Three Ways of Speaking

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There is one phenomenological insight that I have found to be compelling. The insight is this: in order for any other (defined as a strict singularity: different, unique, unrecognizable, a first time, unlike any other time) to be understood or experienced as other, the other must appear; it must be a phenomenon, and therefore it must be meaningful in a broad sense as other. This is an insight into an essential necessity. Yet, if we accept this essential necessity, then we must equally acknowledge that, when the other appears as other (that is, as having the meaning of alterity), the other is forced to be iterable or repeatable. The iterability therefore opens up the possibility of generalizing, and this essential possibility of generalization necessarily violates the singularity of the other. This essential or necessary possibility of generalization is not willed violence. Instead, it a kind of fundamental or transcendental violence, and as transcendental, it is a pre-ethical violence. This pre-ethical violence, because it is fundamental, transcendental, and essential, cannot be eliminated.[1] In short, it is the violence of thinking and of saying the other.

Because I accept this necessity of force and thus violence as a kind of absolute truth, I have come to be concerned with ways of saying the other that reduce this kind of ineliminable violence down to a minimal level. So, I found Virginia Wolff's *Three Guineas* particularly interesting when she speaks of her new Society of Outsiders requiring that its members practice indifference and secrecy.[2] In short, as a writer, Wolff is suggesting, through secrecy especially, a way of not speaking, which is in fact a way of speaking well. In Guattari's *Three Ecologies*, we find the same suggestion. Expanding on the work he did with Deleuze in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Guattari speaks of linguistic expression as a "creative repetition" or as a "ritornello."[3] For Guattari and Deleuze, a repetition or a refrain becomes creative when it "functions through redundancies of [the form of the] expression and content."[4] The expression may transmit a message or denote a referent, but when it functions through redundancies, it produces an effect or an event. The question for me is the following: is it possible to imagine an expression or a statement or a mark

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[1] Jacques Derrida, "Violence et métaphysique," in *L'écriture et la différence* (Paris: Points Seuil, 1967), pp. 187-188, Derrida's italics; English translation by Alan Bass as "Violence and Metaphysics," in *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 128: "Every reduction of the other to a *real* moment of *my* life, its reduction to the state of an empirical alter-ego, is a possibility, or rather an empirical eventuality, which is called violence; and violence [that is, empirical or real violence] presupposes … necessary eidetic [or ideal] relationships. [However,] there is a transcendental …violence, an (in general dissymmetry) whose *arche* is the same…. This transcendental violence institutes the relationship between two finite ipseities. In effect, the necessity of gaining access to the meaning of the other (in its irreducible alterity)…on the basis of an intentional modification of my ego (in general)…; and the necessity of speaking of the other as other, or to the other as other, on the basis of its appearing-for me-as-what-it-is, that is, as other… --- this necessity [of appearing or being a phenomenon] from which no discourse can escape, from its earliest origin -- this necessity is violence itself, or rather the transcendental origin of an irreducible violence."

[2] Virginia Wolff, *Three Guineas* (New York: Harcourt, 1938, 1966), pp. 107, 119.

[3] The phrase "creative repetition" seems to be contradictory since repetitions repeat and therefore cannot be creative. Yet, one can understand the phrase if one thinks of the artwork. An event such as the writing of *Hamlet* was based in no determinate model, no exact foundation, and no self-identical origin; therefore its subsequent theatre productions, while repetitions, are all able to be different.

[4] Félix Guattari, *Les Trois Écologies* (Paris: Galilée, 1989), p. 38; English translation by Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton as *The Three Ecologies* (London: Athlone Press, 2000), pp. 45-46.

that not only functions and has an effect on the one to whom it is expressed, uttered, or given but also that at the same time minimizes the violence that repetition necessitates? In other words, is it possible to produce a speech act that is an act while keeping open potentiality? In still other words, is it possible to say the event? Probably, one distinction is essential for us to imagine this minimally violent linguistic utterance. We must *not* speak *of* the other (the form "speaking of" makes the other be an object of my intention). Instead, we must speak *to* the other or *before* the other. This distinction refers of course to the well-known distinction in speech act theory between the performative and the constative. We shall return to this distinction in a moment.

These questions and this distinction have led me to investigate Derrida's idea of "teleiopoetics" in *Politics of Friendship*.[5] But it has also led me to investigate what Deleuze and Guattari, in *What is Philosophy?*, say about speaking for others and before others.[6] It has also led me to investigate Foucault (and Deleuze's) activities in the *Groupe d'information sur les prisons* (the GIP),[7] and especially Foucault's final lecture courses at the Collège de France on *parrēsia* (on frank-speaking or speaking freely, *libertas*).[8] All of these ways of speaking – "three ways of speaking" – seem to share one conceptual feature. The common conceptual feature is the dissymmetry of the relation between the one speaking and the one to whom the speaking is address. However, in Deleuze and Guattari, in Foucault, and in Derrida, the dissymmetry is presented in different ways. In Deleuze and Guattari, it is presented through the idea that speaking-for makes the other become other (QPh, 105/108). In Foucault, the dissymmetry is presented through the idea that frank-speaking (as opposed to flattery) aims at making the listener to whom the frank-speaking is addressed be sovereign and independent of the speaker (HS, 362-63/379, also HS, 368-69/385). In Derrida finally, the dissymmetry is presented through the literal meaning of the word "teleiopoetics": a teleiopoetic statement – like Nietzsche's statement in *Beyond Good and Evil* that "if you knew, how soon, how very soon, others are coming"[9] – makes something happen at a distance (PA, 49/31). Returning to the common conceptual feature of these three ways of speaking, we must notice that, for all three (or four)

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[5] Jacques Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié* (Paris: Galilée, 1994), p. 152; English translation by George Collins as *Politics of Friendship* (London: Verso, 1997), pp. 128-129. Hereafter cited with the abbreviation PA, with reference first to the French, then to the English.

[6] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1991); English by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell as *What is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994). Hereafter cited with the abbreviation QPh, with reference first to the French, then to the English translation.

[7] Michel Foucault, "Manifest du G.I.P.," document 86, in *Dits et écrits 1, 1954-1975* (Paris : Quarto Gallimard, 2001), pp. 1042. For a more detailed and important narrative of the entire GIP movement, see Phillippe Artières, Laurent Quéro, and Michelle Zancarini-Fournel, *Le groupe d'information sur les prisons. Archives d'une lutte, 1970-1972* (Paris: IMEC, 2003), especially Part 1, and pp. 34-36.

[8] Michel Foucault, *L'Herméneutique du sujet. Cours au Collége de France. 1981-1982* (Paris : Gallimard Seuil, 2001) ; English translation by Graham Burchell as *The Hermeneutics of the Subject. Lectures at the Collége de France 1981-1982* (New York : Picador, 2005). Hereafter cited with the abbreviation HS, with reference first to the French, then to the English translaiton. Michel Foucault, *Le gouvernement de soi et des autres. Cours au Collége de France. 1982-1983* (Paris: Hautes Études Gallimard Seuil, 2008); English translation by Graham Burchell as *The Government of Self and Others. Lectures at the Collége de France, 1982-1983* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010). Hereafter cited with the abbreviation GSA1, with reference first to the French, then to the English translation. Michel Foucault, *Le courage de la vérité. Le gouvernment de soi et des autres II. Cours au Collége de France. 1984* (Paris: Hautes Études Gallimard Seuil, 2009); English translation by Graham Burchell as *The Courage of Truth. The Government of Self and Others II. Lectures at the Collége de France, 1983-1984* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

[9] The Nietzsche quotation comes from *Beyond Good and Evil*, paragraph 214: "Our Virtues."

philosophers, it is not the content of the statement that allows the happening at a distance to occur. If the statement was reducible to its semantic content, to its constative status, to the truth it expresses, then the one to whom it would be addressed would be reduced to that expressed truth. The statement would be about the other; it would be a statement of what alterity is. The statement would determine the other as something other. In contrast, for all three (or four) philosophers, it is the statement's modalities or tones that allows the other to be other in this indeterminate and potential way. In particular, Foucault says in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* that "What characterizes *parrēsia* is above all that basically it is not so much defined by the content itself – which, it goes without saying is given, is the truth – but that it is a specific, particular practice of true discourse" (HS, 367/384). Similarly, Derrida says, "If something is converted or inverted in the two Nietzschean apostrophes, this is perhaps not so much because of the content of the statements: the reversal of friendship into enmity. Once again, a reversal would perhaps leave things intact. What is of more import is what is inscribed rather, earlier, prior to their contents, in the modalities of the enonciation" (PA, 200/175). Of course, Deleuze and Guattari speak of language not in terms of propositions but in terms of the *ritournello*, the refrain, stammering (*bégaiment*), and gibberish (*charabia*).

By stressing the tone or modality of the statement, and not its content, we seem to have to adopted, as we anticipated, the well-known distinction from speech act theory between the performative and the constative. We need to examine this distinction a little more. To do that, let us focus on Deleuze and Guattari and on Foucault. In *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari speaks of shame as one of the most powerful motives of philosophy (QPh 103/108). This shame is what one feels when confronted with the suffering of others. And for them, it seems that the shame in relation to the suffering of others (they call this "the shame at being human") motivates one to "speak for" (*parler pour*) others.[10] But then Deleuze and Guattari ask: what does it mean to speak for others? They say that speaking for other is speaking "before" others. They change the preposition from "pour" to "devant." One feels shame when one stands "before" (*devant*) the suffering of others. But beyond the feeling of shame "before" (*devant*) the suffering of others, they say that what is at issue in "speaking for" is becoming. Here "devant" seems to change its meaning from "before" to "being in advance of." In advance of, for example, the animals who are suffering, one must become animal. In other words, from the shame before, one must take the first step in advance of the animals, and become animal. But then, Deleuze and Guattari return to the preposition "pour." One becomes animal "so that" -- "pour que" – the animals become something else or other. Therefore, speaking for others really amounts to making the animals become something else and something other. "Speaking for" tries to help them change so that they are no longer suffering or in agony. This speaking so that others become other seems to be what responsibility would be for Deleuze and Guattari. And it seems this responsibility would require courage.

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[10] For an earlier discussion of "speaking for," see Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et répétition* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), p. 74; English translation by Paul Patton as *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 52. See also, Gilles Deleuze, "Les intellectuels et le pouvoir," in *L'île déserte et autres textes. Textes et entretiens 1953-1974* (Paris: Minuit, 2002), p. 29; English translation by Michael Taormina as « Intellectuals and Power, » in *Desert Islands and other Texts 1953-1974* (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), p. 208.

The speaking that helps others become other (others to come), then, takes us back to Foucault's lectures on the ancient Greek notion of *parrēsia*" (GSA1, 61/63). In particular, in *The Government of Self and Others I*, Foucault stresses that *parrēsia* is *not* a performative utterance.[11] We saw already that *parrēsia* cannot be restricted to its constative status; however, here we see that *parrēsia* cannot even be restricted to its performative status. For Foucault, *parrēsia* is always something *more* than a performative because performatives, being based in instituted conditions, pose no risk for the speaker. In contrast to performative utterances such as "I baptize you" or "I apologize," "there is," Foucault says, "*parrēsia* at the moment when the statement of [the] of truth constitutes an irruptive event opening up an undefined or poorly defined risk for the subject who speaks." Involving a non-defined or badly defined, indeed an unforeseeable, risk for the speaker, this kind of event provides no outline of what is coming. It seems to be truly a creative repetition and a genuine becoming-other. And the undefined risk for the speaker means that the speaker must be *courageous*. Therefore, if we combine these two ideas, one from Deleuze and Guattari and one from Foucault – that is, respectively, speaking for and *parrēsia* – we can then convert the shame before intolerable suffering into the courage to speak out. Only through this courageous speaking out, only through this risk taking, only through this experimentation with speaking are we able to call forth what Deleuze and Guattari call a people to come and land to come, only through this risk taking with words are we able, to speak like Foucault, to live a life that is other and be in a world that is other. And if we had added Derrida into this mix, we would be able to say that only this experimentation with language are we able to call forth a democracy to come.

Therefore, while involving different lexicons, all three (or four) philosophers are thinking of a statement that lets the alterity of the other be defined as an indeterminate future. If we can imagine this kind of speaking that lets the other have a future and make the other not be reducible to the same, in other words, if we can imagine a kind of expression or mark that is not a mere return of sameness, then we can imagine a kind of statement that minimizes violence. We should notice that, while again all three (or four) philosophers have different ways of speaking – teleiopoetics; speaking-before; and *parrēsia* – all three (or four) are concerned with friendship. That concern with friendship explains why I have found both Wolff's idea of a Society of Outsiders and Guattari's idea of "social ecology" interesting. We should also notice that all three philosopher (not so much Guattari who seems more concerned with the revitalization of psychoanalysis – although he is listed as the co-author of *What is Philosophy?*) are concerned with the very idea of philosophy. For these philosophers, the speaking that lets the other have an indeterminate future and thereby lets the other be as much other as possible – this act of friendship or love – defines philosophy's activity.

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[11] This distinction between *parrēsia* and the speech act repeats and modifies the distinction between the statement (*l'énoncé*) and the speech act Foucault had made more than ten years earlier. See Michel Foucault, *L'archéologie du savoir* (Paris: NRF Gallimard, 1969), pp. 105-115, and 121-126; English translation by A. M. Sheridan Smith as *The Archeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon, 1971), pp. 79-87, and 92-96. The second set of pages concern the position of the subject of the statement.