

## Self-Constitution and Folds of Subjectivation in Foucault<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this paper is to analyze Foucault's final key notion of subjectivation in the light of the Baroque metaphor of *fold(ing)*. According to Deleuze, two distinct sources, Heidegger's memory of Being and Leibniz's monadology, are in a way brought together in this Foucauldian notion. I try to highlight the importance of the concept of subjectivation in the context of a performative turn in contemporary philosophy and various historical ways of conceiving this concept. A technical yet crucial aspect that has to be emphasized is the complex interplay and mutual co-dependence between active subjectivation and subjection (*assujettissement*). Understanding the «mode of subjection» as one of «the four folds of subjectivation» in Foucault provides us with a compelling argument for ethical pluralism. Finally, this gives us the vital clue for adjusting Deleuze's interpretation of Foucault, revealing Nietzsche's violent memory rather than the Heideggerian memory of Being as decisive in the process of subjectivation, and also a necessary conversion of «negative» freedom into positive liberty as autonomy and self-discipline, likewise in agreement with Nietzsche's project of making «asceticism natural again».

**Keywords:** fold; subjectivation; Foucault; ethics; self; memory.

### [en] Autoconstitución y pliegues de subjetivación en Foucault

**Resumen.** El propósito de este artículo es analizar la noción de subjetivación, clave en el último Foucault, a la luz de la metáfora barroca del *pliegue*. Según Deleuze, hay dos fuentes distintas, la memoria del Ser de Heidegger y la monadología de Leibniz, que se reúnen en cierto sentido en esta noción foucaultiana. A este respecto, pretendo destacar la importancia del concepto de subjetivación en el contexto de un giro performativo en la filosofía contemporánea, así como diversas formas históricas de entender este concepto. Un aspecto técnico, pero crucial, que hay que subrayar es la compleja interacción y la mutua co-dependencia entre la subjetivación activa y la sujeción (*assujettissement*). La comprensión del «modo de la sujeción» en Foucault como uno de los «cuatro pliegues de la subjetivación» proporciona un argumento convincente para el pluralismo ético. Por último, esta perspectiva brinda una importante clave para revisar la interpretación de Deleuze de Foucault. Pues es la memoria violenta de Nietzsche, y no la memoria heideggeriana del Ser, la que se revela como decisiva en el proceso de subjetivación, y también como una vía de conversión necesaria de la libertad «negativa» en libertad positiva en el sentido de la autonomía y autodisciplina, en concordancia con el proyecto nietzscheano de hacer que el «ascetismo vuelva a ser natural».

**Palabras clave:** pliegue, subjetivación, Foucault, ética, sí mismo, memoria.

**Summary:** Introduction: the double root of folding. 1. Subjectivation or folding an outside. 2. The performative turn. 3. Discourse of truth and self-constitution: subjectivation vs. objectification. 4. Active subjectivation is not the opposite of subjection. 5. Conclusions: The specters of Foucault. From traumatic memory to personal autonomy. References.

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### Introduction: the double root of folding

The metaphor of «the fold» (*le pli*) has been put into use by French post-structuralist thinkers in various contexts. Its power of attraction can be traced back to a *double* root (which seems only natural, since the literal meaning of the act of folding as bending over

upon itself entails this very idea of the double). One key reference is certainly Deleuze's innovative reading of Leibniz as *the* philosopher of the Baroque, and of the Baroque as the age of «endless» folding: «The Baroque fold unfurls all the way to infinity», states Deleuze in the beginning of his book about Leibniz<sup>3</sup>. The other major source is Deleuze's as well as

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<sup>3</sup> G. DELEUZE, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, London, The Athlone Press, 1993, 3.

Derrida's readings and «translations» of Heidegger's thinking<sup>4</sup>. Here we again encounter a double source. On the one hand, it is the understanding of the ontic-ontological difference as this disclosure of Being that is at the same time a movement of *retreat* behind a particular being that authorizes the metaphor of folding. Being as such is not «the simple» (*das Einfache*), but the double, the «two-fold» of «whatness» (*Was-sein*) and «thatness» (*Daß-sein*), *idea (essentia)* and *energeia* («actuality»)<sup>5</sup>. On the other hand, there is the direct reference to the relationship between Being and thinking as *Zwiefalt* (two-fold): a term coined by Heidegger that the French translation of *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (1954) from 1958 renders as «le Pli» (the fold)<sup>6</sup>. So we witness not one, but a number of translations and mediations folding one against the other. These two distinct sources, Heidegger's memory of Being and Leibniz's monadology are in a way brought together, if we are to believe Deleuze, in Foucault's notion of *subjectivation*<sup>7</sup>.

### 1. Subjectivation or folding an outside

The purpose of this paper is to analyze Foucault's final key notion of subjectivation (fr. *subjectivation*, also translated into English as «subjectification») in the light of the metaphor of *fold(ing)*. «Subjectivation» is a term probably appearing for the first time in Deleuze and Guattari's *Mille Plateaux* (1980)<sup>8</sup>, but it was destined to become of crucial importance in Foucault's later texts and courses delivered between 1980 and 1984, the year of his death. Although Foucault doesn't explicitly talk of subjectivation in terms of «folding», Deleuze's interpretation of Foucault's notion of subjectivation as being basically a *folding* and entailing «four folds of subjectivation»<sup>9</sup> does seem legitimate at least up to a point. Following Nietzsche not only in his genealogy of power, but also in his radical critique of the modern notion of subject and of the modern culture of interiority, «in all his work Foucault seems haunted by this theme of an inside which is merely the fold of the outside (*le dedans comme pli du dehors*)»<sup>10</sup>. If we regard, then,

«the fold» as being essentially a Baroque metaphor, we may find supplementary reasons for applying it to Foucault, having to do with his long-life taste for the Baroque: let's only think about his famous interpretation of Velasquez's *Las Meninas*, which opens *The Order of Things*. Also, we cannot neglect the importance of his early notion of «the empirical-transcendental *doubling*» (or, in a slightly different rendition, «the empirico-transcendental doublet»), placed at the core of the same volume, and regarded as defining for the modern human subject<sup>11</sup>.

If we are to follow Deleuze, the difference between the two approaches of the fold in Foucault and Leibniz lies, broadly speaking, in this: «whereas the process of folding as “subjectivation” in *Foucault* is described as an “interiorization” of the outside, in Deleuze's Leibniz the folding process is described in relation to “the autonomy of the inside, an inside without an outside” (*TF* 28)», which is the monad or Leibniz's subject<sup>12</sup>. As for Heidegger's influence, Deleuze claims that the final Foucault would have shifted towards a basically Heideggerian understanding of the fold, which is temporal rather than spatial<sup>13</sup>. Subjectivation as a process aiming to generate a stable and definite relationship to the self requires not only time, but «time as subject» of endurance and change. This subjective folding of time against itself bears a rather simple name: *memory*. But, according to Deleuze, his longtime friend Foucault did not have in mind the usual meaning of a memory that decays, plays tricks on us, and is the simple opposite of forgetting, but that of an «absolute memory» which is to be «contrasted not with forgetting but with the forgetting of forgetting» as «death»<sup>14</sup>. (It seems that Deleuze links here the concept of memory to the original *lêthê* that lies at the heart of *alêtheia* or truth as essential memory of Being: forgetting conceived as «the experience of a reserve that is, at the same time, *charis*, the gift of presence»<sup>15</sup>.) Nevertheless, only Foucault would have managed to completely separate his thinking from the phenomenological dimension of intentionality that haunts Heidegger up to the very end, «by showing how the fold is ultimately an activity of force upon itself»<sup>16</sup>. To put it otherwise,

<sup>4</sup> See also J. DERRIDA's considerations about «the necessity of folding» in the deconstruction of Mallarmé's *corpus* from *La Dissémination*, Paris, Éd. du Seuil, 1972.

<sup>5</sup> M. HEIDEGGER, «Metaphysics as History of Being», in *The End of Philosophy*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2003, 1-54.

<sup>6</sup> «Le Pli de l'être et de l'étant semble, comme tel, se perdre dans l'inconscient, bien que la pensée depuis ses débuts chez les Grecs se mouve toujours dans le déplié de son dépli (...) c'est dans le Pli de l'évô que la pensée est produite en son paraître» (M. HEIDEGGER, *Essais et conférences*, Paris, Gallimard, 1958, 290; 299).

<sup>7</sup> G. DELEUZE, «Les plissements, ou le dedans de la pensée (Subjectivation)», in *Foucault*, Paris, Éd. de Minuit, 2004 [1986], 101-130; «Foldings, or the Inside of Thought (Subjectivation)», in *Foucault*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1988, 94-123.

<sup>8</sup> G. DELEUZE and F. GUATTARI, *Capitalisme et Schizophrénie 2: Mille plateaux*, Paris, Éd. de Minuit, 1980.

<sup>9</sup> Deleuze, *Foucault* (1988), 104.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, 97.

<sup>11</sup> M. FOUCAULT, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, London, Routledge Classics, 2002, 343-351.

<sup>12</sup> K. ROBINSON, «Towards a Political Ontology of the Fold: Deleuze, Heidegger, Whitehead and the “Fourfold” Event», in S. van Tuinen and N. McDonnell (eds.), *Deleuze and the Fold: A Critical Reader*, Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 186.

<sup>13</sup> «There is a final rediscovery of Heidegger by Foucault» (Deleuze, *Foucault*, 107).

<sup>14</sup> Deleuze, *Foucault* (1988), 107-108.

<sup>15</sup> J.-Fr. COURTINE, *Inventio analogiae. Métaphysique et ontothéologie*, Paris, Vrin, 2005, 144.

<sup>16</sup> Robinson, «Towards a Political Ontology of the Fold», 186.

Heidegger «rushed things and folded too quickly»<sup>17</sup> because he would have missed the original dimension of power and tension of forces in the mutual belonging of thinking and Being. «As Félix says: before Being there is politics»<sup>18</sup>.

The importance of *subjectivation* for the «final» Foucault is quite obvious, since he reaches the point when he re-interprets his entire intellectual itinerary as «a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects»<sup>19</sup>, or even as a «genealogy» of the subject, in the footsteps of Nietzsche<sup>20</sup>. However, a more complex evaluation of his own research is given at the beginning of his 1983 course at Collège de France, where Foucault refers to something like a methodological triangle: his proclaimed goal would have been to study the ways in which *veridiction*, *governmentality*, and *subjectivation* are linked together in various fields of experience<sup>21</sup>.

## 2. The performative turn

Before going further with the analysis of Foucault's targeted concept of subjectivation, I want to advance a general hypothesis concerning the manner in which the return of the subject or the so-called «death of the death of the subject»<sup>22</sup> was accomplished during the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In my view, Western philosophy has registered during the 80s a real *performative* turn, which could also be called a neo-Baroque turn, provided that we agree with those historians of ideas who highlight the essentially «performative» (rather than optical) feature of the Baroque<sup>23</sup>. The strong connection between subjectivity and performativity is supported by a notion of the human subject as merely the «vector» of its foldings, repetitions, and series of exercises. As Sloterdijk points out, «The over-discussed question of the subject is reduced to this compact formulation: a subject is someone who is active as the carrier (*Träger*) of a sequence of exercises»<sup>24</sup>.

So the subject that has returned is not the same as the one that «died» following the combined attack conducted by Nietzsche's or Heidegger's followers, by structuralists and post-structuralists, as well as by social and linguistic constructivism. It is merely an ac-

tion subject, not an absolute center or ground for all knowledge and experience; a result of strenuous practical reflection, instead of something given or of an «I» hard-wired into the brain: «a subject that constructs itself, that gives itself rules of living and of conduct, that forms itself through exercises, practices, and techniques», as Fr. Gros puts it<sup>25</sup>. This means we have to deal with a human subject that, on the one hand, is subject to social pressure or taming (being «folded» in a particular way, caught in a process of bending to various rules), but, on the other hand, is holding the capacity of altering its habits and of instilling new ones by way of «turning the power of repetition against repetition»<sup>26</sup>. In other words, we are entitled to speak, using Foucault's vocabulary, of the human subject as the combined result or effect of *disciplinary* techniques imposed on us from the outside and of *subjectivation* practices of self-formation, through which particular rules of life that have met our intellectual approval are evoked and repeated up to the point they find themselves truly *inscribed* into our minds and bodies. This *ascetic* (in its ancient sense) technology of the self<sup>27</sup> is the practical way of «folding» the outside in order to constitute a self. It can well be argued that it is only through this performative turn that the most celebrated existentialist rhetoric of self-choosing actually finds its way for being converted into real self-practice. It can also be argued that such «pragmatics of self»<sup>28</sup> involves refocusing our attention on ethical training rather than moral codes, as well as getting valuable insight from pre-Christian virtue ethics or Greek and Roman philosophical therapies. But it also challenges us to rethink the meaning of personal freedom, as we shall later see.

## 3. Discourse of truth and self-constitution: subjectivation vs. objectification

According to Foucault's seminal course from 1982 *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, it is important to distinguish between two different ways of constituting a relationship to the self (*rapport à soi*): on the one hand, the Christian rooted procedure of *objectification* of the subject through confession (the historical force that turned Western men and women into «confessing animals», according to the first volume

<sup>17</sup> Deleuze, *Foucault* (1988), 113.

<sup>18</sup> G. DELEUZE and C. PARNET, *Dialogues II* (revised edition), New York, Columbia University Press, 2007, 17.

<sup>19</sup> M. FOUCAULT, «The Subject and Power», in H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (2nd ed.), Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1983, 209.

<sup>20</sup> M. FOUCAULT, «About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self: Two Lectures at Dartmouth», *Political Theory*, vol. 21, no. 2 (1993), 202.

<sup>21</sup> M. FOUCAULT, *The Government of Self and Others. Lectures at the Collège de France 1982-1983*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 4-5.

<sup>22</sup> P. HUDIS, «The Death of the Death of the Subject», *Historical Materialism: Research in Critical Marxist Theory*, 12, 3 (2004), 147-168.

<sup>23</sup> W. THAYER, «El giro barroco. De G. Deleuze a W. Benjamin», *Archivos: Revista de Filosofía*, 2-3 (2007-2008), 93-119.

<sup>24</sup> P. SLOTERDIJK, *You Must Change Your Life: On Anthropotechnics*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2013, 156.

<sup>25</sup> Fr. GROS, «Le souci de soi chez Michel Foucault: A Review of *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*», *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 31, 5-6 (2005), 697-698.

<sup>26</sup> Sloterdijk, *You Must Change Your Life*, 197.

<sup>27</sup> M. FOUCAULT, «Technologies of the Self», in L. Martin, H. Gutman, and P. Hutton (eds.), *Technologies of the Self: A seminar with Michel Foucault*, Amherst, The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988, 16-49.

<sup>28</sup> Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others*, 5.

from *The History of Sexuality*<sup>29</sup>) and, on the other hand, the *subjectivation* of a discourse of truth according to Greek and Roman philosophy, which means incorporation or embodiment of rules of conduct, rather than «internalization» of these rules<sup>30</sup>. The idea of *internalization* would actually involve the other model, the split Christian subject, whereas the ancient self is basically always placed outside of itself and is nothing but this folded outside, as Deleuze would say.

We see how the three axes of governmentality, veridiction and subjectivation are in this way linked together. So the paradoxical Christian ethics and ontology of a discontinuous self or a subject that «could never coincide with itself»<sup>31</sup> practically amounts to this «movement of self-renunciation which proceeds by way of, and whose essential moment is, the objectification of the self in a true discourse»<sup>32</sup>. This discourse is the *avowal*, or its sacramental form of the *confession*. However, the goal of Greek and Roman philosophical *askêsis* was quite different, adds Foucault: «the subjectivation of a true discourse in a practice and exercise of oneself on oneself». Also, a text from around the same period speaks about the opposition between the Christian «hermeneutical» self that come to be expressed, that is verbalized, in the general ascetic movement aiming at the renunciation of the self, and the final, «gnomic» self from the Greek philosophy<sup>33</sup>, regarded as the true goal of self-cultivation, aesthetics of existence or ethico-aesthetic subjectivation. A further opposition could then be established between the personal dimension of the Christian soul and the rather impersonal *psychê* that was the soul according to Greek and Roman philosophy, a decisive aspect stressed out on many occasions by the great historian and anthropologist J.-P. Vernant<sup>34</sup>. And it is this pre-Christian figure of the self that favors Deleuze's reading of the Foucauldian subject (clearly inspired by Nietzsche) as a bending back and folding of forces.

Foucault's last given course from 1984 goes even deeper into the genealogy of subjectivity, em-

phasizing not only the generic opposition between philosophical and Christian subjectivation, but also the difference between two aesthetics of existence involving two distinct models of subjectivation that were advanced in ancient philosophy. On the one hand, there is the existential truth as complete *harmony* of words and deeds, according to the Stoic tradition; on the other, we encounter the truth as challenge (*défi*) or provocation, the existential truth of the Cynical school, the most *performative* and ascetic of all philosophical doctrines: «The *bios philosophikos* as straight life is the human being's animality taken up as a challenge, practiced as an exercise, and thrown in the face of others as a scandal»<sup>35</sup>.

#### 4. Active subjectivation is not the opposite of subjection

At this point, it is decisive to go even further and seriously question a common yet misleading assumption according to which the allegedly «free» subjectivation would be quite the opposite of religious or political subjection. In fact, between power and freedom, as well as between subjectivation and subjection (*assujettissement*), there is a complex interplay and a mutual co-dependence.

The decisive thing is to understand how someone so mad about personal freedom as Foucault was could have developed an entire genealogy of governmentality aiming precisely to reject the common (liberal) view that regards power as being essentially repressive. To put it briefly, «there is always subjectivation in subjection» for Foucault<sup>36</sup>, and this is why we are entitled to speak of a *biopolitical* subjectivation, beside the ethical or ethico-aesthetic subjectivation<sup>37</sup>. This means that speaking about «voluntary servitude» could be misleading, because we are always confronted with the *active* participation of a subject in the process that «forces the individual back on himself and ties him to his own identity in a constraining way»<sup>38</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> M. FOUCAULT, *The History of Sexuality I: An Introduction*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1978, 59.

<sup>30</sup> M. FOUCAULT, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject. Lectures at the Collège de France 1981-1982*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2005, 221-223; 315-327.

<sup>31</sup> Ph. CHEVALLIER, *Michel Foucault et le christianisme*, Lyon, ENS Éditions, 2011, 343.

<sup>32</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 333.

<sup>33</sup> «The term *gnomé* designates the unity of will and knowledge; it designates also a brief piece of discourse through which truth appeared with all its force and encrusts itself in the soul of people. Then, we could say that even as late as the first century A.D., the type of subject which is proposed as a model and as a target in the Greek, or in the Hellenistic or Roman, philosophy, is a *gnomic* self, where force of the truth is one with the form of the will» (Foucault, «About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self», 209-10).

<sup>34</sup> «Socrates' soul is not the psychological individual, but an impersonal or supra-personal *daimôn* in Socrates» (J.-P. VERNANT, in «Summary of Discussions», *Michel Foucault Philosopher* (col.), Hemel Hempstead, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992, 232).

<sup>35</sup> M. FOUCAULT, *The Courage of the Truth. Lectures at the Collège de France 1983-1984*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, 265. As Fr. Gros explains very well, «Peut-être y a-t-il là deux sens profondément différents de la vérité, auxquels Foucault demeure pourtant irréductiblement attaché: la vérité comme régularité et structure harmoniques; la vérité comme rupture et scandale intempestifs. Deux esthétiques de l'existence, deux styles très différents de courage de la vérité: le courage de se transformer lentement, de faire tenir un style dans une existence mouvante, de durer et de tenir; le courage, plus ponctuel et plus intense, de la provocation, celui de faire éclater par son action des vérités que tout le monde sait mais que personne ne se met en peine de faire vivre, le courage de la rupture, du refus, de la dénonciation» (FR. GROS, «La *parrhêsia* chez Foucault (1982-1984)», in *Foucault: Le courage de la vérité*, Paris, P.U.F., 2002, 166).

<sup>36</sup> S. LEGRAND, *Les norms chez Foucault*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2007, 221.

<sup>37</sup> Fr. GROS, «Y a-t-il un sujet biopolitique?», *Noéma*, IV, 1 (2013), 31-42.

<sup>38</sup> Foucault, «The Subject and Power», 212.

In this short text, *The Subject and Power*, whose first part was written directly in English, I think Foucault comes the closest to the Deleuzian concept of *fold*: he really seems to regard, in this context, personal identity or the effect of *individualization* as a kind of folding or bending back after hitting the «wall» of norms and regulations imposed on us from outside. Biopolitical subjectivation seems to entail a «monadological» relationship to the self that «splits up community life» and goes hand in hand with the totalization procedures of State power. In a similar context, the affirmative attempt to constitute «an ethics and an aesthetics of the self» fitted for our times is regarded by Foucault as being «an urgent, fundamental and politically indispensable task», the only true «point of resistance to political power», despite all its pitfalls (2005: 251-252)<sup>39</sup>. But then again, we should conceive «power as a set of reversible relationships», becoming aware of the fact that «power relations, governmentality, the government of the self and of others, and the relationship of self to self constitute a chain, a thread» that links «together the question of politics and the question of ethics»<sup>40</sup>. So the crucial point is to acknowledge this double fact: (a) political or religious subjection has always involved subjectivation, that is an active participation of the individual in the process that «normalizes» him or her; (b) any kind of ethical or ethico-aesthetic subjectivation will always involve, in its turn, a «mode of subjection» and techniques for self-discipline designed to instill in one's daily existence those rules of conduct that she or he considers to be true or appealing<sup>41</sup>.

The time has come to return to Deleuze's provocative reading of Foucault. In his friend's interpretation, the four elements of an ethical subjectivation that Foucault has emphasized in the Introduction to *The Use of Pleasure* – the ethical *substance* that has to be shaped, the mode of subjection (*assujettissement*), the *ethical work* that one performs on oneself, and the *telos* of the ethical subject<sup>42</sup> – should be conceived as «four folds of subjectivation» and understood in close analogy with the Aristotelian doctrine of the four causes<sup>43</sup>.

The ethical substance is that part of an individual's soul and conduct becoming the target of the moral rules. In other words, it is the «material» that will be bent back by way of following the rules. Thus, we encounter ethical doctrines focusing solely on our actions and trying to make them just, or targeting our desires and carnal drives (Christian spirituality), or solely our conscious intentions to act (Kantian ethics), or moralities that are focusing on our feelings<sup>44</sup>. The «*ethical work (travail éthique)* that one performs on oneself» involves different types of «spiritual exercises» (P. Hadot<sup>45</sup>) or techniques of the self such as «techniques of meditation, of memorization of the past, of examination of conscience, of checking representations which appear in the mind, and so on»<sup>46</sup>. It is the field of «anthropotechnics» (P. Sloterdijk), destined to make our self-transformation really happen, under the guidance of the moral rules that have previously met our intellectual approval. As to the «*telos* of the ethical subject», we have to take into consideration the plurality of «ultimate» goals advanced by different spiritual and philosophical traditions throughout time: «For instance, shall we become pure, or immortal, or free, or masters of ourselves, and so on»<sup>47</sup>.

However, in this context, the most important aspect is the second «fold» of subjectivation, which is called by Foucault «the mode of subjection». The differences, here, lie in particular and various understandings of the nature of moral rules that one chooses to obey: «it is always according to a particular rule that the relation between forces is bent back in order to become a relation to oneself»<sup>48</sup>. We might call these variations *metaethical* differences. The general idea is that moral rules function differently in any of these situations: if they are regarded as divine commandments, as «teleological injunctions»<sup>49</sup> for fulfilling our potential (precepts of human flourishing), as laws of universal Reason having an unconditional validity, as rules of social utility, as norms derived from some kind of «contractual» agreement or as principles for a stylization of existence that is both ethical and aesthetic.

<sup>39</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 251-252.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, 252.

<sup>41</sup> We speak here of an ethical truth that «is not defined by correspondence to reality but as a force inherent to principles (...) It is something which is before the individual as a point of attraction, a kind of magnetic force which attracts him towards a goal» (Foucault, «About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self», 209).

<sup>42</sup> M. FOUCAULT, *The Use of Pleasure. The History of Sexuality 2*, New York, Vintage Books, 1990, 26-28.

<sup>43</sup> «Subjectivation is created by folding. Only, there are four foldings, four folds of subjectivation (...) These four folds are like the final or formal cause, the acting or material cause of subjectivity (*la cause finale, la cause formelle, la cause efficiente, la cause matérielle de la subjectivité*) or interiority as a relation to oneself» (Deleuze, *Foucault* (1988), 104; (2004 [1986]), 112).

<sup>44</sup> «For instance, you can say, in general, that in our society the main field of morality, the part of ourselves which is most relevant for morality, is our feelings» (M. FOUCAULT, «On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of a Work in Progress», in H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1983, 238).

<sup>45</sup> P. HADOT, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1995.

<sup>46</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 11.

<sup>47</sup> Foucault, «On the Genealogy of Ethics», 239.

<sup>48</sup> Deleuze, *Foucault* (1988), 104.

<sup>49</sup> MACINTYRE, Alasdair, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 2007 [1981], 53.

Deleuze regarded this second fold as an Aristotelian *efficient* cause in the process of self-fashioning<sup>50</sup>. But as long as it entails the nature of the ethical rules, that is their general *form*, it seems to me that Aristotle's formal cause would be a better correspondence, as the ethical work through actual techniques of the self would fully deserve the name of efficient or active cause, instead of that of formal cause. Also, in my view, by the means of this sketch of a genealogy of ethics, Foucault is advancing a sound argument for ethical *pluralism*, where the variety of «arts of living» might be ultimately explainable not only through different traditions and cultural precepts, but through the existence of multiple and divergent views on the nature of ethical rules to «conduct oneself».

### 5. Conclusions: The specters of Foucault. From traumatic memory to personal autonomy

It is clear that Foucault has been a strong supporter of a «negative» freedom conceivable as a pre-reflective instinct to reject disciplines imposed on us from outside. Nevertheless, in the 80s, when he becomes interested in ancient philosophical «instruction» (*paraskouē*), ethics and *askēsis*, he really seems to acknowledge the troubling fact that any decisive choice for one's existence is fundamentally a choice between two different types of discipline or forms of conditioning. It is either social conditioning through all kinds of techniques of power, or ethical self-conditioning through long-life training, «a continuum of self-persuasive acts»<sup>51</sup>, and practices of the self designed to transform one particular «discourse of truth» or «veridiction» (*dire-vrai*) into the very «mode of being of the subject».<sup>52</sup> It matters less than one might think whether it was the Stoic discourse, the Platonic, the Epicurean, or the Cynic one: the important thing is the effort we put into «subjectifying» it. Moreover, as Sloterdijk puts it, there have always been two sides of pedagogy as anthropotechnics: the longer way of daily practice, exercise, «enlightened repetitions», and the shorter way of «training via terror, or the imprinting of a norm by branding a sacred scene on the psyche through shock».<sup>53</sup>

Therefore, if Deleuze is right in claiming that *memory* is the final sense of the self for Foucault, it is a Nietzschean memory rather than a Heideggerian one: a personal memory created through the com-

bined effect of violence and repetition, shocking and training. *Folding is violent, make no mistake about it.*

If something is to stay in the memory it must be burned in... In a certain sense, the whole of asceticism belongs here: a few ideas are to be rendered inextinguishable, ever-present, unforgettable, «fixed», with the aim of hypnotizing the entire nervous and intellectual system with these «fixed ideas» – and ascetic procedures and modes of life are means of freeing these ideas from the competition of all other ideas, so as to make them «unforgettable»<sup>54</sup>.

Nevertheless, a complete or «totalizing» subjectivation, no matter of what kind it may be, is fortunately impossible, in Foucault's view. We are never completely steady in terms of identity patterns. Assuming that an ethico-aesthetic subjectivation could ever be total or complete, this would imply that subjectivation and subjection (*assujettissement*) mean exactly the same thing. But this would also mean that there is only power, and no freedom to resist it, a thing that Foucault categorically denies, while admitting there are also different modes of subjection instead of only one (as we have just saw).

So resistance is secured by this remnant or «wholly other» of one's individual freedom: a kind of pre-reflective and «ecstatic» movement (as Sartre would put it) or «instinct» to say *no*, rather than the traditional concept of free will<sup>55</sup>. However, this «negative» freedom has to convert itself into positive liberty as autonomy and self-discipline, in order to really transform the self as well as social reality. But because this transformation or «sublation» (*Aufhebung*) is never complete, any kind of ethico-aesthetic subjectivation remains «an ephemeral, never to be completed work-in-progress»<sup>56</sup>. Also, it is this same remnant of «negative» freedom that fortunately guarantees that no biopolitical subjectivation is ever final or irreversible: «power relations are possible only insofar as the subjects are free... if there are relations of power in every social field, this is because there is freedom everywhere»<sup>57</sup>.

The complex interplay and mutual co-dependence between power and freedom, or between subjectivation and subjection, might very well be regarded as Foucault's final re-discovery. And this is what explains, according to Sloterdijk, Foucault's transition from the «tragic verticality» of the 60s, to the mature lucidity of the 80s, coming to accept

<sup>50</sup> This is made explicit only in the French original, the English translation missing the key term «efficient»: «ce n'est certainement pas la même chose, quand la règle efficiente est naturelle, ou bien divine, ou rationnelle, ou esthétique» (Deleuze, *Foucault* (2004 [1986]), 111).

<sup>51</sup> Sloterdijk, *You Must Change Your Life*, 237.

<sup>52</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 327.

<sup>53</sup> Sloterdijk, *You Must Change Your Life*, 465.

<sup>54</sup> F. NIETZSCHE, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, II, 3, New York, Vintage Books, 1989, 61.

<sup>55</sup> The framework of thought for this concept of freedom is to be found in J.-P. SARTRE, *Being and Nothingness*, New York, Washington Square Press, 1993.

<sup>56</sup> T. O'LEARY, *Foucault and the Art of Ethics*, London and New York, Continuum, 2002, 133.

<sup>57</sup> M. FOUCAULT, «The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom», in *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth. Essential Works of Foucault*, vol. 1, edited by Paul Rabinow, New York, New Press, 1997, 292.

the fact that «the Dionysian fails if one does not implant a Stoic inside him»<sup>58</sup>. However, by liberating «himself from the paranoid leftovers of his own studies in power»<sup>59</sup>, Foucault was also following Nietzsche's project «to make asceticism natural again: in place of the aim of denial, the aim of strengthening»<sup>60</sup>.

[H]uman claims to freedom and self-determination are not suppressed by the disciplines, regimes and power games, but rather enabled. Power is not an obstructive supplement to an originally free ability; it is constitutive for ability in all its manifestations. It always forms the ground floor above which a free subject moves in<sup>61</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup> Sloterdijk, *You Must Change Your Life*, 151.

<sup>59</sup> *id.*

<sup>60</sup> F. NIETZSCHE, *The Will to Power*, New York, Vintage Books, 483.

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