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The Analytic of Finitude and the History of Subjectivity.

In one of his last texts, Foucault defined his philosophical enterprise as an "analysis of the conditions in which certain relations between subject and object are formed or modified, insofar as they are constitutive of a possible knowledge"[1], or again as "the manner in which the emergence of games of truth constituted, for a particular time and place and certain individuals, the historical *a priori* of a possible experience"[2]. Despite its eclipse during the genealogical period, the notion of the historical *a priori* is thus reaffirmed as central by later Foucault. There is, however, an essential modification with respect to its archaeological problematisation: in *The Order of Things*, the various historical *a priori* were characterized by a specific relation between being and language, a relation in which the subject of knowledge did not always nor necessarily have a place. The Renaissance episteme was defined by the homogeneity of words and things, and its Classical counterpart, by the transparent distance between being and representation, which excluded any positioning for the subject (the "place of the king"). Thus within the archaeological configuration, only the *contemporary* historical *a priori* was characterized by the invention of a new position for the subject of knowledge, that of Man, which generated the Analytic of Finitude and ultimately resulted in the "anthropological sleep" criticised at the end of *The Order of Things*. So although later Foucault re-focuses his work around the notion of the historical *a priori*, he gives the notion a considerable twist whereby the conditions of truth saying are no longer referred back to an implicit connection between being and language, but to the various relations historically established between "modes of subjectivation"[3] and "modes of objectification"[4]. Correspondingly, these relations are not to be analysed from discourse, as in archaeology, nor from the constituting structures of subjectivity, as in phenomenology, but genealogically, i.e. through practices which, "understood as ways of both of acting and thinking […] give the key to understanding the correlative constitution of the subject and object"[5]. The central idea behind these changes is that objectification and subjectivation are mutually dependent, both for their existence and for their understanding: the "rejection of the philosophical recourse to a constituting subject aims at revealing the processes which are specific to an experience in which subject and object 'form themselves in transforming each other', both in relation to each other and in function of each other"[6]. According to this new problematisation, an entity or epistemological domain can only appear as an object to be known if it is discovered through a specific positioning of the subject of knowledge. For example, the self and its secret desires only became objects of knowledge because of the birth of the subject of the Christian hermeneutic of desire. Conversely, the appearance of new forms of objectification, such as the Cartesian realm of physical objects, engendered fundamental modifications as much in the understanding of the subject (as a detached observer with universal access to truth), as in the form of knowledge (the transition from Antique "meditation" to the Cartesian method). This mutual relativity of the subject of knowledge and what it knows is thus revealed the only focal point from which a "history of truth" can begin. As Foucault says: "it is their mutual development and their reciprocal relation which gives birth to what we call the "games of

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[1] Foucault, *Dits et Ecrits*, vol IV, Paris, Gallimard, 1994, p. 632. Han's italics.
[2] ibid
[3]
[4]
[5] ibid. p.635
[6] ibid. p.634 Han's italics

truth"; that is to say not the discovery of true things, but of rules according to which, in relation to certain things, what a subject can say about specific things becomes assessable as true or false"[7] — which is exactly the definition of the historical *a priori* formerly given in *The Order of Discourse*[8].

But if the history of truth becomes inseparable from the history of subjectivity[9], several questions arise. Firstly, what are the modes of subjectivation and objectification which would correspond to the periods that *The Order of Things* had defined exclusively through the relation between being and language? Secondly, how can Kant's invention of the transcendental, and more specifically of Man as a historico-transcendental double, be incorporated into the history of subjectivity, and how does it modify it? Thirdly, what are the successive conceptions of truth presupposed by these different stages? Finally, and crucially, can Foucault's pessimistic assessment of Modernity as caught within the aporiae of the Analytic of finitude be modified by this recontextualisation of the Analytic within the wider history of the modes of subjectivation and objectification? The publication of the course given by Foucault at the Collège de France in 1982, *L'herméneutique du sujet*, can help us in answering these questions by filling out the notion of a history of subjectivity. As is often the case in later Foucault, the latter is not presented in a clear or systematic manner. The history of the modes of subjectivation and objectification has to be deciphered from scattered clues in the margins of much more detailed analyses of Greek and Roman Antiquity, and critically reconstituted. According to Foucault, this history began when Socrates referred the Greek care of the self to the necessity of self-knowledge. Subsequently, the progressive subordination of the *epimeleia heautou* to the *gnôthi seauton* formed the background against which alone can be understood the birth of Cartesian claim that knowledge, not only of oneself but also of the world, can and indeed must be independent of the care of the self. Thus: "inside this same care of the self, the *gnôthi seauton* has neither the same form nor the same function. This means that the very forms of knowledge used are not the same. This also means that the subject himself, as it is constituted by the form of reflexivity belonging to this or that type of care of the self, will be modified."[10] Correspondingly, the relation between knowledge and care of the self is reinterpreted in the light of the interlacing and then progressive separation of "philosophy" (as "the form of thought that wonders, of course not about what is true or false, but about what makes it possible for things to be true or false"[11]), and "spirituality" (as "the research, practice, and experience by which the subject performs the transformations necessary to gain access to the truth"[12]). Thus a crucial passage of *L'herméneutique du sujet* indicates that "he who would record the history of subjectivity [...] must try to rediscover the very long, very slow transformation of a model of subjectivity defined by the spirituality of knowledge and the practice of the truth by the subject, into this other model of subjectivity which is our own and which is commanded, I believe, by the question of the subject's self-knowledge"[13].

However, *L'herméneutique du sujet* gives very few indications about the status of contemporary thought. Consequently, I have two aims in this paper. Firstly, I will use the only text that presents a detailed diagnosis of philosophical modernity, i.e. *The Order of Things*, to reconstitute the final stage of the history of subjectivity. Conversely, I shall reinterpret the Analytic of Finitude in the light of the course of 1982 and of the structure of objectification and subjectivation that it describes, i.e. Man, as "anthropology constitutes [...] the fundamental

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[7] ibid. p.632
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[10] *L' herméneutique du subjet*. Paris, "Hautes Études'', Gallimard/ LeSeuil, 2001, 24th March 1982, pp. 443-444
[11] 6th January 1982. p. 16
[12] ibid
[13] 24th February 1982, p.305

disposition that has governed and controlled the path of philosophical thought since Kant until our own day"[14]. I shall start by analyzing this structure in its Kantian form to demonstrate that according to Foucault, its commands the *whole* of modernity's philosophical development, and not only the phenomenological configuration criticised by the study of the three "doubles" in *The Order of Things*. Secondly and correspondingly, I shall attempt to reconstitute the prior stages of the history of subjectivity (and the understandings of truth corresponding to them) in order to re-contextualise the redefined Analytic of finitude within the larger history of the relation between philosophy and spirituality, or the "relations between subject and truth"[15]. I hope to find within this recontextualisation some elements for a solution to the "anthropological sleep" previously diagnosed by Foucault, and perhaps a path leading beyond the aporiae of the Analytic of finitude.

The Analytic of finitude I: Kant's Anthropology

In *The Order of Things* "Man's mode of being" is identified "simply [as] that historical *a priori* which, since the nineteenth century, has served as an almost self-evident ground for our thought"[16]. The main characteristic of Man as an historical *a priori* is that he is "at the same time the foundation of all positivities present [..] in the element of empirical things"[17]. That he is their condition of possibility means that positivities are dependent on the transcendental organisation of human faculties to be given and understood as such. Although the *existence* of life, work or language, does not depend on that of Man, their uncovering as positivities is governed by the transcendental opening of human experience. However, Man is equally "present in the element of empirical things", because he is inserted as an empirical object (in so much as he lives, works or talks) within the field he himself has opened as transcendental subject. The anthropological structure specific to modernity is thus defined from the beginning by this doubling of the transcendental subject as an object of empirical knowledge: in later Foucault's terms, the form of subjectivation particular to Man is such that he cannot become a subject of knowledge without being inscribed within the horizon of his own experience, and thus without appearing to himself as an object of knowledge. For the first time in the history of Western knowledge, theoretical subjectivation and objectification go together— a point which I shall return to later.

Such a structure, however, is clearly ambiguous: the distinction between subject and object of knowledge, being grounded in the same being (Man), can easily become erased, or at least confused. This is exactly, according to Foucault, precisely what happens in Kant's own work, where the re-centering of the four critical questions on the question of man in the *Logic*[18] determines and prefigures the philosophical destiny of modernity[19]. The clear distinction between the empirical and the transcendental introduced by the *Critique*[20] is rapidly obscured in the *Anthropology*[21], as revealed by the introduction of a new concept, the "originary": thus "what was, from the point of view of the *Critique,* the *a priori of knowledge* is not immediately transposed by anthropological reflection into an *a priori of existence*, but appears in the density of a becoming where a sudden emergence infallibly in retrospection takes on the sense of the already there [and thus of an originary]"[22]. How to understand such a "transposition"? The

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[14] *The Order of Things*, New York, Vintage Books, 1994, p. 342
[15] 24th February 1982, p.305
[16] *The Order of Things,* p.344
[17] ibid
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[22] *Commentaire*, p. 60

passage clearly refers to a temporalisation of the transcendental, which cannot be thought of as homogenous with chronological time (it is not "immediate"): the *a priori* transposed into an originary appears as an "already there", as if it somehow preexisted itself. The *Critique* excluded this possibility by suggesting two models for thinking time (either as a pure form of sensibility[23], or as uniting *a priori* the order of succession of phenomena[24]) and two definitions of the subject (as transcendental subject or as empirical ego). In this context, that an entity should appear as temporal meant that it was transcendentally perceived under the form of time and chronologically synthesized following the laws of the understanding. Correspondingly the transcendental subject, being itself the condition of intelligibility for time, could not appear within time as such: only the empirical ego could become the object of an internal apperception within the form of time.

However, the idea of a passage from the "*a priori* of knowledge" to an "*a priori* of experience" fuses the two elements carefully distinguished by the *Critique*: the conditions of possibility of experience (the transcendental organization of subjectivity) are referred back to the empirical existence of the subject, which in return invalidates the very possibility of a pure transcendental determination. According to the *Critique,* all temporal objects require the *a priori* framework generated by the subject. But by placing the transcendental subject (and not only the empirical ego) with the chronology of empirical objects, the *Anthropology* reveals transcendental determination as somehow preexisting itself in a past analogical to the "primitivity" highlighted by Derrida in the work of Husserl[25]. Thus the transcendental subject experiences itself as "already there", in a sort of empirical "prehistory"[26]: "the relation of the given and of the *a priori* takes a reverse structure in The *Anthroplogy* to that revealed in the *Critique*. The *a priori* in the order of knowledge, becomes in the order of concrete existence an *originary* which is not chronologically first but which, as soon as it appears [..] reveals itself as already there"[27]. As a result, transcendental determination cannot function as the clear starting point required by the *Critique*, but only as a perpetually retreating origin: the subject cannot recapture the moment of its emergence as a thinking subject without retrojecting it into the paradoxical past of the originary. With this impossibility of the subject accounting for the conditions of its own genesis is born a fundamental opacity at the heart of knowledge. In the terms of the history of subjectivity, the second characteristic of the anthropological *episteme* is thus that subjectivation and objectification are not merely co-extensive with each other, but also destined to exchange roles in an infinite oscillation between the empirical and transcendental aspects of Man, invalidating the critical project of giving knowledge limits and a secure foundation.

The Analytic of Finitude II : the "Metaphysics of the Object" and Positivism.

After having brought out the ambivalence of the Copernican turn, Foucault's strategy is to then show that it determines the evolution of the *whole* of Modernity, which distributed itself between the two poles of the Kantian anthropological structure: transcendental subjectivation, and empirical objectification. Thus "the thought that is contemporaneous with us, and with which, willy-nilly we think, is still largely dominated by the impossibility, brought to light towards the end of the Eighteenth century, of basing syntheses on the space of representation, and by the correlative obligation [..] *to open up the transcendental field of subjectivity, and to constitute inversely, beyond the object, what for us are the 'quasi-*

[23] In the 'Transcendental Aesthetic'
[24] In the 'Analogies of Experience'
[25]
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[27] *Commentaire*, p.60

transcendentals' of Life, Labour, Language"[28]. From the Kantian doubling of the subject, XIXth century philosophical reflections thus split along two axes: on the one hand, the explicit and systematic exploration of transcendental determination ("the transcendental field of subjectivity"), a movement which according to Foucault begins with Fichte[29] and continues with Husserl[30]. On the other, a series of enquiries focused on empirical finitude ("life, labour, language"), which took two consecutive forms: firstly, the "metaphysics of the object", which attempted to overcome the major limit of transcendental determination (the impossibility of knowing the thing-in-itself) by establishing a hypothetically direct access to the object; secondly, the parallel attempts of Marxism and Positivism to bypass the very idea of transcendental determination and to analyse the empirical exclusively from itself. During the XXth century, these two major tendencies reconnected in the analysis of "lived experience [vécu]"[31]: the two dimensions of Man, transcendental subjectivation and empirical objectification, are juxtaposed again, resulting in the phenomenological impasses criticised in the analysis of the "doubles" in *The Order of Things*. As these latter have already been powerfully illuminated elsewhere[32], I shall concentrate exclusively on the stages that preceded them.

On the empirical side of the anthropological division, the first phase consists in the Post-Kantians of the "metaphysics of the object" which, starting from and working against Kant's conclusions, seek to bypass the dependence of experience on its transcendental conditions. Thus "Criticism […] opens up at the same time the possibility of another metaphysics; one whose purpose will be to question, outside of representation, all that is the source and origin of representation; it makes possible those philosophies of Life, of the Will, and of the Word, that the Nineteenth century is to deploy in the wake of criticism"[33]. The objective "source and origin" of representations is the noumenon considered as the condition of possibility of their synthesis. The main characteristic of such philosophies is thus that they attempt by various means to open a direct access to the thing-in-itself[34], a possibility which was previously denied by Kant's distinction between thought and knowledge. For example, the experience of the life of consciousness culminates for Hegel in absolute knowledge. Or again, for Schopenhauer, the limitations of representational knowledge (as described in book one of *The World as Will and Representation*) are overcome by the direct intuition of the will in the internal movements of the body, which allows the analogical identification of the will with the noumenon (in book two). The common ground of these approaches is that they "question[s] the conditions of a relation between representations from the point of view of the being itself that is represented: what is indicated, on the horizon of all actual representations, as the foundation of their unity, is found to be those *never objectifiable objects*, those never representable representations, [..] *those realities that are removed from reality to the degree to which they are the foundation of what is given to us and reaches us*"[35].

However, the problem with such metaphysics is that, in their attempts to reach the in-itself (the "realities that are removed from reality"), they regress beyond the critical perspective they originally presupposed, and look for the conditions of possibility of experience, not within transcendental constitution, but in the noumenon itself. This movement is particularly clear in

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[28] *The Order of Things*, p.250. Han's italics
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[31] *The Order of Things*, p. 321
[32] See Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermaneutics*, Brighton, Harvester Press, 1982. See also Gary Gutting, *Michel Foucault's archaeology of scientific reason*, Cambridge, New York, Cambridge U.P. 1989.
[33] *The Order of Things*, p. 242
[34]
[35] *The Order of Things*, p. 244

the analysis of causality in the first book of *The World as Will and Representation*, where the noumenon is understood as the cause of our phenomenal representations and thus as the point at which they can synthesize themselves. More generally, the mistake of the metaphysics of the object is to forget that any access to the empirical is only possible if it is mediated by the transcendental opening, which is the reason why "despite their post-Kantian chronology, [these metaphysics] appear as 'pre-critical': they [...] move away from the analysis of the conditions of possibility of knowledge as they may be revealed at the level of transcendental subjectivity; but [..] develop on the basis of objective transcendentals (the Word of God, Will, Life)"[36]. These "objective transcendentals" are also characterised by Foucault as "quasi-transcendentals"[37]: transcendentals, because they are held to function as the objective analogon of transcendental determination by operating in advance the synthesis of objects of knowledge[38]. But *quasi-*transcendentals because such an access to the in-self is structurally impossible: since they "have the same archaeological subsoil as Criticism itself"[39], these metaphysics must be "measured by human finitude"[40].

While the metaphysics of the object sought to overcome the Kantian inheritance, but also retained a sharp awareness of the role attributed to transcendental finitude by Kant, the next stage of the exploration of the objective side of the anthropological structure is characterized by the acceptance of the impossibility of knowing things-in-themselves. Yet instead of resulting in a description of the structures of phenomenal experience (such as we find in the other major branch of the philosophical development of modernity, Husserlian phenomenology), this paradoxically resulted in the forgetting of the dependence of experience on transcendental determination. This explains for Foucault "the appearance of a 'positivism': there is a whole layer of phenomena given to experience whose rationality and interconnection rest upon an objective foundation which it is not possible to bring to light; it is possible to know phenomena, but not substances; laws, but not essences; regularities, but not the beings that obey them"[41]. Faced with the impasse of post-Kantian metaphysics in their search to identify the in-itself, positivism deliberately renounces the search for the ontological foundations of human representations and encourages the infinite development of a purely empirical knowledge, whose model is given by the sciences. To "metaphysics of that never objectifiable depth from which objects rise up towards our superficial knowledge" are thus opposed "philosophies that set themselves no other task than the observation of precisely that which is given to positive knowledge"[42]. This observation rests on a definition of truth as adequation to an empirical object (fidelity to "facts"), considered independently both from transcendental determination or from any relation to the in-itself. The object or the facts, posited as absolute, thus become the norm from which the truth of positivist discourse is measured: "this true discourse finds its foundation and model in the empirical truth whose genesis in nature and in history it retraces, so that one has an analysis of the positivistic type (the truth of the object determines the truth of the discourse that describes its formation)"[43]. However, for Foucault, the error of positivism consists precisely in this absolutisation of the phenomenal realm, considered independently of the transcendental conditions which alone can disclose it as such. It is thus the reverse correlate of the metaphysics of the object: while the latter accepted but tried to bypass the dependence of experience on transcendental conditions by reaching, beyond objects, towards noumena,

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[36] ibid, p. 244 (translation modified)
[37] ibid, p. 250
[38]
[39] *The Order of Things*, p. 245
[40] ibid, p. 317 [trans. mod.]
[41] ibid, p. 245
[42] ibid
[43] ibid, p. 320

positivism ends up forgetting about this dependence altogether and treating phenomena as things-in-themselves[44].

The Analytic of finitude III : Transcendental Phenomenology.

The other major direction taken by philosophical thought after Kant, i.e. the subjective branch, explores, not the empirical forms of human finitude, but the structure of transcendental constitution itself. This current is represented by the axis which runs from Fichte to Husserl. This time, the error consists, not in the negation or forgetting of the transcendental, but rather in its absolutisation (Fichte and the first Husserl), or in the impossibility of thinking its relation to the empirical in a non-contradictory manner (the second Husserl, who for Foucault repeats the confusion between the empirical and the transcendental of the Kantian originary). The Fichtean enterprise, chronologically contemporary with the first metaphysics of the object (Hegel, then Schopenhauer), is the most radical. It is characterized by the attempt "to deduce genetically the totality of the transcendental domain from the pure, universal and empty laws of thought"[45]. and thus by a purification of transcendental finitude, a reinforcement of the critical perspective against the forms of the originary which haunt the *Anthropology*. However, the Fichtean project to "reduce all transcendental reflection to the analysis of formalisms"[46] fails, probably precisely because of its too abstract character[47].

The second stage in the analysis of the transcendental side of Man is Husserl, who tries "to anchor the rights and limitations of a formal logic in a reflection of the transcendental type"[48]. To this ambition, which corresponds best to the project of the early Husserl, is added an attempt to "link transcendental subjectivity to the implicit horizon of empirical contents [...] by means of infinite explications"[49], probably a reference to the later works such as *Experience and Judgment* or the *Crisis*. But in both cases Foucault's judgment is the same: "it is probably impossible to give empirical contents transcendental value, or to displace them in the direction of a constituent subjectivity, without giving rise, at least silently, to an anthropology— that is to a mode of thought in which the rightful limitations of knowledge (and consequently all empirical knowledge) are at the same time the concrete forms of existence, precisely as they are given in that same empirical knowledge"[50]. Foucault gives no further explanation for the failure of the Husserlian project, which makes his diagnosis difficult to evaluate[51]. His overriding aim is to reveal, beyond the particular case represented by Husserl, the "closely knit [...] network" which "links thoughts of the positivist or eschatological type [...] and reflections inspired by phenomenology. [..] At the level of archaeological configurations they were both necessary from the moment the anthropological postulate was constituted, that is from the moment that man appeared as an empirico-transcendental doublet"[52].

The point where the two axes of post-Kantian thought — empirical and objective, and transcendental and subjective — intersect is the "the analysis of lived experience [vécu]"[53]. Against positivism, it "tried to restore the forgotten dimension of the transcendental"[54] by defining lived experience as "the space in which all empirical contents are given to

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[45] *The Order of Things*, p. 248

[46] ibid

[47]

[48] ibid

[49] ibid

[50] ibid

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[52] *The Order of Things*, p. 321

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[54] ibid, p. 321

experience"[55]. But against pure transcendentalism, the analysis of lived experience begins from "the original experience which emerges through the body"[56]. The analysis of lived experience, which concludes the evolution of the Analytic of finitude is doubly interesting: firstly, it gathers the two trajectories born of the Copernican turn by questioning human finitude under both its empirical and transcendental aspects; secondly, it seeks to articulate them in such a way as to escape the traps in which the previous forms of thought were caught (the bypassing and forgetting of the transcendental, or hyper-transcendentalism). However, Foucault's conclusion yet again takes the form of a condemnation: the analysis of lived experience, like other phenomenological developments, fails because it once again repeats the anthropological confusion between the empirical and the transcendental. The problem is that it must, "in showing that man is [empirically] determined, show that the foundation of those determinations is Man's very being in its radical limitations [transcendental finitude]; it must also show that the contents of experience are already their own conditions [because they are reflected at the transcendental level by the movement of the originary], that thought, from the very beginning haunts the unthought that eludes them, and that it is always striving to recover"[57]. Thus from the point of view of existence, Man is finite in the sense that he depends on empirical determinations that he does not master. The Copernican turn was supposed to counteract this empirical dependence by turning the *a priori* analysis of the faculties of the knowing subject into the condition of possibility of knowing experience itself. Thus "each of these positive forms [life (the body), labour, language] in which man can learn that he is [empirically] finite *is given to him only against the background of its own [transcendental] finitude*"[58]. However labour, language and life are not only objects for knowledge, given as such against the founding background of man's transcendental finitude, but also "conditions of knowledge"[59]. Man can only know the world, and himself, from his point of view as a living, working and talking being — i.e. in so much as he "already" exists. So "as soon as he thinks [Man], merely unveils himself to his own eyes in the form of a being who is *already*, in a necessary subjacent density, *in an irreducible anteriority*, a living being, an instrument of production, a vehicle for words which exist before him"[60]. As suggested by the recurrence of temporal paradoxes ("as soon as", "already"), this new reinsertion of the transcendental subject at the heart of the empirical repeats *de facto* the anthropological structure of the originary and destroys the founding power of transcendental finitude by producing a logical contradiction: the *a priori* must now appear at the heart of the element of which it is the epistemic condition of possibility. Thus chapter nine of *The Order of Things*[61] concludes that, although it tried to vary the analysis of lived experience according to the successive figures of the Doubles of Man, the Analytic of finitude was prevented by it very structure from in freeing itself from the anthropological *a priori*.

The History of subjectivity I : Philosophy, Spirituality, and Truth in Greek Antiquity.

I shall now turn to the course of 1982 to put this first reading of the Analytic of finitude into perspective, by reconstructing the whole of the history of subjectivity. As previously said, the latter studies the relation between modes of subjectivation and objectification within the context of the relation between spirituality and philosophy. In Antiquity, spirituality (as the injunction to care for oneself) constituted the necessary background for philosophy: "the principle of the *gnôthi seauton* is not autonomous in Greek thought. And one can understand

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[55] ibid
[56] ibid (modified)
[57] ibid, p. 339 (modified)
[58] ibid, p. 314 [Han's italics]
[59] ibid, p. 244
[60] ibid, p. 313 [Han's italics]
[61]

neither its meaning nor its history unless one takes into account this permanent relation between self-knowledge and care for the self in Antique thought"[62]. From this premise, Foucault's central thesis is that the history of subjectivity as a whole reveals a dynamic in which philosophy and spirituality, indissociable from Plato to the first centuries of the Christian era, then began to separate. From the perspective of philosophy gradually appeared the idea of the detached knowing subject, with a corresponding domain of objectively representable and knowable objects. Thus, "by taking Descartes as reference point [..], there came a moment when the subject as such became capable of truth"[63]. Having abandoned its original spiritual conditions, philosophy became epistemology, a tendency that culminates in "Kant's extra turn of the screw [tour de spire]"[64], and subsequently in the Analytic of finitude itself. Correlatively, spirituality's demand for self transformation was progressively annexed by Christian thought, while a new mode of subjectivation appeared, that of the hermeneutic of desire, associated with a new field of objects (the subject's desiring interiority). The history of objectification and subjectivation in the West thus developed along two increasingly divergent lines: on the one hand, the knowing subject emancipated itself from spiritual demands, first though the framework of Cartesianism, then through Kantian philosophy. On the other, the idea of a necessary transformation of the self through a relation to the truth was firstly taken up by Christian pastoralism, then by the disciplines (following the movement analysed by *Discipline and Punish* and mostly by *The History of Sexuality Vol.1* [65]), and finally by the internalisation of techniques of subjectivation particular to bio-power. Therefore, to the growing epistemologisation of philosophy chronologically corresponds the progressive disciplinarisation of the constitution of the self. I shall begin by detailing the stages of the history of the self preceding the Kantian moment, while identifying the forms of relation to the truth that belong to them. I will then use this reconstruction to re-evaluate the situation of contemporary thought, and in particular the definition of the anthropological structure as the historical *a priori* of Modernity.

As indicated above, the first moment of the history of subjectivity, Greek and Roman antiquity[66], is characterized by the impossibility of separating philosophy and spirituality: "since Plato, since *Alcibiades*, which in the eyes of the Platonic tradition founded all philosophy, the following question is asked: at what price can I have access to the truth? [..] How should I shape myself, what is the modification of being that I must make to be able to have access to the truth?"[67]. The mode of subjectivation specific to Antiquity thus presents a double characteristic. Firstly, the idea of an a-temporal and detached subject of knowledge, capable of objective and decontextualised knowledge, does not exist. Correspondingly the subject as such is not an object of knowledge: the "self-knowledge" that Socrates encourages is not a knowledge of the individual in its idiosyncratic particularities, nor a knowledge of the subject in its empirical determinations. This self-knowledge is of a totally different kind, being the metaphysical knowledge of the intelligible within the sensible, the soul in the body: "knowledge of the divine is the condition of self-knowledge"[68]. It is never a question of knowing the individual as an object of knowledge. Thus, "I believe that, purely spontaneously, we ask the question of the relation between subject and knowledge in the following form: is the objectification of the subject possible? [..] In the culture of the self of the Hellenistic and Roman epochs, when one asks the question of the relation between subject and knowledge, *one never asks the question of whether the subject is objectifiable*, whether one could apply to the subject the same mode of

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[62] 24th March 1982, p.443
[63] 3rd February 1982, p. 183
[64] ibid
[65]
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[67] 3rd February 1982, p. 182
[68] 13th January 1982, p.69

knowing that one applies to things in the world"[69]. The second characteristic of Antique subjectivation is the claim that there must be a circularity between the transformation of the self and access to the truth, which defines the correlation between spirituality and philosophy. Since the individual in his natural state is not qualified to be a subject of knowledge, he must transform himself to be worthy of the truth[70]. But inversely, this transformation of the self is facilitated and accelerated by the revelation of the truth. For example, in order to attain truth, the Platonic sage must purify himself through ascetic practices. He will thus attain contemplation of the intelligible world and have an intuition of his true nature as a soul (by opposition to the prison of his body). This revelation in turn will justify the ascetic practices and renders them easier to apply, further facilitating contemplation. As Foucault says, "this is the Platonic circle […]: in knowing myself, I attain a being that is the truth, and thus the truth transforms the being that I am"[71]. Knowledge of the truth is thus not understood in a purely gnoseological way, but rather as operative in the transformation of the self. Conversely, only the subject who transforms himself can attain the truth: "what the Greeks and Romans wonder about [...] is to what extent knowing the truth, saying the truth, practicing and exercising the truth can allow the subject not only to act as he should act, but also to be what he should be and as he wants to be"[72].

In a way, the antique mode of subjectivation forms the exact antithesis of the anthropological structure: the latter was characterized by the claim that the transcendental subject is naturally capable of forming *a priori* knowledge, and by the redoubling of the transcendental in the empirical specific to the figures of the originary. Antique subjectivation operates with exactly opposite presuppositions: on the one hand, the subject in its natural state is incapable of knowing unless he renders itself "worthy of truth"— while the formation of knowledge itself is not understood as epistemological nor as an end in itself, but as a transformation of the self by the self, a "conversion"[73]. On the other, the subject as such is not considered as a possible object of knowledge: thus "where we understand, us Moderns, the question as "the possible or impossible objectification of the subject in a field of knowledge", the Ancients [..] the: "constitution of a knowledge of the world as the spiritual experience of the subject"[74]. Correlatively, the Antique structure of subjectivation rests on a radically different understanding of truth than that of Modernity: truth is neither adequation to the object, nor the transcendental opening of a field of experience. It has two main meanings, one ontological and the other dialogical. According to the first, truth is the opening of the intelligible world, through which the subject obtains a revelation of his true nature and finds himself transformed: "to have access to the truth, is to have access to being itself, an access which is such that the being to which one has access is at the same time, and in return, the agent of transformation of he who has access to it"[75]. The relation to truth is thus a solitary, intuitive one, in which the "eyes of the soul" are filled by "the divine element"[76]. The second definition of the truth rests on the first but is played out in the field of discourse. The primordial connection between truth and being is the foundation of *askesis* as "a practice of the truth"[77], and more generally of *parrhesia*. Thus the transformation of the *ethos* of the subject by the intuition of intelligible truth has the consequence of making him able, not only to see the truth, but also of holding a discourse the

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[69] 24th February 1982, p. 303
[70] I have followed Foucault in using the masculine to refer to the subject, the reason being that during Antiquity, only free male individuals could be constitute themselves as subjects.
[71] 3rd February 1982, p. 184
[72] 24th February 1982, p. 304
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[74] 24th February 1982, p. 304
[75] 3rd February 1982, p. 184
[76] 13th January 1982, p. 69
[77] 24th February, 1982, p. 388

veracity of which can be vouchsafed in the perfect homogeneity of his words and actions. The parrhesiast is characterized by the adequation between his way of being and the contents of his discourse, which demonstrates that he has suitably constituted himself as a subject of knowledge and spirituality, i.e. in such a way that his ethical substance reflects the knowledge of his intelligible nature he has acquired. Thus, "the ground of *parrhesia*, I think, is this *adaequatio* between, on the one hand, the subject that speaks and who speaks the truth and, on the other, the subject who behaves, and who behaves in accord with this truth"[78]. This is certainly an adequationist conception of truth; but in contrast to what will happen in Descartes' conception, adequation does not function from discourse to the real, but from discourse to the speaker. Thus, "what guarantees that I am saying the truth to you, is that I am effectively, as subject of my behaviour, absolutely, integrally and wholly identical to the subject of speech that I am, when I say what I say to you"[79]. More generally, the circularity between the ontological and dialogical understandings of truth reflects the fundamental connection between spirituality and philosophy in antique thought: access to ontological truth transforms the individual into a knowing subject, and inversely this transformation allows him to speak the truth and gives his discourse its legitimacy and power[80]. Thus, "in Greek and Roman philosophy, [the subject] is present in a coincidence between the subject of speech and the subject of his own acts. The truth that I say to you, you see it in me"[81].

The history of subjectivity II : The Progressive Divorce Between Philosophy and Spirituality (Christianity and Cartesianism).

The second stage of the history of subjectivity is characterized by the progressive dissolution of the Antique association between spirituality and philosophy. While the injunction to care for the self is taken up by Christian practices, little by little a new position for the subject emerges, that of the detached and universal subject of knowledge. To the first corresponds the appearance of the Christian hermeneutic of desire, and to the second the Cartesian turn, itself paradoxically prepared for (according to Foucault) by the development of theology. I will examine these moments in turn. The "Christian", or rather "ascetic-monastic"[82] model, formed between the third and sixth centuries BC[83], developed the connection between self-transformation and self-knowledge, but in increasing exteriority to philosophy. *Prima facie*, the Christian form of subjectivation seems very close to the Antique paradigm, for two main reasons. Firstly, it is equally defined by the circularity between access to truth and self-transformation. Thus "knowledge of the self is demanded, implied by the fact that the heart should be purified to understand the Word; and it can only be purified through self-knowledge; and it is necessary that the word be received for the purification of the heart to be undertaken to lead to self-knowledge. There is therefore a circular relation between self-knowledge, knowledge of the truth and the care of the self"[84]. Secondly, the Christian model takes up the idea that truth is given in a revelation in which the subject becomes worthy of knowledge. Although the source of the revelation changes (no longer the contemplation of the intelligible but the biblical "text"[85]), its operation remains the same (conversion and salvation)[86].

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[78] 10th March 1982, p. 388
[79] ibid, p. 389
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[81] ibid, p. 391
[82] 17th February 1982, p. 245
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[84] ibid
[85] 24th February 1982, p. 308
[86]

Nevertheless the two models present two fundamental differences. Firstly, the development of Christianity generated the appearance of a new mode of subjectivation/objectification, in which for the first time the psychological interiority of the subject became a possible object of knowledge. This modification is made particularly visible by Foucault's study of the contrast between the analysis of representations by Marcus Aurelius, and that of a Christian thinker like Cassian. The first was concerned with analyzing the objective content of representations, and with accepting only those that appeared plausible. For the second however, it is the psychical reality representation that is the true object of the examination. "the problem for Cassian is not at all to know the nature of the object represented. The problem is to know the degree of purity of the representation itself [...], to know if it is mixed with concupiscence or not [...] Does the idea that I have in my mind come from God [...]? Does it come from Satan?"[87]. This refocusing of the analysis, no longer on the represented, but on the nature and origin of the representation as a psychic object, reflects back doubly on the self understanding of the knowing subject. On the one hand he becomes himself an object of knowledge in so much as he is the point at which representations are born; on the other, he occupies an unstable position, being dedicated to an unceasing interrogation of the mechanisms giving birth to his representations. In contrast to the Platonic subject, whose relation to the self and to truth was a limpid relation of mastery, the subject of the hermeneutic of desire is fundamentally opaque and always virtually destitute, as he withdraws from himself in the mysterious dynamic of his interior "desires, passions and illnesses"[88].

The second major modification introduced by the Christian model pertains to the relation of the subject to truth. While the idea of a subject-transforming revelation remains from Antique subjectivation, and so with it an ontological understanding of the truth, the parrhesiastic understanding of truth slowly disappears: "[in Christianity] one knows well that truth does not come from the one who guides the soul, but that truth is given in another mode (revelation, text, book etc.) [...] Greek and Roman psychology [...] obeyed the same general structure, namely that the master commands the discourse of truth. But Christianity separates psychagogy and pedagogy by requiring the psychogised, guided, soul to articulate a truth"[89]. For the idea of an universal truth incarnated in the *ethos* of the master, which then served as a proof, is now substituted that of a truth particular to each individual, which only he can articulate. The modality of truth-speaking thus changes fundamentally: it is no longer a matter of transforming oneself to become a subject capable of seeing and speaking a general truth, but of being able to "speak the truth about oneself"[90]. The subject is now constrained to "objectify himself in a true discourse"[91], one highly particularized, whose condition of possibility is the mode of subjectivation/subjectivation newly introduced by the hermeneutic of desire, according to which the truth of the subject is that of his hidden desires. The type of discourse in which this form of individualization of the truth is expressed is the confession, in which henceforth "the subject of the enunciation must be the referent of the statement"[92].

With Christian thought, the demands of spirituality are thus doubly inflected. On the one hand it begins to separate from philosophy, and on the other it takes the form of a new mode of subjectivation/objectification whereby the subject becomes the object of an individual knowledge, the centre of his own discourse, an ungraspable entity whose truth must be revealed in the ceaselessly renewed movement of the examination of consciousness, then of confession. The Christian mode of subjectivation somehow anticipates that of Man in the Analytic of finitude in condemning the subject to seek to recapture himself in an impossible originary (the

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[87] ibid, p. 287
[88] 10th February 1982, p. 225
[89] 10th March 1982, pp. 390-91
[90] 3rd March 1982, p. 345
[91] ibid, p. 317
[92] 10th March 1982, p. 391

point at which our desires are born, the "*arcana conscientiae*"[93], the secrets of the conscience). Just as for Man, the Christian subject is structurally destined both to seek self-transparency and to withdraw from himself[94]. However, the main difference between the Christian structure of subjectivation and that of modernity is that while the first remains grounded on the idea that spiritual transformation is necessary for access to the truth, in the Analytic of finitude both the position of man as empirico-transcendental doublet and that of truth itself are understood as purely epistemological.

Parallel to the development of Christian spirituality, the second tendency to emerge from the Antique model is the progressive eclipse of the care of the self from the philosophical realm, itself more and more taken over by the idea of an objective knowledge with a correspondingly universal and detached position for the subject of knowledge. For Foucault, this mutation was paradoxically facilitated by the development of theology in the fifth to the twelfth centuries[95]: "the correspondence between an all knowing God, and subjects that are all capable of knowing (provided of course that they have faith), is doubtless one of the main elements which caused Western thought, and in particular philosophical thought, to disengage, emancipate and separate itself from the conditions of spirituality which had accompanied it so far, and whose most general formulation was the *epimeleia heautou*"[96]. The refocusing by theologians on the rational nature of man, a nature universally shared and always already present as divine gift, anticipates the Cartesian idea of the universally knowing subject. Nevertheless the crucial step is the birth of Cartesianism[97]: "the reason why this precept of the care of the self was forgotten [..] this reason that I will call the "Cartesian moment" [..] had a double effect: by qualifying *gnôthi seauton* and by disqualifying *epimeleia heautou*"[98]. What disqualifies the care of the self is the idea that "it is sufficient for the subject to be what he is to have, through knowledge, an access to truth that is opened to him by his own subjective structure"[99]. This structure is defined by the possibility of knowing *a priori* and evidently certain representations (innate ideas), without any spiritual transformation being necessary. Thus "the Cartesian procedure [...] placed at the origin, at the point of departure of the philosophical procedure, evidence— evidence such as it appears, that is such as is given to consciousness, without any possible doubt"[100]. The privileged point of the manifestation of this sort of evidence is the Cartesian *cogito*, in which the subject finds an irrefutable proof of his own existence and of his identity as a thinking thing. By opposition with the Antique and Christian modes of subjectivation, the Cartesian position thus excludes the spiritual demand originally carried by the *epimeleia heautou*. It shares with the hermeneutic of desire the idea that the subject can be the object of a specific knowledge, but in contrast with the opacity of Christian interiority the "self" of philosophical knowledge is immediately captured within the clarity of self-consciousness understood as *res cognitans*. The foundation of the Cartesian structure of subjectivation is this transparency of the soul to itself (which is "easier to know than the body", as the *Meditations* indicate): "in placing the evidence of the subjects' own existence at the very principle of the access to being, it really was this knowledge of oneself [...] which made the "know thine own self" a fundamental access to the truth"[101].

For Foucault, the birth of the Cartesian structure of subjectivation has three main consequences. Firstly, it redefines philosophical methodology, henceforth dominated by "the

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[96] 6th January 1982, p. 28
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[98] ibid, p. 15
[99] 3rd February 1982, p. 183
[100] 6th January 1982, p. 16
[101] ibid

model of scientific practice"[102]. As we have just seen, "the subject as such has become capable of truth"[103]. Nevertheless, each individual's potential for accessing the truth, in order to be actualised, requires an ordering of the internal flux of representations, through which the universality of the knowledge is guaranteed. This ordering is the method[104], clearly distinguished by Foucault from the Antique or Christian "spiritual exercise". While the latter consisted of the careful observation of the free play of representations, the Cartesian method seeks to impose on it a systematic and rational law of succession, through which the sequence of representations is fixed in a logical and universally identifiable form. Thus "the method is a form of reflexivity which allows the certitude which could serve as a criterion for all possible truth to be fixed and which, from there, from this fixed point, will lead from truth to truth until the organization and systematization of an objective knowledge is achieved"[105]. The conditions of access to the truth are no longer tied to spirituality, but to the structure of the act of knowing itself as defined by the method. Secondly, there appears with the method a new mode of objectification by which a uniform and infinite domain is opened, that of the objects represented by the subject of knowledge, and which can be examined, decomposed and recomposed by the mind with certainty and universality. By contrast, the idea of a systematic exploration of representations by a universally knowing subject was absent from the two preceding phases of the history of subjectivity— from Antiquity because the idea of such a subject didn't exist, and from the hermeneutic of the subject because the analysis of representations focused on their origin, and not on their content.

The last modification introduced by Cartesianism is the appearance of a new conception of truth: "I believe that the modern age of the history of truth […] begins from the moment […] the philosopher becomes capable of recognizing the truth in himself and by his acts of knowledge alone, and can have access to it"[106]. As we have seen, Antiquity as much as early Christianity were founded on the ontological conception of truth as a revelation transforming the ethical substance of the subject. With the Cartesian emancipation of philosophy from spirituality, this conception disappears: "it is clear that knowledge of the Cartesian type could not be defined as access to the truth: but rather as knowledge of a domain of objects. So there, if you like, the notion of knowledge of the object has just replaced the notion of access to the truth"[107]. To know the truth is no longer to be illuminated by the intelligible or by divine revelation; neither is it any more to be led by the discourse of the parrhesiast, nor to bring to light one's own truth as an individual subject through the play of the examination of conscience and of confession. Access to truth now takes the form of objective knowledge, regulated by the method, whose criteria are the internal coherence of discourse and the adequation of representation to the real. Knowledge of the world becomes knowledge of physical causes[108]: philosophy becomes epistemology. In front of it, an infinite field is opened (that of the objects represented), in which the progress of knowledge seems both unlimited and autonomous: "access to the truth, which henceforth no longer has any other condition than knowledge, will find in knowledge, as recompense and as accomplishment, nothing but the indefinite progress of knowledge"[109]. Conversion as the ultimate horizon of the philosophical enterprise disappears: "such as it is, truth can no longer save the subject"[110], for the good reason that the subject, now master of his representations, no longer needs saving.

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[102] 3rd February 1982, p. 183

[103] ibid

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[105] 24th March 1982, p. 442

[106] 6th January 1982, p. 19

[107] 3rd February 1982, p. 184

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[109] 6th January 1982, p. 20

[110] ibid

The History of Subjectivity III : the Kantian Moment Or The Reinforcing of Cartesianism. Rereading the Analytic of finitude.

The formation of the 'Cartesian theatre' thus represents for Foucault the first triumph of philosophy as epistemology. It guarantees for all individuals an universal and *a priori* access to the truth. It has none of the obscurities characteristic equally (for different reasons) of the hermeneutic of desire and of the Analytic of finitude: everything in it can be observed and grasped by the mind, while conversely the knowing subject is postulated as transparent to itself[111]. However, it is precisely this transparency that the next stage of the history of subjectivity, the Kantian moment, will cloud. *The Hermeneutic of the Subject* alludes to Kant's influence in terms that evoke the earlier, archaeological analysis of the Copernican turn[112]: "Descartes said: philosophy is sufficient alone for knowledge, and [...] Kant completed it by saying: if knowledge has limits, they are wholly contained within the very structure of the knowing subject, i.e. within the very thing that makes knowledge possible"[113]. The question of the limits of representation is thus displaced from the analysis of representations to that of the faculties of the knowing subject, which corresponds exactly to the analyses of chapter seven of *The Order of Things*. Another passage underlines the anthropological derailing of transcendental idealism as follows: "by taking Descartes as reference point, [...] [one has] with Kant the extra turn of the screw [tour de spire], which consists in saying: what we are not capable of knowing is precisely the structure itself of the knowing subject, *which makes it impossible for us to know it*"[114]. This "extra turn of the screw" is the transition from the transcendental subject to Man, and the corresponding retreat of the later from the space of his own knowledge examined above. Between the idea that the limits of knowledge are contained within the very structure of the knowing subject, and the claim that the "structure itself of the knowing subject makes it impossible for us to know it", stretches all the distance that separates the *Critique* and the *Anthropology*. As we have seen, the reason why the knowing subject is structurally unknowable is the instability of Man as an empirico-transcendental doublet.

At this stage of the reconstruction of the history of subjectivity, Foucault's description of Kant's position thus seems very close to that of *The Order of Things*. But it differs on two essential points. Firstly, Kant is now considered as a *continuer* of Cartesianism, and not as the initiator of a new mode of discursivity. The fundamental epistemic rupture that initiates Modernity thus dates back to not to Kant, but to Descartes' invention of the universal knowing subject and of truth as the representation of the real. To be sure, transcendental idealism doubly complicates this picture: the critical movement redefines the position of the knowing subject (as transcendental subject), and shows that the adequationalist conception of truth is itself dependent on transcendental conditions which alone can open up the realm of experience[115]. Moreover, the anthropological reinterpretation of Man as an empirico-transcendental doublet introduces an added weight of complexity by showing the impossibility of the self-transparency on which the Cartesian theatre rested, and thus by destroying the possibility of giving knowledge a sure foundation (since its limits are destined to dissolve in the different figures of the originary engendered by the Analytic of finitude). It remains nonetheless that the Kantian heritage rests on the same archaeological presuppositions as Cartesianism, i.e. the definition of philosophy as epistemology and of the knowing subject as autonomous and endowed by its nature alone with the power to know. The aporiae of the Analytic of finitude now appear as the

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[113] 6th January 1982, p. 27
[114] 3rd February 1982, p. 183 [Han's italics]
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long term consequence of the epistemologisation of philosophy to the detriment of its spiritual dimension.

However, this first modification in the interpretation of Modernity's philosophical situation is particularly important as it may suggest a way out of the Analytic of finitude. Indeed, if the main reason for the impossible position of philosophy comes from the mode of subjectivation/objectification introduced by Descartes, and so from the divorce between knowledge and spirituality, couldn't the solution to the anthropological dilemma, if it exists, lie in the definition of a new position for the subject, which would reincorporate the demand for the transformation of the self? This is where that the second significant difference between the readings of Modernity presented by *The Order of Things* and *The Hermeneutic of the Subject* comes into play. The first placed the whole of the development of thought under the aegis of the empirico-transcendental doubling, with the variations shown above. But the course of 1982 makes an important modification to this picture by questioning the epistemic hegemony of Man. Thus , "[...] if one goes to the other side, from Kant on, I believe that there again, one will see that the structures of spirituality have not disappeared, neither from philosophical reflection nor perhaps from knowledge"[116]. Foucault mentions as examples the names of Hegel, Schelling, Nietzsche, the Husserl of the *Crisis*, and Heidegger. Yet while Nietzsche's inclusion is not surprising as he had already been identified in *The Order of Things* as one of the few thinkers to thwart the anthropological sleep[117], Hegel, Schopenhauer and Husserl were previously all placed under the aegis of the Analytic of finitude! By contrast, they now occupy an ambiguous position. On the one hand, they reaffirm the primacy of the epistemological perspective issuing from the Cartesian turn (although for different reasons, the first two being metaphysicians of the object and the last a pioneer of the failed explorations of the transcendental), and are thus well lodged "within a philosophy that, since Cartesianism, in any case since the philosophy of the Seventeenth century, one attempted to move away from these same [spiritual] structures"[118]. Yet on the other hand these authors are out of step with the anthropological episteme because " in all these philosophies, a certain structure of spirituality tries to connect knowledge, the act of knowing, the conditions of this act and its effects, to a transformation in the being of the subject"[119]. As we know, the idea of the necessary transformation of the subject's being to attain the truth was excluded by the Kantian definition of man as an empirico-transcendental doublet, which attributed a position to the subject that was certainly very ambiguous, but purely epistemological (as condition of possibility of knowledge) and *immutable in its very instability*: the empirico-transcendental duality was posited as unsurpassable, which caused the endlessly renewed aporiae of the Analytic of finitude.

Foucault's renewed interest in Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche or Heidegger can thus be attributed to the fact that these authors attempt to recontextualise epistemology, and to tie the acquisition of knowledge to the idea of self-transformation. So for Hegel consciousness must transform itself dialectically to achieve absolute knowledge; for Schopenhauer, the acquisition of wisdom is conditional on the will's ethical self-renunciation by the will[120]; for Nietzsche, only the overman is able to bear the "the heaviest weight" evoked by *The Gay Science*, and thus of asserting the supreme truth— the Eternal Return; finally, for Heidegger the possibility of going beyond epistemology and of establishing an enriched relation to the everyday depends on the ethical transformation of the subject described in division two of *Being and Time*. For Foucault, what is implicitly at stake in all these philosophies is a return of the *epimeleia heautou* by which the *gnothi seauton* is put into perspective, both in its imperative character (knowledge not being

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[116] 6th January 1982, pp. 30-31
[117]
[118] ibid
[119] ibid
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per se an end) and in its conditions of possibility (as knowledge can only being truly acquired, i.e. become capable of introducing changes in practices, if the subject becomes authentic). Conversely, the reason why Foucault criticizes Marxism in the course of 1982 is not only that it is an eschatological form of forgetfulness of the transcendental, as in the *Order of Things,* but that, although "it takes up on its own account the demands, the questions [...] of the *epimeleia heautou* and thus of spirituality as condition of access to the truth [...], it tried to mask these conditions of spirituality [...] within a certain number of social forms — the idea of a class position, the effects of the Party, of belonging to a group"[121]. Marxism is thus guilty of having presupposed, but without problematising it, the question of the subject's relation to the truth, and of having surreptitiously displaced the connection between philosophy and spirituality from the ethical domain towards positivism, and thus of giving a deterministic version of the *epimeleia heautou.*

A Hope for Modernity? The Return Of Spirituality and Its Difficulties.

At the end of his life, Foucault remained faithful to the idea that with and since Kant the evolution of thought is dominated by the historical *a priori* of Man as empirico-transcendental doublet. But in the 1982 course, contemporary philosophy is now presented as divided against itself. On the one hand, the main philosophical currents of the 19th and 20th centuries maintained the primacy of epistemology and persisted in the futile attempt to ground human knowledge by transparently defining conditions of possibility themselves made opaque by the ambivalent and ambiguous structure of the Analytic of finitude. Yet on the other hand, some of these thinkers sought to overcome the Cartesian perspective they inherited by recontextualising the desire to know itself, and by re-establishing the spiritual self-transformation of the subject as the end and condition of possibility of knowledge. This recontextualisation impacted on the epistemological level itself by producing definitions of the subject that contested the fusion and confusion maintained in Man between the transcendental and the empirical. Thus the ethical transformations proposed by Hegel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche can be interpreted as examples of such an overcoming of the anthropological structure: once consciousness has reached the level of "Reason", it is able to see beyond the "bad infinity" of the understanding, for which alone the empirico-transcendental distinction remains fixed; the Schopenhauerian ascetic, in renouncing himself, is able to reconcile noumena and phenomena in a common pacification[122]; finally, one of the conditions of the transmutation of Nietzsche's overman is that the distinction between the empirical and the transcendental be recognized as an mistake caused by the forms of schematization belonging to the will to truth[123].

The vicious circle of the Analytic of finitude is thus opposed, at least schematically, by a renaissance of the Neo-Platonic virtuous circle. In contrast with Man, an ambiguous but fixed structure, the spiritual subject is engaged in a perpetual self-transfiguration through which the more he is transformed by his knowledge, the more he becomes suited to know. However, this renaissance presupposes the abandonment of the impossible demand for an absolute foundation for philosophical knowledge, as well as of the scientific model of truth. As Foucault urgently states, it is highly desirable to emancipate philosophical knowledge from the scientific model, and to "constitute an ethics of the self [...], an urgent, fundamental, politically indispensable task, [...] if it is true after all that there is no more primary and ultimate point of resistance to political power than in the relationship with the self"[124]. I have indicated elsewhere the reasons

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[121] ibid
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[123]
[124] 7th February 1982, p. 241

why only the ethic of self can form the heart of resistance to power[125], and the ways in which it renews the Antique connection between knowledge and self-transformation. Instead, I would like to question here the presuppositions and possible consequences of the idea that only a return to philosophy's original spiritual vocation can save it from the Analytic of finitude, by taking as an example the evolution of Foucault's thought itself.

As a philosophical method, archaeology did belong to the purely epistemological problematisation criticised by later Foucault in that it sought to think the conditions of possibility of knowledge solely in reference to the discursive level, independently of any specific positioning for the subject (with the exception, we have seen of Modernity). At this stage of Foucault's work, the adequationist conception of truth was implicitly maintained but also bracketed by the archaeologist's neutrality, and referred to its epistemic conditions, i.e. the historical *a priori* as what defines the acceptability of discourses. After, and no doubt thanks to, the attention newly brought by genealogy to non-discursive practices and their rooting at the political level, later Foucault returned to the question of the conditions of possibility of knowledge in the terms that we have just looked at, which subordinate the epistemic perspective of archaeology to the horizon of the ethical transformation of the subject. Correspondingly, the position occupied by Foucault himself as subject of his own discourse changed. In his last texts he is no longer the detached observer of the modifications in the conditions of possibility of human knowledge: his discourse has acquired a performative vocation, and is now meant to generate within his readers the very kind of ethical transformation it describes— an emancipating awareness of their historical and political situation, of the relations of subjectivation/objectification that they are inscribed within, and of the mechanisms of subjection to which they are submitted by bio-power[126]. Foucault's analysis of Antique spirituality thus has implicitly acquired a unity of form and meaning in which the description of the aesthetic of existence becomes the operator of ethical transformations. Strikingly, this brings to mind another characteristic of Antiquity, namely the parrhesiastic understanding of the truth. Later Foucault spoke in his own name, and addressed his readers as a parrhesiast, whose life, personal engagement, and even the manner in which he handled the coming of his own death, testified to its authenticity.

Although the power and seduction of such a model are evident, it nonetheless presents two problems. Firstly, the parrhesiastic conception of truth examined above is not, and never was, *autonomous*. Originally, it depended on a metaphysical understanding of truth as intelligible revelation, which performed the transformation of the master before being passed onto the disciple by his example[127]. The truth of the Parrhesiast's discourse was *testified* and made communicable by the adequation between his ethical substance and his words, but not *grounded* in itself. But Foucault's analysis of the evolution of knowledge in the West shows that this ontological conception of truth progressively fell into disuse due to the growing epistemologisation of philosophy. The parrhesiastic characteristics of Foucault's discourse cannot therefore *per se* be sufficient to found its truth— a point of which Foucault is himself aware, and to which I shall return later. Secondly and correspondingly, the parrhesiastic model is not a *general* model of truth: the adequation between the discourse of the master and his ethical substance can only function as the visible expression of truth if this knowledge has an *ethical* dimension. In the case of Antiquity this was not really a limitation, as the indissolubility of the *gnothi seauon* and *epimeleia heautou* meant that only those forms of knowledge that had such a potential counted as valuable and worthy of being pursued (hence the rejection of the

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[125] "Nietzsche and Foucault on Style: the Limits of the Aesthetic Paradigm", in *Nietzsche, Postmodernismus und was nach ihhen kommt,* hrsg. Von Endre Kiss und Uschi Nussbaumer-Benz. Cuxhaven, Dartford: Junghans, 2000, ISBN 3-932905-18-0.
[126] For more details of these aspects see the second part of "Foucault and Style".
[127]

objective knowledge of causes by Demetrius mentioned above). But the context of contemporary thought is defined precisely by the autonomy of the epistemological understanding of the truth, i.e. the inheritance of the Cartesian divorce between philosophy and spirituality. Further, Foucault points out that in this new configuration the very idea that knowledge of truth can transform the subject is now considered as a criterion of *non-validity*: one can "identify a false science from the fact that it demands, in order to be accessible, a conversion of the subject and that it promises at the end of its development a conversion of the subject[...]. One can identify a false science from its spiritual structure"[128]. The dominant model is thus now that of a fundamental *incompatibility* between science and spirituality, which seems to invalidate in advance, or at least render extremely problematic, the very possibility of a return to the parrhesiast model of thinking truth.

Foucault thus finds himself in an uncomfortable position. Since the parrhesiastic characteristics of his discourse are insufficient to guarantee its truth, and since the Antique ontological understanding of truth has become obsolete, he has to turn towards the currently dominant model, the scientific paradigm. Paradoxically, in order to gain acceptability his discourse has to take up the scientific norms whose influence he is challenging— precise quotation and translation, maximal exhaustivity, rejection of internal contradictions, extensive critical apparatus, etc. In doing so, he implicitly reaffirms the power of the very conception that he is trying to contest, as these criteria are considered independently of the potential for self-transformation of his work, There therefore exists a strong tension between the scientific *form* that his discourse must assume to be acceptable (and to ground the parrhesiast model), and its *content*, as the very nature of the contemporary epistemological paradigm appears to deny the very idea that is central to later Foucault, that of an intrinsic connection between the truth of a proposition and its ethical effects. Foucault's thought thus appears caught between a rock and a hard place, since the idea of overcoming epistemology with a return to the ethical through which alone the aporiae of the anthropological *a priori* might be overcome, has the unforeseen and unfortunate consequence of referring philosophy back to the scientific perspective that it sought to emancipate itself from. As Foucault indicates, reinforcing epistemology leads to the mirages of Naturalism, which believes itself capable of defining the field and content of knowledge independently of any examination of the corresponding positions of subjectivity. But inversely, to choose to ignore this epistemological demand and to engage in a purely spiritual understanding of truth— like Nietzsche for example, who attempted to revive the pre-Socratic of truth as mastery of truth and judge the truth of a discourse solely by its ethical consequences[129]— is to exposure philosophy to charges of irrationality or prophecy. If we take seriously Foucault's demand for a return to spirituality, which seems desirable, we nonetheless have to admit that it becomes very difficult to assign to philosophy a form of truth which would preserve its status as a autonomous discipline without returning it to the primacy to the sciences, or making a new religion of it. This difficulty does not necessarily mean that such a task would be impossible, but it certainly indicates that the way out of the Analytic of finitude, if it exists is no doubt more problematic than the "reconstitution of an aesthetic and ethic of the self"[130] proposed by the last Foucault.

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[128] 6th January 1982, p. 30
[129] See "Nietzsche and the Masters of Truth: the Presocratics and Christ", in *Heidegger, Authenticity and Modernity: Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus*, Vol. 1, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1999.
[130] 17 February 1982, p. 241