

ARTICLE

Foucault and Weber on Leadership and the Modern Subject

Tahseen Kazi, Georgia Southern University

ABSTRACT: I propose in this paper that Foucault's interest in parrhesia as a "technique of the self," particularly in his reading of Cynic parrhesia, can be fruitfully taken as an exemplar for new political thought on leadership. I make my case by comparing parrhesia with Weber's charisma, which is the only force Weber allows for inserting new valuations into traditional and rational-legal legitimate dominations. I propose that charisma and parrhesia not only share several key characteristics, but express an overabundance of identities. Although it is rarely acknowledged, I propose that this should hardly be surprising given Foucault's longstanding interest in Weber's work. Foucault's governmentality can be productively set next to Weber's psycho-sociology of modern man, *Menschenheit*, to reveal the parallel courses taken by these two thinkers on the modern predicament. Both share a critical curiosity – one that revolves around Kant's presentation in "What is Enlightenment?" – about life, and about seeing how we have come to be how we are as a philosophical problem. Yet, even with all of their parallels, particularly on the subject of leadership, the staggering difference between Foucault and Weber is that while Weber approached charisma as a possible therapy to the problem of the *Menschenheit* being unable to derive new valuations from his rational-legal calculations, Foucault approached parrhesia by looking for techniques for confronting disciplined and biopolitical subjects within society with dangerous truths. Whereas conventional wisdom may presume that it is at such points as Weber's charismatic leadership that Weber and Foucault would part ways, careful study shows that leadership is a point of connection between these two thinkers.

Keywords: Parrhesia, Weber, Menschenheit, Governmentality, Leadership

Introduction

This paper locates leadership in the context of practices of subject formation as a process distinct from leadership in the commonsense context of already individuated subjects. My focus is on leadership in Foucault's "practices of the self," practices of self-creation of the subject in relation to truth, and particularly on Foucault's notion of "parrhesia" or bold speech. I make my approach

to this question by way of Max Weber's concept of charisma, and propose several affinities between Foucault's parrhesia and Weber's charisma. For Weber, the problem with the state in capitalism is that it alone does not have an ability to instill value into modern life. To address this, Weber offers plebiscitary and party politics as means through which charisma could transform a society's hearts and minds. I argue that in a move parallel to Weber's, Foucault proposes parrhesia as a means by which the subject can act at the intersection of power and knowledge, and by which totalizing and individualizing power can be confronted. For both Weber and Foucault, there seems to be a felt absence of leadership in the present age. However, the affinities between the two thinkers reveal their underlying difference at this point, and I argue that Foucault's project of uncovering parrhesia runs counter to Weber's hopes for charisma.

This paper is presented in three sections. The first section looks for similarities between Weber's and Foucault's respective concepts of charisma and parrhesia. Finding that the two concepts are not only affinal but exhibit an overabundance of identities, the second section takes a different tack by moving from an assumption of affinal relations to inquire into the source of their difference. In brief, the difference between the two concepts rests on differences between Weber's and Foucault's concern with, borrowing Colin Gordon's term,¹ "the soul of the citizen." In the third section I demonstrate that whereas Weber looks pessimistically yet hopefully to a professionalized society for a capacity to charismatically add value amidst regimented rationality, and thus create a citizenship adequate to the challenge of disenchantment in modernity, Foucault's work is marked by an "unwillingness to take the side of society against the state" since society itself is the product of disciplinary and biopolitical deployments within pastoral power.² From a Foucauldian perspective, the problem with Weber's intellectual project does not subsist in the concept of charisma or the notion of introducing leadership into relations, but in its aim to use state institutions to carry out a disciplinary project. Foucault looks to parrhesia as a mode of leadership that guides the self-creation of the subject within fields of power and knowledge as a force capable of confronting society.

Weber's Charisma and Foucault's Parrhesia: A Comparison

In this section, I directly compare the relevant concepts, charisma and parrhesia, that held such a central place in the mature writings of Weber and Foucault respectively. Charisma thoroughly permeates Weber's sociology with a transformational potentiality, and parrhesia is important in Foucault's work for being the single "technique of the self" in his search for the "roots" of the Western critical tradition in philosophy.³ My intention here is to locate differences and affinities

¹ Colin Gordon, "Soul of the Citizen: Max Weber and Michel Foucault on Rationality and Government," in *Max Weber. Rationality and Modernity* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987).

² Gordon, "Soul of the Citizen," 263.

³ Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001), 170.

in these two concepts. Whereas Foucault's parrhesia is quite a new topic of study⁴ even among Foucauldians – although it has motivated a very recent proliferation of essays⁵ – Weber's work on charisma may feel to the reader to be overly familiar, well-trodden ground. It is partly for this reason that I begin by reading charisma afresh, directly from Weber's magnum opus *Economy and Society*.

Charisma in Weber's *Economy and Society*

According to Weber, domination can be both legitimate and illegitimate in the eyes of the dominated. Weber conceives three ideal types – rational authority, traditional authority, and charismatic authority – as forming the bases of claims that legitimate domination. He describes charismatic authority as having five features. Firstly, one makes a claim as to the legitimacy of charismatic domination by virtue of a characteristic "devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character" of a person and the order disclosed or created by the person.⁶ This further entails two characteristics; the first being that obedience in charismatic domination is *personally* owed to the leader, in traditional domination it is owed to the *person of the chief*, while in rational domination it is owed to a legally established *impersonal* order. Additionally, the scope of charismatic domination is limited according to those revelations and exemplary qualities in which the follower has faith. The particular nature of the charismatic relation, its "charismatic qualification," is infinitely divisible (the charismatic relation may pertain only to one aspect of a person's life, and a charismatic relation may involve more than one charismatic leader) and infinitely variable.⁷ The scope of tradition, by contrast, is limited to the domain of accustomed obligations, and legal-rationalism only extends according to the authority of the office within the legal-rational order.

As an ideal type, charismatic authority is characterized by individual leadership on the basis of divine or exemplary qualities that are not, in their locale, considered accessible to the ordi-

⁴ Early accounts of Foucault's work regarding parrhesia, some excellent, include John Oneill, "The Disciplinary Society - from Weber to Foucault," *British Journal of Sociology* 37, no. 1 (1986) (<https://doi.org/10.2307/591050>); Gordon, "Soul of the Citizen"; David Owen, "Ambiguity of the Modern: Nietzsche, Weber, Foucault, and the Fate of the Subject of Modernity" (University of Durham, 1989); Charles Taylor, "Foucault on Freedom and Truth," *Political Theory* 12, no. 2 (1984) (<https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591784012002002>).

⁵ These include Jorge Davila, "Ethique De La Parole Et Jeu De La Vérité," in *Foucault Et La Philosophie Antique*, ed. Frédéric Gros and Carlos Lévy (Paris: Kime, 2003); Thomas Flynn, "Foucault as Parrhesiast: His Last Course at the College De France (1984)," in *The Final Foucault*, ed. J. Bernauer and D. Rasmussen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991); David Konstan, "The Prehistory of Sexuality: Foucault's Route to Classical Antiquity," *Intertexts* 6, no. 1 (2002); Thomas Lemke, "Foucault's Hypothesis: From the Critique of the Juridico-Discursive Concept of Power to an Analytics of Government," *Parrhesia* 9(2010); Kimon Lycos, "Foucault, Freedom and Truth Emergence," *ibid.*1(2003); Matthew Sharpe, "'Critique' as Technology of the Self," *Foucault Studies* 2(2005); Eric Paras, *Foucault 2.0: Beyond Power and Knowledge* (New York: Other Press, 2006).

⁶ Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, Vol. 1, ed. Gunther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 215; *Wirtschaft Und Gesellschaft* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1922), 124.

⁷ *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, Vol. 1, 243.

nary person.⁸ These qualities have, in so-called primitive societies, taken the form of magic, prophecy, therapy, legal wisdom, and leadership in the hunt and in war. Weber provides further examples of charisma as diverse as the manic passion of the berserk, the Mormon followership of Joseph Smith, the demagogic reputation of the Socialist Bavarian revolutionary Kurt Eisner, and the Germanic kingship in late Antiquity; all of which are deemed charismatic by virtue of judgment in the charismatic community. Charismatic leadership cannot be representative, because the latter's basis for validity is the representative's assumption of characteristics already possessed by delegates, while with charisma, devotion results from introducing something outside the followers' nature.

A second feature of the charismatic relation is that devotion is exhibited in the followers' sense of a calling; the effect of the leader's investment of arousal in followers felt as distress, excitement or hope. However, if this hope seems permanently suspended, or if the marvel of ardent desire is never consummated, then the charismatic authority may wane.⁹ For Weber, this essential vulnerability of the charismatic relation is the "genuine" pre-modern meaning of the divine right of kings. That is, divine right describes both a kingly prerogative to act decisively and an affliction insofar as charismatic authority enervates when a king appears deserted by his gods and his leadership fails to affect his followers.¹⁰ Weber's reading of divine right is supported by the prevalence of the medieval figure of the king of fools in theater up until today.¹¹ This king of derision also appears in Foucault's comparison of the king of men and the Cynic philosopher's philosopher-king, and we will return to this shortly.¹²

Thirdly, unlike eventual revolutionary relations which seem to happen all at once, Weber's charismatic leadership can extend over time. When charismatic leadership is extended, a charismatic community develops comprised of disciples to a prophet, a *trustis* to a warlord, and generally of agents to a leader.¹³ Agents, and this is the fourth characteristic, are not passive followers

⁸ *Ibid.*, 242.

⁹ *Wirtschaft Und Gesellschaft*, 140.

¹⁰ *Economy and Society: Vol. 1*, 242.

¹¹ Louise Amoore and Alexandra Hall, "The Clown at the Gates of the Camp: Sovereignty, Resistance and the Figure of the Fool," *Security Dialogue* 44, no. 2 (2013) (<https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010613479994>); Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984); Paul V.A. Williams, *The Fool and the Trickster: Studies in Honour of Enid Welsford* (Rochester: D. S. Brewer, 1979); Enid Welsford, *The Fool: His Social and Literary History* (London: Faber & Faber, 1968).

¹² Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1983-1984*, ed. Frederic Gros, trans. Graham Burchell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 273-87.

¹³ Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology, Vol. 2*, ed. Gunther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 1122. The German word Weber uses to generally describe the charismatic *trustis* or community of "disciples" is *Vertrauensmänner*, which is unfortunately translated to "agent" in the English edition *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology, Vol. 1*, 243. I use the Latin *trustis* to highlight the particular position of these followers beyond being agents, and to stress a warrior culture in charismatic communities over the priestly culture suggested by the prophetic "disciple."

of charisma, but those stirred by their “charismatic qualifications” – that particular basis of a sense of a calling from among infinite possible bases which need not be the same even among agents of one leader – who together constitute a community “based on an emotional form of a communal relationship.”¹⁴ There are no appointments, benefices, dismissals, experts, careers or promotions in charismatic communities, nor are there hierarchies, “but only a sense of calling aroused by the leaders, on the basis of the charismatic qualification of those who feel called.”¹⁵ Relations within the charismatic community are communistic and provided for by voluntary gifts. In the charismatic community’s sharp opposition to bureaucratic or traditional authority, there are no abstract legal principles or rational-legal systems of government; instead “formally concrete judgments are newly created from case to case and are originally regarded as divine judgments and revelations”. Similarly, economic considerations are foreign to the charismatic community, where the charismatic relation constitutes a spiritual duty. It is not so much that the community does not seek wealth, particularly as a display of authority, but that the calculation of wealth and poverty is repugnant to both leader and disciple. “What is despised,” Weber writes, “is traditional or rational everyday economizing, the attainment of a regular income by continuous economic activity devoted to this end ... [C]harismatic want satisfaction is a typical anti-economic force.”¹⁶

A fifth characteristic is that Weber presents charisma as the “great” revolutionary force in traditionalist societies; a force that is eclipsed in the “iron cage” of capitalist modernity where the equally revolutionary force of legal-rationality does not work internally as a transformation from the inside that engenders a complete reorientation of engagements in all forms of life, but by the power of *ratio* through intellectualization or “by changing the conditions and problems of life and thus, indirectly our engagements with these.”¹⁷

In summary, as an ideal type, charisma is a personal sense of the presence of extraordinary qualities in another person and in the leader’s revelations about the order of their world. This sense is accompanied by a feeling of being called by, and of feeling devotion to, the leader. Devotion here is a passionate commitment and is infinitely variable and divisible and even revocable on the part of those called. The substance and quality of devotion describes an individual’s charismatic qualification. When charisma is extended over time, a charismatic community of a *trustis* forms itself and is characterized by its constitution by individuals with charismatic qualifications; emotional communality; an absence of hierarchy and office; anti-economy; and purely substantive and improvised justice. Lastly, the charismatic relation was the great revolutionary force of traditional society that has been eclipsed in modernity.

¹⁴ *Economy and Society: Vol. 1*, 243.

¹⁵ “Sondern nur Berufung nach Eingebung des Führers auf Grund der charismatischen Qualifikation des Berufenen.” *Wirtschaft Und Gesellschaft*, 141.

¹⁶ *Economy and Society: Vol. 1*, 244-45.

¹⁷ *Wirtschaft Und Gesellschaft*, 142.

Parrhesia in Foucault's Late Lectures

In his late lectures, Foucault characterizes his critical work according to the three themes of analysis of forms of governmentality, the history of modes of objectification of the subject in knowledge disciplines, and the history of the "care of oneself"; the last of which occurs "at the intersection" of the first two in that a history of the care of the self would be a history of subjectivity that includes relations with oneself and transformations in these relations with new practices and effects of technologies of the self.¹⁸ Secondly, it would also be a history of governmentality, but now of "the government of oneself by oneself in its articulations with relations with others."¹⁹ Care for the self describes the techniques by which subjects construct relationships to the self and, in doing so, direct themselves, others and their worlds.

For Foucault, the ancient Greek practice of care for the self was not a "spontaneous attitude, a natural movement of subjectivity," but something that occurred in relation to a recognized other, a master, who calls upon and instructs the listener to correct their care of the self and so induce positive reconstruction in the listener. By contrast, early Christianity also involved a transpersonal care for the self, but the Christian teacher in monastic and confessional traditions directs the instruction toward sacrificial renunciation.²⁰ Care for the self in Greek and Roman antiquity takes on a particular political sense.²¹ It involves the free-spokenness, or parrhesia, of instructors who, through cultivation, learning and their own practices of care for the self, possess the courage of truth to call upon and direct others to correct their care for the self. Parrhesia, it becomes clear, entails a concern for, and participation in discourses on, truth.²² Foucault offers the following description in this regard:

[Parrhesia is] a rich, ambiguous, and difficult notion, particularly insofar as it designates a virtue, a quality (some people have *parrēsia* and others do not); a duty (one must really be able to demonstrate *parrēsia*, especially in certain cases and situations); and a technique, a process (some people know how to use *parrēsia* and others do not). And this virtue, duty, and technique must characterize, among other things and above all, the man who is responsible for directing

¹⁸ Michel Foucault, "Subjectivity and Truth," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth. The Essential Work of Foucault, Vol. I*, ed. P. Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997), 88.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Frédéric Gros, "Course Context," in *The Government of Self and Others*, ed. F. Gros, *Lectures at the College De France* (New York: Palgrave, 2008), 378.

²¹ Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 8.

²² Foucault's 1984 interview with H. Becker, R. Fornet-Betancourt, and A. Gomez-Müller serves as a good introduction to the truth games in care for the self "The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* (New York: Free Press, 1997), 295-96.

others, particularly for directing them in their effort, their attempt to constitute an appropriate relationship to themselves.²³

We see here that parrhesia is a personal quality, a technique, and a duty of one who is responsible for directing others in their relationship to the self.

In Foucault's last lectures,²⁴ we find roughly six currents of pre-Christian thought regarding parrhesia; each of which distinctively conceives the problem for the subject in relation to truth, and so provides distinct techniques by which parrhesia is practiced. These currents roughly correspond to (1) Greek democratic thought (Euripedes and Isocrates) about the right of the citizen to speak his mind regarding the affairs of his city, (2) Platonic parrhesia that validates truth-telling as the defining principle of guiding the Prince's government of the *politeia* in which democracy must be carefully excluded, (3) Socratic conceptions in Plato's writing with an emphasis on Socrates' courage to approach Athenian citizens and parrhesiatically offer advice, (4) Cynic thought in which Cynic courage is Socratic parrhesia made into a "stylistics of existence", (5) Greek and Roman Stoicism, and (6) the Roman work of Plutarch and Galen.

Foucault does not use a methodology of ideal types like Weber, but he does delineate common elements in these quite diverse currents of parrhesia. In all the currents, parrhesia is characterized by frankness, truth, danger, criticism, and duty. Another common element is the condition of ethical differentiation, namely the differential placement of oneself in the position of teacher, as one that possesses something in one's own existence that one feels must be cultivated in others.

I briefly describe the first (democratic) and third (Socratic) conceptions Foucault presents below, followed by a focused review of the fifth (Cynic) conception. I then draw out points of affinity between Cynic parrhesia and charisma.

In the Greek democratic current, a first citizen's city – its government, its institutions – is the object of parrhesia. Parrhesia is at first conceived here in the positive role of seeking to improve the city's laws and understandings of truth. However, over time parrhesia takes on a second meaning as a dangerous practice for democracy that must be exercised within limits and with caution.²⁵ The "crisis" seen with respect to parrhesia is not dissimilar to the "crisis" of leadership in contemporary political thought on democracy; for example, in Thomas Wren's writing.²⁶ The problem is that in democracy one cannot distinguish between discourse which speaks the truth

²³ *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the College De France, 1982-1983*, ed. A.I. Davidson and G. Burchell (New York: Palgrave, 2011), 43.

²⁴ Covering three different term-length courses at the College de France in Paris *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège De France 1981--1982* (New York: Palgrave, 2006); *The Government of Self and Others; The Courage of Truth*; and six lectures presented during Foucault's time at the University of California in Berkeley *Fearless Speech*.

²⁵ *The Courage of Truth*, 36-52.

²⁶ J. Thomas Wren, *Inventing Leadership: The Challenge of Democracy* (Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2007).

and is useful to the city, and discourse which “utters lies, flatters, and is harmful.”²⁷ This is because the only differentiation permitted in the democratic city is a “quantitative” one that distinguishes between the masses and the few, coinciding with the distinction between the worst and the best, and the bad and the good, for the city. So parrhesia as truth-telling cannot have its place in the democratic game “inasmuch as democracy is unable to recognize and cannot make room for the ethical division on the basis of which, and only on the basis of which, truth-telling is possible.”²⁸

Plato’s depiction of Socrates, particularly in his *Laches*, exemplifies Foucault’s third current of parrhesia. Here the emphasis is on Socrates’ courage to approach Athenian citizens and offer advice, acting like a father or elder brother. This is a face-to-face interpersonal form of parrhesia, expressed as the result of a mission to watch over and care for others’ souls, to ensure that they attend to themselves. Here the focus of parrhesia is neither the city nor the prince’s soul, but the relationship between the individual and “truth founded on the very being of his soul.”²⁹ This aesthetic, rather than political, form of parrhesia acts “on the very axis” of ethics by harmonizing life with reason. On the one hand, Socrates approaches others as equals in that he too lives under the mastery of the autocratic *logos*. On the other hand, Socrates must, in taking care of himself, put “himself in the hands of the missing teacher (the *logos*),” while formally rejecting the teaching role. In this dual role, Socrates “is the one who guides others on the way of the *logos*.”³⁰

Foucault presents Cynic courage as Socratic parrhesia made into a “stylistics of existence.”³¹ Whereas Socrates courageously approaches the Athenian citizenry as an elder truth-teller, with Cynicism this approach is heightened, unmediated by the presumption of equality, and emboldened “to the point that it becomes an intolerable nuisance.” The Cynic takes the aesthetics of Socratic parrhesia to the point of scandal, but this is a scandal of truth that strips existence bare and finds its modern descendants in revolutionism (Foucault mentions Russian nihilism, anarchism, and terrorism) and also in art (Baudelaire, Bacon, Burroughs, though one might add Artaud). In extending Socrates’ parrhesia, Cynic parrhesia takes life as testimony of truth, as that which produces truth, as nonconcealment, purity, conformity to nature and sovereignty in the form of the Cynic’s own life.³² Where Socrates met Athenians as equals with the mission of philosophically guiding others in the way of *logos* to another world, the Cynic, with a Delphic mandate to “deface the currency,” met Athenians as an embodiment of philosophy with the egalitarian task of showing by one’s own life how their lives are false and that the true life is “other than the life led by men in general and philosophers in particular.”³³ This, for Foucault, begins the two

²⁷ Foucault, *The Courage of Truth: Lectures at the College De France, 1983-1984*, 40.

²⁸ *The Courage of Truth*, 44.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 86.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 152.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 165.

³² *Ibid.*, 218.

³³ *Ibid.*, 244.

great themes of Western philosophy found in Kant. The first of these is the question of the other world, and the second that of an other life. The Cynics, Foucault tells us, by their striving for true life, make possible the thought of another world.

Charisma and parrhesia are similar in that they both introduce the extra-ordinary into quotidian life. Both describe an unequal relation between at least two individuals in which one speaks or otherwise presents something extra-ordinary. For Foucault, the qualifying criterion for being extraordinary is the presentation of a dangerous truth, while for Weber it is an exceptionally heroic act or form of life.

By the end of his final lectures at the Collège de France, it becomes clear that Foucault's concern with parrhesia revolves around the fifth current of parrhesia found in Diogenes and the "Cynic Sect."³⁴ A closer study of this Cynic current reveals other affinities between Foucault's and Weber's concepts. For Foucault, revelations attributed to Diogenes and his early disciples about truth are central to the Cynic sect, and so, for example, when Foucault describes the basic principles of Cynic practice, every one of them is based on an aphorism, anecdote, saying, or experience in the life of Diogenes.³⁵ Although the sect flourished hundreds of years after Diogenes' death, Foucault notes the personal relationship between Cynic practice and its founder. The most important of these is the Cynic motto to "falsify the currency" (where "currency" can also be taken as social standards and practices). This motto is attributable to a number of legends about Diogenes' life according to which Diogenes was a money changer who falsified the money, or that Diogenes, upon asking the oracle at Delphi how he could become famous, was told to "alter the currency."

This gives a second point of affinity in addition to their shared introduction of the extraordinary. This second point, specifically between Cynic parrhesia and charisma, is the strong sense of calling acutely felt in Foucault's discussion of Cynic poverty and militancy.³⁶ As with Weber's calling, for Foucault Cynic poverty is not just a matter of acceptance, but a disciplined conduct. Foucault adds that the Cynic drive to poverty is incapable of being satisfied and is part of an ongoing training in resistance "to everything to do with opinions, beliefs, and conventions."³⁷ Foucault speaks of the Cynic life of poverty as unconcealed shamelessness, sovereignty and animality, which more than a mission, is a missionary battle reminiscent of Weber's berserk battle, which is comprised not only of a militant dedication to poverty, but also of an interventionist care of others as an aggressive benefaction.³⁸ "The Cynics," Foucault says, "frequently apply these qualities to themselves, this description of their own mission as a battle ... comparing themselves to soldiers of an army who have to mount guard or confront enemies and engage in

³⁴ *Fearless Speech*, 115.

³⁵ *The Courage of Truth*, 238-39.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 257-59.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 261.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 278-79.

physical combat.”³⁹ Yet, Cynic poverty is distinct in that the struggle is both internal, against the Cynic’s own desires, as well as against the “customs, conventions, institutions, laws, and a whole condition of humanity.”⁴⁰

A third point of affinity is found in similarities between Weber’s discussion of the charismatic *trustis* or community and Foucault’s depiction of the Cynic sect. Both are anti-economic, but two additional features of Weber’s charismatic *trustis* are found in Foucault’s Cynic sect. First, Foucault clearly states that the Cynic sect opposes social organization and hierarchy: “The Cynics are opposed to divine and human laws, and to all forms of tradition or social organization.”⁴¹ Furthermore, the Cynic cult, as with the charismatic communal form, follows a substantive and improvised justice that opposes traditional and rational authority. Foucault writes that the Cynic sect practiced a “traditionality of existence” which, rather than following the doctrinal teaching, passed on anecdotes and in doing so made use “not so much of a theoretical, dogmatic teaching as above all models, stories, anecdotes, and examples.”⁴²

A fourth point of affinity is the substantive, informal nature of justice within the Cynic community, which works via an improvisational bricolage of legends from Cynic lives. Here we see that the traditionality Foucault sees is entirely about the lives of cherished founders, and stands opposed to Weber’s traditional authority. Foucault is explicit about this. Whereas doctrinal tradition “enables a meaning to be maintained or retained beyond forgetfulness” so as to be applied in present circumstances, Cynicism’s traditionality of existence “enables the strength of conduct to be restored beyond moral enfeeblement.”⁴³ That is, whereas the former seeks to maintain and retain meaning, the latter recalls elements and episodes of leaders’ lives so as to give life once again to those episodes. In giving anecdotes of cherished leaders a new life, the Cynic finds a new calling to strengthen conduct and restore morality in the present life.

In summary, as with the charismatic community, the Cynic sect exhibits a sense of the presence of the extraordinary qualities of personalities whose lives continue to guide and lead the sect; a sense of calling and devotion to the lives of its leaders; a passionate commitment that imbues the sense of calling with a militancy; an absence of tradition and office; and a substantive and improvisational sense of justice. Although I am comparing Foucault’s parrhesiastic life of the Cynic with the ideal type of charisma – which, according to Weber is a “utopia” that does not exist in history – the affinities are still striking.

But the identity does not stop here. Foucault adds that “through this traditionality of existence we see emerging—and this is very clear in the Cynics, much more than in any other form of philosophy, much more even than in Epicureanism or Stoicism—*that figure, which is so important,*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 279.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 280.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 208.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 209.

of the philosophical hero.”⁴⁴ This figure, the philosophical hero, rests chronologically between the sage and the Christian holy man, between archaic tradition and the last centuries of Antiquity, and is the “essence of philosophical heroism” in its “most general, rudimentary, and also demanding aspect.”⁴⁵ “Philosophical heroism,” Foucault adds, “the philosophical life as heroic life, was something put in place and handed down by this Cynic tradition.”

Foucault is plainly saying here that the Cynic sect is not only made up of followers of a hero, but, on top of this, that the Western tradition of philosophical heroism is itself born with the Cynic tradition. In setting out to study the possibility of affinity between charisma and parrhesia, what seems to have been obtained is identity, with the addition that parrhesia is the charismatic form of the Western philosophical tradition. One could say that, in Cynic fashion, identity has been driven to identity’s dishonor, lurching into a claim of priority and origination. To understand better how this has come about, I will compare Foucault’s and Weber’s *oeuvres* in the next section.

Before ending this comparison, a fifth point of affinity between charisma and parrhesia must be pointed out. As charisma, for Weber, was eclipsed in modernity, Foucault declares parrhesia to have all but disappeared by the nineteenth century, except in the revolutionary life. Other than pointing out that Foucault makes reference in it to Weber’s hero, Goethe, the passage below needs no introduction:

Obviously, this history of philosophy as ethics and heroism would come to a halt when, as you know, philosophy became a teaching profession, that is to say, at the beginning of the nineteenth century ... [This is] also the moment when the legend of the philosophical life receives its highest and last literary expression. This is, of course, Goethe’s *Faust* ... When philosophy becomes a teaching profession, the philosophical life disappears. Unless we want to recommence this history of the philosophical life, of philosophical heroism, in exactly the same period, but in a completely different, displaced form. Philosophical heroism, philosophical ethics will no longer find a place in the practice of philosophy as a teaching profession, but in that other, displaced and transformed form of philosophical life in the political field: the revolutionary life. *Exit Faust, and enter the revolutionary.*⁴⁶

Foucault and Weber on the Divine Right of Kings

The theme of monarchy’s fragility is common to both Foucault’s and Weber’s conception of monarchy. As I have shown above, this was expressed by Weber as the meaning of divine right in the concept of the “divine right of kings.” Whereas the phrase is generally understood to mean a right for kings to do anything because their rule is derived directly from God, Weber offers a quite different meaning. Weber distinguishes divine right from other rights by making it dependent on

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, my italics

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 210.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 211.

the King's ability to provide *heil*, "health," to his following.⁴⁷ If fortune has turned on the king and his people no longer feel they are in the presence of his *charism*, then his charismatic authority is liable to wither. When this occurs, the worst fate befalls the king, who now becomes a king of derision.

The figure of the king of derision stands out in Foucault's reading of Cynic parrhesia in a passage where he discusses a legendary meeting between Diogenes and Alexander of Macedon. The meeting is depicted as one of kings. While for Stoics the philosopher *ought* to be king, the Cynic narrative of this meeting goes beyond the constraint of "ought" to directly declare that Diogenes *is* king. The Cynic philosopher is an anti-king who exposes the precarity of monarchy. The Cynic's kingship is not vulnerable precisely because it is not divine. Foucault tells us that there are four ways in which the Cynic is an anti-king.⁴⁸ First, whereas kings like Alexander must depend on other things (guards, allies, armor, etc.), the Cynic anti-king does nothing more than exercise sovereignty. Second, while kings must be cultivated into monarchs, the sage's soul is already fully endowed with greatness and virility. Third, a king's fragility is eternal only as long as he battles his enemies, but the anti-king is forever virile for waging an everlasting battle with his own faults and vices. Fourth, while the king of men is eternally exposed to a reversal of fortune, the anti-king is king by nature and so king forever. More than this, the Cynic anti-king is already the king of derision, and in fact becomes king through a scandalous dedication to poverty.⁴⁹ The Cynic anti-king's unwelcome gift, unlike the king's *charism*, is a harsh medication administered in the form of aggressive benefaction that cannot be returned and annulled. Whereas Alexander momentarily possesses the divine right of kings, Diogenes' kingship is solid and eternal.

Here we see a major distinction between Weber's charisma and Foucault's parrhesia. Whereas Weber's charisma includes kings whose divine right makes them vulnerable to losing their charisma, the Cynic king has no such fear. Weber writes that charisma exists as the only type of authority that carries the force to transform people from within, and Foucault appears to be in agreement. However, Foucault's divergence from Weber's conceptualization is in Foucault's stress on parrhesiastic leadership as a falsifying leadership. While the king's charisma, which may come from glory in battle, is vulnerable to turning into derision with the king's next defeat, the philosopher's parrhesia, which may appear in harangues and unwanted admonishments, is distinctly endowed with its own virility and invulnerability to misfortune. It is invulnerable to derision because it is already derisory. It is derisory in that the parrhesiast's life is a militant life against false customs. If the charismatic king battles for his own health and that of the community, the parrhesiast battles for self and others against conventions. The Cynic practices poverty against the custom of exalting wealth, displays a bare body against the custom of clothing, and intervenes into the lives of passersby by giving them unsolicited advice on caring for themselves

⁴⁷ Henry Myers and Herwig Wolfram, *Medieval Kingship* (Burnham Inc Pub, 1982), 4.

⁴⁸ Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 276-77.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 278-79.

against customs of politeness. Most importantly of all, the Cynic falsifies the currency against the flows of circulation of wealth and debt that the Alexandrian currency entails. Falsification of myth is the calling of the parrhesiast, a calling not to guard conventions but a call to arms against convention. Foucault lectures that the Cynic military battle is:

a battle against customs, conventions, institutions, laws, and a whole condition of humanity. It is a battle against vices, but these are not the individual's vices. They are vices which afflict humankind as a whole, the vices of men which take shape, rely upon, or are at the root of their customs, ways of doing things, laws, political organizations, or social conventions. The Cynic battle is therefore not simply that military or athletic battle by which the individual ensures self-mastery and thereby benefits others. The Cynic battle is an explicit, intentional, and constant aggression directed at humanity in general, at humanity in its real life, and whose horizon or objective is to change its moral attitude (its ethos) but, at the same time and thereby, its customs, conventions, and ways of living.⁵⁰

Parrhesia is a battle to destroy myths that give rise to customs, whereas charisma allows for – and sometimes centers on – the production of myths. This is the decisive difference between charisma and parrhesia.

Comparing the *Oeuvres* of Foucault and Weber

This accord and discord between Weber and Foucault on the concept of charisma – supposedly the prime exemplar of the sort of personalized conception of human relations that Foucault devoted his career to efface – demands explanation. How could Foucault, after decades of demonstrating that the subject is the outcome of modes of veridiction in psychiatry, sexuality, and criminology, modes imbricated in power relations, propose subject formation as self-constitution? And, how could Foucault do so in a manner that is in such close parallel to Weber's notion of charismatic leadership? I present their *oeuvres* below to show that congruencies between the two authors go beyond the concepts of charisma and parrhesia to shared concerns about modern forms of *Menschen-tum* and governmental subjectivity, and that these concepts remain essential to each author's overall focus of study and to their relation with one another.

Let me be clear at the outset that my intention is not at all to make the case that some kind of break or turn can be found in Foucault's later work. To the contrary, I believe that there are principles that pull together, perhaps even unify, his body of work. What I demonstrate below can be thought of as taking in a different direction Mathew Sharpe's argument that Foucault's reading of Kant demands that Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* itself be reread.⁵¹ My argument is that Weber's concept of charisma be reread in light of Foucault's parrhesia with an awareness of pre-

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 280.

⁵¹ Sharpe, "'Critique' as Technology of the Self."

cisely how their two bodies of work, Foucault's and Weber's, share features and diverge from one another.

Although Weber is understood in highly sophisticated terms by Weberians, his general reputation in the United States remains linked to methodological individualism, a particular reading of value-free social science, and a tragic story of an evolutionary and universalist rationality. If asked what the central thematic of Weber is, an American scholar – familiar with Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, his essays on politics and science as vocations, and perhaps some extracts from *Economy and Society* – might mistakenly say that Weber's main concern was with the evolution of rationalism and with sociological methodology. Yet, if one reads these works, the concern with Weber's central question is only likely to heighten. The diverse interests expressed in single essays, let alone the various themes of his many, often fragmented, writings, may well leave one wondering what motivated Weber's interests and, more than this, what Weber is trying to say. Part of the problem is with the various partially successful translations of his work, but the question of the central thematic is also pertinent to Weber's German-speaking audiences.

Partly responsible for debates over Weber's writing are the difficulties it poses. It is characterized by a sparkling clarity that obscures irony and play in the positions he presents; features that combine to form subtly composed demands to rethink conventions and even his own arguments.⁵² It also presents the challenge of a seemingly drastic shift in focus – from the Protestant ethic to the sociology of religion in his last writing before his death – that is not unlike Foucault's own "trip to Greece."

In a spirited article responding to a claim that Weber's central thematic is the universal, inexorable, rationalization of life, Wilhelm Hennis addresses the question of Weber's *oeuvre* by directing readers to Weber's use of the key word *Lebensführung* in the following quote by Max Weber: "It is the spirit of a 'methodical' *Lebensführung* which should be 'derived' from 'asceticism' in its Protestant transformation and which stands in a cultural-historical relation of 'adequacy-equivalence' (*Adaquanz*) which is in my opinion very important."⁵³ In other words, the explanation Weber himself provides for writing *Protestant Ethic* is to "derive" the spirit of a *Lebensführung* (the particular conduct or leadership of life specific to capitalism) from Protestant asceticism. Weber's interest is not to derive a general rationality, whatever that may be, but to give an account for the rise of an "ethical *Lebensstil*,"⁵⁴ a stylization of life, that is "spiritually adequate to the economic stage of capitalism" and which "signifies its triumph in the 'souls' of men."⁵⁵ The *Lebensfüh-*

⁵² Chapters 3 and 4 of Arpad Szakolczai's *Max Weber and Michel Foucault Max Weber and Michel Foucault: Parallel Life-Works* (New York: Routledge, 1998) offer a very close, instructive, and inventive take on Weber's writing style.

⁵³ Wilhelm Hennis, "Max Weber's 'Central Question'," in *Max Weber: Essays in Reconstruction* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1988), 142.

⁵⁴ Here *Lebensstil*, lifestyle, can also be translated, using Foucauldian language, to the "stylistics of existence."

⁵⁵ Quoted in Hennis, "Max Weber's 'Central Question'," 143.

run of Weber's interest comes with a *Habitus* that cannot be generalized away, and displays a characteristic tension between vocation, life and ethics whose effect is this manhood, a particular kind of rationalized manhood, *Menschentum*. Hennis' point is that Weber's central theme is not the process of rationalization *in toto*, but the development of the specificity of *Menschentum*, whose *Lebensführung* is the object of his investigation.⁵⁶

Hennis' depiction reveals affinity in the *oeuvres* of Weber and Foucault. Compare the pair of terms *Lebensführung* (the conduct, literally leadership, of life) with Foucault's *la conduite de la conduite*. Foucault introduces us to the phrase "conduct" in discussions of medieval Christian pastoral power, which involves a "highly specific form of conducting men" having to do with the "conduct of souls."⁵⁷ That is, pastoral power conducts the conduct of individuals by way of conducting their souls. This form of power is reawakened, according to Foucault, and central to the rise of governmentality. Like *Lebensführung*, the conduct of conduct is about the government, the self- and other-leadership, of life. And like *Lebensführung*, conduct of conduct in pastoral power has produced a specific governmentality which we understand and treat as natural and central to our political economy.⁵⁸ For both Weber and Foucault, the *Menschentum* produced in capitalism – that is, the subject of capitalist calculation – is precisely not a universal, general, and rationalized subject.

In a thorough but ultimately flawed study of Weber's and Foucault's *oeuvres*, David Owen correctly points to the heart of the matter, which is that Weber and Foucault share two essential influences in Kant and Nietzsche. It would be fair to say that the "origin" of the question that drives both their studies is Kant's presentation of life as a philosophical problem in his "What is Enlightenment?" Owen's contribution is his detailed study of how one can trace, from Kant to Nietzsche, Weber, and Foucault, trajectories of the critique of modernity, but the problem with Owen's depiction is that it is too linear with each successor solving prior problems. His is not the first time either Weber's or Foucault's work has been linked to Nietzsche,⁵⁹ but it is one of a few

⁵⁶ See *Max Weber: Essays in Reconstruction* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1998) for a detailed reading of Weber's oeuvre.

⁵⁷ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège De France 1977--1978*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave, 2007), 193-94.

⁵⁸ *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1978--1979*, ed. Michel Senellart and Francois Ewald (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 15.

⁵⁹ Studies of relations between Weber's and Nietzsche's work include Robert Eden, *Political Leadership and Nihilism: A Study of Weber and Nietzsche* (Tampa: University Presses of Florida, 1983); John Patrick Diggins, *Max Weber: Politics and the Spirit of Tragedy* (New York: Basic Books, 1998); Stephen A. Kent, "Weber, Goethe, and the Nietzschean Allusion: Capturing the Source of the "Iron Cage" Metaphor," *Sociological Analysis* 44, no. 4 (1983) (<https://doi.org/10.2307/3711612>); Hubert Treiber, "Nietzsche's Monastery for Freer Spirits and and Weber's Sect," in *Weber's Protestant Ethic: Origins, Evidence, Contexts*, ed. H. Lehmann and G. Roth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and those between Foucault and Nietzsche include Mark Warren, *Nietzsche and Political Thought* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991); Scott Lash and Sam Whimster, *Max Weber, Rationality*

book-length studies devoted to applying their common influences to link Weber and Foucault to one another.⁶⁰

For Owen, Nietzsche's great contribution is his stance against Hegel's position that maturity is "self-actualization," the realization of one's own authentic being, and Nietzsche's own interpretation of maturity as "self-overcoming, as the ongoing process of becoming what one is."⁶¹ Nietzsche offers the method of genealogy for evaluating values in this ongoing process in history, and finds that modern culture is characterized by a fundamental ambivalence due to an absence of any grounds for evaluation that would enable the exercise of autonomy. Nietzsche offers, as an alternative ground, an aesthetics of time by posing the moment as the threshold at which all future and all past extends. The experience of time as such is the eternal recurrence of the experience of the self-generating value of existence. In Owen's work we clearly see the shared importance of Nietzsche's *übermensch* for Weber and Foucault. To the extent that eternal recurrence is culturally substantiated, individuals with autonomy for self-legislation (Nietzsche's *übermensch*) will rise up and reintroduce value to the modern world. Weber and Foucault share an interest in refining Nietzsche's notion of eternal return by investigating what culturally substantiating it would entail, and by historically seeking out modes of being that substantiate Nietzsche's *übermensch*.

Both Weber and Foucault refine and reproduce Nietzsche's immanent critique of Kant and reconsider the problem of grounds for value in modernity. The paradox of Weber's *Menschen-tum* is that its distinctive capacity for achieving an inner distance for autonomy accompanies a disenchantment that leaves it bereft of the ground of values that would give meaning to human action. Weber's hope out of this lay in the ethical cultivation of the self that results in individuals and communities endowed with charisma, which substantiates the eternal return and reintroduces value to the modern world. It is here that one can find the shared concern of Foucault and Weber. Weber and Foucault respectively see *Menschen-tum* and governmentality as the product of pastoral power that has been displaced from its religious origins. This rise of *Menschen-tum*/governmentality, as both clearly recognize, occurs with the rise of capitalism after the capital-

and Modernity, (New York: Routledge, 1987); Gary Shapiro, *Archaeologies of Vision: Foucault and Nietzsche on Seeing and Saying* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

⁶⁰ Other such attempts include Oneill, "The Disciplinary Society - from Weber to Foucault; Nicholas Gane, *Max Weber and Postmodern Theory: Rationalization Versus Re-Enchantment* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Árpád Szakolczai, *The Genesis of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2003). Szakolczai has also published a stimulating and provocative intellectual biographical comparison of Weber and Foucault *Max Weber and Michel Foucault: Parallel Life-Works*.

⁶¹ David Owen, *Maturity and Modernity: Nietzsche, Weber, Foucault and the Ambivalence of Reason* (London: Routledge, 1994), 3.

labor encounter, or in Marxist terms, real subsumption after formal subsumption, and in DeleuzoGuattarian terms, spiritualized *Urstaat* after capital.⁶²

Different Lives: Leadership to the Human Condition in Foucault and Weber

One may still be tempted to seek comfort in the thought that charisma is precisely what Foucault is not interested in, and that parrhesia should not be confused with charisma. I have shown above that parrhesia and charisma share too many features to characterize Foucault's relation to Weber so easily. Furthermore, the problem with any ready dismissal of charisma as an individualist insertion of authority is simply that, as we have seen, the charismatic relation is not constitutive in the sense of making up relations of hierarchy, and so plebiscitarian leadership cannot be a 'natural' outgrowth of charisma. Charisma is destined to be fleeting and at most create a charismatic community, which is a strictly limited communistic community that itself knows no hierarchy. Although for Weber a charismatic community of *trustis* can form over time, this community constitutes nothing: no central demand, no meaningful identity, no offices, no hierarchy, no bureaucracy, and no formal laws. Any notion of a statewide, legislating charisma cannot be about charisma itself. What, then, does charismatic authority do? It instills charismatic qualifications in others where charismatic qualification describes particular conditions of calling from among the infinitely divisible and variable ways by which disciples may feel called.

The problem with Weber's charismatic plebiscitarian politician argument is that it implies that the characteristics of the plebiscitarian politician are charismatic characteristics.⁶³ In particular, the plebiscitarian politician must have an ethic of responsibility to meet the demands of the day in one's vocation, and a sense of distance to mediate between ultimate values and daily demands. Certainly, Weber affirms these qualities in his "Politics as a Vocation," but the problem is that there is no reason to believe (and every reason not to believe) that Weber was describing charisma as affirming an ethic of responsibility. As we have seen, the charismatic relation is entirely opposed to something like an ethic of responsibility which "takes account of precisely the average deficiencies of people," does not presuppose their "goodness and perfection" to do the right

⁶² Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 225.

⁶³ Andreas Kalyvas makes an argument that bears some affinities with my own *Democracy and the Politics of the Extraordinary: Max Weber, Carl Schmitt, and Hannah Arendt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Kalyvas argues that there are two versions of charismatic politics to be found in Weber's work. The first is a "collective, impersonal form of rebellious hegemonic processes" and the other is a forms that focuses on "personal attributes of charismatic leaders" "Charismatic Politics and the Symbolic Foundations of Power in Max Weber," *New German Critique* 85, no. Special Issue on Intellectuals (Winter) (2002): 20-21. Kalyvas argues that the former, chronologically earlier (pre-1913) version form charisma merits closer examination.

thing, and acts in terms of an economy of consequences.⁶⁴ Arguments against charisma on the basis of a political stance against plebiscitarian authoritarianism recreate the plebiscitarian politician as a fully charismatic personality, and base their critique of the charismatic personality on a novel construction of the charismatic. The problem is that by Weber's own descriptions, a charismatic relation is to a great extent at odds with hierarchical, office-holding plebiscitarian leadership, and Weber's definition of charisma blurs to accommodate a plebiscitarian stance. Charisma cannot itself be criticized for being authoritarian and plebiscitarian. The argument against Weber's politics on the basis of charisma itself does not hold, but a much more interesting problem in Weber's work will be raised below.

Foucault, Governmentalities, and the Parrhesiastic Modality

It was through, not in spite of, the study of sexuality that Foucault arrived at the concept of the care of the self. Through his research on sexuality, Foucault made the remarkable discovery that more than being just an indicator of power, sex is also an indicator of the subject in relationship to truth.⁶⁵ This relation of subjectivity to truth develops Foucault's previous work by adding a third dimension to the previously known power and knowledge. We should no longer be confident as Foucauldians that we can see our sexual identities as formatted by a dominant power and confine our agency strictly to a resistance to that power.

Through his studies of sexual practices in Antiquity, Foucault was able to locate "the form and effects" of the relation of the self to truth as particular elements in the constitution of experience and distinguish these effects with respect to the more familiar effects of knowledge and power. In undertaking this turn, Frédéric Gros reminds us, "Foucault does not abandon politics to dedicate himself to ethics, but complicates the study of governmentalities through the exploration of the care of the self."⁶⁶ Foucault had to distance himself from the "terrain" of modernity, in which he had so forcefully found the binding apparatuses of knowledge and power, to see the significance of practices of the self. From here on we must add, in addition to Foucault's famous focus on the imbrications of power and knowledge, the subject who emerges in practices of the self.⁶⁷

The significance of introducing the subject to power and knowledge is clearly illustrated in a short passage of an unpublished manuscript that Foucault had prepared for his first Collège de France course that centers on the techniques of the care of the self; a passage found in Gros' "Course Context" at the end of *Hermeneutics of the Subject*.⁶⁸ Foucault notes that, since Descartes,

⁶⁴ Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *Weber: Political Writings*, ed. Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁶⁵ Frédéric Gros, "Course Context," in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège De France 1981--1982*, ed. F. Ewald and G. Burchell (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006), 512.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 2: The Use of Pleasure* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 4.

⁶⁸ Gros, "Course Context."

philosophy has developed the figure of a subject who is capable of accessing truth through knowledge, and capable of right action only by way of being enlightened by truth. In Antiquity, on the other hand, Foucault sees another access to truth by way of a drastic ethical conversion. The question of interest to Foucault is whether the former has entirely displaced the latter. If the answer is affirmative, then “the question of whether the subject’s being must be brought into play” in accessing truth can be set aside.⁶⁹ If ethical conversion cannot be displaced, then “virtues and experiences” from ethical conversions will have a certain “form” and “force” that must be taken into account in the emergence of the subject. It is here, through the subject, that Foucault tries to escape Marxist humanism to propose a response to the question of how the capital-labor encounter evolved into capitalism. Rejecting a theory of objective knowledge or a new analysis of signifying systems, Foucault turns to putting “the subject back into the historical domain of practices and processes in which he has been constantly transformed,” where the subject is now a subject of knowledge, a subject of power, and a subject of practices of the self.⁷⁰

In his second Collège de France course on the care for the self, published as *The Government of Self and Others*, Foucault displaces the phrase “care for the self” with truth-telling, “parrhesia,” and begins the course by revisiting Kant’s “What is Enlightenment?” Here, for the first time, the question of how to critically interpret agency is staged not in terms of “desubjectification” through resistance to knowledge/power deployments, but with regard to parrhesia. In Foucault’s last course, published as *The Courage of Truth*, parrhesia is presented with three characteristics. The first of these is that parrhesia is clearly placed in relation to governmentality. Foucault says, “It seems to me that by examining the notion of parrhesia we can see how the analysis of veridiction, the study of techniques of governmentality, and the identification of forms of practices of the self interweave.”⁷¹ Parrhesia is a practice of self-making through veridiction rather than through the acquisition of knowledge. It is a technique of the government of the self and others that is distinct from domination. It is a formation of the practices of the self rather than a deduction of the subject. Since practices of self-making vary, and since they variably involve deployments of knowledge and power, for the first time Foucault speaks of “governmentalities” to describe the various rationalities of practices. These rationalities do not necessarily result from knowledge and power deployments alone, and can now also sometimes be seen to create effects that directly counter those deployments. Secondly, parrhesia occurs in a relationship that is not egalitarian in that it is a relationship of leadership, the government of self *and others*. As we learn from the danger of practicing parrhesia in democracy, parrhesia necessarily creates an inequality between speaker and listener. A third characteristic of parrhesia is that it involves ethical differentiation on the part of the listener – understood as a process of valuation that necessitates bringing truth into play in the construction of the self. Ethical differentiation can be positively compared to

⁶⁹ “Course Context,” 523.

⁷⁰ “Course Context,” 525.

⁷¹ Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 8.

Weber's "charismatic qualifications" in that both take truth into play in the construction of the self and both involve valuation – the latter not as some moral quality only available to a leader, but in the part of all those involved in the relationship.

My point here is that it is in Foucault's studies of the practices of the self, and particularly of parrhesia, that he provides viability for the realization of techniques for creating the self with respect to truth in modernity. I should be clear that Foucault is not optimistic about this possibility: He says, "And what about the modern epoch, you may ask? I don't really know. It would no doubt have to be analyzed. We could say perhaps—but these are hypotheses, not even hypotheses: ... [T]he parrhesiastic modality has, I believe, precisely disappeared as such, and we no longer find it except where it is grafted on or underpinned" by truth-telling as prophecy, technical expertise, or philosophical discourse on being.⁷²

Foucault and Weber: Two Distinct Projects Regarding Leadership

What does all this mean for the relation between Weber's and Foucault's work? I think that the resemblance of parrhesia in Foucault's work to charisma in Weber's work is not coincidental. In both cases, what is of concern is the insertion of value into a life run by, on the one hand, a philosophy of government embodied in pastoral power, and on the other, by a politics of interests played out in the domain of law.

The importance of this similarity becomes clearer on reading about Foucault's position with respect to Weber's *oeuvre*. Foucault himself says that Weber's works on modern enterprise "support the neo-liberal project."⁷³ In line with this view, Colin Gordon describes Weber's somewhat ambivalent position in the German liberal *Nationalökonomie* platform of his time. Within this group, Weber recommended the insertion of reason of state as the contingent value-criterion of political economy, that is, as a means by which to insert value into political economy. Careful use of the state as a criterion would enable the retention of economic rationality while at the same time imbuing, from above, the society with value-rationality.⁷⁴ This is done by the entry into politics of the "man of calling for politics" whose charisma is tempered in maturity by his ethic of responsibility.⁷⁵ Weber's most personal depiction of charisma comes in the form of the plebiscitarian leader; an individual Weber realizes is hard to come by. He must have great convictions that are unconventional to society, yet have an ethic of responsibility to uphold society's conventions. He must guard society and yet bring in the new. The psychic tensions this creates seem unbearable. Which comes first, guardianship or transformation? What if the two confront one another head on and the very thing the plebiscitarian leader is called to guard is what must change? Weber's is a therapeutic stance regarding the insertion of reason of state into political economy by

⁷² Ibid., 30.

⁷³ *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1978--1979*, 147.

⁷⁴ Gordon, "Soul of the Citizen" 304.

⁷⁵ Weber, "Politics as a Vocation."

those who take on the heavy burden of politics as a vocation. The problem with this stance is that it asks too much of the plebiscitarian politician, who is expected to respect conventions – including the custom for acquisitiveness – and yet be devoted to change. Weber wants charisma to play the crucial role in modernity that his own depiction of charisma seems to defy. In a Weberian mode, charismatic insertion of the new would have the effect of crumbling the imagined walls that economists like to think separate private from public interests while it went about its business of adding value-rationality to the rationally interested and acquisitive character of *Menschen-tum*. This is Weber's project, one that forces a modality that ultimately falsifies custom into the vocation of upholding custom.

For Foucault, sovereign and pastoral power in modernity is a totalizing and individualizing power whose interest lies in society as *omnes et singulatum*.⁷⁶ While Weber would recognize the potentially totalizing power of pastoralism, he would not recognize the individualizing power of discipline in the same sense as Foucault. For Weber, religion and politics can instill a certain government of self, as with Protestant inner-worldly asceticism, but Gordon reminds us that Weber would be deeply suspicious of governmentality as "rationality pertaining to the conduct of others' conduct."⁷⁷ For Weber, government as the conduct of others' conduct could only have one rationality, and this would be of those fearful to act as a result of overwhelming coercive power; those "who have police in their very bones."⁷⁸ Therefore, Weber did not seek to comparatively investigate the governmentalities involved with the conduct of others' conduct, since all such rationality would be labeled suspicious for being veiled coercion. For Weber, there is reason of state, which is a criterion by which charisma can be introduced into rational government, and there is governmentality among those with police in their bones, which is an undesirable attribute that would retard individual liberties and thus one that cannot describe *Menschen-tum*.

Whereas Foucault finds that the modern state is the effect of a combined pastoral and juridical power, for Weber the modern state is constantly in jeopardy of relinquishing reason of state to capitalism, where the latter is understood as an ethos of acquisitiveness in the absence of grounds of value. For Weber the issue was to give value to this ethos through expert scientific valuation, and importantly through the entry of individuals carrying a charisma cultivated within an ethic of responsibility which would somehow – and Weber is not clear how – affect the population. Reason of state is, for Weber, nothing more than a useful channel by which to instill new values in people. What Weber did not see in his pre-Hitler world was that not only charisma, but also governmentality, pertains to those processes that fall into the rubric of reason of state. Gordon writes, "If Weber is not a noted theoretician of this topic [of individual existence as a concern of the state], this may be because he is one of its most passionate and pragmatically committed

⁷⁶ Michel Foucault, *Power*, ed. J.D. Faubion and R. Hurley (New Press, 2001), 298-325.

⁷⁷ Gordon, "Soul of the Citizen," 306.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

exponents."⁷⁹ After all, for Weber the way out of the iron cage of capitalism is not to critique acquisitiveness, but to try to instill, through state politics, *Menschentum* with a new *Lebensführung*.

If this is Weber's project, then what does it tell us of how Foucault's is different? If Foucault sought out parrhesia in ancient Greek cultures as Weber sought out charisma in medieval kingship and religion, then how are their two projects different? The answer in my view lies in the appropriate domain in which they felt leadership could be enacted. Whereas Weber wants leadership to remain exclusively in the hands of those who use state institutions so that they act on collective identities, such as the nation and civil society, for Foucault leadership is a means by which the ethical difference of truth can come into play in self construction. It is the means by which customs can be falsified. As such, the domain of this play of truth cannot be at the level of society or people, at which point the issue of quantity and the problem of always being a minority becomes the determining factor in assessing truth, as seen in the Greek democratic example. Additionally, the Cynic experience speaks to the force of the play of truth that interweaves with life itself – in life lived as truth. If Weber is looking to enhance modern governmentality by having charismatic leaders of state institutions introject value into the *Menschentum's* governmentality, Foucault is looking to leadership to disturb and destruct this governmentality's effects at the capillaries of power. By acting at the capillaries of power, Foucauldian leadership enables the creation of collectivities in which practices of the self confront biopolitical and disciplinary deployments. Foucault's focus on Cynic parrhesia specifically speaks to Foucault's conception of leadership as a philosophical activity of falsification. Philosophical heroism is the art of making life a philosophical problem, an art cultivated by legendary histories of philosophical lives, and through a "traditionality of existence" that displaces the traditionality of doctrine by taking lessons from histories of philosophical lives and modes of heroism. As such, leadership at the capillaries of power is neither passive nor quotidian. It is a life both of self-creation and of the self-creation of heroes as a stylistics of existence.

For Foucault, parrhesia as a technology of the self is active particularly in the last of three dimensions – truth-telling, governmentality, and subjectivation – of his research, and in its Cynic form is key to the entry of the subject's morality at the intersection of knowledge and power. For this reason, namely that leadership matters in political formations and in changing the societal effects of knowledge and power, leadership should be recognized and studied for its capacity to constitute subjects. Foucault found himself turning to Weber much more closely in his later years, by which time he must have been well aware of the affinities between charisma and parrhesia. This turn to Weber can be attributed, at least in part, to the work of Paul Veyne and Pasquale Pasquino, who themselves have published works that speak to the vibrant tension between Weber and Foucault.⁸⁰ It is at this point in his life that Foucault is quoted as saying "if Nietzsche in-

⁷⁹ "Soul of the Citizen," 307.

⁸⁰ Among the works of interest are Pasquale Pasquino, "Hobbes, Religion, and Rational Choice: Hobbes's Two Leviathans and the Fool," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 82, no. 3-4 (2001); "Machiavelli and Aristotle: The

terests me, this is only to the extent that Nietzsche for Weber was absolutely determining, even if in general it is not said."⁸¹ Foucault and Weber problematized leadership in affinal, but in the senses discussed above opposing, terms. This puts a vitalizing tension into the apposition of their work, and more pertinently lays the groundwork for a revitalized study of leadership as a technology of self creation.

Foucault, Parrhesia, and Modernity

Both Foucault and Weber stress that leadership, respectively as parrhesia and charisma, is absent in modern state society. While Weber frames this as disenchantment, for Foucault the pastoral power conducted in networks of relations in biopolitical governmentality is individualizing in such a way as to somehow undo, neutralize, or suppress parrhesia. Foucault writes, "the individualization assured by the exercise of pastoral power" is an individualization that is no longer "defined by an individual's status, birth, or the splendor of his actions."⁸² By the phrase "splendor of his actions," I think we can understand both the valorous charismatic actions of feudal warfare and the parrhesiastic actions in the Socratic and Cynic mode. This suppression, neutralization or otherwise disappearance of parrhesiastic technologies of the self in pastoralism describes "procedures of human individualization in the West." In a Weberian reading of Foucault, the project may simply be that such technologies have to be reintroduced into modern society. My suspicion is that the problem is nowhere near as simple as this. Before we can call upon a reinvigoration of parrhesiastic technologies, we should ask ourselves precisely what happened to parrhesiastic technologies in modernity. How is it that authority, dictated by parrhesia in such exemplars as Socrates and especially Diogenes, is now dominantly something given and changeable by the rituals of confession found, for example, in electoral cycles?

I have shown in this paper that Foucault's interest in parrhesia in his research of Greek practices of the self can be read as an attempt to take the concept of charisma in a direction that Weber would not. For Weber, charisma is a problematic vehicle by which value might be instilled in rationalized citizens, and he turned to religion late in his career with the interest of exploring how their charismatic dimensions may be imported as a therapy for the rationalized citizen. For

Anatomies of the City," *History of European Ideas* 35, no. 4 (2009); "Political Theory of War and Peace: Foucault and the History of Modern Political Theory," *Economy and Society* 22, no. 1 (1993); "Spiritual and Earthly Police: Theories of the State in Early-Modern Europe," in *The New Police Science: The Police Power in Domestic and International Governance*, ed. M.D. Dubber and M. Valverde (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); Roger-Pol Droit, *Généalogie Des Barbares* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2007); Michel Senellart, *Les Arts De Gouverner* (Paris: Seuil, 1995); Paul Veyne, "The Final Foucault and His Ethics," in *Foucault and His Interlocutors*, ed. A.I. Davidson (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997).

⁸¹ I take this quote from Árpád Szakolczai, *Max Weber and Michel Foucault: Parallel Life-Works*, 2., who found it in the April 1983 interview at Berkeley, "A propos de Nietzsche, Habermas, Arendt, MacPherson," document D 240 (8) in the Foucault Archives.

⁸² Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 184.

Foucault, parrhesia is a form of government of the self and others that gives subjects the autonomy of action by which to confront the imbrications of power and knowledge with techniques of self-formation in relation to truth. Foucault turns to Greek – particularly Cynic – parrhesia in search of techniques of the self that do not seem to exist in modernity, and with an interest in learning something of what (and how) other, similar techniques could be reintroduced in modernity. Importantly, while Weber is ambivalent about whether charisma shirks tradition and legal-rationality to inaugurate the new, sometimes writing of the charismatic’s vulnerability to derision, for Foucault the parrhesiast is the king of derision who falsifies customs and currencies and so has a kingship immune to derision. While their intended applications may seem the same – they both intend to introduce leadership in modernity – taken on a broader scale of their overall work, they are clearly entirely different. While Weber turns to charisma to add value to the life of the capitalist subject, Foucault turns to parrhesia in search of a weapon with which to attack networks of pastoral power.

Tahseen Kazi
Georgia Southern University
1332 Southern Drive
Statesboro, Georgia
tkazi@georgiasouthern.edu