is in this sense, and in this sense alone then, that Foucault may argue that Socrates is the parrhesiast *par excellence*. It is in this sense, then, that Socrates works in private to take care of himself (the task and duty of *epimeleia*) and to improve others (imparting goodness), according to the principle announced at the beginning of the *Laches*: "one must question the way in which one lives, even when one is old, and throughout one's life."[45] Indeed, to do that throughout the course of one's life is to be, demonstrably in one's conduct and not only in one's words, *parrhesiast* truly: In that way one is clear that daily one ought not live in contradiction with oneself, but speak and act only from what one's knowledge discloses—for oneself and for others—as the obligation of veridiction.

44 Foucault, *Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth*, p. 288. Foucault adds later (p. 293) in this discussion, "the care of the self appears a pedagogical, ethical, and also ontological condition for the development of a good ruler. To constitute oneself as a governing subject implies that one has constituted oneself as a subject who cares for oneself."

45 Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 153.