


LIFE AS A SCANDAL OF TRUTH: MICHEL FOUCAULT'S PHILOSOPHICAL TESTAMENT

 <https://doi.org/10.56238/sevened2024.029-049>

Lucas Nogueira do Rêgo Monteiro Villa Lages¹

ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze the last course taught by Michel Foucault at the Còllege de France, in 1984, extracting from it a kind of philosophical testament. I begin by seeking to emerge from this Foucaultian self-writing a parrhesiastical accountability, in which Foucault speaks frankly about the dimensions of his work and his horizon of concern with the intertwining of three major themes: truth, power and the subject. Subsequently, I analyze how these three themes are linked by Foucault around the central issue of his last course: *parrhesia*. I expose the development of the concept of *parrhesia* in connection with the theme of true life in the Socratic-Platonic tradition, in Cynicism and in primitive Christianity to, in the end, conclude that Foucault leaves us a vast legacy, including the legacy-mission of, from the tradition opened by Cynicism, promoting a rereading of the history of philosophy no longer as a metaphysics of the soul, but as an aesthetics of existence.

Keywords: *Parrhesia*. Self-Care. Foucault. Cynicism. Aesthetics of Existence.

¹ Post-Doctorate from Universität Hamburg, Germany. Doctor in Law from Uniceub. Master in Philosophy from the Federal University of Piauí. Professor at the Federal University of Piauí, assigned to the Department of Legal Sciences, in the Graduate Program in Philosophy (Master's and Doctorate) and in the Professional Master's Degree in Philosophy.

Affiliation: Professor at the Federal University of Piauí - UFPI. Teresina, Piauí, Brazil.

E-mail: lucasvilla@ufpi.edu.br

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1771-7107>

LATTES: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/1680393644793054>



INTRODUCTION

Between February 1 and March 28, 1984, Michel Foucault taught his last course at the *Collège de France*, entitled "The Courage of Truth" (FOUCAULT, 2011). On June 25 of the same year he died of AIDS (at a time when little was known about the disease). There is, as perceived by Frederic Grós (In: FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 303), a temptation to see this last course as a kind of philosophical testament. It seems to me that this temptation is justified.

In those last lectures, Foucault resumed themes with which he had been involved since the beginning of the eighties² and which marked the ethical dimension of his final philosophy: the processes of subjectivation and veridiction (telling the truth), the care of the self, *parrhesia* (frank speech) and the philosophical life (*bíos philosophikós*). He takes them up, however, in a new, subtly autobiographical sense, which signals two concerns: 1) to give an account of his work as a philosopher (and, perhaps, of his philosophical life); and 2) leaving a legacy and a philosophical mission. To put an end to these concerns, he inserts a new element of analysis: cynicism, cynical life (*bíos kynikós*).

In this article, I intend to articulate two facets of the subliminal writing of the self that emerges from the final course of this parrhesiast Foucault, who seems to want to say, without veils, a truth-of-the-self. To this end, I begin with the French philosopher's primary concern, already in the classes of February 1, 1984: to explain the three dimensions of his work, showing how the "phases" of the archaeology of knowledge, the genealogy of power and ethics (or the techniques of the self) are related to each other. Later, I dedicate myself to the analysis of the concept of *parrhesia* in classical antiquity, especially from the Socrates of the Platonic dialogues. Foucault will argue that it is possible to find the root of two different Western philosophical traditions, based on the theme of Socratic-Platonic truth-telling: a metaphysics of the soul, inaugurated in "Alcibiades I" (Plato, 2022), and an aesthetics of existence, which can be extracted from "Laches" (Plato, 2016). Then, I analyze the *cynical parrhesia* and the experience of scandal that, in cynicism, takes the tradition of the aesthetics of existence to the extreme, transvaluing true life into another life. I also deal with *parrhesia* in primitive Christianity, a point where Foucault prematurely interrupts his history of the aesthetics of existence.

In the end, I propose to extract from this intellectual testament of Michel Foucault, in addition to the philosophical heritage bequeathed, a mission that the French thinker left open, to be continued by others: to reinvent the narrative of Western thought, no longer as

² Check, for example, the courses of the years 1980 (FOUCAULT, 2014), 1981 (FOUCAULT, 2016), 1982 (FOUCAULT, 2006) and 1983 (FOUCAULT, 2010) at *the Collège de France*, as well as volumes II (FOUCAULT, 2007a), III (FOUCAULT, 2007b) and IV (FOUCAULT, 2021) of the *History of Sexuality*.



a history of the metaphysics of the soul, but in the form of a history of the aesthetics of existence, of life as possible beauty.

ACCOUNTABILITY, SELF-WRITING AND *PARRHESIA*: "ABOVE ALL, DO NOT CONFUSE ME"

Sensing, perhaps, the abrupt end of his intellectual activities, Nietzsche, in 1888, his last year of lucidity, submerged himself in a creative whirlwind. Among the various works written that year is "*Ecce homo*", a kind of intellectual autobiography. In the prologue, the German philosopher justifies that exercise of writing about oneself: "in these circumstances there is a duty (...) which is to say: *Listen to me! For I am such and such. Above all, don't confuse me!*" (NIETZSCHE, 2008, p. 15). It seems that, in his last course, Foucault (2011) is moved by the same spirit of self-clarification and accountability. He wants to be understood, he wants to give meaning to the global project in which his production is inserted, so that we do not speak of isolated "phases" of his thought as if there were, among them, more ruptures than continuities. Above all, he wants not to be confused³.

It is a common interpretation that Foucault's work can, chronologically, be divided into three moments: 1) an archaeological phase, concerned with the production of knowledge; 2) a genealogical phase, concerned with the exercise of power; and 3) an ethical phase, concerned with the practices of subjectivation (GRÓS, 2007; ARAÚJO, 2004; VEIGA-NETO, 2003). Already in the first class of his final course, returning to the theme of *parrhesia*, Foucault seeks to clarify that these supposed "phases" of his thought are not independent, they are all articulated around the same task, which he states has always been his job: "The articulation between the modes of veridiction, the techniques of governmentality and the practices of the self is, basically, what I have always tried to do" (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 9). He continues, explaining his craft:

And you are seeing that, insofar as it is a question of analyzing the relationships between modes of veridiction, techniques of governmentality and forms of self-practice, the presentation of research as well as an attempt to reduce knowledge to power, to make knowledge the mask of power, in structures where the subject has no place, it cannot be more than pure and simple caricature. On the contrary, it is an analysis of the complex relations between three distinct elements, which are not reduced to each other, which do not absorb each other, but whose relations are constitutive of each other. These three elements are: knowledge, studied in the specificity of its veridiction; the relations of power, studied not as an emanation of a substantial and invasive power, but in the procedures by which the conduct of men is governed; and, finally, the modes of constitution of the subject through the practices of the self. It is by making this triple theoretical shift – from the theme of

³ It is true that the singularity of "*Ecce homo*" goes beyond that of a simple rendering of accounts and that Foucault had the habit of referring, in the first classes of his courses, not only in "The Courage of Truth", to his previous works, but it seems that a certain parrhesiastical tone finds, in these authors, its climax precisely in these two works.



knowledge to the theme of veridiction, from the theme of domination to the theme of governmentality, from the theme of the individual to the theme of the practices of the self – that it is possible, so it seems to me, to study the relations between truth, power and subject, without ever reducing them to each other (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 10).

The relations between truth, power and subject: this is Foucault's perennial concern, and it is by returning to the theme of *Greek parrhesia* that he synthesizes the three key elements of his thought: "*Parrhesia* (...) It is etymologically the activity that consists of saying everything: *pan rēma*. (...) The parrhesiast is the one who says everything" (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 10). Around this theme of frank speech, of truth-telling (veridiction) about everything, including oneself, the issues of allurgy (production of truth), governmentality (government of others) and subjectivity (government of the self) will be intertwined. Foucault (2011, p. 59) goes so far as to argue that there are, in the practice of *parrhesia*, three poles, which coincide precisely with the three dimensions of his philosophical work: 1) truth (*alétheia*); 2) the government (*politeía*); 3) the formation of the subject (*ethos*).

The problem of truth, present in the title of his final course, is, in fact, the guiding thread of Foucault's production, which could be described, as Cesar Candiotto (2006) suggests, as "a critical history of truth". There was, in Greco-Roman culture, a great principle: it is necessary to tell the truth about oneself (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 5). *Parrhesia* is precisely the practice of speaking frankly and sincerely (CASTRO, 2023, p. 213), of saying everything, bluntly, of telling the truth, including about oneself. This practice, however, is not a solitary activity. It requires the other, an interlocutor, be it a philosopher, a teacher, a friend, a lover. This other necessary for truth-telling, in antiquity, is precisely the figure of the *parrhesiast*, who finds in Socrates, as we shall see, his model par excellence.

Already in his 1983 course, Foucault (2010) had paid attention to the fact that the notion of *parrhesia* is initially founded on a political dimension. He dedicated that course ("The government of oneself and others") to this analysis of *parrhesia as a political concept*. In "The Courage of Truth", however, he returns to the theme of *parrhesia as an ancient history of the practices of telling-the-truth about oneself* (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 9). Initially, Foucault draws attention to the fact that, already in antiquity, *parrhesia* could be valued both positively and negatively. In Aristophanes, for example, the term is associated with the figure of the chatterbox, the loudmouth, the one who says anything about anything, without indexing his discourse to principles of rationality and truth. In a positive sense, *parrhesia* is the telling of the truth, without dissimulation, reserve or rhetorical ornament that can cipher or mask it – it is the saying of everything attached to the truth (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 11).



In this positive sense of the term, which is what Foucault (2011) will be interested in, *parrhesia* will depend on four conditions: 1) saying everything; 2) telling the truth; 3) saying what you think (not paying lip service); 4) taking a risk. It is precisely in the fourth condition that we find the justification for the title of the course: the courage of truth. The parrhesiast needs to have the necessary courage to face at least two great dangers arising from his practice of telling the truth: 1) the danger of breaking the bond of fundamental intimacy he has with his interlocutor, by telling him uncomfortable truths; 2) the physical danger, which can affect one's own life, when telling uncomfortable truths to the polis or the sovereign. Thus, *parrhesia* finds in rhetoric and flattery its two greatest enemies. In rhetoric there is no link of belief between the speaker and what is said, but it is intended to establish a link between what is said and the one to whom the speech is addressed - the speaker wants to make the interlocutor believe in something in which he himself does not necessarily believe. In *parrhesia*, there is an inseparable bond between the one who says and what is said, in addition to the risk of breaking the bond between the one who speaks and the one who listens, due to a certain effect of offending the truth. In flattery, on the other hand, the speaker says only what the interlocutor intends to hear, without any commitment to the truth and, above all, without any courage to expose to danger the existing bond with the listener - on the contrary, the flattering speech is intended not to tell the truth, but to strengthen the bond with the interlocutor.

In addition to *parrhesia*, according to Foucault (2011), there are three other fundamental modalities of veridiction (telling the truth): prophecy, wisdom, and technique (teaching). The characteristics of the prophet that differentiate him from the parrhesiast are the fact that: 1) he does not speak in his name, he is a spokesman/intermediary (the parrhesiast speaks in his own name); 2) he tells the future to men (the parrhesiast shows men the present of themselves); 3) speaks through riddles (the parrhesiast, of course, leaves nothing to interpret). In turn, the characteristics of the wise man are the fact that he: 1) speaks in his own name (just like the parrhesiast); 2) it is structurally silent, it does not need to speak (unlike the parrhesiast, who has the duty to tell the truth); 3) their answers can be cryptic (like the prophet, as opposed to the parrhesiast); 4) it talks about the truth of being (the parrhesiast talks about the truth of what the interlocutor is). The (technical) teacher, in turn, is the one who: 1) does not take any risk (unlike the parrhesiast, who puts himself in danger); 2) it ensures the survival of knowledge received by another teacher and that will be, in the future, passed on by another. In the words of Foucault (2011, p. 24/25):

The parrhesiast is not the prophet who tells the truth by unveiling, in the name of another and enigmatically, destiny. The parrhesiast is not a sage, who, in the name of wisdom, says, when he wants and on the background of his own silence, being



and nature (a *phýsis*). The parrhesiast is not the teacher, the instructor, the man of *know-how* who says, in the name of a tradition, the *tékhne*. He therefore says neither destiny nor being nor *tékhne*. On the contrary, to the extent that he takes the risk of going to war with others, instead of solidifying, like the teacher, the traditional bond [speaking] in his own name and in all clarity, [unlike] the prophet who speaks in the name of another, [to the extent] ultimately [that he tells] the truth of what is – the truth of what is in the singular form of individuals and situations, and not the truth of the being and nature of things – well, the parrhesiast brings into play the true discourse of what the Greeks called *ethos*.

Prophecy: verdict of destiny. Wisdom: veridication of being. Teaching: veridiction of the *tékhne*. *Parrhesia*: veridiction of ethos. Here are the four fundamental forms of truth-telling. These are, however, modes of veridication that do not necessarily represent distinct characters or social roles. Often these modes combine. Socrates, for example, considered the parrhesiast par excellence, combines with *parrhesia* elements of prophecy, wisdom and teaching.

METAPHYSICS OF THE SOUL X AESTHETICS OF EXISTENCE: THE SOCRATIC-PLATONIC PARRHESIA

The theme of *parrhesia* was introduced by Foucault as early as his 1983 course at the Collège de France, entitled "The government of oneself and others" (FOUCAULT, 2010). The focus at that moment, however, was the political dimension of frank speech in antiquity. Foucault found in *parrhesia* a forgotten foundation of Athenian democracy and also a common practice of the Prince's political advisors in tyrannies. Political *parrhesia* demanded a courage of truth, because telling the truth to the polis, in democracy, and to the Prince, in tyranny, could endanger the very life of the *parrhesiast*. In "The Courage of Truth", a course from 1984, the concern is with another dimension of *parrhesia*: ethics.

Foucault (2011, p. 63) describes Socrates as the model of parrhesiast of antiquity: "Socrates is the one who has the courage to tell the truth, who accepts to risk death to tell the truth, but practicing the test of souls in the game of ironic interrogation". It introduces the theme of *ethical parrhesia* from the trilogy of the death of Socrates: the Platonic dialogues Crito, Phaedo and the Apology (Plato, 2019). This theme of death, insistently evoked under the pretext of analyzing the meaning of Socrates' death, defined as being "at the very heart of Western rationality" (FOUCAULT, p. 106), reinforces the testamentary and autobiographical character of his last course. Reflecting on the value of Socrates' philosophical life and death, Foucault invokes, between the lines, the specter of his own death and the balance of his intellectual life.

From the trilogy of the death of Socrates, especially the Apology, Foucault questions the reason for the Socratic turn from *political parrhesia* to *ethical parrhesia*: after all, why



didn't Socrates do politics? He answers: Socrates did not do politics because if he did, he would be killed. Socrates is and is not afraid of death. It is not a fear of ceasing to exist, but of not being able to abandon your divine mission before your time. This mission is precisely to take care of the other and teach the other to take care of himself (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 69).

Since his 1982 course ("The Hermeneutics of the Subject"), Foucault (2006) has been proposing a reading of Western thought based on the intertwining of two originally Socratic themes: the knowledge of the self (*gnôthi seautón*) and the care of the self (*epiméleia heautoû*). In "The Courage of Truth", he takes up the Socratic dialogues to propose, based on "Alcibiades I" and "Laches", two lines that would have conditioned different developments of philosophical thought in the West: on the one hand, a "metaphysics of the soul", on the other, an "aesthetics of existence" (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 138).

There are, between "Alcibiades I" and "Laches", points of convergence and divergence. In both dialogues, for example: 1) Socratic *parrhesia* serves to ask the interlocutors if they are capable of taking care of themselves; 2) this *parrhesia* leads the interlocutors to the conclusion that they need to take care of themselves; 3) Socrates appears as the one who is capable of taking care of others, helping them to take care of themselves. On the other hand, the two dialogues are distinguished by the fact that: 1) in Laches, Socrates practices frank speech with adults; in Alcibiades, with a young man; 2) in Laches, no conclusion is reached on the central theme (the truth of courage); in Alcibiades a conclusion is reached about what man is: his soul (*psykhé*) (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 138).

In Alcibiades (Plato, 2022), Socrates, in love with the handsome and ambitious young man who gives his name to dialogue, debates with him about his intention to perform great feats in his political career. Socrates is committed to demonstrating that, in order to take care of the things of the polis, that is, to take care of the other, one must first know how to take care of oneself: "one cannot well govern others (...) if one is not occupied with oneself" (FOUCAULT, 2006, p. 48). Taking care of oneself, however, presupposes knowing what this "self" is that one must take care of, that is, to take care of oneself one must first know oneself: "what, then, is the self that one must take care of when one says that one must take care of oneself?" (FOUCAULT, 2006, p. 50). Thus Socrates arrives at the motto of dialogue, which is the Delphic commandment of know thyself (*gnôthi seautón*): "by knowing ourselves, we will automatically know how to take care of ourselves; not knowing, but we will never know" (PLATO, 2022, p. 137). Interspersing refutation and maieutics, Socrates leads his interlocutor to discover that taking care of oneself is not taking care of



one's body, but of the soul, since man is one's soul: "*psykhês epimeletéon* (one must occupy oneself with one's own soul)" (FOUCAULT, 2006, p. 67).

The soul (*psykhé*) is the rational self that uses the body as the shoemaker uses the hammer to make shoes, as the musician uses the sitar to make music. The shoemaker, however, is not the hammer, just as the musician is not the zither. Likewise, the subject is not his body, but his rational soul (*psykhé*) (Plato, 2022, p. 142). This soul, in Plato, as is well known, belongs to another world and inhabits the body in a precarious way. The need to deal not with the body or the world that can be perceived by the body (sensible world), but with the soul and the world that can only be reached by it (intelligible world), launched in this dialogue, inaugurates the metaphysical tradition of Western thought. In Alcibiades, the role of Socratic veridiction "is to lead this soul back to the way of being and to the world that are theirs", and thus "circumscribes what will be the place of the discourse of metaphysics" (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 139).

In the "Laches", on the other hand, another dimension of Socratic veridiction emerges. In it, Lysimachus and Melesias take counsel with Laches and Nicias about the education of their children. From the outset, the dialogue reveals a tension between ethical and political care: Lysimachus and Melesias, sons of illustrious Athenians responsible for great political deeds, resent not having feats themselves that, like those of their parents, can inspire their offspring. They attribute their failure in public life to the fact that their parents, too busy taking care of the affairs of the city, neglected their children⁴.

After watching a presentation by Stesilau in which the warrior demonstrated his skill in combat with breastplates, Laches and Nicias disagree about the usefulness of this warlike knowledge for the education of young men in general and the sons of Lysimachus and Melesias in particular. For Nicias, "it is a practice whose learning proves to be beneficial in several ways to young people" (PLATÃO, 2016, p. 170). For Laques, combat with breastplates "is not worth the effort spent on its learning" (Plato, 2016, p. 173). Socrates, then, is summoned to break the tie with his vote, to which he responds by contesting the very suffragette structure of the debate: "if we want to make decisions correctly, it is by the criterion of knowledge that we must make them and not by the criterion of the greatest number" (Plato, 2016, p. 174). The confrontation of the opinions of Nicias and Laques about the master of arms had taken the form of a political-judicial debate: the

⁴ "None of us has our own feats to report. We can't help but be embarrassed in front of our boys because of this, and we blame our parents for allowing us to have an easy life when we entered our youth, while they were busy with other people's business" (Plato, 2016, p. 166). In the course manuscripts, Foucault (2011, p. 116) gives an account of this tension "between the care of others in the political form (...) and the ethical care of oneself and others".



parties presented their arguments and, after that, the votes followed. Socrates' intervention, however, promotes three transformations in the discussion: 1) the passage from the political-judicial model of discussion to the model of technical veridiction; 2) adoption of the interrogation procedure (*exétasis*) and accountability on the competence of the interlocutors; 3) displacement to the game of ethical *parrhesia* (FOUCAULT, 2011).

In the course of the dialogue, it is clear that Socrates redirects the issue of technical accountability and competence to accountability for the way one lives (*hóntina trûpon nûn te zê*). It is about understanding the relationship between the subject and reason (*lógos*). The theme of true life as philosophical life, life lived according to reason, enters the scene: "it is this domain of existence, the domain of the manner of existence, of *the tropes* of life, it is this that will constitute the field in which Socrates' discourse and *parrhesia* will be exercised" (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 126). It is no longer a metaphysics of the soul, as in *Alcibiades*, nor of technical knowledge, but of the form that is given to life. It is about submitting life to what Socrates calls the touchstone (*básanos*), which allows us to separate what is good from what is bad. *Socratic parrhesia*, in *Laches*, leads to this operation of screening life through the examination of the self, a principle of proof of life that must be pursued throughout one's existence.

And what allows Socrates to be placed in this position of touchstone, capable of examining and sorting the soul of the other, this position of master of care? Laches is the one who gives the key to understanding him: he recognizes in Socrates a harmony, a symphony between his discourse and his way of life. *Socratic parrhesia* is frank speech in accordance with the way of existing: "when the life (the *bíos*) of the speaker is in conformity, there is a symphony between someone's discourses and what that someone is, it is at that moment that I accept the discourse" (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 129). Socrates' way of saying and way of living are in harmony and conformity.

Here we arrive at a formula: "frank speech is articulated from lifestyle" (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 129). Truth-telling committed to the care of oneself and of the other is found precisely in the task of putting one's way of life to the test. This is the ethical *parrhesia*: equalization between the truth of what is said and the truth of what is done, harmony between true discourse and true life. *Socratic parrhesia*, in *Laches*, does not lead to a metaphysics of the soul, as in *Alcibiades*, but to something quite different: "it leads us to *the bíos*, to life, to existence and to the way in which this existence is conducted" (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 139). This is where another possible key to the reading of the history of philosophy is inaugurated, no longer as a metaphysics of the soul, but as an aesthetics of existence, as a stylistics of life: the construction of life as a beautiful work, as a work of art. Foucault



denounces that we have been much more concerned with making a history of philosophy as a metaphysics of the soul than as a stylistic of existence.

It is through this return to Socrates that Foucault introduces the theme of true life (*alethés bíos*), which will serve as a bridge for his analysis of cynicism and cynical life (*bíos kynikós*). He then ends his lecture on February 22, 1984 with a posthumous account of himself, declaring that he has just accomplished a task that he could not die without carrying out: "It is necessary, for a professor of philosophy, to give at least once in his life a lecture on Socrates and the death of Socrates. It's done. *Salvate animam meam*" (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 134).

LIFE AS A SCOURGE OF TRUTH: CYNICAL PARRRESIA

If, in Laques, Socrates inaugurates the articulation between way of life and truth-telling, it is the cynics, according to Foucault, who take this relationship to the extreme, making it almost insolent. Cynical *parrhesia* will always be marked by an ambivalence: on the one hand it is frank speech, on the other, it is insolent speech (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 144/145). Antisthenes, a disciple of Socrates and founder of cynicism, radicalizes *parrhesia*. Remembering that flattery is the enemy of frank speech, he used to say, using a pun filled with Socratic irony, that he preferred to be among the crows (*kórax*) than among the sycophants (*kólax*), since the former devour corpses, while the latter devour living beings (LAERCIO, 2013, p. 306).

If Plato was responsible for driving the philosophical line that leads from Socrates to the metaphysical tradition, Antisthenes, his antipode⁵, launches cynicism towards the stylistics of life. His disciple, Diogenes of Sinope, would be the greatest protagonist of this journey towards the cynical life, taking to the limit the experience of a life of detachment and scandal, in total conformity with nature and return to animality.

The history of cynicism was more a history of attitude than of doctrine. Foucault (2011, p. 156) draws attention to the fact that the cynical doctrine has practically disappeared, and that studies on movement are rare. Normally, interpreters of cynicism tend to consider individualism as its core, to which Foucault (2011, p. 158) opposes it, suggesting that what is at the core of the movement is "the form of existence as a living scandal of truth". Taking up the lives of cynical thinkers such as Antisthenes, Diogenes,

⁵ Diogenes Laertius reports on some occasions in which Antisthenes made clear his antagonism towards Plato. One of them tells that, when Plato was ill, Antisthenes went to visit him and when he saw the basin where he had vomited, he said to him: "here I see your bile, but I do not see your vanity", implying that the most famous disciple of Socrates should also expel this other harmful secretion: vanity (*typhos*) (LAERCIO, 2013, p. 308).



Crates, Hipparchia, Demonax, Demetrius and Perstus, the French philosopher outlines the diversity of the spectrum of cynicism, but also the commonalities of cynical life.

The typical portrait of the cynic is that of the man with a long, hirsute beard, disheveled hair, short cloak, bare and dirty feet, who carries a saddlebag and a staff. A subject with the air of a beggar who is always on the streets, at the doors of temples and in squares, questioning people to tell them truths that are often uncomfortable (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 171). The cynic spoke to everyone and the recruitment of disciples, in cynicism, took place outside the cultivated elites. Dio Chrysostom suggested that there are three categories of philosophers: 1) those who are silent because they think that the crowd is not capable of being convinced; 2) those who reserve their words for a select audience; 3) the cynics, who make philosophy a popular practice and speak in the streets (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 180).

Cynicism intended to prepare man for life by teaching him to free himself from what is not necessary (material goods, fame, power, vanity...) and to live in accordance with nature. More than transmitting doctrine, cynicism intended to teach how to live:

For the Cynics, philosophical teaching did not essentially have the function of transmitting knowledge, but, above all and above all, of giving the individuals who were trained an intellectual and moral training at the same time. It was a matter of arming them for life, so that they could face the events (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 181).

The Cynics banished from the domain of philosophy disciplines such as logic and physics. Everything that is difficult to understand is also unnecessary for life. That which conforms to nature stands out, without concealment⁶. The only truly philosophical discipline is morals. Promoting the reduction of life to itself, cynicism represents the shortest path to virtue, as opposed to the long path of doctrine (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 183).

Cynical pedagogy, much more than with writings or speeches, was transmitted by the example of life or through the *khreîai*, brief anecdotal accounts of the life of the Cynics. For example, the anecdotes about Diogenes, such as the account of his meeting with Alexander, who blocked his sun, are famous; the occasion when he learned from a child to drink water with his cupped hands, freeing himself from his mug; or when he threw a plucked chicken at Plato's feet – "here is your man", he said to the famous philosopher, who defined the human being as an implume biped (LAERCIO, 2013). From these almost

⁶ Demetrius taught that "what, in nature, is difficult to know, is only hidden, deep down, because its knowledge is useless for life. (...) They are hidden, because they are useless. On the other hand, all that is necessary for existence, necessary for this struggle in which cynical life must consist, all this is available to all. They are the most familiar and most evident things that nature has thus arranged around us so that we can learn them and make use of them. Cynical teaching is a simple teaching, a practical teaching. It is a teaching that the cynics themselves said consisted of a shortcut, a short path" (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 182/183).



mythical accounts a new figure emerges: the philosophical hero. Foucault (2011, p. 186) suggests that the essence of philosophical heroism resides in cynicism itself, which "has shaped in a certain way the way in which philosophical life itself has been perceived and practiced in the West until now".

In cynicism, then, the themes of *parrhesia* and philosophical life meet: "cynicism appears as this way of manifesting truth, of practicing allegory, the production of truth in the very form of life" (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 191). The cynical life (*bíos kynikós*) corresponds to the true life (*alethés bíos*), which makes Foucault (2011, p. 192/193) return to what, according to him, would be the four meanings of what is meant, in classical Greek thought, by *alethés* (true): 1) that which is not hidden, not concealed (*a-létheia*); 2) that which does not receive any addition or supplement, does not suffer mixture, is pure; 3) what is straight, without beating around the bush or detouring; 4) that which is sovereign, immutable, and incorruptible. True life, therefore, in ancient thought, is the undisguised, pure, upright, and sovereign life.

This idea of true life is found in Socrates, Plato, and virtually all of classical Greek philosophy. The cynics, however, raise it to extreme, scandalous levels. Cynicism ends up functioning as a broken mirror of ancient philosophy: it reflects what is familiar about it and at the same time distorts this reflection, making it strange. This scandalous banality of philosophy appears in him: he says what all philosophies say, but makes the very fact of saying it inadmissible (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 203/204).

Cynical scandal constitutes a third kind of *parrhesia* in antiquity, in addition to political bravery and Socratic irony. The political bravery of opposing an error with the courage to tell the truth characterizes *political parrhesia*. The Socratic irony of introducing into someone the awareness of their ignorance and the need to take care of themselves characterizes ethical *parrhesia*. On the other hand, the cynical scandal of telling the truth by the way one lives, condemning and insulting people based on the radicalization of the very principles in which they believe, characterizes practical *parrhesia* (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 205/206).

According to Foucault (2011, p. 209/210), cynicism reposes the question of philosophical life based on five principles: 1) philosophy is preparation for life; 2) preparation for life requires self-care; 3) to take care of oneself, one should study only what is really useful for life; 4) one must live according to the precepts it formulates; 5) it is necessary to transvalue the values, to change the value of the currency (*parakharáttein tò nòmisma*).

The cynical transvaluation represented by the imperative *parakharáxon tò nòmisma* comes from an account of the life of Diogenes of Sinope that has already been told in



several versions (LAÉRCIO, 2013, p. 315/316). The most illustrative is that the philosopher, who, together with his father, was in charge of the public bank of Sinope, went to Delphi to consult with the oracle, to whom he asked what he should do to obtain fame and success. He received a command as an answer: *parakharáxon tò nòmisma*, which he interpreted as "counterfeit your currency". He acted according to the oracle, taking advantage of his position to manufacture counterfeit coins and thus become rich and famous. It turns out that his crime was discovered, resulting in exile for him and his father. Having to leave Sinope, he went to Athens, where he became a disciple of Antisthenes, converting to cynicism and finally understanding that he had misinterpreted the Delphic commandment. The verb *parakharáttein*, in addition to "falsify", can also be translated as "modify", "alter". Similarly, *nòmism*, in addition to meaning "currency", can also mean "value", "custom" or even "law" (given the common root with *nomos*). *Parakharáxon tò nòmisma*, therefore, more than "counterfeit your currency", should have been understood by Diogenes as "altering your values". The priestess of Apollo wanted to tell the future philosopher that his question was wrong. He shouldn't care about fame, success, or wealth. Rather, if he was in search of a true life, he should completely transvalue his values. And it was precisely this transvaluation of all values that made him plunge into a completely different life: the cynical life.

Thus, "the principle 'changes your currency', 'changes the value of your currency', is seen as a principle of life, including the most fundamental and most characteristic principle of cynics" (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 211/212). This is because the currency appears there as a metaphor: "to alter the *name* is also to change the custom, to break with it, to break the rules, habits, conventions and laws" (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 213). As Michel Onfray (2007, p. 143) suggests, counterfeiting currency is to set in motion a task aimed at producing new values, new imperatives.

Antisthenes, the first Cynic, founded his philosophical school at the Cynosargus, a gymnasium located outside the walls of Athens, intended for those who, because they did not have Athenian citizenship, were on the margins of society, such as those born to slaves, prostitutes, and foreigners. *Cynosarges*, in Greek, means "white dog", "agile dog". The gymnasium would have received this name in honor of a pale dog that surreptitiously seized a piece of meat offered in sacrifice to Hercules (ONFRAY, 2007, p. 36/37). Hercules, by the way, was an archetype often invoked by the Cynics: a god born among men, who did not live on Olympus, but on pilgrimage; that faced the jungle and lived by hunting; that he was not the brilliant hero, happy in his exploits, but that he was always fighting and dying. Hercules is the example of someone who turned his life into a fight for survival.



There are at least two reasons why the disciples of Antisthenes and Diogenes were known as Cynics (from the Greek *kyōn*, genitive *kynos*, meaning dog): because of the place where they settled (Cynosargus) and because they led the life of a dog. According to Foucault (2011, p. 214), there are four meanings that we can give to the expression dog's life, or cynical life (*bíos kynikós*): 1) life without shame or shame; 2) life indifferent to everything (*adiáphoros*); 3) life that barks, that distinguishes friends from enemies and barks against enemies (*diakritikós*); 4) life of a guard, who is dedicated to saving and protecting friends (*phylaktikós*). The cynical life, therefore, is a "life of shamelessness, life *adiáphoros* (indifferent), life *diakritikós* (diacritical, of distinction, of discrimination, life in a certain way barking) and life *phylaktikós* (life of a guard, of a watchdog)".

This cynical life, then, takes up the Socratic theme of true life. The lives of others, non-philosophical lives, are seen by the cynic as counterfeit currency, without value. The true life, then, is a life different, different not only from that which men in general lead, but also from that which other philosophers lead. This, for Foucault (2011, p. 215), is the great question posed by cynicism: "Shouldn't life, to truly be real life, be another life, a radical and paradoxically different life?". Thus, two categories are developed that structure Western philosophy, both rooted in Socrates: the tradition of the other world (Platonism) and the tradition of the other life (cynicism).⁷

Foucault then takes up the four aspects of true life (*alethés bíos*) of the ancients, showing how the Cynics subvert each of them until they become a scandal: 1) undisguised life; 2) life without mixture (pure); 3) Straight life; 4) Sovereign life. Cynics transvalue the Stoic version of undisguised life. For Seneca, true life is one that must be lived as if we were always in front of the gaze of the other, therefore, a life of modesty (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 211). The Cynics, however, transform this non-dissimulation of life into a public spectacle of shamelessness: absence of home, absence of clothes, meals in public, sex in public, masturbation in public, physiological needs in public, death in public (Diogenes died at the gates of a gymnasium in Corinth, Peregrinus made his suicide public by setting himself on fire in a public square). The cynical life is a life of absolute visibility, based on the principle that one must live without being ashamed of what one does:

The game, which makes this dramatization turn into scandal and into the very inversion of the undisguised life of the other philosophers, is as follows: an undisguised life is a life that would not hide anything that is not bad and would not

⁷ In this regard: "Perhaps – once again forgive the schematism, they are hypotheses, dotted lines, outlines, possibilities of work – it could be said that Greek philosophy, in essence, has posed since Socrates, with and through Platonism, the question of the other world. But he also posed, based on Socrates or the Socratic model to which cynicism referred, another question. Not the question of the other world, but of the other life. The other world and the other life were, it seems to me, in the end, the two great themes, the two great forms, the two great limits between which Western philosophy has not ceased to develop" (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 215).



do evil because it would not conceal anything. Now, say the cynics, can there be any evil in what nature wants and in what it has put in us? (...) All this constitutes the form of this undisguised life, according to the principle that Diogenes and Crates often take up, namely: how could making love, having sexual relations, be considered an evil, if this has been inscribed in our nature? If it is inscribed in our nature, it cannot be an evil. Therefore, there is no need to conceal it (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 224).

This is how, applying the idea of undisguised life to the letter, cynicism ends up imploding the code of modesty that served as the foundation of the very principle of non-dissimulation present in other philosophies.

Likewise, the principle of life without mixture will be transvalued by cynicism and transformed into a stylistics of independence dramatized in the form of poverty. True life is one that not only does not depend on material goods, but repudiates them. Cynical poverty, unlike Stoic or Epicurean poverty, is real, active, and indefinite poverty. He is always looking for possible strippings. The pure, unmixed life is the self-sufficient life of rude misery: "cynical poverty ... it is the affirmation of the self-worth and intrinsic value of physical ugliness, dirt and misery" (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 227/228). It is not enough not to depend on material goods, it is necessary to effectively exercise this independence, rejecting them. This life of extreme poverty and even begging leads to *adoxia* (bad reputation). In cynicism, the systematic practice of dishonor is conduct with positive meaning and value. Seeking humiliating situations exercises the cynic to resist everything: opinions, beliefs, conventions, or judgments.

The commandment of the right life, as an attribute of the true life, will also be taken up by the Cynics, but in such a way as to make this life according to the laws of nature a totally different life. There was, in the other ancient philosophical traditions, an ambivalence in relation to the notion of an upright life: if on the one hand it was linked to a life in accordance with nature and with the *logos*, on the other it was also connected to the idea of a life in conformity with the laws, rules, customs and conventions of men. There was, therefore, this ambiguity around the idea of upright life, which was linked at the same time to a nucleus of naturalness and to another artificial nucleus linked to social laws. The cynics will remove this artificial dimension from the right life, making it another life, indexed only to the domain of natural law: "no convention, no human prescription can be accepted in cynical life, if it is not exactly in accordance with what is found in nature, and only in nature" (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 232). In this sense, the return to animality becomes an exercise and perpetual trial, but also a scandal for others.

Finally, the theme of sovereign life will also undergo a cynical reversal: "the cynics make the very simple, very stripped-down, totally insolent affirmation that the cynic himself



is king" (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 242). Sovereign of himself, owner of himself, the cynic has a relationship of enjoyment-possession and enjoyment-pleasure to himself. Because he does not depend on a crown, wealth, fame or power, the cynic is the only true king. He takes to the extreme the ideal of autarky and self-sufficiency: ruler of himself, nothing outside of him can shake the power he possesses over the kingdom of himself. This position of anti-king as the only true king denounces the illusion of political royalty, so well portrayed in the famous anecdote that relates the meeting between Diogenes and Alexander the Great.

Foucault (2011, p. 250) summarizes the cynical transvaluation of the themes of true life:

Through the different themes already evoked, we have seen that the Cynics had reversed the idea of the disguised life by dramatizing it in the practice of nakedness and shamelessness. They had reversed the theme of independent living by dramatizing it in the form of poverty. They had reversed the theme of the right life by dramatizing it in the form of animality. Well, we can also say that they reverse and invert this theme of sovereign life (tranquil and beneficial life: tranquil for oneself, enjoying oneself, and beneficial for others) by dramatizing it in the form of what we could call militant life, a life of combat and struggle against oneself and for oneself, against others and for others.

Thus, the cynical life projects itself as militancy that seeks more than just to provide its adherents with the means to achieve happiness. It is a militancy that intends to change the world, to make it another world through the practice of a scandalously different life. In short, cynicism merges the theme of true speech (*parrhesia*) with that of true life (*alethés bíos*). The question of the cynic is "to exercise in his life and for his life the scandal of truth" (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 152).

This scandal that is the cynical life truly characterizes a mission: "the cynic is an employee of humanity in general, he is an employee of ethical universality" (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 266). The Cynic philosopher, then, is responsible for humanity and has the mission of taking care of the care of men. This mission, however, is not a burden, but a gift. The cynical life is a happy life: the cynic says yes to his fate, establishing a relationship with himself in the form of contented acceptance. It is a question of "sovereignty that manifests itself in the brightness of the joy of those who accept their destiny and therefore know no lack, no sadness and no fear" (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 272).

This blessed life, according to Foucault (2011, p. 273), characterizes the very courage to tell the truth. It is a matter of summoning those who do not lead the cynical life to this form of existence which is the only true existence and which consists in a change of oneself and of the world itself. To do this, it is necessary to escape the banal: to work, to produce wealth, to marry, to have children, to fight for one's homeland – all of this was outside the horizon of projection of cynical life (ONFRAY, 2007, p. 173). The world can only



be transformed into another world at the cost of a complete alteration of the relationship one has with oneself and the transvaluation of all values and customs. It is necessary, on the part of the cynic, willingness and courage to go beyond the common man⁸.

TREMBLING OBEDIENCE AND SELF-DENIAL: *PARRHESIA* IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY

From Socrates, through Cynicism, we see this figure of the missionary of truth, who comes to men to give them the ascetic example of the true life and to proclaim another world. Foucault did not have time to develop more than a brief outline of the analysis of this passage from pagan asceticism to Christian asceticism.

His reading in this sense begins by perceiving the continuity between the practices of asceticism, the forms of resistance and the modes of exercise found in both Cynicism and Christianity. These practices include, for example, relations with food, fasting, and a kind of dietary asceticism that was important both for ancient thought and for primitive Christianity. The cynic practiced a reduced form of eating with the aim of obtaining maximum pleasure with minimum means. In Christianity there is also the idea that it is necessary to impose limits on food. This, however, occurs in a different way: it is not a question of the search for a point of equilibrium of pleasure, but of the denial of all pleasure, "in such a way that neither food nor drink ever provoke, in itself, any form of pleasure" (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 280). There is, therefore, between cynicism and Christianity, with regard to this theme, a relationship that is both one of continuity and rupture.

The cynical theme of scandal as indifference to the opinion of others and to the structures of power also appears in primitive Christianity and cenobitism. In the same way, Christian asceticism, in some texts and traditions such as that of eremitism, rescues the theme of bestiality. The theme of extreme poverty also reappears in Christian asceticism through mendicant orders such as the Franciscans and Dominicans. The cynical theme of the other world, however, undergoes a platonic inversion, becoming another world. Christian asceticism, then, connects Platonic metaphysics to cynical asceticism, linking the themes of the other life as true life and access to the other world as access to truth (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 280/282).

Christianity, however, attaches great importance to a principle that cannot be found in either Cynicism or Platonism: the principle of obedience. Obedience to God, conceived as

⁸ Perhaps it would be possible, in a work that had as its specific objective a more detailed analysis of Nietzsche's influence on Foucault and of the French philosopher's reading of the Cynics, to suggest that, in his final course, he subliminally roots in cynicism four themes of Nietzsche's thought: 1) the transvaluation of all values (through the principle of changing currency and transvaluing the dimensions of true life); 2) the philosophy of grand style (stylistic existence and life as a beautiful work); 3) amor *fati* (the joy of saying yes to fate); 4) the beyond-man (the cynic as the one who has the courage to transform himself to go beyond the common man).



the despot to whom we are all slaves, becomes the only way of access to true life and to the true world. From this arises a new type of power relationship of the subject towards himself and a new regime of truth that will characterize *parrhesia* in the Christian experience: *parrhesia* as a relationship with the other world and as obedience to God and others (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 283).

In pre-Christian texts, *parrhesia* is no longer situated on the axis of horizontal relations between individuals, but on the vertical axis of a relationship with God. It becomes a movement by which the pure soul rises to God, manifesting to him its truth. In the New Testament texts, *parrhesia* also designates the courageous attitude of those who preach the Gospel. The figure of the martyr appears as the portrait par excellence of the parrhesiast, who places his entire trust in the divine will. As the Christian life becomes an institutionalized practice, however, this principle of trust makes room for a principle of trembling obedience (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 292).

The relationship between believer and God, once direct, becomes possible only when intermediated by authority figures established within institutional relations. Souls are entrusted to pastors, priests and bishops. In these authorities one must trust, even if one must distrust oneself, since without the intermediary access to the divine is prohibited: "By oneself and in oneself, one cannot find anything but evil, and it will be only by renouncing oneself and applying this general principle of obedience that man will be able to achieve his salvation" (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 293). Thus, *parrhesia*, as self-confidence and courage to tell the truth, becomes reprehensible, presumptuous and arrogant behavior.

This *parrhesia*, which now takes on the features of defect and vice, also loses its connection with the principle of care: taking care of oneself is pride and vanity, renouncing oneself is virtue. Foucault (2011, p. 295) suggests, then, that, through the principle of trembling obedience, from the institutionalization of Christianity, an inversion of the value of *parrhesia* is promoted. This is what he called the passage from the mystical tradition of Christianity to its ascetic tradition:

And you have, in Christianity, another pole, an anti-parrhesiastical pole that founds not the mystical tradition, but the ascetic tradition. It is the pole according to which the relationship with the truth can only be established in fearful and reverential obedience to God, and in the form of a suspicious decipherment of oneself, through temptations and trials. This anti-parrhesiastic, ascetic, trustless pole, this pole of distrust of oneself and fear of God, is no less important than the parrhesiastical pole. I would even say that it was historically and institutionally much more important, since it was around him, after all, that all the pastoral institutions of Christianity developed. (...) Truth of life before true life: it was in this inversion that Christian asceticism fundamentally modified an ancient asceticism that always aspired to lead true life and real life at the same time and that, at least in cynicism, affirmed the possibility of leading this true life of truth (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 296).



Thus, with Christian asceticism, there is a transvaluation of *parrhesia*, with the consequent denial of the body, the world and life in favor of another world and another life – which have nothing to do with the other world or with the other life of cynicism⁹.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS: INHERITANCE AND MISSION

Through the theme of *parrhesia*, chosen not by chance for his last course, Foucault intertwines the three major questions that were the object of reflection in all his work: truth, power and subject. Rescuing the idea of philosophical life as an art of living and the path to true life, the philosopher inserted ancient cynicism as a category of analysis in which he subliminally projected not only the stylistics of the existence of his philosophical heroes (such as, for example, Nietzsche), but also and especially his own vision of how life and philosophy should be. When Foucault, in "The Courage of Truth", speaks of the Cynics, he speaks, in fact, of Foucault. When he speaks of the cynical life, he speaks of the life of Foucault, the life that he carved out as a work of art and that, already on the threshold of death, he claims for himself and proudly signs.

Western philosophy has progressively eliminated, or at least neglected, the problem of philosophical life. Foucault (2011, p. 207) points out as possible causes of its disappearance: 1) the confiscation of the theme of true life by religious practice; 2) the institutionalization of veridication practices in the form of science. Since the Middle Ages, with the institutionalization of Christianity, religion has hijacked for itself the position of saying how life should be lived. On the other hand, modernity has annulled the problem of true life by handing over to science the monopoly of truth-telling practices. The return to ancient philosophy and *parrhesia* was the path opened by Foucault so that one could once again discuss the art of living, the aesthetics of existence.

No one better than François Ewald, Foucault's assistant at the Collège de France, to testify to the testamentary and autobiographical character of this last course by the French thinker, who thematized the relations between *parrhesia* and philosophical life, with a marked emphasis on ancient cynicism:

None of his courses were so beautiful and so moving. He wanted to show how *parrhesia*, the true saying, reached with Plato and Diogenes, not only philosophical activity, but also the life of the philosopher, characterizing his style of existence. In reality, Foucault did nothing more than describe himself, just as he would have liked to have been, as he was and as he would have liked to be. In front of us, clearly, he made his autobiography. Thus, finally, shortly before his death, Foucault recognized himself, with great tranquility, again as a philosopher. As if he had accepted his identity as a philosopher, making it desirable. As if he was aware, at last, of who he

⁹ Although Foucault (2011, p. 283), in the first hour of the class on March 28, 1984, criticized the terms in which Nietzsche supposedly proposed the opposition between ancient asceticism and Christian asceticism.



was. Foucault, I believe, died reconciled with himself (EWALD, Apud CHAVES, 2013, p. 18/19).

Foucault, in his final course, does more than the aforementioned accountability of his entire production and the way he articulated his three major themes: truth, power and subject. In this intellectual testament, he reconciles himself with philosophy, recognizes himself, at last, as a philosopher, and leaves to the philosophical community a collection that is, at the same time, heritage and mission. By legacy, it leaves an open path to rethink the history of philosophy as a history of the art of living. It signals, in countless senses, how it is possible, from *Laches* and, especially, from cynicism, to trace the origin of the non-metaphysical tradition of the art of living that goes from Socrates not to Plato, but to Antisthenes and Diogenes, and from them leads to the mystique of primitive Christianity, to Spinoza, to Nietzsche, to Foucault himself and, we could say, to contemporary authors such as Derrida, Rorty, Butler, Preciado, etc. Foucault bequeaths us the way to redeem philosophy and its mode of veridiction: to retell its history by another way, not the way of *psykhé*, but the way of *bíos*, because "this neglect of philosophical life made it possible for the relationship with truth to no longer be validated and manifested now except in the form of scientific knowledge" (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 208). Only the rescue of the theme of philosophical life as true life would allow the revalidation of the knowledge of philosophy.

Foucault interrupted his sketch of the history of philosophy as the history of the art of living prematurely, but left several paths that can be followed. The very redescription of ancient cynicism and the concern with thinking about the reflexes of the movement in contemporary figures has already been echoed by authors such as Michel Onfray, Peter Sloterdijk and, in Brazil, Ernani Chaves, for example. If, on the one hand, Foucault sees cynical marks in the lives of nineteenth- and twentieth-century revolutionaries and in the artistic lives of figures such as Baudelaire, Flaubert or Manet, wouldn't it be equally possible to find the same marks in movements such as punk music and aesthetics, with all their countercultural scandal of preaching a diacritical life and detachment? Ademias, when Foucault speaks of the Cynics, to what extent could he be showing the influence of other important authors in his formation, such as Nietzsche? How much of Nietzschean influence is there in Foucault's reading of the cynics and how much of cynical influence does Foucault propose to be in Nietzsche's philosophy? All these are loose threads that Foucault leaves us as an inheritance in his final course and that deserve development in new works.

What if, on the other hand, when he spoke of the cynics, Foucault was talking about himself? What if the scandal of the cynical, huge, hirsute beard is the scandal of the shaved head? What if the scandal of public masturbation and sex in *the agora* is the scandal of



sadomasochism and gay saunas in San Francisco? What if the public preaching of the Cynics, made to the people in the streets and squares, are the courses in the Collège de France, obligatorily open to the public, without the possibility of esoteric teaching exclusively for initiates? What if the life of struggle and cynical militancy is the militancy in favor of the infamous lives, together with the movements for the abolition of asylums and prisons? What if the outcasts welcomed in the Cynosargus are the abnormal, the insane, the criminals, the sorceresses, the hermaphrodites and all those sorts of lives that develop on the margins and that were a permanent object of Foucault's concern? To what extent would it not be in Foucault himself that cynicism would find its clearest projection and contemporary reinterpretation? To what extent was cynicism not the broken mirror in which Foucault projected, rather than the distorted image of all philosophy, a fragmented image of himself?

If Foucault were alive and still concerned with making a critical history of the present, he would perhaps be finding, in the cult of the perfect body and the fitness/healthy life of gyms, nutrition clinics, crossfit boxes, beauty salons, steroid compounding pharmacies and plastic surgery hospitals, an inversion of the Socratic principle of self-care. Understood no longer as deep care of the soul, but as banal care for the body? Would you be seeing in self-help literature, self-entrepreneurship, high-performance coaches and grating spiritual gurus of social networks mercantile or vulgarized forms of Socratic know-thyself? Would the evasion of privacy, bloggers and influencers, the narcissistic, voyeuristic and exhibitionist lifestyle and the evasion of privacy of tiktoks, instagrams, twitters and facebook be new forms of writing of the self? Would hyper-information and the possibility that everyone is a "content producer" and "opinion maker", with the commandment that it is necessary to have and express an opinion about everything, be a form of "post-modern" veridiction? What courage does it take to tell the truth in the age of *fake news* and post-truth? What risks does political *parrhesia* run in contemporary democracies? In what terms is it still possible and useful to speak, in the present day, of a true life as another life? How to think of existence as a work of art and life as possible beauty?

All these questions are loose threads that Foucault bequeaths to us as an inheritance in his final course and that deserve development in new works. Foucault leaves open the way to construct (or invent) a history of philosophy as an aesthetics of existence and, above all, as a history of ourselves, of how we become what we are. He himself reminded us: "I don't write a book so that it is the last. I write so that other books are possible, not necessarily written by me" (FOUCAULT, 1994, p. 162). It is up to us to write



these books, appropriating their heritage. This is the mission that Foucault leaves us as a legacy in his philosophical testament.



REFERENCES

1. Araújo, I. L. (2004). Foucault, um arqueogenealogista do saber, do poder e da ética. *Revista de Ciências Humanas*, *35*, 37-55.
2. Candioto, C. (2006). Foucault: uma história crítica da verdade. *Trans/Form/Ação*, 29*(2), 65-78.
3. Castro, E. (2023). *Introducción a Foucault: guía para orientarse y entender una obra en movimiento*. Siglo Veintiuno.
4. Chaves, E. (2013). *Michel Foucault e a verdade cínica*. Editora PHI.
5. Foucault, M. (2011). *A coragem da verdade: o governo de si e dos outros II*. Editora WMF Martins Fontes.
6. Foucault, M. (2006). *A hermenêutica do sujeito*. Martins Fontes.
7. Foucault, M. (1994). *Ditos e escritos, t. II*. Forense Universitária.
8. Foucault, M. (2007a). *História da sexualidade 2: o uso dos prazeres*. Edições Graal.
9. Foucault, M. (2007b). *História da sexualidade 3: o cuidado de si*. Edições Graal.
10. Foucault, M. (2010). *O governo de si e dos outros*. Editora WMF Martins Fontes.
11. Foucault, M. (2014). *O governo dos vivos*. Editora WMF Martins Fontes.
12. Foucault, M. (2016). *Subjetividade e verdade*. Editora WMF Martins Fontes.
13. Grós, F. (2007). *Michel Foucault*. Amorrortu.
14. Laercio, D. (2013). *Vidas y opiniones de los filósofos ilustres*. Alianza Editorial.
15. Nietzsche, F. W. (2007). *A genealogia da moral: uma polêmica*. Companhia das Letras.
16. Nietzsche, F. W. (2008). *Ecce homo: como alguém se torna o que é*. Companhia das Letras.
17. Onfray, M. (2007). *Cinismos: retrato de los filósofos llamados perros*. Paidós.
18. Platão. (2022). *Alcíades I*. Penguin-Companhia das Letras.
19. Platão. (2019). *Diálogos III: Fedro, Eutífron, Apologia de Sócrates, Críton, Fédon*. Edipro.
20. Platão. (2016). *Diálogos VI: Crátilo, Cármides, Laques, Ion, Menexeno*. Edipro.
21. Sloterdijk, P. (2012). *Crítica da razão cínica*. Estação Liberdade.
22. Veiga-Neto, A. (2003). *Foucault e a educação*. Autêntica.