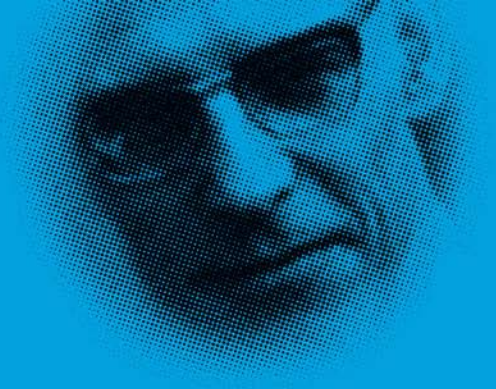

# Michel Foucault

## ABOUT THE BEGINNING OF THE HERMENEUTICS OF THE SELF

## LECTURES AT DARTMOUTH COLLEGE, 1980

Translated by Graham Burchell

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## LECTURES AT DARTMOUTH COLLEGE, 1980

EDITION ESTABLISHED BY
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TRANSLATIONS BY
Graham Burchell

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MICHEL FOUCAULT (1926–84) was one of the most significant social theorists of the twentieth century, his influence extending across many areas of the humanities and social sciences. GRAHAM BURCHELL is a freelance researcher and translator and has translated several volumes of Foucault's lectures.

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# Contents

# Abbreviations for Works by Michel Foucault

(French edition is given first, followed by English translation where this exists)

| | |
|---|---|
| *AN* | *Les anormaux. Cours au Collège de France, 1974–1975*, ed. V. Marchetti and A. Salomoni (Paris: Seuil-Gallimard, 1999) |
| *AB* | *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974–1975,* trans. Graham Burchell, English series ed. Arnold I. Davidson (New York: Picador, 2003) |
| *CT* | *The Courage of Truth: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1979–1980*, trans. Graham Burchell, English series ed. Arnold I. Davidson (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) |
| *CV* | *La courage de la vérité. Le gouvernement de soi et des autres II. Cours au Collège de France, 1979–1980*, ed. F. Gros (Paris: Seuil-Gallimard, 2009) |
| *DE, I* | *Dits et écrits I, 1954–1975*, ed. D. Defert and F. Ewald with the collaboration of J. Lagrange (Paris: Gallimard, 2001) |
| *DE, II* | *Dits et écrits II, 1976–1988,* ed. D. Defert and F. Ewald with the collaboration of J. Lagrange (Paris: Gallimard, 2001) |

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|---|---|
| *EW*, 1 | *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*. Volume 1: *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: New Press, 1997) |
| *EW*, 2 | *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*. Volume 2: *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: New Press, 1998) |
| *EW*, 3 | *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*. Volume 3: *Power*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: New Press, 2000) |
| *GSA* | *Le gouvernement de soi et des autres. Cours au Collège de France, 1982–1983*, ed. F. Gros (Paris: Seuil-Gallimard, 2008) |
| *GSO* | *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1982–1983*, trans. Graham Burchell, English series ed. Arnold I. Davidson (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) |
| *GV* | *Du gouvernement des vivants. Cours au Collège de France, 1979–1980,* ed. M. Senellart (Paris: Seuil-Gallimard, 2012) |
| *GL* | *On the Government of the Living: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1979–1980*, trans. Graham Burchell, English series ed. Arnold I. Davidson (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) |
| *HS* | *L'herméneutique du sujet. Cours au Collège de France, 1981–1982,* ed. F. Gros (Paris: Seuil-Gallimard, 2001) |
| *HS* (Eng) | *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981–1982*, trans. Graham Burchell, English series ed. Arnold I. Davidson (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) |

| | |
|---|---|
| *LVS* | *Leçons sur la volonté de savoir. Cours au Collège de France, 1970–1971*, ed. D. Defert (Paris: Seuil-Gallimard, 2011) |
| *LWK* | *Lectures on the Will to Know: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1970–1971*, trans. Graham Burchell, English series ed. Arnold I. Davidson (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) |
| *MFDV* | *Mal faire, dire vrai. Fonction de l'aveu en justice*, ed. F. Brion and B. Harcourt (Louvain-la-Neuve: Presses universitaires de Louvain, 2012) |
| *WDTT* | *Wrong-Doing, Truth-Telling: The Function of Avowal in Justice*, ed. F. Brion and B. Harcourt, trans. Stephen W. Sawyer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014) |
| *SP* | *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975) |
| *DP* | *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Allen Lane, 1977) |
| *SS* | *Histoire de la sexualité III. Le souci de soi* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984) |
| *CS* | *The Care of the Self*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1986) |
| *STP* | *Sécurité, territoire, population. Cours au Collège de France, 1977–1978*, ed. M. Senellart (Paris: Seuil-Gallimard, 2004) |
| *STP* (Eng) | *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège France, 1977–1978*, trans. Graham Burchell, English series ed. Arnold I. Davidson (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) |
| *SV* | *Subjectivité et vérité. Cours au Collège de France, 1980–1981*, ed. F. Gros (Paris: Seuil-Gallimard, 2014) |

| | |
|---|---|
| *UP* | *Histoire de la sexualité II. L'usage des plaisirs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984) |
| *UP* (Eng) | *The Use of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1985) |
| *VS* | *Histoire de la sexualité I. La volonté de savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976) |
| *HIST* | *The History of Sexuality.* Volume 1: *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1978) |

# Foreword

This volume presents two lectures delivered by Michel Foucault, in English, at Dartmouth College on 17 and 24 November 1980 with the titles "Truth and Subjectivity" and "Christianity and Confession." Shortly before, on 20 and 21 October, and with the title "Subjectivity and Truth," he delivered a slightly different version of these lectures as the Howison Lectures at the University of California, Berkeley. Significant differences from the Berkeley version are indicated in footnotes.

In this edition we have included two texts from the same time as these lectures: the transcript of a public discussion, conducted in English, that took place at Berkeley on 23 October, in which Foucault goes back over some of the themes raised during the lectures and answers questions about his work, as well as an interview, conducted in French, given on 3 November to Michael Bess, who has published an English version of it.

For the lectures at Dartmouth, the texts are based upon the transcription produced by Thomas Keenan and Mark Blasius, a copy of which is deposited at the Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine (IMEC). Some errors in the transcription have been corrected.

For the lectures and discussion at Berkeley, the texts are based upon recordings available on the site of the Media Resources Center of the Library of the University of California, Berkeley. The transcription of the recording of the discussion was produced by Davey K. Tomlinson.

For the interview, the text is based upon the recording, a copy of which is deposited at IMEC.

The texts have been edited as literally as possible. We have only, when it seemed indispensable, eliminated some repetitions or, in the discussion, some of Foucault's hesitations when he is looking for English words, and corrected the incorrect constructions of some sentences. Additions and conjectures, when it is difficult to hear the recording, are given in square brackets. In the discussion and interview we have decided to summarize the questions and delete some exchanges extraneous to themes being discussed.

To avoid any risk of confusion with the lectures delivered by Foucault at the Collège de France in 1980–81, which, like the lectures at Berkeley, are entitled *Subjectivity and Truth*, we have chosen to entitle this collection *About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self*, following, like earlier American and Italian editors, Foucault's own suggestion in the lecture of 20 October (see p. 27, note *).

We would like to thank very warmly Jean-François Braunstein, Arnold I. Davidson, Daniel Defert, François Ewald, and Frédéric Gros for the support, help, and advice they have given us in the realization of this book.

*H.-P. Fruchaud and D. Lorenzini*

# Introduction

## A Genealogy of the Modern Subject

The two lectures presented here were first delivered by Michel Foucault on 20 and 21 October 1980 at the University of California, Berkeley, where he had been invited by the organizing committee of the Howison Lectures. On this occasion only a little more than half of the one thousand five hundred people who flocked to hear Foucault could find a place in the auditorium, while the others remained outside demanding entry.[1] Two days after the second lecture, 23 October, still at Berkeley, Foucault replied to a series of very varied questions during a public discussion, which was recorded, and on 3 November he gave a brief interview to Michael Bess, in French, in which he touched on several crucial themes of his work. Subsequently, Foucault led a seminar with Richard Sennett at the Institute for the Humanities of New York University[2] and, a few days later, went to Dartmouth College, in New Hampshire, where he again delivered the two Berkeley lectures, introducing, however, a number of significant modifications.

All these contributions in the autumn of 1980, as well as the first of the lectures Foucault gave at Louvain the following spring,[3] share the same incipit, namely, a description of the therapeutic practice of the alienist François Leuret, who, by means of a series of cold showers, forced his patients to confess their own madness. At the heart of this practice, the confession (*aveu*) is thus structured as a verbal act by which the subject, in affirming the "truth" of what he is ("I am mad"), binds himself

to that truth, submits to another person, and, at the same time, modifies his relationship to himself. The episode had held Foucault's attention for a long time,[4] but it is used here in a completely original way to introduce the project of a "genealogy of the modern subject."[5] Foucault explains that such a genealogy is justified by the theoretical and practical need, which manifested itself in France and the whole of continental Europe after the Second World War, to have done with the philosophy of the subject. But the Foucauldian genealogy of the modern subject is also a point of discontinuity and alternative to other attempts to distinguish oneself from that philosophy: Marxism, logical positivism, and structuralism. Looking back at his own research, Foucault lays claim to a specific (Nietzschean) use of history that enabled him to analyze the processes of formation of the sciences that have objectivized "man" as a speaking, living, and working being, as well as the practices established in institutions like hospitals, asylums, and prisons. These latter, connecting with a specific type of knowledge (*connaissance*), have transformed the subject into an object of domination and should therefore be included among the "techniques"[6] used in our societies to determine the conduct of individuals.

It is in the wake of these analyses that Foucault undertakes his project of a history of sexuality, soon becoming aware of the need to study also the forms of knowledge that, over the centuries, the subject has developed and put to work on himself and regarding himself. Thus, from 1980, Foucault begins a vast project of genealogical research on the relations between subjectivity and truth in which a decisive role will be given to "techniques of the self," that is to say, those techniques "which permit individuals to effect, by their own means [or with the help of other people], a certain number of operations on their own bodies, on their own souls, on their own thoughts, on their own conduct, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves, modify themselves, or to attain a certain state of perfection, of happiness, of purity, of supernatural power, and so on."[7]

The year 1980 is a key year, a real turning point in this journey. In fact, it is in the lectures at the Collège de France, "On the Government of the Living," that Foucault elaborates the project of a history of "truth acts"—indicating by this expression "the part that falls to a subject in the procedures of alethurgy"—or better, "reflexive" truth acts, in which the subject is at once actor, witness, and object of the manifestation of truth, and of which confession (*l'aveu*) evidently constitutes the purest and historically most important form.[8] Foucault will further develop his analyses of the relationships between subjectivity and truth in the 1980–81 lectures at the Collège de France and in *Wrong-Doing, Truth-Telling*, but more generally this line of research will remain at the heart of his work until 1984, when, during the inaugural lecture of "The Courage of Truth," Foucault distinguishes the "epistemological" analysis of structures peculiar to different discourses that claim to be and are taken as being true discourses from the study of "alethurgic" forms, that is to say of the forms through which truth is produced and manifested.[9]

However, as the example of Leuret and his patient clearly shows, the subject's production of a discourse of truth about himself constitutes an instrument of both subjectivation and subjection—one of the principal forms of our obedience. Foucault already asserted this in his analysis of pastoral power in *Security, Territory, Population*, in which he introduced the concept of "conduct," which, with its essential ambiguity (to be conducted by others/to conduct oneself), revealed the relationship of self to self as the decisive site of the articulation of technologies of power and practices of resistance.[10] At Berkeley and Dartmouth College, Foucault takes up these ideas, stating that "government" is the "contact point, where the way individuals are driven by others is tied to the way they conduct themselves," and it is precisely through this definition of government as "versatile equilibrium . . . between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself"[11] that Foucault opens the conceptual space

in which he situates his project of a genealogy of the modern Western subject.

Thus, the two lectures presented here endeavor to study the practices of self-examination and confession (*aveu*), first in the philosophical schools of Greco-Roman antiquity, and then in the Christianity of the first centuries, in order to highlight the radical transformations that have marked the transition from the ancient Delphic principle "know yourself" (*gnōthi seauton*) to the monastic precept "confess all of your thoughts (*omnes cogitationes*) to your spiritual guide." The structure of these lectures thus proves to be rather singular, for the analyses of both ancient and Christian techniques of the self have the same weight and autonomous status in relation to each other; the first is not dealt with only in terms of or in the light of the second (as was the case in *Security, Territory, Population*) or vice versa (as will be the case in Foucault's subsequent lectures at the Collège de France).

## Subjectivity and Truth in Greco-Roman Antiquity

The main aim of Foucault's study of ancient techniques of the self (in particular, self-examination and spiritual direction) in the first lecture is to show that the hermeneutics of the subject was absent in antiquity, and therefore that it is a typically Christian "invention," as the second lecture explains. In fact, the obligation to tell the truth about oneself occupied a rather modest place within the ancient philosophical schools, for their objective was rather the individual's transformation through the activation within him of a series of precepts that were supposed to orientate his conduct in every circumstance of life and enable him to reach a number of ends: self-mastery, tranquillity of soul, purity of body and mind, and so on. Emphasis was therefore placed less on the disciple's verbalization than on the master's discourse, and the bond between disciple and master remained entirely provisional and circumstantial: it was a temporary

relationship aimed at getting the person being directed to acquire a certain degree of autonomy, and it ended as soon as that result was obtained. Consequently, it was not necessary for the individual to undertake an analytical self-exploration or to expose a secret truth about himself to the other.

In the lectures presented here, unlike those given at the Collège de France and those he will give at Louvain,[12] Foucault's illustration of the specificity of self-examination in Greco-Roman antiquity omits reference to the Pythagorean examination of conscience and concentrates solely on the third book of Seneca's *De ira*. Through a close terminological analysis, Foucault highlights the fact that Seneca employs not so much a judicial vocabulary, which would assume a scene in which the subject would be, in relation to himself, both accused and judge, as a vocabulary of an administrative inspection of goods and territory: it is a question not of confessing a fault or fixing punishments but rather of understanding the "mistakes" one has made with regard to the aims and rules of conduct one has set for oneself, so as not to repeat them. This flaw in the practical application of certain schemas of action thus requires of the individual no more than a recollection of his acts and a reactivation of the rational principles of conduct, so as to establish a better adjustment of means to ends.

In the following years, in different contexts and always with specific inflections, Foucault returns on several occasions to the analysis of the third book of *De ira*.[13] At Berkeley and Dartmouth College, however, after listing the characteristics of the self-examination described by Seneca, Foucault focuses on the *expositio animae* within ancient spiritual direction. Thus, for the first time, he accompanies the reading of *De ira* with the analysis of another text by Seneca, *De tranquillitate animi*, which he did not have time to talk about at the Collège de France, although he referred to it in the preparatory manuscript for the course.[14] An analogous schema of argument recurs moreover at Louvain, where, on 29 April 1981, Foucault studies these two texts by

Seneca in order to explore the "two major forms" taken by procedures of veridiction, discovery, and manifestation of the truth of oneself in ancient philosophical practice.[15]

So the framework within which Foucault analyzes *De tranquillitate animi* is that of spiritual direction, and even in this case the *verum fateri* of Serenus, his "truth-telling," has nothing to do with the verbalization of hidden thoughts or shameful desires. Although Serenus's letter to Seneca, which opens the text, may be read today as a sort of confession that the person being directed addresses to his director in order to reveal to him the deepest secrets of his soul, the interpretation Foucault suggests aims rather at showing that the practice of confession as we understand this today is absent. Serenus does not disclose his hidden thoughts to Seneca, nor does he intend to identify and verbalize "faults" he has committed. Rather, he asks Seneca for the advice that he supposes will help him reorient his everyday conduct and establish a correspondence between his way of living and a given set of philosophical and moral principles—a correspondence that he too often forgets when external events or worldly ambitions distract him from his true objective, tranquillity of the soul.

The help that Seneca as spiritual director (*directeur de conscience*) can offer Serenus consists, then, neither in expounding a philosophical theory to him, nor in reminding him of the moral precepts to be followed. For Seneca it is a matter rather of adding something to the pure knowledge of the rational principles of action—knowledge Serenus already possesses—in order to transform it into a true mode of life. Seneca's discourse, in other words, aims to transform theoretical principles into a "victorious force," to give a place "to truth as a force."[16] With this expression, which is one of the most singular aspects of the lectures at Berkeley and Dartmouth College, Foucault brings out a series of features that characterize the ancient relationship between subjectivity and truth, differentiating it radically from the form it will take in Christianity and in the modern period.

First, Foucault explains that this truth is not defined by a correspondence with reality: it is defined rather as a force linked to the principles themselves and manifesting itself through a discourse. Second, it is not found in the depths of conscience: it is instead right in front of the individual, like a kind of "magnetic force" that attracts him toward a specific goal. Third, access to this truth is obtained not by analytical self-exploration but rather by a master's persuasive arguments, demonstrations, examples, and rhetorical explanations. Finally, this truth does not possess any individualizing effects consequent upon the discovery of certain personal characteristics of the subject: on the contrary, it transforms the subject into a node in which knowledge and will are joined together without any discontinuity. Thus, this "truth as a force" remains in the framework of what the Greeks called *gnōmē*: "a brief piece of discourse through which truth appears with all its force and encrusts itself in the soul of people," by transforming the individual into subject of knowledge and subject of will at the same time.[17] At Berkeley, Foucault is therefore able to conclude that self-examination and confession, in Greco-Roman antiquity, structure the relationship between master and disciple as a "truth-game" whose objective is not to discover the truth hidden deep within the subject but to make the subject a locus "where the truth can appear and act as a real force."[18]

It should be noted that this exposition of "truth as a force" will not be found either in Foucault's analysis of *De tranquillitate animi* at Louvain on 29 April 1981[19] or in his lectures at the Collège de France of 1981–82. However, in the lecture of 27 January 1982, Foucault seems to inscribe this same power of transformation that characterizes the "truth as force" of *De tranquillitate animi* in the general figure of the philosopher, who, as master, "is an effective agency [*opérateur*] for producing effects in the individual's reform and in his formation as a subject."[20] Furthermore, it is within this framework that Foucault first introduces the notion of *parrēsia*, understood as an "ethics of

speech" and "one of the conditions, one of the fundamental ethical principles of direction."[21] And yet, if at Berkeley and Dartmouth College, with regard to the "truth as a force" and *gnōmē*, Foucault emphasized several times the importance of the rhetorical qualities of the master's discourse, in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, with regard to *parrēsia* and its role in ancient spiritual direction, he stresses instead the differences that clearly distinguish rhetoric—understood as art of persuasion—from *parrēsia*, the foundation of which is found rather in the ethical coincidence of the subject of speech and the subject of conduct.[22]

## Subjectivity and Truth in Early Christianity

Self-examination and spiritual direction (*direction of conscience*), along with a series of other practices developed in ancient philosophical schools, were inherited by Christianity and thus transferred into a context profoundly marked by new modalities of the exercise of power and novel processes of the extraction of the truth from the subject. The modes of formation of the subject that ensue from the Christian technology of the self are thus very different from those found in Greco-Roman antiquity, and the objective of the analyses developed by Foucault in the second lecture at Berkeley and Dartmouth College is to bring out this fundamental discontinuity.

Faced with two types of "truth obligation" that historically have characterized Christianity,—the first concerning faith, the Book, and dogma, and the second concerning the self, the soul, and the heart—Foucault focuses on the analysis of the latter, emphasizing from the start the strict relationship that, in Christianity, ties the production of the truth of the self to the possibility of acceding to the divine light. These two operations thus require a series of techniques that codify the subject's obligation to manifest its own truth to another person. If, in the Collège de France 1979–80 lectures, Foucault analyzed three major practices of the manifestation of individual truth within

early Christianity (baptism, ecclesial or canonic penance, and spiritual direction), in the lectures presented here he removes all reference to baptism and is interested only in penitential rites and spiritual direction within monastic institutions.

Foucault explains that in the Christianity of the first centuries, penance is not viewed as an act: rather it is a status that, through the imposition of a series of codified obligations on an individual who has committed one or several serious sins, has the function of avoiding this sinner's definitive expulsion from the Church community. Penance thus takes the form of a lengthy affair, of a sort of general discipline of existence entailing a whole restrictive regulation of food, clothing, sexual relations, and so on. Within this framework, Foucault highlights the importance of a specific obligation: the penitent must manifest the truth of himself as sinner, and do this in a ritualized form that the Greek Fathers designate with the word *exomologesis*, and Tertullian with the revealing expression *publicatio sui*. In fact, this manifestation of the truth of oneself as sinner is carried out not through the detailed verbalization of the sins committed but by the "dramatization" of one's own status, which one must "stage" by dressing wretchedly, wearing the hair shirt, covering head and body with ashes, beseeching and weeping, fasting regularly, exposing oneself to public censure during religious ceremonies—in short, by a constant mortification of oneself offered to the gaze of others.

So the absence of the analytical verbalization of sins committed does not prevent the penitent from showing himself "theatrically" as a sinner, that is to say, as someone who preferred spiritual death to eternal life. And if he wishes to be reintegrated into the community of the faithful, the penitent has to demonstrate—by his actions, physical aspect, and whole existence—the will to free himself from this world that corrupted him, to rid himself of his own body and his own flesh that prompted him to sin, therefore to *die* to himself as sinner. Consequently, in the practice of *exomologesis*, the manifestation of the truth of

oneself is no longer brought about by the superimposition of the subject of knowledge on the subject of will; rather, by the "dramatic manifestation of the renunciation to oneself,"[23] this manifestation is supposed to produce a radical "rupture" in the subject.

Alongside this public and gestural form of confession, in the fourth century CE another form of confession emerges and is elaborated in the monastic communities, a modality of the manifestation of the truth of oneself that is very different from the former and whose history will prove to be decisive. This is *exagoreusis*, a specific technology that entails the sinner's obligation to expose the sins he has committed to his spiritual director, and to do so verbally, in detail, and analytically in a relationship of total obedience to the latter's will. According to Foucault, this verbal and exhaustive confession, coupled with permanent examination of oneself and one's thoughts, entails decisive consequences at the level of the constitution of the subject: this is where, in fact, we should locate the origin of that "hermeneutic of self" that, although modified in its features and aims, is still proposed to us today.

In the lectures at Berkeley and Dartmouth College, Foucault maintains that the two poles around which monachism radically transformed the structure, object, and purpose of ancient spiritual direction are the principle of obedience and the principle of contemplation. If the direction of Greco-Roman antiquity was utilitarian and provisional, and if the disciple's obedience was always directed toward the final acquisition of a certain degree of autonomy and self-mastery, within the monastic communities, in contrast, direction becomes permanent and totalizing: it has to take charge of every aspect of the life of the person being directed, whose obedience takes the form of a constant and endless sacrifice of his own will with the aim of purification of the soul as the necessary condition for the contemplation of God.

In this context, commenting on several passages from John Cassian's *Institutiones* and *Collationes*, Foucault shows that

Christian self-examination no longer focuses on acts, as was the case in Greco-Roman antiquity, but on an "anterior" domain that is constituted—and this involves a radical innovation—as a "field of subjective data which have to be interpreted."[24] This is the domain of thoughts (*logismoi* or *cogitationes*) that make the soul changeable and expose it to the danger of *concupiscentia* and that, as a result, distract the monk's attention and threaten to disturb his contemplation of God. This ceaseless flow of thoughts constitutes the material that the monk is called upon to examine constantly in order to purify himself and discover the truth of himself. And yet the nature, quality, and substance of the thoughts must become the object of an endless and suspicious effort of interpretation, not so as to identify a correspondence between idea and reality, or in order to find a logical rule able to establish whether an idea is true or false, but rather in order to enable the monk to go back to the most secret and hidden origins of his thoughts and thus determine whether they were sent by God or by Satan.

To illustrate the salient characteristics of Christian self-examination, Foucault singles out for comment three comparisons employed by Cassian—that of the millstone, that of the officer, and that of the money changer—and with regard to the last he introduces the problem of what the Latin Fathers called *discretio*, that is to say, the specific ability to separate according to the right measure what appears mixed, or, in other words, to sort thoughts. Furthermore, the metaphor of the money changer gives Foucault the opportunity to raise the question of its possible resemblance to the image of the censor in Freud, which, in the lecture of 12 March 1980 of "On the Government of the Living," was compared with the self-examination of Seneca's *De ira*.[25]

However, this perpetual hermeneutic work on oneself can be effective only on condition that the monk verbalizes his thoughts, exhaustively and continuously, in the presence of his spiritual director: confession is the essential correlative of

Christian self-examination, because it possesses in itself an inescapable interpretive function. In fact, according to Cassian, evil thoughts can be recognized by their tenacious resistance to being verbalized, because Satan, the source of the evil that inhabits them, and the light of the discourse that makes them explicit are incompatible. The exhaustive verbalization of one's thoughts, in the presence of the spiritual director to whom the monk owes absolute obedience, has the aim therefore of exposing these thoughts to the divine light and thus forcing them to show what they are, while at the same time purifying the monk's soul.

Foucault can conclude then that, certainly, *exomologesis* and *exagoreusis* are two very different ways of manifesting the truth of oneself, the first turned toward the manifestation of the sinner's being ("ontological" temptation of Christianity), the second turned toward the permanent analysis of thought ("epistemological" temptation of Christianity). And yet these two techniques share a fundamental feature, namely, mortification, the renunciation of oneself and one's own will, so that, in both cases, revelation of the truth of oneself can never be separated from the obligation to sacrifice the self.[26]

## Philosophical, Ethical, and Political Stakes

The lectures presented here are very clearly structured around the contrast between ancient and Christian techniques of the self. But in the version delivered at Berkeley, Foucault enriches this contrast with a novel schema expressed in striking terms, the three stages of which correspond to three configurations taken by the "self" in Western history.

First, in Greco-Roman antiquity, the correlative of the techniques of self-examination and confession is a "gnomic self" for which the "force of the truth is one with the form of the will":[27] here, the self is constituted by the force of a truth that comes from outside and, in particular, is linked to the discourse of the

master, which is supposed to help the disciple to appropriate, incorporate, and "subjectivize" a given series of rules of conduct. Second, there is a "Gnostic self" that, on the contrary, must be discovered within the individual "as a part, as a forgotten sparkle, of the primitive light."[28] Thus, at Berkeley, Gnosticism is interposed between Greco-Roman antiquity and Christianity, giving rise to a historically specific configuration of the "self" that complicates the binary schema Foucault decides to employ at Dartmouth College. Finally, the correlative of the Christian techniques of self-examination and confession is a "gnoseologic self,"[29] which poses the problem of the discovery and decipherment of the secret truth of the self by a hermeneutic work; and this is not at all in order to be enlightened and transfigured by this truth, but rather the better to renounce oneself, for it may be that what is found in the depths of oneself is the Other (Satan).

In the version delivered at Dartmouth College, maybe for reasons of clarity or simplification, Foucault will not refer to the "Gnostic self" and will present a schema of two terms founded on the contrast between "gnomic self" and "gnoseologic self." This schematization, inscribed within the project of a genealogy of the modern subject, contributes decisively to bringing out the link between Foucauldian analyses and contemporary reality. Thus, in these lectures more than elsewhere, Foucault explicitly emphasizes the political stakes of his study of Greco-Roman antiquity and early Christianity—stakes certainly present also in his lectures at the Collège de France and in his books, but more often only implicitly.

At the beginning of the first lecture at Berkeley, Foucault explains that, according to him, an analysis has a "political dimension" when it concerns what we want "to accept, to refuse, and to change, both in ourselves and in our circumstances," and at the same time he inscribes his intention in the horizon of "another kind of critical philosophy," a critical philosophy that seeks "the conditions and the indefinite possibilities of

transforming the subject, of transforming ourselves."[30] This passage should no doubt be put together with what Foucault says in the interview with Michael Bess, where the variables of acceptance/refusal, with their "thresholds of tolerance," give rise to the assertion that "there will always be [some] people who will not want to accept, there will always be a point where [some] people will revolt, resist."[31] To refuse a given system of power relations, to resist power relations that are too congealed, immobilized, is therefore the necessary condition for creating the *undefined* possibilities of a transformation of the subject and for giving new impetus, "as far and wide as possible, to the *undefined* work of freedom."[32] And it is precisely this idea of the "undefined" that marks the political and ethical field of Foucauldian critical philosophy, distinguishing it from almost all other post-Kantian critical philosophies.

In the conclusion of the second lecture, Foucault maintains that what has characterized Western culture since the modern age has been the attempt to find a positive foundation for the hermeneutics of the self inherited from Christianity: the aim of judicial institutions, of medical and psychiatric practices, the aim too of political and philosophical theory, has been in effect to substitute the positive figure of man—what Foucault calls "the permanent anthropologism of Western thought"—for the sacrifice of the self that was, for Christianity, the condition for opening up the self as the field of an unlimited interpretation. And yet the self being "nothing else than the historical correlation of the technology built in our history,"[33] maybe the time has come, according to Foucault, for us to understand that our problem is rather one of changing that technology, thus releasing ourselves from the hermeneutics of the self.[34]

But refusing, changing, ridding ourselves are only the ethical-political conditions, made possible by genealogical work, of creation, innovation, and invention. Replying to Michael Bess, Foucault puts three fundamental elements at the center of his morality: refusal, curiosity, and innovation. These same

elements also characterize what, at Berkeley and Dartmouth College, he calls a "politics of ourselves."[35]

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## Notes

1. See D. Defert, "Chronologie," in *DE, I*, 80. In the few words spoken before the first lecture, Foucault reacted to this situation by expressing sympathy, of course, for those who had not been able to enter, but also for those there who were going to have to listen to a discourse that was no doubt very different from the one they were expecting.

2. See M. Foucault, "Sexuality and Solitude," *EW*, 1: 175–84.

3. See *MFDV*, 1–2; *WDTT*, 11–12.

4. See below, p. 38, n. 1.

5. See below, p. 21. Although the project of tracing the genealogy of the modern subject appears at several points in Foucault's texts, including in *On the Government of the Living* and *Wrong-Doing, Truth-Telling: The Function of Avowal in Justice*, the theoretical framework in which Foucault inserts his analyses in these latter is not the same as that of the lectures at Berkeley and Dartmouth College: at the Collège de France, in fact, the explicit aim was to study "the government of men through the manifestation of truth in the form of subjectivity" (*GV*, 79; *GL*, 80), while at Louvain it will be a matter of tracing a "political history of veridictions" in order to analyze "how subjects are effectively tied within and by the forms of veridiction in which they engage" (*MFDV*, 9; *WDTT*, 20).

6. In the lecture of 25 March 1981 at the Collège de France course "Subjectivité et vérité," Foucault gives the following definition of "techniques": "[Techniques are] regulated procedures, thought-out ways of doing things that are intended to carry out a certain number of transformations on a determinate object. These transformations are organized by reference to certain ends to be attained through these transformations" (*SV*, 253).

7. Below, p. 25.

8. *GV*, 79–80; *GL*, 81–82.

9. *CV*, 4–5; *CT*, 2–3.

10. *STP*, 188, 196–97; *STP* (Eng), 184–85, 192–93.

11. Below, pp. 25–26. Foucault returns to this idea in the public discussion that took place after his lectures at Berkeley, speaking of a "mutual support" between techniques of self and the way in which we are governed (below, p. 107).

12. See *GV*, 232–41; *GL*, 237–46; *MFDV*, 92–97; *WDTT*, 95–100.

13. See below, pp. 46–47, notes 25 and 26.

14. See *GV*, 235; *GL*, 239–40.

15. *MFDV*, 92; *WDTT*, 95.

16. Below, p. 34.

17. Below, p. 36.

18. Below, p. 37, note *.

19. *MFDV*, 97–101; *WDTT*, 100–103.

20. *HS*, 125; *HS* (Eng), 130. In the lecture of 10 February 1982, using an expression of Plutarch, Foucault explains that within the framework of ancient philosophical ascesis, what is decisive is whether or not knowledge (*savoir*) is "ethopoietic": knowledge is considered useful when and only when it functions in such a way that it is capable of modifying, of transforming *ēthos*, that is to say, the individual's way of being, his mode of existence. See *HS*, 227–28; *HS* (Eng), 237–38. See also "L'écriture de soi," in *DE, II*, no. 329, p. 1237; trans. Robert Hurley, "Self Writing," in *EW*, 1: 209.

21. *HS*, 132–33; *HS* (Eng), 137–38.

22. See *HS*, 350 and 365–69; *HS* (Eng), 368 and 381–86.

23. Below, p. 60.

24. Below, p. 74.

25. See *GV*, 237; *GL*, 241.

26. Below, pp. 75–76.

27. Below, p. 36.

28. Below, p. 55, note *.

29. Below, p. 75.

30. Below, p. 24, note ‡.

31. Below, p. 134.

32. M. Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?," in *DE, II*, no. 339, p. 1393; trans. Catherine Porter, "What Is Enlightenment?" in *EW*, 1: 316 (our emphasis).

33. Below, p. 76.

34. One might see here an illustration *avant la lettre* of the last Foucauldian definitions of archaeology and genealogy. To show that the self is no more than the historical correlative of the technology constructed in our history is, in fact, a way of putting archaeological criticism into action—"archaeological" in the sense that it seeks "to treat the instances of discourse that articulate what we think, say, and do as so many historical events." And trying to change this technology corresponds to the moment of the genealogical critique, which does not deduce "from the form of what we are what it is impossible for us to do and to know," but separates out "from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think." "What Is Enlightenment?," *DE, II*, 1393; *EW*, 1: 315–16).

35. Below, p. 76.

# Subjectivity and Truth

17 NOVEMBER 1980

In a work consecrated to the moral treatment of madness and published in 1840, a French psychiatrist, Leuret, tells of the manner in which he has treated one of his patients—treated and, as you can imagine, of course, cured. One morning, Dr. Leuret takes Mr. A., his patient, into a shower room. He makes him recount in detail his delirium.

"Well, all that," says the doctor, "is nothing but madness. Promise me not to believe in it anymore."

The patient hesitates, then promises.

"That's not enough," replies the doctor. "You already made similar promises, and you haven't kept them." And the doctor turns on a cold shower above the patient's head.

"Yes, yes! I am mad!" the patient cries.

The shower is turned off, and the interrogation is resumed.

"Yes, I recognize that I am mad," the patient repeats, adding, "I recognize because you are forcing me to do so."

Another shower. Another confession. The interrogation is taken up again.

"I assure you, however," says the patient, "that I have heard voices and seen enemies around me."

Another shower.

"Well," says Mr. A., the patient, "I admit it. I am mad; all that was madness."[1]

To make someone suffering from mental illness recognize that he is mad is a very ancient procedure. Everybody in the old

medicine, before the middle of the nineteenth century, everybody was convinced of the incompatibility between madness and recognition of madness. And in the* works, for instance, of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, one finds many examples of what one might call truth-therapies. The mad would be cured if one managed to show them that their delirium is† without any relation to reality.

But, as you see, the technique used by Leuret is altogether different. He is not trying to persuade his patient that his ideas are false or unreasonable. What happens in the head of Mr. A. is a matter of indifference for the doctor. Leuret wishes to obtain a precise act: the explicit affirmation "I am mad." It is easy to recognize here the transposition within psychiatric therapy of procedures which have been used for a long time in judicial and religious institutions.[2] To declare aloud and intelligibly the truth about oneself—I mean, to confess—has in the Western world been considered for a long time either as a condition for redemption for one's sins or an essential item in the condemnation of the guilty. The bizarre therapy of Leuret may be read as an episode in the progressive culpabilization of madness. But I would wish, rather, to take it as a point of departure for a more general reflection on this practice of confession and on the postulate, which is generally accepted in Western societies, that one needs for his own salvation to know as exactly as possible who he is and also, which is something rather different, that he needs to tell it as explicitly as possible to some other people.[3] The anecdote of Leuret is here only as an example of the strange and complex relationships developed in our societies between individuality, discourse, truth, and coercion.‡

*_Berkeley_: medical

†_Berkeley_, _instead of "their delirium is"_: their hallucinations are

‡_Berkeley_: The question is: what is this obligation to tell the truth about oneself, which is imposed on everybody, and even on the mad if they want to become reasonable and normal people?

In order to justify the attention I am giving to what is seemingly so specialized a subject, let me take a step back for a moment. All that, after all, is only for me a means that I will use to take on a much more general theme—that is, the genealogy of the modern subject.[4]

In the years that preceded the second war, and even more so after the second war, philosophy in France and, I think, in all continental Europe was dominated by the philosophy of the subject.* I mean that philosophy set as its task *par excellence*[5] the foundation of all knowledge and the principle of all signification as stemming from the meaningful subject. The importance given to this question of the meaningful subject was of course due to the impact of Husserl—only his *Cartesian Meditations*[6] and the *Crisis*[7] were generally known in France—but the centrality of the subject was also tied to an institutional context. For the French university, since philosophy began with Descartes, it could only advance in a Cartesian manner. But we must also take into account the political conjuncture. Given the absurdity of wars, slaughters, and despotism, it seemed then to be up to the individual subject to give meaning to his existential choices.

With the leisure and distance that came after the war, this emphasis on the philosophical subject no longer seemed so self-evident. Two hitherto-hidden theoretical paradoxes could no longer be avoided. The first one was that the philosophy of consciousness had failed to found a philosophy of knowledge, and especially scientific knowledge, and the second was that this philosophy of meaning paradoxically had failed to take into account the formative mechanisms of signification and the structure of systems of meaning. I am aware that another form of thought claimed then to have gone beyond the philosophy of the subject—this, of course, was Marxism. It goes without saying—and it goes indeed better if we say it—that neither materialism nor the theory of ideologies successfully

*_Berkeley_: The transcendence of the ego reigned.

constituted a theory of objectivity or of signification. Marxism put itself forward as a humanistic discourse that could replace the abstract subject with an appeal to the real man, the concrete man.* It should have been clear at the time that Marxism carried with it a fundamental theoretical and practical weakness: the humanistic discourse hid the political reality that the Marxists of this period nonetheless supported.

With the all too easy clarity of hindsight—what you call, I think, the "Monday morning quarterback"—let me say that there were two possible paths that led beyond this philosophy of the subject. First, the theory of objective knowledge and, two, an analysis of systems of meaning, or semiology. The first of these was the path of logical positivism. The second was that of a certain school of linguistics, psychoanalysis, and anthropology, all generally grouped under the rubric of structuralism.

These were not the directions I took. Let me announce once and for all that I am not a structuralist, and I confess with the appropriate chagrin that I am not an analytic philosopher—nobody is perfect. I have tried to explore another direction. I have tried to get out from the philosophy of the subject through a genealogy of the subject, by studying the constitution of the subject across history which had led us to the modern concept of the self. This has not always been an easy task, since most of historians prefer a history of social processes,† and most philosophers prefer a subject without history. This has neither prevented me from using the same material that certain social historians have used, nor from recognizing my theoretical debt to those philosophers who, like Nietzsche, have posed the question of the historicity of the subject.[8,‡,(10,15,16)]

*_Berkeley, instead of "to the real man, the concrete man"_: to the disalienation of man

†_Berkeley_: where society plays the role of subject

‡_Berkeley_: So much for the general project. Now a few words on methodology. For this kind of research, the history of science constitutes a privileged point of view. This might seem paradoxical. After all, the genealogy

Up to the present, I have proceeded with this general project in two ways. I have dealt with the modern theoretical constructions that were concerned with the subject in general. I have tried to analyze, in a previous book,[9] theories of the subject as a speaking, living, working being. I have also dealt with the

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of the self does not take place within a field of scientific knowledge, as if we were nothing else than that which rational knowledge could tell us about ourselves. While the history of science is without doubt an important testing ground for the theory of knowledge, as well as for the analysis of meaningful systems, it is also fertile ground for studying the genealogy of the subject. There are two reasons for this. All the practices by which the subject is defined and transformed are accompanied by the formation of certain types of knowledge, and in the West, for a variety of reasons, knowledge tends to be organized around forms and norms that are more or less scientific. There is also another reason maybe more fundamental and more specific to our societies. I mean the fact that one of the main moral obligations for any subject is to know oneself, to explore oneself, to tell the truth about oneself, and to constitute oneself as an object of knowledge both for other people and for oneself. The truth obligation for individuals and a scientific organization of knowledge: those are the two reasons why the history of knowledge constitutes a privileged point of view for the genealogy of the subject.

Hence, it follows that I am not trying to do history of sciences in general, but only of those which sought to construct a scientific knowledge of the subject. Another consequence. I am not trying to measure the objective value of these sciences, nor to know if they can become universally valid. That is the task of an epistemological historian. Rather, I am working on a history of science that is, to some extent, regressive, a history that seeks to discover the discursive, the institutional, and the social practices from which these sciences arose. This would be an archaeological history.[10] Finally, the third consequence, this project seeks to discover the point at which these practices became coherent reflective techniques with definite goals, the point at which a particular discourse emerged from those techniques and came to be seen as true, the point at which they are linked with the obligation of searching for the truth and telling the truth. In sum, the aim of my project is to construct a genealogy of the subject. The method is an archaeology of knowledge,

more practical understanding formed in those institutions like hospitals, asylums, prisons, where certain subjects became objects of knowledge and at the same time objects of domination.[11] And now I wish to study those forms of understanding which the subject creates about himself. Those forms of self-understanding are important, I think, to analyze the modern experience of sexuality.[12]

But since I have started with this last type of project I have been obliged to change my mind on several important points. Let me introduce a kind of autocritique.[13] It seems, according to some suggestions by Habermas,[14] that one can distinguish three major types of techniques in human societies: the techniques which permit one to produce, to transform, to manipulate things; the techniques which permit one to use sign systems; and the techniques which permit one to determine the

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and the precise domain of the analysis is what I should call technologies. I mean the articulation of certain techniques and certain kinds of discourse about the subject.

I would like to add one final word about the practical significance of this form of analysis. For Heidegger, it was through an increasing obsession with *technē* as the only way to arrive at an understanding of objects that the West lost touch with Being. Let's turn the question around and ask which techniques and practices form the Western concept of the subject, giving it its characteristic split of truth and error, freedom and constraint.[15] I think that it is here where we will find the real possibility of constructing a history of what we have done and, at the same time, a diagnosis of what we are. This would be a theoretical analysis which has, at the same time, a political dimension. By this word "political dimension," I mean an analysis that relates to what we are willing to accept in our world, to accept, to refuse, and to change, both in ourselves and in our circumstances. In sum, it is a question of searching for another kind of critical philosophy. Not a critical philosophy that seeks to determine the conditions and the limits of our possible knowledge of the object, but a critical philosophy that seeks the conditions and the indefinite possibilities of transforming the subject, of transforming ourselves.[16]

conduct of individuals, to impose certain wills on them, and to submit them to certain ends or objectives. That is to say, there are techniques of production, techniques of signification, and techniques of domination.

Of course, if one wants to study the history of natural sciences, it is useful if not necessary to take into account techniques of production and semiotic techniques. But since my project was concerned with the knowledge of the subject, I thought that the techniques of domination were the most important, without any exclusion of the rest. But, analyzing the experience of sexuality, I became more and more aware that there is in all societies, I think, in all societies whatever they are, another type of techniques: techniques which permit individuals to effect, by their own means,* a certain number of operations on their own bodies, on their own souls, on their own thoughts, on their own conduct, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves, modify themselves, or to attain a certain state of perfection, of happiness, of purity, of supernatural power, and so on. Let's call this kind of techniques a "techniques" or "technology of the self."[17]

I think that if one wants to analyze the genealogy of the subject in Western civilization, he has to take into account not only techniques of domination but also techniques of the self. Let's say: he has to take into account the interaction between those two types of techniques—techniques of domination and techniques of the self. He has to take into account the points where the technologies of domination of individuals over one another have recourse to processes by which the individual acts upon himself. And conversely, he has to take into account the points where the techniques of the self are integrated into structures of coercion or domination. The contact point, where the way individuals are driven† by others is tied to the way they

*_Berkeley_: or with the help of other people
†_Berkeley_: and known

conduct themselves,* is what we can call, I think, government.[18] Governing people, in the broad meaning of the word,† is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself.

When I was studying asylums, prisons, and so on, I insisted, I think, too much on the techniques of domination. What we can call discipline is something really important in these kinds of institutions, but it is only one aspect of the art of governing people in our society. We must not understand the exercise of power as pure violence or strict coercion. Power consists in complex relations: these relations involve a set of rational techniques, and the efficiency of those techniques is due to a subtle integration of coercion-technologies and self-technologies. I think that we have to get rid of the more or less Freudian schema—you know it—the schema of interiorization of the law by the self. Fortunately, from a theoretical point of view, and maybe unfortunately from a practical point of view, things are much more complicated than that. In short, having studied the field of government by taking as my point of departure techniques of domination, I would like in years to come to study government—especially in the field of sexuality—starting from the techniques of the self.

Among those techniques of the self in this field of self-technology, I think that the techniques oriented toward the discovery and the formulation of the truth concerning oneself are extremely important; and if for the government of people in our societies everyone had not only to obey, but also to produce and publish the truth about oneself,[19] then examination of conscience and confession are among the most important of those procedures. Of course, there is a very long and very complex

*_Berkeley_: and know themselves

†_Berkeley_: as they spoke, for instance, in the sixteenth century, of governing children, or governing the family, or governing souls

history, from the Delphic precept *gnōthi seauton* (know yourself) to the strange therapeutics promoted by Leuret, about which I was speaking in the beginning of this lecture. There is a very long way from one to the other, and I don't want, of course, to give you even a survey this evening. I'd like only to underline a transformation of those practices, a transformation which took place at the beginning of the Christian era, of the Christian period, when the ancient obligation of knowing oneself became the monastic precept "confess, to your spiritual guide, each of your thoughts." This transformation is, I think, of some importance in the genealogy of modern subjectivity.[20] With this transformation starts what we could call the hermeneutics of the self. This evening I'll try to outline the way confession and self-examination were conceived by pagan philosophers, and next week I'll try to show you what it became in early Christianity.*

* * *

It is well-known that the main objective of the Greek schools of philosophy did not consist of the elaboration, the teaching,

**Berkeley, in place of this paragraph*: Among such techniques, those oriented toward the discovery and the formulation of the truth concerning oneself are extremely important. This is because for the government of people in our societies everyone had not only to obey, but also to produce the truth about oneself. Self-examination of conscience and confession are among the most important of those procedures. I would like to show the transformation through those two procedures of the old Delphic precept "know yourself" (*gnōthi seauton*) to the monastic precept "tell me each of your thoughts" (*omnes cogitationes*). For this precept, born and developed first in monastic institutions, played, I think, a great role in the constitution of modern subjectivity. With this precept starts what we could call the hermeneutics of the self. This evening I'll try to outline the way confession and self-examination were conceived in Greek and Latin philosophies. And tomorrow, I'll try to show you what it became in early Christianity. The title of those two lectures could have been in fact, and should have been: "About the beginning of the hermeneutics of the self."

of theory. The goal of the Greek schools of philosophy was the transformation of the individual. The goal of the Greek philosophy was to give the individual the quality which would permit him to live differently, better, more happily, than other people.[21] What place did the self-examination and the confession have in this? At first glance, in all the ancient philosophical practices, the obligation to tell the truth about oneself occupies a rather restrained place. And this for two reasons, both of which remain valid throughout the whole Greek and Hellenistic antiquity. The first of those reasons is that the objective of philosophical training is to arm the individual with a certain number of precepts which permit him to conduct himself in all circumstances of life without his losing mastery of himself or without losing tranquility of spirit, purity of body and soul. From this principle stems the importance of the master's discourse. The master's discourse has to talk, to explain, to persuade; he has to give the disciple a universal code for all his life, so that the verbalization takes place on the side of the master and not on the side of the disciple.[22]

There is also another reason why the obligation to confess does not have a lot of importance in the direction of antique conscience. The tie with the master was then circumstantial or, in any case, provisional. It was a relationship between two wills, which does not imply a complete or a definitive obedience. One solicits or one accepts the advice of a master or of a friend in order to endure an ordeal, a bereavement, an exile, or a reverse of fortune, and so on. Or again, one places oneself under the direction of a master for a certain time of one's life,* so as one day to be able to behave autonomously and no longer have need of advice. Ancient direction tends toward the autonomy of the directed. In these conditions, one can understand that the necessity for exploring oneself in exhaustive depth does not present itself. It is not indispensable to say everything about

*_Berkeley_: often, but not necessarily, when one is young

oneself, to reveal one's least secrets, so that the master may exert complete power over one. The exhaustive and continual presentation of oneself under the eyes of an all-powerful director is not an essential feature in this technique of direction.[23]

But despite this general orientation which has so little emphasis on self-examination and on confession, one finds well before Christianity already elaborated techniques for discovering and formulating the truth about oneself. And their role, it would seem, became more and more important. The growing importance of these techniques is no doubt tied to the development of communal life in the philosophical schools, as with the Pythagoreans or the Epicureans, and it is also tied to the value accorded to the medical model, either in the Epicurean or the Stoic schools.[24]

Since it is not possible in so short a time even to give a sketch of this evolution in the Greek and Hellenist civilization, I'll take only two passages of a Roman philosopher, Seneca. They may be considered as rather good witnesses of this practice of self-examination and confession as it existed with the Stoics of the imperial period at the time of the birth of Christianity.[25] The first passage is to be found in the *De ira*. Here is this passage; I'll read it to you:

> What could be more beautiful than to conduct an inquest on one's day? What sleep better than that which follows this review of one's actions? How calm it is, deep and free, when the soul has received its portion of praise and blame, and has submitted itself to its own examination, to its own censure. Secretly, it makes the trial of its own conduct. I exercise this authority over myself, and each day I will myself as witness before myself. When my light is lowered and my wife at last is silent, I reason with myself and take the measure of my acts and my words. I hide nothing from myself; I spare myself nothing. Why, in effect, should I fear anything at all amongst my errors whilst I can say: "Be vigilant in not beginning it again;

today I will forgive you. In a certain discussion, you spoke too aggressively or you did not correct the person you were reproaching, you offended him, . . ." etc.[26]

There is something paradoxical in seeing the Stoics, such as Seneca and also Sextius,[27] Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, and so on, according so much importance to the examination of conscience whilst, according to the terms of their doctrine, all faults were supposed equal.[28] It should not therefore be necessary to interrogate themselves on each one of them. But let's look at this text a little more closely. First of all, Seneca employs a vocabulary which at first glance appears, above all, judicial. He uses expressions like *cognoscere de moribus suis* and *me causam dico*—all that is typically judicial vocabulary. It seems, therefore, that the subject is, with regard to himself, both the judge and the accused. In this examination of conscience it seems that the subject divides itself in two and organizes a judicial scene, where it plays both roles at once. Seneca is like an accused confessing his crime to the judge, and the judge is Seneca himself. But if we look more closely, we see that the vocabulary used by Seneca is much more administrative than judicial. It is the vocabulary of the direction of goods or territory. Seneca says, for instance, that he is *speculator sui*, that he inspects himself, that he examines with himself the past day, *totum diem meum scrutor*, or that he takes the measure of things said and done; he uses the word *remetior*. With regard to himself, he is not a judge who has to punish; he is, rather, an administrator who, once the work has been done or the year's business finished, does the accounts, takes stock of things, and sees if everything has been done correctly. Seneca is a permanent administrator of himself more than a judge of his own past.

The examples of the faults committed by Seneca and with which he reproaches himself are significant from this point of view. He says and he reproaches himself for having criticized someone and instead of correcting him he has hurt him; or

again, he says that he has discussed with people who were in any case incapable of understanding him. These faults, as he says himself, are not really faults; they are mistakes. And why mistakes? Either because he did not have in his mind the aims which the sage should set himself or because he had not applied in the correct manner the rules of conduct to be deduced from them. The faults are mistakes in that sense that they are bad adjustments between aims and means. Significant is also the fact that Seneca does not recall those faults in order to punish himself; he has as a goal only to memorize exactly the rules which he had to apply. This memorization has for an object a reactivation of fundamental philosophical principles and the readjustment of their application. In the Christian confession the penitent has to memorize the laws in order to discover his own sins, but in this Stoic exercise the sage has to memorize acts in order to reactivate the fundamental rules.

One can therefore characterize this examination in a few words. First, this examination, it's not at all a question of discovering the truth hidden in the subject. It is rather a question of recalling the truth forgotten by the subject. Two, what the subject forgets is not himself, nor his nature, nor his origin, nor a supernatural affinity. What the subject forgets is what he ought to have done, that is, a collection of rules of conduct that he had learned. Three, the recollection of errors committed during the day serves to measure the distance which separates what has been done from what should have been done. And four, the subject who practices this examination on himself is not the operating ground for a process more or less obscure which has to be deciphered. He is the point where rules of conduct come together and register themselves in the form of memories. He is at the same time the point of departure for actions more or less in conformity with these rules. He constitutes, the subject constitutes, the point of intersection between a set of memories which must be brought into the present and acts which have to be regulated.

This evening examination has its logical place among a set of other Stoic exercises:* the continual reading, for instance, of the manual of precepts (that's for the present); the examination of the evils which could happen in life, the well-known *praemeditatio malorum* (that was for the possible); the enumeration each morning of the tasks to be accomplished during the day (that was for the future); and finally, the evening examination of conscience (so much for the past).[29] As you see, the self in all those exercises is not considered as a field of subjective data which have to be interpreted.† It submits itself to the trial of possible or real action.‡

Well, after this examination of conscience, which constitutes a kind of confession to oneself, I would like to speak about the confession to others: I mean to say the exposé of one's soul which one makes to someone, who may be a friend, an adviser, a guide. This was a practice not very developed in philosophical life, but it had been developed in some philosophical schools, for instance among the Epicurean Schools, and it was also a very well-known medical practice. The medical literature is rich in such examples of confession or exposé of the self. For instance, the treatise of Galen *On the Passions of the Soul*[30] quotes an example like that; or Plutarch in the *De profectibus in virtute* writes, "There are many sick people who accept medicine and others who refuse it; the man who hides the shame of soul, his desire, his unpleasantness, his avarice, his concupiscence, has little chance of making progress. Indeed, to speak one's evil reveals one['s] nastiness. To recognize it instead of taking pleasure in hiding it, all this is a sign of progress."[31]

Well, another text of Seneca might also serve us as an example here of what was confession in late antiquity. It is in

*_Berkeley_: all of them being a way to incorporate in a constant attitude a code of actions and reactions, whatever situation may occur

†_Berkeley, instead of "interpreted"_: discovered

‡_Berkeley_: past or future

the beginning of the treatise *De tranquillitate animi*. Serenus, a young friend of Seneca, comes to ask him for advice. It is very explicitly a medical consultation on his own state of soul. "Why," says Serenus, "should I not confess to you the truth, as to a doctor? . . . I do not feel altogether ill but nor do I feel entirely in good health."[32] Serenus feels himself in a state of malaise, rather, as he says, like on a boat which does not advance but is tossed about by the rolling of the ship. And he fears staying at sea in this condition, in view of firm land and of the virtues which remain inaccessible. In order to escape this state, Serenus therefore decides to consult Seneca and to confess his state to Seneca. He says that he wants *verum fateri*, to tell the truth to Seneca.*

Now what is this truth, what is this *verum*, that he wants to confess? Does he confess faults, secret thoughts, shameful desires, and things like that? Not at all. The text of Serenus appears as an accumulation of relatively unimportant, at least for us unimportant, details; for instance, Serenus confesses to Seneca that he uses the earthenware inherited from his father, that he easily gets carried away when he makes public speeches, and so on and so on. But it is easy, beneath this apparent disorder, to recognize three distinct domains for this confession: the domain of riches, the domain of political life, and the domain of glory; to acquire riches, to participate in the affairs of the city, to gain public opinion. These are—these were—the three types of activity possible for a free man, the three commonplace moral questions that are asked by the major philosophical schools of the period. The framework of the exposé of Serenus is not therefore defined by the real course of his existence; it is not defined by his real experience, nor by a theory of the soul or

*_Berkeley, instead of these last two sentences_: In order to escape this state, Serenus therefore decides to consult Seneca and to confess the truth to Seneca. But through this confession, through this description of his own state, he asks Seneca to tell him the truth about his own state. Serenus is at the same time confessing the truth and lacking in truth.

of its elements, but only by the classification of the different types of activity which one can exercise and the ends which one can pursue. In each one of these fields, Serenus reveals his attitude by enumerating that which pleases him and that which displeases him. The expression "it pleases me" (*placet me*) is the leading thread in his analysis.[33] It pleases him to do favors for his friends. It pleases him to eat simply, and to have nothing other than that which he has inherited, but the spectacle of luxury in others pleases him. He takes pleasure also in inflating his oratorical style with the hope that posterity will retain his words. In thus exposing what pleases him, Serenus is not seeking to reveal what are his profound desires. His pleasures are not the means of revealing what Christians later call *concupiscentia*. For him, it is a question of his own state and of adding something to the knowledge of the moral precepts. This addition to what is already known is a force, the force which would be able to transform pure knowledge and simple consciousness into a real way of living. And this is what Seneca tries to do when he uses a set of persuasive arguments, demonstrations, examples, in order not to discover a still unknown truth inside and in the depth of Serenus's soul but in order to explain, if I may say, to what extent truth in general is true. Seneca's discourse has for an objective not to add to some theoretical principle a force of coercion coming from elsewhere but to transform them into a victorious force. Seneca has to give a place to truth as a force.[34,*]

*Berkeley, instead of "His pleasures are not . . . as a force"*: For him it is a question of indicating, as exactly as possible, to what he is still attached and from what he is already detached, in what respect he is free and on what external things he is dependant. The *verum fateri* which he proposes to himself is not the bringing into the light of day of profound secrets. It is rather in terms of the ties which attached him to things of which he is not the master. It is a kind of inventory of freedom in the frame of a code of actions. It is not an enumeration of past faults, it is a balance sheet of dependences.

Hence, I think, several consequences. First, in this game between Serenus's confession and Seneca's consultation, truth, as you see, is not defined by a correspondence to reality but as a force inherent to principles and which has to be developed in a discourse. Two, this truth is not something which is hidden behind or under the consciousness in the deepest and most

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But we have to go further. Serenus makes this confession not only in order to expose the true state of his soul, but also to learn from Seneca the truth about himself. Now, what is this kind of truth Serenus needs and asks Seneca to tell him? A diagnosis? That is in fact what Serenus says. And that is what Seneca gives him. And this diagnosis does not consist in saying: "Here is what you are," "Here are the secret ills from which you suffer." Seneca contents himself with saying: "Do not believe that you are a sick man who cannot manage to be cured. You are a former sick man who does not realize that he has been healed." Seneca helps Serenus to situate himself on the path which should lead him to the *terra firma* of virtues. He establishes exactly the ship's bearing. But, by itself, this diagnosis is, as you see, a very short analysis. But that's only the smallest part of what Seneca says, and the treatise *De tranquillitate animi* says much more than that. Which kind of answer does Seneca in this treatise give to the needs of Serenus? A philosophical theory? Not at all. A new exposé of moral precepts? It is clear that Serenus does not need that. Serenus has shown in his confession that he knows very well the great moral principles which are necessary for a philosophical life. The truth Serenus needs is not a complementary knowledge. It is something added to the knowledge he possesses, to the knowledge of his own state, and to the knowledge of the moral precepts. This addition to what is already known is not a knowledge, it is a force. A force which is able to transform pure knowledge and simple consciousness into a real way of living. And that is what Seneca tries to do. That is what Seneca transmits to Serenus, when he uses a set of persuasive arguments, demonstrations, examples, in order not to discover a still unknown truth inside of Serenus, but to explain, if I may say, to what extent truth is true. Seneca's discourse has for an objective not to add to some theoretical principles a force of coercion coming from elsewhere. Seneca's discourse has for an objective to transform truth into a victorious, into an incoercible force. Seneca has to give place to truth as a force.

obscure part of the soul. It is something which is before the individual as a point of attraction, a kind of magnetic force which attracts him towards a goal. Three, this truth is not obtained by an analytical exploration of what is supposed to be real in the individual but by rhetorical explanation of what is good for anyone who wants to approach the life of a sage. Four, the confession is not oriented toward an individualization of Serenus* by the discovery of some personal characteristics but towards the constitution of a self which would be at the same time and without any discontinuity subject of knowledge and subject of will. Five, we can see that such a practice of confession and consultation remains within the framework of what the Greeks for a long time called the *gnōmē*.[35] The term *gnōmē* designates the unity of will and knowledge; it designates also a brief piece of discourse through which truth appears with all its force and encrusts itself in the soul of people. Then we could say that even as late as the first century AD, 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 the force of the truth is one with the form of the will.

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In this model of the gnomic self, we found several constitutive elements: the necessity of telling truth about oneself, the role of the master and the master's discourse, the long way that leads finally to the emergence of the self. All those elements, we find them also in the Christian technologies of the self, but with a very different organization.[36] I should say, in sum, and I'll conclude there, that as far as we followed the practices of self-examination and confession in the Hellenistic or Roman philosophy, you see that the self is not something that has to be discovered or deciphered as a very obscure text. You see that

*_Berkeley, instead of "of Serenus"_: of the disciple

the task is not to put in the light what would be the most obscure part of our selves. The self has, on the contrary, not to be discovered but to be constituted, to be constituted through the force of truth. This force lies in the rhetorical quality of the master's discourse, and this rhetorical quality depends for a part on the exposé of the disciple, who has to explain how far he is in his way of living from the true principles that he knows. And I think that this organization of the self as a target, the organization of what I call the gnomic self as the objective, the aim, towards which the confession and self-examination is oriented, is something deeply different from what we meet in the Christian technologies of the self.[37] In the Christian technologies of the self, the problem is to discover what is hidden inside the self; the self is like a text or like a book that we have to decipher, and not something which has to be constructed by the superposition, the superimposition, of the will and the truth. This organization, this Christian organization, so different from the pagan one, is something which is I think quite decisive for the genealogy of the modern self, and that's the point I'll try to explain next week when we meet again. Thank you.*,(38)

**Berkeley, from "Five, we can see . . ." to the end of the lecture is different*: (5) If the role of confession and consultation is to give place to truth as a force, it is easy to understand that self-examination has nearly the same role. We have seen that if Seneca recalls every evening his mistakes, it is to memorize the moral precepts of the conduct, and memory is nothing else than the force of the truth when it is permanently present and active in the soul. A permanent memory in the individual and in his inner discourse, a persuasive rhetoric in the master's advices—those are the aspects of truth considered as a force. Then we may conclude self-examination and confession may be in ancient philosophy considered as truth-game, and as important truth-game. But the objective of this truth-game is not to discover a secret reality inside the individual. The objective of this truth-game[38] is to make of the individual a place where truth can appear and act as a real force through the presence of memory and the efficiency of discourse.

## Notes

1. F. Leuret, *Du traitement moral de la folie* (Paris: J. B. Baillière, 1840), 191–204. Foucault attaches considerable importance to this therapeutic practice of François Leuret: referred to in *Maladie mentale et psychologie* (Paris: P.U.F., 1962), 85–86; English trans., Alan Sheridan, *Mental Illness and Psychology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 72, it reappears in many other texts. See M. Foucault, "L'eau et la folie," in *DE, I*, no. 16, pp. 298–99, and "Sexuality and Solitude," in *EW, I*, 175–76. Foucault also devotes several reflections to Leuret and his methods in his 1973–74 lectures at the Collège de France, in particular in the lecture of 19 December 1973. See M. Foucault, *Le pouvoir psychiatrique. Cours au Collège de*

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We can see that such a practice of examination and of confession remains within the framework of what the Greeks for a long time called the *gnōmē*. The term *gnōmē* designates the unity of will and knowledge; it designates also a brief piece of discourse—a sentence, a few lines—through which truth appears with all its force and encrusts itself in the soul of ordinary mortals. In the earliest forms of Greek philosophy, poets and divine men told the truth to ordinary mortals through this kind of *gnōmē*, through *gnōmai*, *gnōmai* very short, very imperative, and so deeply illuminated by the poetical light that it was impossible to forget them and to avoid their power. Well, I think that you can see that self-examination and confession, as you can find them, for instance, by Seneca, but also in Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, and so on, self-examination and confession, even as late as in the first century AD, were still a kind of development of this *gnōmē*. So we could call gnomic self the type of self which is proposed as the model, and as the target, by the ancient, by Greek and Latin philosophy. A self where the force of the truth has to be one with the form of the will.

In sum, the self has to be constituted through the force of the truth. This force lies in the mnemonic aptitude of the individual and in the rhetorical quality of the master's discourse, and those depend for a part on art of memory and art of persuasion, so that technologies of the self in the ancient world are not linked with an art of interpretation, but with arts such as mnemotechnics and rhetoric. Self-observation, self-interpretation, self-hermeneutics won't intervene in the technology of the self before Christianity. And that's the point I'll try to explain to you tomorrow. Well, thank you.

*France, 1973–1974*, ed. J. Lagrange (Paris: Seuil-Gallimard, 2003), 144–63; English trans., Graham Burchell, *Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1973–1974*, English series editor, Arnold I. Davidson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 144–64. In the inaugural lecture at Louvain, Foucault again cites this therapeutic scene described by Leuret, giving it the same role as it plays in these lectures, that is to say, of an introduction to a genealogy (or "ethnology") of the techniques of confession/avowal (*aveu*) in Western culture: "There is, then, a long history of avowal behind this particular case of avowal demanded by Leuret. There are long-held beliefs in the powers and the effects of 'truth-telling' in general and, in particular, of 'truth-telling about oneself.' . . . So perhaps there is an entire ethnology of truth-telling to be pursued." See *MFDV*, 1–3; *WDTT*, 11–13.

2. For an analysis of what Foucault presents as a transposition of Christian procedures of confession (*aveu*) into the schemas of scientificity (*la régularité scientifique*), and into medical, psychiatric, and psychological practice in particular, see *VS*, 84–94; *Hist*, 63–70. On the other hand, in the last of his Louvain lectures Foucault analyzes the development of the confession in judicial institutions from the Middle Ages to our times, while also evoking the role that medical and psychiatric practices have played in this. See *MFDV*, 199–228; *WDTT*, 199–229.

3. This "postulate" constitutes at once the point of departure, the theoretical justification, and the critical target of the analyses Foucault develops in these lectures. Moreover, in *La volonté de savoir* we can already find the assertion that "the confession became one of the West's most highly valued techniques for producing truth": our society is "a singularly confessing society," and Western man "has become a confessing animal." From this, according to Foucault, derives the need for a "political history of truth." See *VS*, 79–81; *Hist*, 59–60. It is basically in the wake of this (political) history of truth that Foucault inscribes his Collège de France lectures of 1979–80 and 1980–81, as well as his 1981 seminar at Louvain. See *GV*, 49, 73–74, 99, 111–12, and 305–7; *GL*, 49, 75, 101–2, and 310–13; *SV*, lecture of 7 January 1981; *MFDV*, 7–10 and 89; *WDTT*, 18–21 and 91–92.

4. The project of a genealogy of the modern subject appears at several points in Foucault's texts. Thus, in an interview in 1976, Foucault explains clearly that one has to "get rid of the subject itself, that's to say, to arrive at an analysis that can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework," and this "is what I would call

genealogy." See M. Foucault, "Entretien avec Michel Foucault," interview with Alessandro Fontana and Pasquale Pasquino, in *DE, II*, no. 192, p. 147; English trans., Colin Gordon, "Truth and Power," in *EW*, 3: 118. In the lecture of 22 February 1978 of the lectures *Sécurité, territoire, population*, Foucault concludes his analysis of Christian pastoral power by remarking, in a perspective already close to that of 1980, that studying the history of the pastorate also means tracing the history of the Western subject. See *STP*, 187; *STP* (Eng), 184. However, in the 1979–80 lectures, the general framework of analysis explicitly indicated by Foucault is not that of a genealogy of the modern subject (even if the theme is implicitly present everywhere), but that of the "government of men through the manifestation of truth in the form of subjectivity." See *GV*, 79; *GL*, 80; but also *GV*, 140 and 220–21; *GL*, 143 and 224–26, where Foucault evokes the theme of the history of Western subjectivity. From 1981, the project of a genealogy of the modern subject takes shape in terms of a history of the relations between subjectivity and truth or, as Foucault puts it at Louvain, of a "political history of veridictions" whose aim would be to study "how subjects are effectively tied within and by the forms of veridiction in which they engage." See *MFDV*, 9; *WDTT*, 20. See also, *SV*, lecture of 7 January 1981; *HS*, 3–4; *HS* (Eng), 1–2; *GSA*, 42; *GSO*, 42; *CV*, 5; *CT*, 3. On the other hand, Foucault inscribes the last two volumes of the history of sexuality (and also *Les aveux de la chair*) in the project of a "genealogy of desiring man, from classical antiquity through the first centuries of Christianity"—a project that, in reality, was already outlined in his 1980–81 lectures at the Collège de France. See *UP*, 18; *UP* (Eng), 12.

5. Michel Foucault uses the French words.

6. E. Husserl, *Meditations Cartésiennes*, trans. Gabrielle Peiffer and Emmanuel Levinas (Paris: Armand Colin, 1931); *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorian Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973).

7. Michel Foucault is referring to "Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man," a lecture delivered by Husserl in 1935 in Vienna and republished in E. Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

8. In the lecture delivered at McGill University of Montreal in 1971, Foucault explains that Nietzsche wanted "to account for knowledge by putting the maximum distance between subject and object," denying that "the subject-object relation [is] constitutive of knowledge": "the existence

of a subject and an object is the first and major illusion of knowledge," and they are, on the contrary, historically constituted. See M. Foucault, "Leçon sur Nietzsche," in *LVS*, 203–4; "Lecture on Nietzsche," in *LWK*, 212. Similarly, in the first lecture given at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, 21 May 1973, Foucault declares that his aim is to show that "[t]he subject of knowledge itself has a history; the relation of the subject to the object; or, more clearly, truth itself has a history": one should therefore inaugurate a "radical critique of the human subject by history." And Foucault clarifies: "what I say here won't mean anything if it isn't connected to Nietzsche's work" in which one finds "a type of discourse that undertakes a historical analysis of the formation of the subject itself." See M. Foucault, "La vérité et les formes juridiques," in *DE, I*, no. 139, pp. 1407–8 and 1410; English trans., Robert Hurley, "Truth and Juridical Forms," *EW*, 3: 2–3 and 5–6. Ten years later, in an interview in 1983, evoking once again the importance of the German philosopher for his own work, Foucault asserts that reading Nietzsche had been for him a real "rupture," because in him there is "a history of the subject just as there is a history of reason; but we can never demand that the history of reason unfold as a first and founding act of the rationalist subject." See M. Foucault, "Structuralisme et poststructuralisme," interview with G. Raulet in *DE, II*, no. 330, p. 1255; English trans., Jeremy Harding (amended), "Structuralism and Post-structuralism," in *EW*, 2: 438. In the passage of the preparatory manuscript of the lecture "Sexuality and Solitude" that Frédéric Gros transcribes in the "Situation du cours" of *L'herméneutique du sujet*, after citing Nietzsche in the way he does here, Foucault concludes: "It was a matter then for me of getting free from the ambiguities of a humanism that was so easy in theory and so fearsome in reality; it was also a matter of replacing the principle of the transcendence of the ego with research into the subject's forms of immanence." See F. Gros, "Situation du cours," in *HS*, 507; "Course Context," *HS* (Eng), 525.

9. M. Foucault, *Les mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966); English trans., Alan Sheridan, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970).

10. See M. Foucault, "Entretien avec Michel Foucault," interview with J. G. Merquior and S. P. Rouanet, in *DE, I*, no. 85, pp. 1025–26: "[I]n *Les Mots et les choses*, I understood that, independently of the traditional history of the sciences, another method was possible that consisted in

a certain way of considering not so much the content of science as its specific existence, a certain way of questioning the facts, which made me see that, in a culture like that of the West, scientific practice has a historical emergence, includes a historical existence and development, and has followed a certain number of lines of transformation independently—to a certain extent—of its content. Leaving aside the problem of the content and formal organization of the science, it was necessary to seek the reasons the science existed, or a determinate science began to exist at a given moment and take on a certain number of functions in our society."

11. M. Foucault, *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972); first edition: *Folie et déraison. Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Paris: Plon, 1961); English trans., Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa, *History of Madness* (London: Routledge, 2006); *Naissance de la clinique. Une archéologie du regard médical* (Paris: P.U.F., 1963); English trans., A. M. Sheridan Smith, *The Birth of the Clinic* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1973); *SP*; *DP*.

12. Foucault began his project of a history of sexuality in six volumes in 1976 with *La volonté de savoir* (English trans., R. Hurley, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1: *An Introduction*); he continues with it in the following years, but at the cost of a series of profound theoretical and chronological shifts. The second and third volumes, devoted to Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman antiquity, will finally appear in 1984. See *UP; UP* (Eng); *SS*; *CS*. However, Foucault did not have time to publish the fourth volume, *Les aveux de la chair*.

13. Michel Foucault pronounces the word in French.

14. Jürgen Habermas, *Erkenntnis und Interesse* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1968), and appendix in *Technik und Wissenschaft als "Ideologie"* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1968); *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy Shapiro (Boston: Beacon, 1971), esp. "Appendix: Knowledge and Human Interests, A General Perspective," 313.

15. See too the passage of the preparatory manuscript of the lecture "Sexuality and Solitude" cited by F. Gros, "Situation du cours," in *HS*, 505; "Course Context," *HS* (Eng), 523.

16. In the lecture of 17 January 1979 of the lectures *Naissance de la biopolitique*, Foucault inscribes his analyses under the rubric of a "political critique of knowledge (*savoir*)," and he clarifies: "to have political significance, analysis does not have to focus on the genesis of truths or the memory of errors . . . I think that what is currently politically important is to determine the regime of veridiction established at a given

moment. . . . This is the point, in fact, where historical analysis may have a political significance." See M. Foucault, *Naissance de la biopolitique. Cours au Collège de France, 1978–1979*, ed. M. Senellart (Paris: Seuil-Gallimard, 2004), 37–38; English trans., Graham Burchell, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*, English series editor Arnold I. Davidson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 36. In the first of the Louvain lectures, Foucault dwells at greater length on what he understands, at that moment, by "critical philosophy," but he still ties this concept to an analysis of forms of veridiction, rather than to the conditions and possibilities of transformation of the subject. See *MFDV*, 9; *WDTT*, 20. Hence it may be better to refer to his article "The Subject and Power," in which, after having referred to Kant and his answer to the question "What is Enlightenment?," Foucault asserts that "the task of philosophy as a critical analysis of our world is something that is more and more important," and that "the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are," to "promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality that has been imposed on us for several centuries." See M. Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in *EW*, 3: 336. On Foucault's texts devoted to "critique" and the *Aufklärung*, see below, p. 92, n. 51.

17. For an analogous introduction to the theme of techniques or technologies of the self, see M. Foucault, "Sexuality and Solitude," in *EW*, 1: 177, and "Technologies of the Self," *EW*, 1: 224–25. In the first of the Louvain lectures Foucault speaks only of "three broad types of technologies" (techniques of production, of communication, and of government), to which, however, he seems to add a fourth when he refers to "technologies of the subject." See *MFDV*, 12–13; *WDTT*, 23–24. The "techniques of the self" are, moreover, presented by Foucault as the real guiding thread of his 1980–81 lectures at the Collège de France: in the *résumé* of this course, they are defined as the procedures that are "suggested or prescribed to individuals in order to determine their identity, maintain it, or transform it in terms of a certain number of ends, through relations of self-mastery or self-knowledge." Foucault also clarifies here that the history of techniques of the self would be "a way of doing the history of subjectivity," and this "through the putting in place, and the transformations in our culture, of 'relations with oneself,' with their technical armature and their knowledge effects." See M. Foucault, "Subjectivité et vérité," in *DE, II*, no. 304, pp. 1032–33; English trans., Robert Hurley, "Subjectivity and Truth," in *EW*, 1: 87–88, and *SV*, lectures of 25 March and 1 April 1981. See too *UP*, 16–17; *UP* (Eng), 10–11, where, however,

"techniques of the self" becomes a synonym for "arts of existence" and "aesthetics of existence."

18. From 1978, the notion of "government" takes on a central role in Foucault's reflection, which it will retain until the end of his life With this notion, Foucault picks out a historically specific form of political power, "governmentality," that would have emerged between the seventeenth and eighteenth century and that still characterizes our societies; a form of power "that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses (*dispositifs*) of security as its essential technical instrument." See *STP*, 111–12; *STP* (Eng), 108. But the notion of "government" is also, for him, an analytic grid through which to redefine the concept of power itself: "The exercise of power is a 'conduct of conducts' and a management of probability. Basically, power is less a confrontation between two adversaries or their mutual engagement than a question of 'government.' This word must be allowed the very broad meaning it had in the sixteenth century. . . . To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others. The relationships proper to power would therefore be sought not on the side of violence or of struggle, nor on that of voluntary contracts (all of which can, at best, only be the instruments of power), but, rather, in the area of that singular mode of action, neither warlike nor juridical, which is government." See M. Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *EW*, 3: 341. See also *GV*, 13–14; *GL*, 12–13; *MFDV*, 12; *WDTT*, 23. However, as Foucault shows in these lectures, the notion of "government" also makes it possible to connect the "political" point of view of power relationships and the "ethical" perspective of techniques of the self, thus opening the way to the analyses of the relationship between government of self and government of others. See M. Foucault, "Subjectivité et vérité," 1033; "Subjectivity and Truth," 88; *HS*, 34–40; *HS* (Eng), 34–39; "Technologies of the Self," 225; *GSA*; *GSO*; *CV*; *CT*; "L'éthique du souci de soi comme pratique de la liberté," interview with H. Becker, R. Fornet-Betancourt, and A. Gomez-Müller, in *DE, II*, no. 356, 1547–48; English trans., P. Aranov and D. McGrawth (amended), "The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom," in *EW*, 1: 299–301.

19. This is the main theme of the 1979–80 lectures at the Collège de France: "Why, in what form, in a society like ours, is there such a deep bond between the exercise of power and the obligation of individuals to become themselves essential actors in the procedures of manifestation of the truth, in the procedures of alethurgy needed by power?" See *GV*, 79; *GL*, 80–81.

20. During the exchange with a member of the audience following the lecture of 29 April 1981 at Louvain, Foucault lays more stress on this transformation that, according to him, represents a real innovation and even a "rupture" in the "history of Western subjectivity." He then explains that "the Christian requirements of self-knowledge do not derive from the *gnōthi seauton*," for these Christian techniques of the self aim not to establish a relationship to *the* truth in general (as was the case for Socrates and Plato), but rather to establish a relationship to *one's own* truth, to the truth *of oneself*, and in particular with regard to sin. See *MFDV*, 114; *WDTT*, 117–18. See also M. Foucault, "Interview de Michel Foucault," interview with J. F. de Wit and J. de Wit, in *DE, II*, no. 349, pp. 1477–78.

21. Foucault is perhaps thinking about Pierre Hadot's studies here, according to which ancient philosophy was above all a way of living, the aim of which was to bring about a transfiguration of the mode of being of the individuals who practiced it, and not a theoretical construction. See P. Hadot, "Exercices spirituels," *Annuaire de la Ve section de l'École pratique des hautes études* 84 (1977); republished in *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2002), 19–74; English trans., Michael Chase, "Spiritual Exercises," in P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life : Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

22. Foucault will go deeper into this in *L'herméneutique du sujet*, and precisely in this context he will introduce the notion of *parrēsia* in order to describe the characteristics of the master's speech within ancient practices of direction: "*Parrēsia* is basically what on the master's side corresponds to the disciple's obligation of silence. Just as the disciple must keep quiet in order to bring about the subjectivation of his discourse, so the master's discourse must obey the principle of *parrēsia* if, at the end of his action and guidance, he wants the truth of what he says to become the subjectivized true discourse of his disciple." See *HS*, 348 and also 132–33, 158, and 338–74; *HS* (Eng), 366, 137–38, 164, and 355–91.

23. Foucault analyzes the characteristics of ancient spiritual direction in more detail, contrasting it with those of Christian direction, in the lecture of 22 February 1978 of *Sécurité, territoire, population* (*STP*, 184–86; *STP* [Eng], 180–83), and in the lectures of 12 and 19 March of *Du gouvernement des vivants* (*GV*, 224–30 and 260–65; *GL*, 229–35 and 266–71). He deals with the theme again in the second hour of the lectures of 3 and

10 March 1982 of *L'herméneutique du sujet* (*HS*, 345–48 and 390–91; *HS* [Eng], 362–66 and 407–9).

24. For more details on these points, see *HS*, 94–96 and 131–33; *HS* (Eng), 97–100, 136–38. See too F. Gros in *HS*, 141n18; *HS* (Eng), 146n18.

25. Foucault studies the ancient practice of self-examination (or examination of conscience) at several points. In the lecture of 12 March 1980 of the lectures *Du gouvernement des vivants*, after a long section on the practice of spiritual direction in antiquity and its differences with respect to Christian direction, he broaches the theme of Greco-Roman examination of conscience as an "essential, fundamental component" in ancient techniques of direction, and he studies it in the Pythagoreans and Stoics of the Roman period (Seneca and Epictetus). See *GV*, 231–41; *GL*, 235–46. On the other hand, in the lecture of 29 April 1981 at Louvain, the order of presentation is reversed: Foucault poses directly the problem of the "veridiction of the self in pagan antiquity," analyzing it within popular religious practices and oriental religions, as well as in the Pythagoreans and Seneca, and it is only subsequently that he introduces the theme of the "confession (*aveu*) to another person." See *MFDV*, 91–97; *WDTT*, 93–100. In the second hour of the lecture of 24 March 1982, the context is different again and ancient self-examination is studied, after the premeditation of evils and the meditation on death, as one of the "test[s] of oneself as subject of truth." Here, Foucault relies above all on the Pythagorean examination, then on the morning examination of Marcus Aurelius, and finally on the evening examination in Seneca and Epictetus. See *HS*, 444–45, 460–65; *HS* (Eng), 463–64, 480–85. Later, in the seminar at the University of Vermont, in 1982, Foucault deals with the Stoic examination of conscience within a reflection on the "cultivation of silence" and the "art of listening" under the Empire (see M. Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," *EW*, 1: 235–38), whereas, in an article of 1983, it is rather in light of the question of writing as exercise and art of oneself that he evokes the theme of examination of conscience, in Seneca and Marcus Aurelius in particular: "It seems . . . that it was in the epistolary relation . . . that the examination of conscience was formulated as a written account of oneself." See M. Foucault, "L'écriture de soi," in *DE, II*, no. 329, pp. 1247–49; English trans., Robert Hurley, "Self Writing," in *EW*, 1: 219–21. Finally, for a discussion of the examination of conscience in the context of the "culture of self," see *SS*, 65–66, 77–79; *CS*, 50–51, 60–62.

26. Seneca, "De ira"/"On Anger," *Moral Essays*, vol. 1, trans. John W. Basore, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University

Press, 1958), 340–41 (3.36.2–4): "Can anything be more excellent than this practice of thoroughly sifting the whole day? And how delightful the sleep that follows this self-examination—how tranquil it is, how deep and untroubled, when the soul has either praised or admonished itself, and when this secret examiner and critic of self has given report of its own character! I avail myself of this privilege, and every day I plead my cause before the bar of self. When the light has been removed from sight, and my wife, long aware of my habit, has become silent, I scan the whole of my day and retrace all my deeds and words. I conceal nothing from myself, I omit nothing. For why should I shrink from any of my mistakes, when I may commune thus with myself? 'See that you never do that again; I will pardon you this time. In that dispute you spoke too offensively . . .'" For other comments by Foucault on this passage from Seneca, see *GV*, 235–41; *GL*, 239–46; *MFDV*, 94–97; *WDTT*, 97–100; *HS*, 157, 461–64; *HS* (Eng), 162, 481–84; "Technologies of the Self," *EW*, 1: 237–39; Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, ed. J. Pearson (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001), 145–50; *SS*, 77–79; *CS*, 60–62. See too F. Gros, in *HS*, 469 n17; *HS* (Eng), 489n17.

27. Quintus Sextius the elder, Roman philosopher of the first century BCE, of a neo-Pythagorean and Stoic tendency, about whom Seneca speaks in "De ira"/"On Anger," 338–41 (3.36.1).

28. For more details on this point, see *MFDV*, 94; *WDTT*, 97.

29. Foucault studies these exercises in detail in *L'herméneutique du sujet*, in particular in the lectures of 3 and 24 March 1982. See *HS*, 338–51, 444–54, 457–64; *HS* (Eng), 355–68, 462–73, 477–85.

30. Galen, "On the Diagnosis and Cure of the Soul's Passions," in *On the Passions and Errors of the Soul*, trans. Paul W. Harkins (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1963). Foucault deals with Galen's *On the Passions* at greater length at the start of the second hour of the lecture of 10 March 1982 of the lectures *L'herméneutique du sujet*. See *HS*, 378–82; *HS* (Eng), 395–99. See also M. Foucault, "La Parrêsia," *Anabases* 16 (2012): 170–73; English trans., Graham Burchell, "Parrēsia," *Critical Inquiry* 41, no. 2 (2015): 234–37; *SS*, 72; *CS*, 56.

31. Plutarch, "How a Man May Become Aware of His Progress in Virtue," in *Moralia,* vol. 1, trans. Frank Cole Babbitt, Loeb Classical Library (New York: Putnam, 1927), 434–37 (81F–82A): "Of persons needing the services of a physician those who have a painful tooth or finger go straightway to those who treat such ills; those who have fever summon the physicians to their houses, and implore their assistance; but those

who have reached a state of melancholia or frenzy or delirium, sometimes cannot endure even the physicians' visits, but either drive them away or run away from them, not realizing even that they are ill, because of the violence of their illness. So also of the erring: the incurable are those who take an hostile and savage attitude and show a hot temper toward those who take them to task and admonish them, while those who patiently submit to admonition and welcome it are in less serious plight. And for the man who is in error to submit himself to those who take him to task, to tell what is the matter with him, to disclose his depravity, and not to rejoice in hiding his fault or to take satisfaction in its not being known, but to confess it, and to feel the need of somebody to take him in hand and admonish him, is no slight indication of progress."

32. Seneca, "De tranquillitate animi"/"On Tranquility of Mind," in *Moral Essays*, vol. 2, trans. John W. Basore, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), 202–85, esp. 202–13. For other commentaries by Foucault on *De tranquillitate animi*, see *GV*, 235; *GL*, 239–40; *MFDV*, 97–101; *WDTT*, 100–103; *HS*, 86, 126–29, 150–51; *HS* (Eng), 89, 130–33, 155–56; Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 150–60.

33. See Seneca, "De tranquillitate animi"/"On Tranquillity of Mind," 204–11 (1.5–15).

34. In itself, the theme of the "truth as force" is certainly not new in Foucault. See, for example, *LVS*, 71–74, 81–82; *LWK*, 73–76, 83–84; *"Il faut défendre la société." Cours au Collège de France, 1975–1976,* ed. M. Bertani and A. Fontana (Paris: Seuil-Gallimard, 1997), 45–46; English trans., David Macey, *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976*, English series editor Arnold I. Davidson (New York: Picador, 2003), 52–53; *GV*, 37–38, 98–99; *GL*, 36–38, 100–102; *MFDV*, 17; *WDTT*, 28. However, here the theme is treated differently and within a new framework, which will then be taken up in the 1981–82 lectures at the Collège de France where Foucault will present ancient ascesis (*askēsis*) as a "practice of the truth," that is to say, as a series of exercises aiming to "change the subject's being" and to constitute the latter "as final end for himself through and by the exercise of the truth," and where he clarifies that the "truth must affect the subject," although (unlike Christianity) there is no question of "the subject becoming the object of a true discourse." This is the theme of the *paraskeuē* (preparation, equipment): ancient *askēsis*, Foucault explains, aims to equip the subject so that he can respond immediately in the proper way to the events of life, and this equipment is formed by *logoi* (discourses), which in reality are "inductive

schemas of action which, in their inductive value and effectiveness, are such that when present in the head, thoughts, heart, and even body of someone who possesses them, that person will then act as if spontaneously. It is as if these *logoi* themselves, gradually becoming as one with his own reason, freedom, and will, were speaking for him: not only telling him what he should do, but also actually doing what he should do, as dictated by necessary rationality." Thus, Foucault concludes, ancient *askēsis* "makes truth-telling a mode of being of the subject": its meaning and function is essentially assuring "the subjectivation of the true discourse." See *HS*, 233, 303–13, and 316; *HS* (Eng), 243–44, 317–27, and 331–32. See also "Technologies of the Self," *EW*, 1: 238; "L'écriture de soi," *DE, II*, 1238; "Self Writing," *EW*, 1: 211; "L'éthique du souci de soi comme pratique de la liberté," *DE, II*, 1532; "The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom," *EW*, 1: 285–86. However, it should be stressed that in all of these texts, the theme of the "truth as force" will no longer appear.

35. Foucault had already talked about the *gnōmē* in the lecture "Le savoir d'Œdipe," delivered twice, in 1972, in the United States: in fact, in Sophocles's *Oedipus the King*, *gnōmē* is, with *tekhnē*, the fundamental attribute of the knowledge and power of Oedipus, for it was thanks to *gnōmē*, Oedipus asserts, that he resolved the enigma of the Sphinx. Foucault then explains that *gnōmē* is opposed to a mode of knowledge that would consist in learning something from someone: rather, *gnōmē* is a knowledge "that does not learn anything from anyone." See M. Foucault, "Le savoir d'Œdipe," in *LVS*, 239–40; "Oedipal Knowledge," in *LWK*, 245–46. See also M. Foucault, "La vérité et les formes juridiques," *DE, I*, 1434; "Truth and Juridical Forms," *EW*, 3: 28–29. Foucault returns to this word in a more detailed way in the lecture of 23 January 1980 in the lectures *Du gouvernement des vivants*, again in the context of a reading of *Oedipus the King*: *gnōmē* means "viewpoint, opinion, way of thinking, way of judging," in contrast with a knowledge obtained after a search for or discovery of the truth. More precisely, "*gnōmē* is a technical term that is part of the political-judicial vocabulary of fifth century Greece," and that indicates the opinion the citizen is induced to give in the course of a political deliberation or following a judicial trial. See *GV*, 55 and 66; *GL*, 55–56 and 67. On these themes, and as possible source of Foucault's assertions, see also J.-P. Vernant and P. Vidal-Naquet, *Mythe et tragédie en Grèce ancienne* (Paris: Maspero, 1972); republished in J.-P. Vernant, *Œuvres. Religions, Rationalités, Politique* (Paris: Seuil, 2007), 1: 1102, 1147,

1156, and 1160; Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Tragedy and Myth in Ancient Greece*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Brighton, UK: Harvester Press, 1981), 21, 81, 89, and 92. However, in these lectures Foucault seems to give *gnōmē* a different interpretation: "unity of will and knowledge" and "a brief piece of discourse through which truth appeared with all its force and encrusts itself in the soul of people." Similarly, in the lecture of 6 May 1982 at Louvain, Foucault refers to the word *gnōmē* (in the context of ancient spiritual direction) and explains that it indicated both a knowledge and a precept, a truth and a rule. See *MFDV*, 130; *WDTT*, 132–33. This is why, in *L'herméneutique du sujet*, even if the word *gnōmē* is not employed, one may think that this is what is being referred to in the first hour of the lecture of 17 February 1982 when Foucault speaks of "recommendations made to his disciple in the first *Letters* to Lucilius," in which Seneca proposes a meditation exercise to Lucilius that "does not proceed by way of a cultural journey undertaken by knowledge in general," but much rather, "according to a very old Greek technique, on the basis of maxims, of propositions, which are both the statement of truth and the pronouncement of a prescription, both assertion and prescription." See *HS*, 250; *HS* (Eng), 260–61.

36. According to Foucault, Christianity "inherits" several techniques of the self that were elaborated by ancient philosophy, but it inscribes them in a different framework marked by new modalities of the exercise of power and by new forms of the extraction of the truth. In this context, the techniques of self then acquire, in reality, effects of subjectivation opposite to those of the ancient techniques, giving rise to a subject "whose merits are analytically identified," a subject "who is subjected in continuous networks of obedience, and who is subjectivized through the compulsory extraction of truth." See *STP*, 188; *STP* (Eng), 184–85.

37. In the second hour of the lecture of 24 March 1982 of *L'herméneutique du sujet*, Foucault asserts that philosophical ascesis "is not at all of the same type as Christian ascesis, the essential function of which is to determine and order the necessary renunciations leading up to the ultimate point of self-renunciation." Philosophical ascesis is, rather, "a certain way of constituting the subject of true knowledge as the subject of right action," a subject that takes "as the correlate of oneself, a world that is perceived, recognized, and practiced as a test." See *HS*, 465; *HS* (Eng), 486–87.

38. In the entry "Foucault" that he writes for the *Dictionnaire des philosophes*, Foucault defines "games of truth" as the set of "rules according

to which what a subject can say about certain things depends on the question of true and false." See M. Foucault, "Foucault," in *DE, II*, no. 345, p. 1452; English trans., Robert Hurley, "Foucault," in *EW*, 2: 460. See also M. Foucault, "L'éthique du souci de soi comme pratique de la liberté," in *DE, II*, 1544; "The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom," in *EW*, 1: 296. In the 1979–80 lectures at the Collège de France, the concepts of "game" and especially of "regime of truth" acquire a decisive importance, because it is through them that Foucault undertakes the analysis of Christianity of the first centuries. See *GV*, 91–99; *GL*, 93–102. On the other hand, for a first, different definition of "regime of truth," see M. Foucault, "La fonction politique de l'intellectuel," in *DE, II*, no. 184, p. 112. Finally, for an analysis of confession/avowal (*aveu*) as a "speech act" and "rather strange figure within language games," see *MFDV*, 4–10; *WDTT*, 15–21.

# Christianity and Confession

24 NOVEMBER 1980

The theme of this lecture is the same as the theme of last week's lecture. The theme is: how was formed in our societies what I would like to call the interpretive analysis of the self; or, how was formed the hermeneutics of the self in the modern, or at least in the Christian and the modern, societies? In spite of the fact that we can find very early, in the Greek, in the Hellenistic, in the Latin cultures, techniques such as self-examination and confession, I think that there are very large differences between the Latin and Greek—the classical—techniques of the self and the techniques developed in Christianity. And I'll try to show this evening that the modern hermeneutics of the self is rooted much more in those Christian techniques than in the classical ones. The *gnōthi seauton* is, I think, much less influential in our societies, in our culture, than it is supposed to be.[1,*]

*_Berkeley, the beginning of the lecture is different_: Well, several persons have asked me to give this evening a short résumé of what I said last night. I will try to do it as if it was a good TV series. So, what happened in the first episode? Very few important things, indeed. I have tried to explain why I was interested in the practices of self-examination and confession. Those two practices seem to me to be good witnesses for a major problem, that is, the genealogy of the modern self. This genealogy, which is since years my obsession, since it is one of the possible ways to get rid of a traditional philosophy of the subject, this genealogy, I'd like to outline it from the point of view of techniques, what I call techniques of the self. And among those techniques of the self, the most important,

As everybody knows, Christianity is a confession. That means that Christianity belongs to a very special type of religion, the religions which impose on those who practice them obligations of truth.[2] Such obligations in Christianity are numerous; for instance, a Christian has the obligation to hold as true a set of propositions which constitutes a dogma; or he has the obligation to hold certain books as a permanent source of truth; or he has the obligation* to accept the decisions of certain authorities in matters of truth.

But Christianity requires another form of truth obligation quite different from those I just mentioned. Everyone, every Christian has the duty to know who he is, what is happening in him. He has to know the faults he may have committed: he has to know the temptations to which he is exposed. And, moreover, everyone in Christianity is obliged to say these things to other people and, hence, to bear witness against himself.[3]

A few remarks. These two ensembles of obligations, those regarding the faith, the Book, the dogma, and the obligations

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in our modern societies, are, I think, those which deal with the interpretative analysis of the subject, with the hermeneutics of the self. How was formed this hermeneutics of the self? That's the theme of these two lectures. Yesterday night, I spoke about Greek and Roman techniques of the self, or at least about two of them, confession and self-examination. It's a fact that we meet them, confession and self-examination, very often in late Hellenistic and Roman philosophy. Are they the archetypes of Christian confession and self-examination? Are they the early forms of the modern hermeneutics of the self? I have tried to show that they are quite different from that. Their aim is not, I think, to decipher a hidden truth in the depths of the individual. Their aim is something else. It is to give force to truth in the individual. Their aim is to constitute the self as the ideal unity of will and truth. Well, now let's turn toward Christianity as the cradle of the Western hermeneutics of the self.

**Berkeley, from here to the end of the paragraph is different*: obligation also, at least in the Catholic branch of Christianity, to accept the decisions of certain authorities in matters of truth; obligation also not only to believe in certain things, but also to show that one believes in them. Every Christian is obliged to manifest his faith.

regarding the self, the soul, the heart, are linked together. A Christian is supposed to be supported by the light of the faith if he wants to explore himself, and, conversely, access to the truth of the faith cannot be conceived of without the purification of the soul. As Augustine said in a Latin formula I'm sure you'll understand, *qui facit veritatem venit ad lucem*.[4] That means: *facere veritatem*, "to make truth inside oneself," and *venire ad lucem*, "to get access to the light." Well, to make truth inside oneself, and to get access to the light of God, and so on, those two processes are strongly connected in the Christian experience. But those two relationships to truth, you can find them equally connected, as you know, in Buddhism,[5] and they were also connected in all the Gnostic movements of the first centuries. But there, either in Buddhism or in the Gnostic movements, those two relationships to truth were connected in such a way that they were almost identified. To discover the truth inside oneself, to decipher the real nature and the authentic origin of soul, was considered by the Gnosticists as one thing with coming through to the light.[6,*,(8)]

On the contrary, one of the main characteristics of orthodox Christianity, one of the main differences between Christianity and Buddhism, or between Christianity and Gnosticism, one of the main reasons for the mistrust of Christianity toward mystics,[7] and one of the most constant historical features of Christianity, is that those two systems of obligation, of truth obligations—the one concerned with access to light and the one concerned with the making of truth, the discovery of truth inside oneself—those two systems of obligation have always maintained a relative autonomy. Even after Luther, even in Protestantism, the secrets of the soul and the mysteries of the faith,

*_Berkeley_: If the gnomic self of the Greek philosophers, which I spoke of yesterday evening, had to be built as an identification between the force of the truth and the form of the will, we could say that there is a Gnostic self, the Gnostic self that we can find described in *Thomas Evangelium*[8] or the Manichean texts. This Gnostic self has to be discovered inside of the individual, but as a part, as a forgotten sparkle, of the primitive light.

the self and the Book, are not in Christianity enlightened by exactly the same type of light. They demand different methods and put into operation particular techniques.

* * *

Well, let's put aside the long history of their complex and often conflictual relations before or after the Reformation.[9] I'd like this evening to focus attention on the second of those two systems of obligation. I'd like to focus on the obligation imposed on every Christian to manifest the truth about himself. When one speaks of confession and self-examination in Christianity, one of course has in mind the sacrament of penance and the canonic confession of sins. But these are rather late innovations in Christianity.[10] Christians of the first centuries knew completely different forms for the showing forth of the truth about themselves, and you'll find these obligations of manifesting the truth about oneself in two different institutions—in penitential rites and monastic life.[11,*] And I would like first to examine the penitential rites and the obligations of truth, the

*_Berkeley_: _instead of "When one speaks of confession . . . and monastic life"_: And instead of considering Christianity as the religion of a book which has to be interpreted, I'd like to consider Christianity as the religion of a self which has to be deciphered. To put it in another way, the Greek book *par excellence*, Homer, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, was already before Christianity a matter of interpretation for the Greeks themselves, but the Greek self was not a matter of interpretation. I tried to show yesterday why it was not a matter of interpretation, in spite of the fact that the Greek philosophers practiced confession and self-examination. When one speaks of confession and self-examination in Christianity, one has in mind, of course, the sacrament of penance and the canonic confession of sins. But these are rather late innovations in Christianity. And Christians of the first centuries knew completely different forms for the showing forth of the truth about themselves. And those forms are, I think, decisive if one wants to understand how began in the West the hermeneutics of the self.

truth obligations which are related, which are connected with those penitential rites. I will not enter, of course, into the discussions which have taken place and which continue until now as to the progressive development of these rites. I would like only to underline one fundamental fact: in the first centuries of Christianity, penance was not an act.* Penance, in the first centuries of Christianity, penance is a status, which presents several characteristics.[12] The function of this status is to avoid the definitive expulsion from the Church of a Christian who has committed one or several serious sins. As penitent, this Christian is excluded from many of the ceremonies and collective rites, but he does not cease to be a Christian, and by means of this status he can obtain his reintegration. And this status is therefore a long-term affair. This status affects most aspects of his life—fasting obligations, rules about clothing, interdictions on sexual relations—and the individual is marked to such an extent by this status that even after his reconciliation, after his reintegration in the community, he will still suffer from a certain number of prohibitions (for instance, he will not be able to become a priest). So penance is not an act corresponding to a sin; it is a status, a general status in the existence.

Now, amongst the elements of this status, the obligation† to manifest the truth is fundamental. I don't say the enunciation of sins is fundamental; I employ a much more imprecise and obscure expression. I say that manifestation of the truth is necessary and is deeply connected with this status of penance. In fact, to designate the truth games or truth obligations inherent to penitents, the Greek Fathers used a word, a very specific word (and very enigmatic also): the word *exomologēsis*.[13] This word was so specific that even Latin writers, Latin Fathers, often used the Greek word without even translating it.

*_Berkeley_: a determined act

†_Berkeley_: to *facere veritatem*, as would say Augustine

What does this term *exomologēsis* mean? In a very general sense, the word refers to the recognition of a fact, but more precisely, in the penitential rite, what was the *exomologēsis*?*,(16) Well, at the end of the penitential procedure, at the end and not at the beginning, when the moment of reintegration came, an episode took place which the texts regularly call *exomologēsis*. Some descriptions are very early and some very late, but they are almost identical. Tertullian, for instance, at the end of the second century, describes the ceremony in the following manner. He wrote: "The penitent wears a hair shirt and ashes. He is wretchedly dressed. He is taken by the hand and led into the church. He prostrates himself before the widows and the priest. He hangs on the skirts of their garments. He kisses their knees."[14] And much later after this, in the beginning of the fifth century, Jerome described in the same way the penitence of Fabiola. Fabiola was a woman, a well-known Roman noblewoman, who had married a second time before the death of her first husband. And Jerome describes thus this penance: "During the days which preceded Easter," which was the moment of the reconciliation, "Fabiola was to be found amongst the rank of the penitents. The bishop, the priests, and the people wept with her. Her hair disheveled, her face pale, her hands dirty, her head covered in ashes, she chastened her naked breast and the face with which she had seduced her second husband. She revealed to all her wound, and Rome, in tears, contemplated the scars on her emaciated body."[15] No doubt Jerome and Tertullian

*_Berkeley, the beginning of the paragraph is different_: What does this term mean? In a very general sense, this word refers to the recognition of a fact, an agreement on the truth of a fact, but in the penitential rite, with reference to the penitential rite, I think that things can be represented schematically in the following manner. When a sinner seeks penance, he presents to the bishop the reasons for his demand, that is to say, he explains the faults which he has committed.[16] This presentation, in any case, was to be extremely brief, and was not a part of the penance itself. It preceded the penance, it was not a part of it.

were liable to be rather carried away by such things; however, in Ambrose and in others one finds indications which show clearly the existence of an episode of dramatic self-revelation at the moment of the reconciliation of the penitent. That was, specifically, the *exomologēsis*.

But the term of *exomologēsis* does not apply only to this final episode. Frequently the word *exomologēsis* is used to designate everything that the penitent does to obtain his reconciliation during the time in which he retains the status of penitent. The acts by which he punishes himself must be indissociable from the acts by which he reveals himself. The punishment of oneself and the voluntary expression of oneself are* bound together.

A correspondent of Cyprian in the middle of the third century writes, for instance, that those who wish to do penance must, I quote, "prove their suffering, show their shame, make visible their humility, and exhibit their modesty."[17] And, in the *Paraenesis*, Pacian says that the true penance is accomplished not in a nominal fashion, but finds its instruments in sackcloth, ashes, fasting, affliction, and the participation of a great number of people in prayers.[18] In a few words, penance in the first Christian centuries is a way of life acted out at all times out of an obligation to show oneself. And that is, exactly, *exomologēsis*.

As you see, this *exomologēsis* did not obey a judicial principle of correlation, of exact correlation, adjusting the punishment to the crime. *Exomologēsis* obeyed a law of dramatic emphasis and of maximum theatricality. And neither did this *exomologēsis* obey a truth principle of correspondence between verbal enunciation and reality. As you see, no description in this *exomologēsis* is of a penance; no confession, no verbal enumeration of sins, no analysis of the sins, but somatic expressions and symbolic expressions.[19] Fabiola did not confess her fault, telling to somebody what she has done, but she put under everybody's eyes the flesh, the body, which has committed the sin. And, paradoxically,

*_Berkeley_: strictly

the *exomologēsis* is this time to rub out the sin, restitute the previous purity acquired by baptism, and this by showing the sinner as he is in his reality—dirty, defiled, sullied.

Tertullian has a word to translate the Greek word *exomologēsis*; he said it was *publicatio sui*, the Christian had to publish himself.[20] Publish oneself, that means he has two things to do. One has to show oneself as a sinner; that means, as somebody who, choosing the path of the sin, preferred filthiness to purity, earth and dust to heaven, spiritual poverty to the treasures of faith. In a word, he has to show himself as somebody who preferred spiritual death to eternal life. And that was the reason why *exomologēsis* was a kind of representation of death. It was the theatrical representation of the sinner as dead or as dying. But this *exomologēsis* was also a way for the sinner to express his will to get free from this world, to get rid of his own body, to destroy his own flesh and get access to a new spiritual life. It is the theatrical representation of the sinner as willing his own death as a sinner. It is the dramatic manifestation of the renunciation to oneself.

To justify this *exomologēsis* and this renunciation to oneself in manifesting the truth about oneself, Christian Fathers had recourse to several models. The well-known medical model was very often used in pagan philosophy: one has to show his wounds to the physicians if he wants to be healed. They also used the judicial model: one always appeases the court when spontaneously confessing the faults. But the most important model to justify the necessity of *exomologēsis* is the model of martyrdom.[21] The martyr is he who prefers to face death rather than to abandon his faith. The sinner abandons the faith in order to keep the life of here below; he will be reinstated only if in his turn he exposes himself voluntarily to a sort of martyrdom to which all will be witnesses, and which is penance, or penance as *exomologēsis*. Such a demonstration does not therefore have as its function the establishment of the personal identity. Rather, such a demonstration serves to mark this dramatic demonstration of

what one is: the refusal of the self, the breaking off from one's self. One recalls what was the objective of Stoic technology: it was to superimpose, as I tried to explain to you last week, the subject of knowledge and the subject of will by means of the perpetual rememorizing of the rules. The formula which is at the heart of *exomologēsis* is, on the contrary, *ego non sum ego*.[22] The *exomologēsis* seeks, in opposition to the Stoic techniques, to superimpose, by an act of violent rupture, the truth about oneself and the renunciation of oneself. In the ostentatious gestures of maceration, self-revelation in *exomologēsis* is, at the same time, self-destruction.[23,*,(24,25)]

**Berkeley, instead of the last three paragraphs*: This form, attested to from the end of the second century, will subsist for an extremely long time in Christianity, since one finds its aftereffects in the orders of penitents, so important in the fifteenth and the sixteenth century. One can see that the procedures for showing forth the truth are multiple and complex in it. Certain acts of *exomologesis* take place in private, but most are addressed to a public. Tertullian has a characteristic expression to designate this aspect of penance: *publicatio sui*. The penitent must speak, he uses a verbal means to express himself as a sinner, but in this showing forth of oneself, the nonverbal part is the most important, clothing, gestures, supplications, tears, and so on. In this *exomologesis*—and Tertullian has a very beautiful expression to translate *exomologesis*, he says *publicatio sui*—in this *publicatio sui*, the sin is referred to, not through a precise description, not through a verbal analysis, but principally through somatic and symbolic expression. Showing her own body, Fabiola put under everybody's eyes the flesh which has committed the sin. There is something paradoxical in this. The *publicatio sui* has in fact two functions: it is destined to rub out the sin, to strike it out, to make it disappear, to restitute the previous purity acquired by baptism, but it is also destined to show the sinner as he is: dirty, defiled, sullied. The greater part of the acts which constitute penance has the role, not of telling the truth about the sin, it has the role of showing the true being of the sinner, or the true sinful being of the subject. Tertullian's expression *publicatio sui* is not a way to say that the sinner has to explain his sins; the expression means that he has to produce himself as a sinner in his reality of sinner.

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Well, if we turn to the confession in monastic institutions, it is of course quite different from this *exomologēsis*. In the Christian institutions of the first centuries another form of confession is to be found, very different from this one. It is the organized

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And now the question is: why the showing forth of the sinner should be efficient to efface the sins? To give a succinct glance into this problem, one may say that the Christian Fathers have recourse to three models. The well-known medical model: one has to show his wounds if he wants to be cured. Another model is often used, the model of tribunal and of judgment: one always appeases one's judge by spontaneously confessing to one's faults. The day of judgement, the Devil himself will stand up to accuse the sinner. If the sinner has already anticipated him by accusing himself, the enemy will be obliged to remain quiet. But the most important model used to justify the necessity of *exomologesis*, of *publicatio sui*, in penance is of an altogether different nature. It is the model of martyr. It must not be forgotten that the practice and the theory of penance were elaborated to a great extent around the problem of the relapsed.[24] The martyr is this who prefers to face death rather than abandon his faith. The relapsed abandons the faith in order to keep the life of here below. He will be reinstated only if in his turn he exposes himself voluntarily to a sort of martyrdom to which all will be witnesses, and this kind of martyrdom is penance. In brief, penance, insofar as it is a reproduction of martyrdom, is an affirmation of *metanoia*, of change, of rupture with oneself, with one's past, a rupture with the world and with all the previous life.[25] Such a demonstration, as you see, does not therefore have as its function the establishment of an identity. Rather, it serves to mark, via the dramatic demonstration of what one is, the refusal of the self, the breaking off from oneself. *Ego non sum ego*, such is the formula which is at the heart of the *publicatio sui*, of the *exomologesis*. And the ostentatious gestures of maceration have the function of showing, at the same time, the truth of the state of being a sinner and the authenticity of the rupture. It is a self-revelation which is, at the same time, a self-destruction. One recalls what was the objective of the Stoic technology of the self: it was to superimpose the subject of knowledge and the subject of truth by means of a perpetual rememorizing of the rules.* Well, on the contrary, the *exomologesis*, the

confession in the monastic communities.*,[26] In a certain way, this confession is close to the exercise practiced in the pagan schools of philosophy. There is nothing astonishing in this, since† the monastic life presented itself as the true form of philosophical life, and the monastery was presented as the school of philosophy. There is an obvious transfer of several technologies of the self in Christian spirituality from practices of pagan philosophy.

Concerning this continuity I'll quote only one witness, John Chrysostom, who describes a self-examination which has exactly the same form, the same shape, the same administrative character as that described by Seneca in the *De ira* and which I spoke about last week. John Chrysostom says, and you'll recognize exactly (well, nearly) the same words as in Seneca. Chrysostom writes:

> It is in the morning that we must take account of our expenses, then it is in the evening, after our meal, when we have gone to bed and no one troubles us and disquiets us, that we must ask ourselves to render account of our conduct to ourselves. Let us examine what is to our advantage and what is prejudicial. Let us cease spending inappropriately and try to set aside useful

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*publicatio sui*, of the penance seeks to superimpose, by an act of violent rupture, the truth about oneself and the renunciation of oneself.

*[In the typescript for the lecture, written in French, this sentence continues: "and a plotting of the distance covered on a continuous line of development." Foucault omitted this phrase from both the Berkeley and the Dartmouth lectures. At Dartmouth, Foucault changed "the subject of truth" to "the subject of will": "the objective of Stoic technology . . . was to superimpose, as I tried to explain to you last week, the subject of knowledge and the subject of will by means of the perpetual rememorizing of the rules." G.B.]

**Berkeley*: first in the oriental world

†*Berkeley*: this Greek philosophy had a great impact, a great influence, in the oriental world, and since

funds in the place of harmful expenses, prayers in place of indiscreet words.[27]

You'll recognize exactly the same administrative self-examination you could find last week with Seneca. But these kinds of ancient practices were modified under the influence of two fundamental elements of Christian spirituality: the principle of obedience, and the principle of contemplation. First, the principle of obedience—we have seen that in the ancient schools of philosophy the relationship between the master and the disciple was, if I may say, instrumental and provisory. The obedience of the disciple was founded on the capacity of the master to lead him to a happy and autonomous life. For a long series of reasons that I haven't time to discuss here, obedience has very different features in the monastic life and above all, of course, in the cenobite communities. Obedience in the monastic institutions must bear on all the aspects of life. There is an adage, very well-known in the monastic literature, which says, "everything that one does not do on order of one's director, or everything that one does without his permission, constitutes a theft."[28,*, (30)] Therefore, obedience is a permanent relationship, and even when the monk is old, even when he became, in his turn, a master, even then he has to keep the spirit of obedience as a permanent sacrifice of his own will.[29]

Another feature distinguishes monastic discipline from the philosophical life. In the monastic life, the supreme good is not the mastership of oneself; the supreme good in the monastic life is the contemplation of God. The obligation of the monk is continuously to turn his thoughts to that single point which is

*_Berkeley_: And Cassian quotes, Cassian tells the story of a young monk who was so ill that he was nearly dying. But before he dies, he asks permission to die from his master, who forbids him to die. So he lives a few weeks more, and then the master gave him the order to die, and the young monk dies.[30]

God, and his obligation is also to make sure that his heart, his soul, and the eye of his soul is pure enough to see God and to receive the* light from him.[31]

Placed under this principle of obedience, and oriented towards the objective of contemplation, you understand that the technology of the self which develops in Christian monasticism presents peculiar characteristics. John Cassian's[32] *Institutiones* and *Collationes* give a rather systematic and clear exposé of this self-examination and of the confession as they were practiced among the Palestinian and Egyptian monks.[33] And I'll follow several of the indications you can find in those two books, which were written in the beginning of the fifth century.† First, about the self-examination, the first point about the self-examination in the monastic life is that the self-examination in this kind of Christian exercise is much more concerned with thoughts than with actions. Since he has to turn his thought continuously towards God, you understand very well that the monk has to take in hand not the course of his actions, as the Stoic philosopher, he has to take in hand the course of his thoughts. Not only the passions which might make vacillate the firmness of his conduct; he has to take in hand the images which present themselves to the spirit, the thoughts which come to interfere with contemplation, the diverse suggestions which turn the attention of the spirit away from its object, that means away from God. So much so that the primary material for scrutiny and for the examination of the self is an area anterior to actions, of

*_Berkeley_: divine

†_Berkeley, instead of the last two sentences_: John Cassian's *Institutiones* and *Collationes* give a rather systematic and clear exposé of this self-examination and of the confession as they were practiced among the Palestinian and Egyptian monks that John Cassian visited before he came back in the south of France and wrote those two books, which are a kind of *relation de voyage*, travel relation, among the monasteries of Egypt and Palestine. So, how John Cassian describes the self-examination and the confession, which are practiced by those monks he visited in the Orient?

course, anterior to will also, even an area anterior to desires—a much more tenacious material than the material of the Stoic philosopher had to examine in himself. The monk has to examine a material which the Greek Fathers call (almost always pejoratively) the *logismoi*,[34] that is, in Latin, *cogitationes*, the nearly imperceptible movements of the thoughts, the permanent mobility of soul.[35] That's the material which the monk has to continuously examine in order to maintain the eye of his spirit always directed towards the unique point which is God.* But when the monk scrutinizes his own thoughts, what is he concerned with? Not of course with the relation between the idea and the reality. He is not concerned with this truth relation which makes an idea wrong or true. He is not interested in the relationship between his mind and the external world. What he is concerned with is the nature, the quality, the substance of his thoughts.

We must, I think, pause for a moment on this important point. In order to make comprehensible what this permanent examination consists in, Cassian uses three comparisons. He uses first the comparison of the mill. Thought, says Cassian, thought is like a millstone which grinds the grains. The grains are of course the ideas which present themselves continuously in the mind. And in the comparison of the millstone, it is up to the miller to sort out amongst the grains those which are bad and those which can be admitted to the millstone because they are good.[36] Cassian has recourse also to the comparison of

*Berkeley, instead of "So much so that the primary material . . . the unique point which is God": So much so that the primary material for scrutiny and for the examination of the self is not the desire of the will, it is an area anterior to the desire, a much more tenacious material. This material is what the Greek Fathers call (almost always pejoratively) the *logismoi*, that is in Latin *cogitationes*, thoughts, the nearly imperceptible movements of the thoughts, the permanent mobility of the soul, this soul that Cassian described with two Greek words, *polukinetos kai aeikinetos*, [it means] that soul is always moving, and moving in all the directions.

the officer who has the soldiers file past him and makes them pass to the right or to the left, allotting to each his task according to his capacities.[37] And lastly, and that, I think, is the most important, the most interesting, Cassian says that one must be with respect to oneself like a money changer to whom one presents coins, and whose task consists in examining them, verifying their authenticity, so as to accept those which are authentic whilst rejecting those which are not. Cassian develops this comparison at length. When a money changer examines a coin, says Cassian, he looks at the effigy it bears, he considers the metal of which it is made, to know what it is and if it is pure. The money changer seeks to know the workshop from which it comes, and he weighs it in his hand in order to know if it has been filed down or ill-used. In the same way, says Cassian, one must verify the quality of one's thoughts, one must know if they really bear the effigy of God; that is to say, if they really permit us to contemplate him, if their surface brilliance does not hide the impurity of a bad thought. What is their origin? Do they come from God, or from the workshop of the demon? Finally, even if they are of good quality and origin, have they not been whittled away and rusted by evil sentiments?[38] I think that this form of examination is at the same time new and historically important.

Perhaps I have insisted a little too much with regard to the Stoics on the fact that their examination, the Stoic examination was concerned with acts and rules. One must recognize, however, the importance of the question of truth with the Stoics, but the question was presented in terms of true or false opinions favorable to forming good or bad actions. For Cassian, the problem is not to know if there is conformity between the idea and the order of external things; it is a question of examining the thought in itself. Does it really show its true origin, is it as pure as it seems, have not foreign elements insidiously mixed themselves with it? Altogether, the question is not "Am I wrong to think such a thing?" but "Have I not been deceived by the

thought which has come to me?" Is the thought which comes to me, independently of the truth as to the things it represents, is there not an illusion about myself on my part? For instance, the idea comes to me that fasting is a good thing. The idea is certainly true, but maybe this idea has been suggested not by God but by Satan in order to put me in competition with other monks, and then bad feelings about the other ones can be mixed in the project of fasting more than I do. So the idea is true in regard to the external world, or in regard to the rules, but the idea is impure since from its origin it is rooted in bad sentiments. And we have to decipher our thoughts as subjective data which have to be interpreted, which have to be scrutinized, in their roots and in their origins.*

It is impossible not to be struck by the similarity of this general theme, and the similarity of this image of the money changer, and several texts of Freud about censorship.[39] One could say that the Freudian censorship is both the same thing and the reverse of Cassian's changer; both the Cassian changer and the Freudian censorship have to control the access to consciousness—they have to let some representations in and to reject the others. But Cassian's changer has for a function to decipher what is false or illusory in what presents itself to consciousness and then to let in only what is authentic. For that purpose, the Cassian changer uses a specific aptitude that the Latin Fathers called *discretio*.[40,†] The Freudian censorship is, compared with the Cassian changer, both more perverse and more naive.[‡] The Freudian censorship rejects that which presents itself as it is, and[§] it accepts that which is sufficiently disguised. Cassian's changer is a truth-operator through *discretio*; Freudian censorship is a falsehood-operator through

*_Berkeley_: this paragraph not spoken.
†_Berkeley_: and the Greek Fathers *diacrisis*
‡_Berkeley_: perverse since
§_Berkeley_: much more naive since

symbolization.* But I don't want to go further in such a parallel; it's only an indication, but I think that the relationship between Freudian practice and the Christian techniques of spirituality could be, if seriously done, a very interesting field of research.

But we have to go further, for the problem is, how is it possible to perform, as Cassian wishes, how is it possible to perform continuously this necessary self-examination, this necessary self-control of the tiniest movements in the thoughts? How is it possible to perform this necessary hermeneutics of our own thoughts? The answer given by Cassian and his inspirators is both obvious and surprising. The answer given by Cassian is, well, you interpret your thoughts by telling them to the master or to your spiritual father. You interpret your thoughts by confessing not of course your acts, not confessing your faults, but in confessing continuously the movement you can notice in your thought.[41,†,(42,43)] Why is this confession able to assume this

*_Berkeley, instead of this sentence_: Cassian's changer is a truth-operator through _discretio_ and _diacrisis_. Freudian censorship is a symbolic operator, or a falsehood-operator through symbolism.

†_Berkeley, instead of "But we have to go further . . . the movement you can notice in your thought"_: What I would like to insist upon this evening is something else, or, at least, something indirectly related to that. There is something really important in the way Cassian poses the problem of truth about the thought. (1) Thoughts, in Cassian, thoughts—not desires, not passions, not attitudes, not acts—thoughts appear in Cassian and in all the spirituality he represents, thoughts appear as a field of subjective data which have to be considered and analyzed as objects.[42] And I think that is the first time in history that thoughts are considered as possible objects for an analysis. (2) Thoughts have to be analyzed not in relation to their object, according to the objective experience, or according to logical rules, they have to be suspected since they can be secretly altered, disguised, in their own substance. (3) What man needs if he does not want to be the victim of his own thoughts is a perpetual work of interpretation, a perpetual hermeneutics. The function of this hermeneutics is to discover the reality hidden inside the thought. (4) This reality which is able to hide in my thoughts, this reality is a power,

hermeneutical role? One reason comes to mind: in exposing the movements of his heart, the disciple permits his senior to know those movements, and thanks to his greater experience, to his greater wisdom, the senior, the spiritual father, can better understand what's happening. His seniority permits him to distinguish between truth and illusion in the soul of the person he directs.

But that is not the principal reason that Cassian invokes to explain the necessity of confession. There is for Cassian a specific virtue of verification in this act of verbalization. Amongst all the examples that Cassian quotes, there is one which is particularly enlightening on this point. Cassian quotes the following anecdote: A young monk, Serapion, incapable of enduring the obligatory fast, stole every evening a loaf of bread. But, of course,

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a power which is not of another nature than my soul, as is, for instance, the body. The power which hides inside my thoughts, this power is of the same nature as my thoughts and as my soul. It is the Devil. It is the presence of somebody else in me.[43] The constitution of thoughts as a field of subjective data needing an interpretative analysis in order to discover the power of the other in me, that is, I think, if we compare it to the Stoic technologies of the self, a quite new manner to organize the relationships between truth and subjectivity. I think that hermeneutics of the self begins there.

But we have to go further, for the problem is, how is it possible to perform continuously this necessary hermeneutics of our thoughts? How is it possible to make this work of the changer, how is it possible to be the money changer of ourselves, the money changer of our thoughts? Well, the answer given by Cassian about this work of the money changer, the answer given by Cassian and his inspirators is both obvious and surprising. The answer is: you will be the money changer of yourself, you will be the money changer of your thoughts, you will interpret your thoughts, you will be the hermeneutist of yourself, only by telling this thought to the master or to the father, by confessing, by confessing not your faults, not your acts, not what you have done, by confessing your thoughts, the movement of the thoughts, of your thoughts, the most imperceptible movement of these thoughts. And this operation, the fact to tell to somebody else what's happening in your consciousness, in your thought, that is the mechanism which assures the work of the money changer.

he did not dare to confess it to his spiritual director, and one day this spiritual director of Serapion, who no doubt guessed all, gives a public sermon on the necessity of being truthful. Convinced by his sermon, the young Serapion takes out from under his robe the bread that he has stolen and shows it to everyone. Then he prostrates himself and confesses the secret of his daily meal; at this very moment of the confession, a light seems to tear itself away from his body and cross the room, spreading a disgusting smell of sulphur.[44]

One sees that in this anecdote the decisive element is not that the master knows the truth. It is not even that the young monk reveals his act and restores the object of his theft. It is the confession, the verbal act of confession, which comes last and which makes appear, in a certain sense, by its own mechanics, the truth, the reality of what has happened. The verbal act of confession is the proof, is the manifestation, of truth. Why? Well, I think it is because what marks the difference between good and evil thoughts, following Cassian, is that the evil ones cannot be referred to without difficulty. If one blushes in recounting them, if one seeks to hide his own thoughts, if even quite simply one hesitates to tell his thoughts, that is the proof that those thoughts are not as good as they may appear. Evil inhabits them. Thus verbalization constitutes a way of sorting out thoughts which present themselves. One can test their value according to whether they resist verbalization or not. Cassian gives the reason of this resistance: Satan, as principle of evil, is incompatible with the light, and he resists* when confession drags him from the dark caverns of the conscience into the light of explicit discourse. I quote Cassian: "A bad thought brought into the light of day immediately loses its venom. The terrible serpent that this confession has forced out of its subterranean lair, to throw it out into the light and make its shame a public spectacle, is quick to beat a retreat."[45] Does that mean that it would be sufficient for the monk to tell his

*_Berkeley_: with the thoughts under which he hides

thoughts aloud even when alone? Of course not. The presence of somebody, even if he does not speak, even if it is a silent presence, is requested for this kind of confession,[46] because the *abba*, or the brother, or the spiritual father, who listens at this confession, is the image of God. And the verbalization of thoughts is a way to put under the eyes of God all the ideas, images, suggestions, as they come to consciousness, and under this divine light, they show necessarily what they are.

From this, we can see (1) that verbalization in itself has an interpretative function. Verbalization contains in itself a power of *discretio*.* (2) This verbalization is not a kind of retrospection about past acts. The verbalization Cassian imposes on monks has to be a permanent activity as contemporaneous as possible to the stream of thoughts.† (3) This verbalization must go‡ as deep as possible in the depth of the thoughts. These, whatever they are, have an inapparent origin, obscure roots, secret parts, and the role of verbalization is to excavate these origins and those secret parts. (4) As verbalization brings to the external light the deep movement of the thoughts, it leads also, and by the same process, the human soul from the reign of Satan to the law of God.§ That means that verbalization is a way for the conversion (for the *metanoia,* said the Greek Fathers) to develop itself and to take effect. Since under the reign of Satan the human being was attached to himself, verbalization as a movement toward God is a renunciation of Satan, and a renunciation of oneself. Verbalization is a self-sacrifice. To this permanent, exhaustive, and sacrificial verbalization of the thoughts, which was obligatory for the monks in the monastic institution, to

*_Berkeley, instead of this sentence_: It detains in itself a power of *diacrisis*, of differentiation, of *discretio*.

†_Berkeley_: The monk has to tell the father *omnes cogitationes*, all his thoughts.

‡_Berkeley, instead of "must go"_: must be exhaustive, but it must go also

§_Berkeley_: The path from night to light of the consciousness is also the path from Satan to God.

this permanent verbalization of the thoughts, the Greek Fathers gave the name of *exagoreusis*.[47]

Thus, as you see, in the Christianity of the first centuries, the obligation to tell truth about oneself was to take two major forms: the *exomologēsis** and the *exagoreusis*,† and as you see they are very different from one another. On one hand, the *exomologēsis* is a dramatic expression by the penitent of his status of sinner, and this in a kind of public manifestation. On the other hand, the *exagoreusis*, we have an analytical and continuous verbalization of the thoughts, and this in a relation of complete obedience to the will of the spiritual father. But it must be remarked that this verbalization, as I just told you, is also a way of renouncing self and no longer wishing to be the subject of the will. Thus the rule of confession in *exagoreusis*, this rule of permanent verbalization, finds its parallel in the model of martyrdom which haunts *exomologēsis*. The ascetic maceration exercised on the body and the obligation of verbalization applied to the thoughts, the obligation to macerate the body and the obligation of verbalizing the thoughts—those things are deeply and closely related.‡ They are supposed to have the same goals and the same effects. So much that one can isolate as the common element to both practices the following principle: the revelation of the truth about oneself cannot, in those two early Christian experiences, be dissociated from the obligation to renounce oneself. We have to sacrifice the self in order to discover the truth about ourself, and we have to discover the truth about ourself in order to sacrifice ourself. Truth and sacrifice, the truth about ourself and the sacrifice of ourself, are deeply and closely connected. And we have to understand this sacrifice not only as a radical change in the way of life, but as the consequence of a

*Berkeley: *publicatio sui*

†*Berkeley*: exhaustive verbalization

‡*Berkeley, instead of this sentence*: The ascetic maceration exercised on the body and the obligation of verbalization applied to the thoughts, those two things, somatic maceration and verbalization, are symmetric.

formula like this: you will become the subject of the manifestation of truth when and only when you disappear or you destroy yourself as a real body or as a real existence.[48,*]

* * *

Let's stop here. I have been both too long and much too schematic. I would like you to consider what I have said only as a point of departure, one of those small[†] origins that Nietzsche liked to discover at the beginning of great things. The great things that those monastic practices announced are numerous. I will mention, just before I finish, a few of them.

First, as you see, the apparition of a new kind of self, or at least a new kind of relationship to ourselves. You remember what I told you last week: the Greek technology, or the philosophical techniques of the self, tended to produce a self which could be, which should be, the permanent superposition in the form of memory of the subject of knowledge and the subject of the will.

I think that in Christianity we see the development of a much more complex technology of the self. This technology of the self maintains the difference between knowledge of being, knowledge of world, knowledge of nature, and knowledge of the self, and this knowledge of the self takes shape in the constitution of thought as a field of subjective data which are to be interpreted.

**Berkeley: From "We have to sacrifice the self" to the end of the paragraph is different*: We have to sacrifice the self in order to discover the truth about oneself. And we have to understand this sacrifice not only as a radical change in the way of life, but as the consequence of a formula like this: you will become the subject of the manifestation of truth about yourself on the condition you renounce being the subject of your own will, be it by the obedience to the others or by the symbolic staging of your own death in the *publicatio sui*. *Facere veritatem*, to make the truth about oneself, is impossible without this sacrifice.

[†]*Berkeley*: tiny

And the role of interpreter is assumed by the work of a continuous verbalization of the most imperceptible movements of the thought—that's the reason we could say that the Christian self which is correlated to this technique is a gnoseologic self.

And the second point which seems to me important is this: you may notice in early Christianity an oscillation between the truth-technology of the self oriented toward the manifestation of the sinner, the manifestation of the being—what we could call the ontological temptation of Christianity, and that is the *exomologēsis*—and another truth-technology oriented toward the discursive and permanent analysis of the thought—that is the *exagoreusis*, and we could see there the epistemological temptation of Christianity. And as you know, after a lot of conflicts and fluctuation, the second form of technology, this epistemological technology of the self, or this technology of the self oriented toward the permanent verbalization and discovery of the most imperceptible movements of our self, this form became victorious after centuries and centuries, and it is nowadays dominating.

Even in these hermeneutical techniques derived from the *exagoreusis*, the production of truth could not be met, you remember, without a very strict condition: hermeneutics of the self implies the sacrifice of the self. And that is, I think, the deep contradiction, or, if you want, the great richness, of Christian technologies of the self: no truth about the self without a sacrifice of the self. I think that one of the great problems of Western culture has been to find the possibility of founding the hermeneutics of the self not, as it was in the case of early Christianity, on the sacrifice of the self but, on the contrary, on a positive, on the theoretical and practical, emergence of the self. That was the aim of judicial institutions, that was the aim also of medical and psychiatric practices, that was the aim of political and philosophical theory—to constitute the ground of the subjectivity as the root of a positive self, what we could call the permanent anthropologism of Western thought. And I

think that this anthropologism is linked to the deep desire to substitute the positive figure of man for the sacrifice which for Christianity was the condition for the opening of the self as a field of indefinite interpretation.[49] During the last two centuries the problem has been: what could be the positive foundation for the technologies of the self that we have been developing during centuries and centuries? But the moment, maybe, is coming for us to ask, do we need, really, this hermeneutics of the self? Maybe the problem of the self is not to discover what it is in its positivity, maybe the problem is not to discover a positive self, or the positive foundation of the self. Maybe our problem is now to discover that the self is nothing else than the historical correlation of the technology built in our history.[50] Maybe the problem is to change those technologies. And in this case, one of the main political problems would be nowadays, in the strict sense of the word, the politics of ourselves.[51]

Well, I thank you very much.*

**Berkeley: from "First, as you see, the apparition of a new kind of self" to the end of the lecture is different*: (1) The apparition of what we could call the gnoseologic self. You remember what I told you yesterday: the Greek technology of the self tended to produce what I called a gnomic self, a permanent superposition, in the form of memory, of the subject of knowledge and of the subject of the will. You remember what I have indicated in the beginning of this lecture: in the movements of a Gnostic type, it was a question of constituting an ontological unity, the knowledge of the soul and the knowledge of the being, and then would be constituted what we could call the Gnostic self. In Christianity, one sees the development of a much more complex technology. This technology first maintains the difference between knowledge of the self and knowledge of the being. And that's the main difference with the Gnostic self, Gnostic technology of the self. And this knowledge of the self takes shape, not in the identification between will and truth, as in the gnomic self, it takes shape in the constitution of thoughts as subjective data which are to be interpreted. And the role of interpreter is assumed by the work of a continuous verbalization of the most imperceptible movements of the

## Notes

1. At several points Foucault stresses the discontinuity between the ancient *gnōthi seauton* and the modern "know yourself," including in the discussion that follows the Berkeley Howison Lectures (see below, p. 111). See also *HS*, 16 and 443–44; *HS* (Eng), 14 and 461–62, where Foucault says that "we should not constitute a continuous history of the *gnōthi seauton* whose explicit or implicit postulate would be a general

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thought. That's the reason why we could say that the Christian self which is correlated to this technique is a gnoseological self.

(2) The second point which seems to me important is this: there has been in early Christianity a perpetual oscillation between a truth-technology of the self oriented toward the manifestation of the being, the *exomologesis*—this *exomologesis*, we could call it the ontological temptation of Christianity—there was an oscillation between this technology of the self following the *exomologesis*, and a truth-technology oriented toward the discursive analysis of the thoughts, I mean *exagoreusis* that we could call it the epistemological temptation of Christianity. And as you know, after a lot of oscillations, after a lot of conflicts and fluctuations, the second, the *exagoreusis*, the epistemological temptation of Christianity, became victorious.

(3) Even in this hermeneutical technique derived from *exagoreusis*, the production of truth could not be met without a very strict and imperative condition: as we saw, hermeneutics of the self implies the sacrifice of the self, and of course a nonidentity processus. And that is, I think, the deep contradiction, or, if you want, the greatest richness, of the Christian technologies of the self: no truth about the self without the sacrifice of the self. The centrality of confession, of confession of sins, in Christianity finds here its explanation. The verbalization in confession of sins is institutionalized as a discursive truth-game which is the sacrifice of the subject who is just speaking.

(4) And last point, I think that one of the great problems of Western culture has been to find the possibility of founding the hermeneutics of the self, not on the sacrifice of the self, but on a positive, on a theoretical and practical emergence of the self: a trend toward an identity-technology of the self and not a sacrificial technology of the self. That was the aim of the judicial institutions from the middle of the medieval ages, it was also the aim of the medical, and psychiatric, and

and universal theory of the subject," but "begin with an analytics of the forms of reflexivity, a history of the practices on which they are based, so as to be able to give the old traditional principle of 'know yourself' its meaning—its variable, historical, and never universal meaning."

2. By "obligations of truth," Foucault means two things: "First, there is the obligation to believe, admit, or postulate, whether it be in the order of religious faith or in the order of accepting scientific knowledge; and

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psychological practices since the end of the eighteenth century. That was also the aim of political, and philosophical, and epistemological theory from the seventeenth century. That is, I think, the ground, the deep root, of what we could call the permanent anthropologism of the Western way of thinking. I think that this anthropologism, this trend toward an identity-technology and toward a theory of man as the root of a hermeneutics of the self, I think that that is linked to the situation, to the heritage of Christianity. It is linked to this deep desire of modern Western society, this deep desire to substitute the positive figure of man to the sacrifice, which was for Christianity the condition of the opening of the self as the field of indefinite interpretations. Or we can say that the problem, or one of the problems, of Western culture was this one: how could we save the hermeneutics of the self and get rid of the necessary sacrifice of the self which was linked to this hermeneutics since the beginning of Christianity? During the two last centuries, the problem has been: what could be the positive foundation for the technologies of the self that we have been developing during centuries and centuries?

But the moment is coming, maybe, for us to ask another question: is this hermeneutics of the self worth to be saved? Do we need still, really, this hermeneutics of the self we have inherited from the first centuries of Christianity? Do we need a man, a positive man, to serve as the foundation of this hermeneutics of the self? Maybe the problem about the self is not to discover what it is, but maybe to discover that the self is nothing else than the correlative of technology built in our history. And then the problem is not, maybe, to find a positive foundation for those interpretative technologies, maybe the problem is now to change those technologies, or maybe to get rid of those technologies, and then to get rid of the sacrifice which is linked to those technologies. In this case, one of the main political problem would be, in the strict sense of the word politics, the main political problem, would be the politics of ourselves.

Thank you for your attention.

second, the obligation to know the truth of ourselves, as well as to tell, manifest, and authenticate it." See M. Foucault, "Entretien de Michel Foucault avec Jean François and John de Wit," in *MFDV*, 249–50; "Interview with Jean François and John de Wit," in *WDTT*, 256.

3. For an analogous description of the "truth obligations" of Christianity, with, on the one hand, the pole of faith, dogma, and the Book, and, on the other, the pole of the self and of confession—the obligation "to look for the truth of oneself, to decipher it as a condition of salvation, and to make it manifest to someone else"—see *MFDV*, 89–91; *WDTT*, 91–94, and "Technologies of the Self," *EW*, 1: 242–43. In the 1979–80 Collège de France lectures, Foucault presents this duality, this "extraordinary tension" that runs through Christianity, speaking of two different "regimes of truth," the regime of faith and the regime of confession. See *GV*, 81–82 and 99–100; *GL*, 83–84 and 102.

4. Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1961), 207: "We know that you are a lover of faithfulness, for the man whose life is true comes to the light" (*Ecce enim veritatem dilexisti quoniam qui facit eam venit ad lucem*). Saint Augustine is paraphrasing the Gospel according to Saint John, 3: 21: "But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

5. In 1975, during his stay in Japan, Foucault had the opportunity to discuss the relationship between Zen Buddhist mysticism and the techniques of Christian mysticism with some specialists. See D. Defert, "Chronologie," in *DE, I*, 74. On that occasion he states that Christian spirituality and its techniques seek "ever more individualization," in order to explore through the "tell me who you are" what there is "in the depths of the individual's soul," whereas Zen and the techniques of Buddhist spirituality seek to reduce the importance of the individual—they tend toward a "disindividualization" or "desubjectivation." So, according to Foucault, even if Zen and Christian mysticism cannot be compared, their techniques are comparable. See M. Foucault, "La scène de la philosophie" (interview with M. Watanabe) and "Michel Foucault et le zen: un séjour dans un temple zen" (remarks recorded by C. Polac), in *DE, II*, nos. 234 and 236, pp. 592–93 and p. 621. Foucault will return many times, although always briefly, to this comparison, sometimes presenting it in terms of the relationship between subject and truth. See *GV*, 183; *GL*, 186; and "Sexuality and Solitude" in *EW*, 1: 178, where he says: "A Christian needs the light of faith when he wants to explore himself. Conversely,

his access to the truth can't be conceived of without the purification of his soul. The Buddhist, too, must go to the light and discover the truth about himself; but the relation between these two obligations is quite different in Buddhism and in Christianity. In Buddhism, it is the same type of enlightenment which leads you to discover what you are and what is the truth. In this simultaneous enlightenment of yourself and the truth, you discover that your self was only an illusion."

6. In the last of the 1979–80 Collège de France lectures, Foucault speaks of the need for Christianity, which wanted to establish itself as a religion of salvation, to detach itself from the presumption of perfection that characterized the Gnostic movements, in which there was the idea that the mind is a spark, a fragment of divinity, and that salvation is obtained by finding this divine element in oneself. Thus, "for the Gnostic, knowing God and recognizing oneself is the same thing": knowledge of oneself and memory of the divine are identified. See *GV*, 303–4; *GL*, 309–10. Foucault also deals with the Gnosis from the point of view of the relations between subjectivity and truth in the first lecture of *L'herméneutique du sujet*, where he presents Gnosticism as precisely a sort of exception to the two main and historically dominant ways of understanding the relationship between subjectivity and truth: the modern way of "philosophy" and the ancient way of "spirituality." Then, in the lecture of 17 February 1982, Foucault contrasts two "models" of the knowledge of oneself: the Platonic and the Gnostic model, to which he attributes a "memorial function" (recollection of the being of the subject by itself), and the Christian model, which has rather an "exegetical function" (detection of the nature and origin of the internal movements that occur in the soul). Finally, in the first hour of the lecture of 17 March 1982, Foucault maintains that, from the end of the third century, Christian spirituality within monastic institutions frees itself from the Gnosis, rejecting its two fundamental principles: the principle of knowledge of self and the principle of recognition of self as divine element. See *HS*, 18, 246, and 402–3; *HS* (Eng), 16–17, 256–57, 420–22. On the possible sources for Foucault's references to the Gnosis, see M. Senellart, in *GV*, 133n6; GL, 136n6.

7. In the lecture of 1 March 1978 of *Sécurité, territoire, population*, Foucault presents mysticism in an analogous way, that is to say, as a form of counter-conduct that essentially escapes pastoral power and its "system of truth" (founded on the teaching of the truth as dogma to all the faithful and on the extraction of the truth from each of them as a

secret discovered in the depths of the soul). See *STP*, 215–17; *STP* (Eng), 212–13. In the last of his final Collège de France lectures, Foucault speaks again about mysticism, this time as "parrhesiastic pole of Christianity," which has survived, although on the edges, against the anti-parrhesiastic pole of the ascetic-monastic tradition—"the great enterprise of anti-parrhesiastic suspicion that man is called upon to manifest and practice with regard to himself and others, through obedience to God, and in fear and trembling before this same God." See *CV*, 307–8; *CT*, 336–38.

8. *The Gospel of Thomas*, trans. Stephen Patterson and Marvin Meyer, in *The Complete Gospels: Annotated Scholars Version*, ed. Robert J. Miller (Salem, OR: Polebridge Press, 1995).

9. For more about this history and the complex role of Protestantism within it, see *MFDV*, 165–66; *WDTT*, 167–68.

10. Foucault traces in detail the history of these later practices of Christian confession (*aveu*) in the lecture of 19 February 1975 of *Les anormaux* and speaks about it again in the lecture of 13 May 1981 at Louvain. See *AN*, 161–79; *AB*, 174–93; *MFDV*, 182–89; *DWTT*, 184–91.

11. In the lectures *Du gouvernement des vivants*, Foucault analyzes three great practices of the manifestation of individual truth in the Christianity of the first centuries: baptism, ecclesial or canonical penance, and spiritual direction (*direction de conscience*). In particular, the second half of the lecture of 6 February and the lectures of 13 and 20 February 1980 are devoted to baptism (mainly on the basis of texts from Tertullian). See *GV*, 101–58; *GL*, 103–61. Subsequently, however, in the lectures, seminars, and articles in which he touches on the same subject, Foucault always chooses to concentrate rather on penance and spiritual direction, that is to say, on *exomologēsis* and *exagoreusis*, leaving baptism aside.

12. Foucault already speaks of penance in early Christianity in the lecture of 19 February 1975 of the lectures *Les anormaux* (*AN*, 159–60; *AB*, 171–73); moreover, he devotes the entire lecture of 5 March 1980 of *Du gouvernement des vivants*, as well as the second part of the lecture of 29 April 1981 at Louvain. See *GV*, 189–210; *GL*, 193–215; *MFDV*, 101–10; *WDTT*, 103–13. Finally, Foucault briefly describes the practice of *exomologēsis* in "Technologies of the Self," in *EW*, 1: 243–45.

13. For more about this term, see *GV*, 150–51, 197–98; *GL*, 154–55, 201–3; *MFDV*, 103; *WDTT*, 105–6. "*Omologein* means to say the same thing; *omologein* is to be in agreement, to give one's assent, to agree something with someone. *Exomologein*, the verb designating these acts—the substantive

is *exomologēsis*—is not to be in agreement, it is to manifest one's agreement. And so *exomologēsis* will be the manifestation of one's agreement, the acknowledgment, the fact of admitting something, namely one's sin and the fact of being a sinner. It is this *exomologēsis*, roughly, that is demanded of the penitent." See *GV*, 197; *GL*, 201–2.

14. Tertullian, "On Modesty," in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), chap. 13, p. 473: "Why do you yourself, when introducing into the church . . . the repentant adulterer, lead into the midst and prostrate him, all in haircloth and ashes, a compound of disgrace and horror, before the widows, before the elders, suing for the tears of all, licking the footprints of all, clasping the knees of all?"

15. Jerome, "Letter LXXVII, to Oceanus," in *The Principal Works of St. Jerome*, trans. W. H. Freemantle, vol. 6 in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (New York: Christian Literature Co., 1893), 157–62, esp. 159–60: "In the presence of all Rome . . . in the basilica which formerly belonged to that Lateranus who perished by the sword of Caesar, she stood in the ranks of the penitents and exposed before bishops, presbyters, and people—all of whom wept when they saw her weep—her dishevelled hair, paled features, soiled hands and unwashed neck. . . . She laid bare her wound to the gaze of all, and Rome beheld with tears the disfiguring scar which marred her beauty. She uncovered her limbs, bared her head, and closed her mouth. . . . That face by which she had once pleased her second husband she now smote with blows."

16. This is the *expositio casus* or, more correctly, the *expositio causae* which Foucault talks about, citing Saint Cyprian, in the lecture of 5 March 1980 of *Du gouvernement des vivants* and in that of 29 April 1981 at Louvain. See *GV*, 199–200; *GL*, 204–5; *MFDV*, 104; *WDTT*, 106–7.

17. Cyprian, "Letter 36, The presbyters and deacons dwelling in Rome send greetings to Pope Cyprian," in *The Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage*, vol. 2, trans. G. W. Clarke, Ancient Christian Writers, no. 44 (New York: Newman Press, 1984), 48: "It is high time, therefore, for them to be doing penance for their sin, to give proof that they grieve for their fall, to demonstrate their shame, to manifest their humility, to display their meekness, to elicit for themselves the clemency of God by their submissive behaviour, to draw upon themselves the mercy of God."

18. Saint Pacian, "Paraenesis, or, Treatise of Exhortation unto Penance," 24, trans. C. H. Collins, in *Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church* (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1842), 376: "I adjure and intreat

you, brethren, not to be ashamed in this work, not to be slack to seize, as soon as ye may, the proffered remedies of salvation; to bring your souls down by mourning, to clothe the body with sackcloth, to sprinkle it with ashes, to macerate yourselves by fasting, to wear yourselves with sorrow, to gain the aid of the prayers of many."

19. Analyzing *exomologēsis*, Foucault always stresses its dramatic, public, spectacular dimension, and does so precisely in order to better mark the contrast with *exagoreusis* (the exhaustive verbalization of sins). *Exomologēsis* is not a verbal conduct, but a grand theatrical dramatization of the penitent's life, body, and acts in which language plays a minor role: it "is entirely on the side of non-verbal expressive elements, or, if one uses words, if one prays, if one implores, it is not at all to speak of the sin one has committed, it is to affirm that one is a sinner. . . . In this *exomologēsis* it is the ashes, the hair shirt, the clothes, the mortifications, and the tears that speak, and the verbal has only an expressive function." See *GV*, 207; *GL*, 212. From a purely formal point of view, and certainly not of the content, this insistence on the theatricality and nonverbal expressivity of *exomologēsis* will find a parallel in Foucault's study of ancient Cynicism, the specificity of which resides precisely in that, for the Cynic, *parrēsia*, truth-telling, consists not only or even mainly in a verbal practice, but in a form of existence that makes truth itself visible "in one's acts, one's body, the way one dresses, and in the way one conducts oneself and lives." See *CV*, 159; *CT*, 172.

20. Tertullian, "On Repentance," trans. S. Thelwall, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, ed. A. Robertson and J. Donaldson (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1979), chap. 10, p. 664: "Yet most men either shun this work, as being a public exposure of themselves (*ut publicationem sui*), or else defer it from day to day."

21. The model of the martyr also plays an important role in Foucault's reflections on *parrēsia* and ancient Cynicism in his last lectures at the Collège de France. In particular, in the lecture of 29 February 1984, he suggests the expression "*marturōn tēs alētheias*" (to be witness to the truth), employed by Gregory Nazienzen in his twenty-fifth homily, could characterize what Cynicism had been throughout antiquity and, moreover, what it will be throughout the history of the West. See *CV*, 160; *CT*, 173.

22. Saint Ambrose, "Concerning Repentance," trans. H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin, and H. T. F. Duckworth, book 2, chap. 10, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2nd series, vol.

10, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 357. To illustrate the break that conversion represents, Ambrose tells the story of a young man who, on meeting a young women he had previously, but no longer, loved, failed to greet her. The latter, thinking he had not recognized her, said: "'*It is I.' 'But,'* was his answer, *'I am not the former I.'*"

23. This is what, at the end of the lecture of 5 March 1980 of *Du gouvernement des vivants*, Foucault calls the "paradox of Christian humility," that "affirms a truth and at the same time erases it, that qualifies the Christian as a sinner and at the same time qualifies him as being no longer a sinner" (because "see how little I am a sinner since I say that I am a sinner"). See *GV*, 209; *GL*, 215. See also "Technologies of the Self," in *EW*, 1: 244. The paradox derives from the fact that, through *exomologēsis*, "one wants to die to death": the death that one manifests by fasting, by renouncing everything, etc., "is both the death one is and represents because one has sinned, but also that death one seeks with regard to the world." Thus, by showing that one is dead and at the same time that one dies to death, on the one hand one brings out the truth of oneself as sinner, and on the other hand one erases death by becoming capable of being reborn. See *GV*, 208; *GL*, 213.

24. On the problem of the relapsed or, more correctly, of the *lapsi*, that is to say, "those who 'failed' at the time of persecution and who, regretting their action, wanted to be reintegrated into the Church," see M. Senellart, in *GV*, 187n34; *GL*, 191n34, which refers to *Mal faire, dire vrai* (*MFDV*, 102 and 109; *WDTT*, 104 and 110) and to *Sécurité, territoire, population* (*STP*, 172–73; *STP* (Eng), 169–70).

25. The notion of *metanoia*, which is only mentioned here, is the object of a series of very detailed analyses that Foucault develops in the lectures at the Collège de France in 1979–80 and 1981–82. In the lecture of 13 February 1980 of *Du gouvernement des vivants* he speaks of *metanoia* with reference to Tertullian's *De baptismo* and the "discipline of repentance (*pénitence*)," where this notion—which traditionally indicated the *unique* movement by which the soul turned away from appearances and the world, and at the same time turned to the light and the truth—"is diffracted," is dissociated into two moments, "one of which will be the exercise itself of repentance (*pénitence*), and then, after, the illumination that rewards it." It is in this way, as Foucault explains also in the following lectures, that Christianity was able to develop the idea that the whole of life must be a life of repentance and ascesis, that is to say,

a life characterized by the break with oneself. In other words, *metanoia* becomes "a constant dimension of the life of the Christian," a "state of break by which one detaches one's self from one's past, one's faults, and from the world in order to turn around towards the light, the truth, and the other world." See *GV*, 125–31, 140–42, 174–75, and 222; *GL*, 128–35, 143–46, 176–77, 226–27. For the description of *exomologēsis* as "the externalization of *metanoia*," see *GV*, 204–5; *GL*, 209–10. In the lecture of 10 February 1982 of *L'herméneutique du sujet*, relying explicitly on the article by Pierre Hadot, "Épistrophè and metanoia" (1953), but modifying its central thesis, Foucault establishes and develops at length the distinction between three forms of "conversion": Platonic *epistrophē*, Hellenistic and Roman conversion, and Christian *metanoia*. See *HS*, 201–9; *HS* (Eng), 209–17. For more on these themes, see too M. Senellart, in *GV*, 136n36; *GL*, 140n36; F. Gros, in *HS*, 216n11 and 218n40; *HS* (Eng), 225n11 and 226n40.

26. Foucault had already discussed Christian spiritual direction, in contrast with ancient direction, in the framework of his study of pastoral power. See *STP*, 184–86; *STP* (Eng), 180–83. He returns in detail to this form of confession (*aveu*), and its differences from *exomologēsis* and from pagan spiritual direction, in the lectures of 12, 19, and 26 March 1980 of *Du gouvernement des vivants* (*GV*, 219–307; *GL*, 223–313), the lectures of 6 and 13 May 1981 of *Mal faire, dire vrai* (*MFDV*, 123–70; *WDTT*, 125–72), as well as in *Technologies of the Self* (*EW*, 1: 245–49).

27. Saint John Chrysostom, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 3, homily 42: "That it is dangerous for the orator and the auditor to speak in order to please, that it is of much greater utility and more rigorous justice to accuse one's sins": : "Immediately after rising, before appearing in public and concerning ourselves with any business, we summon our servant and ask him for an account of what has been spent, in order to know what has been spent well or at the wrong time, and what we have left. If there is little left, we search our minds for new resources so as not to risk dying of hunger. We must proceed in the same way for the conduct of our life. Let us call on our conscience, let us get it to give an account of actions, words, and thoughts. Let us examine what profits us or harms us; what evil we have spoken, the malicious, clownish, offensive remarks we have permitted ourselves, what thought has led us to glances that are too free; what plan we have carried out to our detriment, whether of the hand, the tongue, or even the eyes. Let us cease spending at the wrong time, and endeavor to replace harmful expenses with useful investment, indiscreet

words with prayers, brazen glances with fasting and almsgiving. If we spend regardless, without putting anything in its place, without storing up for heaven, we will fall insensibly into extreme poverty, and we will be delivered up to tortures as unbearable for their duration as much as for their intensity. It is in the morning that we give an account of our expenditure; it is in the evening, after dining, when we have gone to bed, and no one disturbs and disquiets us, that we must account to ourselves for our conduct, of what we have said and done during the day; and if we find something bad, we must judge and punish our conscience, sadden our guilty heart, correct it with such force that, sensitive to our reprimands, it recalls it the following day and no longer dares to precipitate us into the same abyss of sin." (p. 401.)

28. See, for example, Saint Basil, *Exhortatio de renuntiatione saeculi*, 4, in *Patrologia Graeca*, 31, 633B: "Every deed performed without the superior's command or permission is a theft, a sacrilege that leads to death, not to profit, even if it seems good to you." Quoted in Irénée Hausherr, *Spiritual Direction in the Early Christian East*, trans. Anthony P. Gythiel (Cistercian Publications, 1990), 198.

29. In the lecture of 19 March 1980 of *Du gouvernement des vivants*, Foucault speaks of the "two fundamental obligations" that constitute the distinctive characteristic of Christian spiritual direction within monastic institutions: "to obey in everything and to hide nothing" or, in other words, "willing nothing by oneself" and "telling all about oneself." Subsequently, he develops this "principle of obedience" in detail, contrasting it with the idea and practice of ancient direction: in Christian direction, if one has to obey, this is not in view of an "external" objective (tranquility of soul, happiness, wisdom, etc.), but in order to produce a permanent and definitive "state of obedience." Here, therefore, "obedience produces obedience," that is to say, obedience—which is at once submission ("I want what the other wills"), *patientia* ("I want not to will anything different from the other"), and humility ("I do not want to will")—is the condition and, at the same time, aim of direction. See *GV*, 260–69; *GL*, 266–75. For an analogous exposition, see also *MFDV*, 127–38; *WDTT*, 129–40. Foucault, moreover, had already described this "instance of pure obedience" in his study of the Christian pastorate. See *STP*, 177–82; *STP* (Eng), 174–79; "'*Omnes et Singulatim*': Toward a Critique of Political Reason," in *EW*, 3: 308–9.

30. This anecdote on the subject of the monk Dositheus, who waits for the authorization of his master before dying, is in reality recounted by

Dorotheus of Gaza in the *Vie de saint Dosithée*, 10, in *Oeuvres spirituelles*, trans. L. Regnault et J. de Préville (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1963), 139.

31. On this principle of contemplation, see *GV*, 293; *GL*, 298–99; *MFDV*, 144–45; *WDTT*, 146–47. See also "Technologies of the Self," *EW*, 1: 246.

32. John Cassian, *The Institutes*, trans. Boniface Ramsey, Ancient Christian Writers, 58 (New York: Newman Press, 2000), and *The Conferences*, trans. Boniface Ramsey, Ancient Christian Writers, 57 (New York: Newman Press, 1997).

33. Apart from the texts already cited, Foucault also deals with the self-examination described by Cassian in "Le combat de la chasteté" (in *DE, II*, no. 312, pp. 1114–27; English trans., Anthony Forster [amended], "The Battle for Chastity," in *EW*, 1: 185–97), in which he analyzes the testimony of Cassian on the practices of monastic life in order to study the Christian hermeneutics of the subject from the point of view of the emergence of the question of the "flesh." This question, moreover, was to be the theme of the fourth volume of *Histoire de la sexualité*, *Les aveux de la chair*. Foucault also refers to Cassian in the lecture of 24 February 1982 of *L'herméneutique du sujet* and in a short passage of the 1983 seminar on *parrēsia* that he gave at the University of California, Berkeley, where he indicates the differences between Christian self-examination and the Stoic exercise of the examination of representations as described by Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. See *HS*, 286–88; *HS* (Eng), 299–301; M. Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, ed. J. Pearson (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001), 160–62.

34. For more about this term, see M. Senellart, in *GV*, 310n32; *GL*, 317n32; F. Brion and B. Harcourt, in *MFDV*, 190n1; *WDTT*, 191n1.

35. John Cassian, "The First Conference of Abba Serenus: On the Changeableness of the Soul and on Evil Spirits," 4, in *The Conferences*, 249–50.

36. John Cassian, "The First Conference of Abba Moses: On the Goal and the End of the Monk," 18, in *The Conferences*, 57.

37. John Cassian, "First Conference of Abba Serenus," 5, in *The Conferences*, 252–53.

38. John Cassian, "First Conference of Abba Moses," 20–22, in *The Conferences*, 59–63.

39. This reference to Freud is also found in the 1979–80 Collège de France lectures and in the Louvain lectures, but with significant differences. In the lecture of 12 March 1980 of *Du gouvernement des vivants*,

Foucault compares the Freudian conception of censorship with the practice of examination of conscience described by Seneca in the *De ira*, with particular regard to its aspect as "preparation" for a good sleep. See *GV*, 237; *GL*, 41. On the other hand, analogously to what Foucault does here, at the beginning of the lecture of 13 May 1981 of *Mal faire, dire vrai*, the image of Freudian censorship is evoked with regard to Cassian's texts. Later in the same lecture, Foucault speaks again of Freud, but this time raising the problem of the unconscious and the elaboration of a "hermeneutics of the self that would have its own interpretative techniques." Finally, during the lecture of 20 May 1981, Foucault reconsiders the Christian hermeneutics of the subject and affirms: "Through a whole series of efforts in which, naturally, Freud and psychoanalysis occupied a central place, the hermeneutics of the subject opened itself at the end of the nineteenth century to a method of analysis far removed from the practice of the permanent examination and exhaustive verbalization about which I spoke to you regarding ancient Christianity. A hermeneutics of the subject opened up, weighed down or burdened, having as its instrument and method principles of analysis that bore a far greater resemblance to the principles of textual analysis." See *MFDV*, 162, 168–69, and 224; *WDTT*, 164, 170–71, and 225. Foucault had already broached the problem of hermeneutics in Freud in a contribution to a colloquium in 1964, published three years later with the title "Nietzsche, Freud, Marx," in *DE, I*, no. 46, pp. 592–607; English trans., Jon Anderson and Gary Hentzi (amended), "Nietzsche, Freud, Marx," in *EW*, 2.

40. Foucault gives more information about this term in the lecture of 26 March 1980 of *Du gouvernement des vivants*. See *GV*, 285–301; *GL*, 290–307.

41. Foucault develops the study of this verbalization that possesses an interpretive value in itself in the last of the 1979–80 Collège de France lectures, as well as in the lecture of 6 May 1981 at Louvain. See *GV*, 299–303; *GL*, 304–9; *MFDV*, 138, 148–49; *WDTT*, 140, 150–51. Moreover, Foucault had already evoked the problem of this permanent and exhaustive verbalization in the first volume of the *Histoire de la sexualité*, speaking of a project of "transforming sex into discourse" (*"mise en discours" du sexe*) that was developed in an ascetic and monastic tradition, and that became a rule for everybody in the seventeenth century. See *VS*, 29; *Hist*, 20. As he explains very clearly in May 1982, in a lecture given at the University of Grenoble: "[With *exagoreusis* we have] a very strange obligation, which is not found again afterwards because, after all, the

confession of sins is not the obligation to say everything (*tout dire*); the confession of sins is, of course, the obligation to say what faults one has committed; it is not the obligation to say everything, to reveal one's thoughts to someone else. The obligation to say everything is quite unique in the Christian spirituality of the fourth and fifth centuries. It does occur subsequently, in fact; it has a long, parallel, and somewhat subterranean history in relation to the great ritual of penance, but it is found again obviously in the spiritual direction (*direction de conscience*) that develops and flourishes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries." See M. Foucault, "La Parrēsia," *Anabases* 16 (2012): 159; English trans., Graham Burchell, "Parrēsia," *Critical Inquiry* 41, no. 2 (2015): 221.

42. On the formation of this new "field," see too M. Foucault, "Le combat de la chasteté," *DE, II*, 1125–26; "The Battle for Chastity," *EW*, 1: 194–95.

43. Foucault develops the theme of the "Other in ourselves" in the lectures of 13 and 20 February 1980 of *On the Government of the Living*, in particular with regard to Tertullian and preparation for baptism. See *GV*, 121–22, 128, 153–58; *GL*, 124–25, 131, 157–61.

44. John Cassian, "The Second Conference of Abba Moses: On Discretion," 11, in *The Conferences*, 91–92.

45. John Cassian, "The Second Conference of Abba Moses," 10, in *The Conferences*, 91.

46. In the lectures of 3 and 10 March of *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, again evoking the "extraordinarily complex, complicated, and important development of the art of speaking" in Christian spirituality, Foucault emphasizes an essential inversion produced by Christianity in the history of "truth telling": "Greco-Roman psychagogy was still very close to pedagogy. It conformed to the same general structure of the master who delivers the discourse of truth. Christianity will unhook psychagogy and pedagogy by requiring the psychagogized soul, the guided soul, to express a truth; a truth that only it can tell, that it alone holds, but that is not the only element but one of the fundamental elements of the operation by which its mode of being will be changed. Christian confession will consist in this." See *HS*, 345–47, 390–91; *HS* (Eng), 362–66, 408–9. On this "inversion of responsibility," see too *MFDV*, 138–39; *WDTT*, 140–41; "La Parrēsia," 159–60, 183; "Parrēsia," 222–23, 248; *GSA*, 47; *GSO*, 47.

47. For more on this term, see M. Senellart, *GV*, 311–12n53; *GL*, 319n53.

48. At the end of the 1979–80 lectures at the Collège de France, Foucault asserts that "this linkage between production of truth and

renunciation of self seems to me to be what could be called the schema of Christian subjectivity, let's say more exactly the schema of Christian subjectivation, a procedure of subjectivation historically formed and developed in Christianity and characterized paradoxically by the obligatory link between self-mortification and production of the truth of oneself." See *GV*, 303; *GL*, 309. Foucault speaks of a series of "paradoxes of the history of morality" that, in his view, have contributed to discrediting the principle of care of oneself after antiquity, but he does not refer explicitly to Christianity (see *HS*, 14–15; *HS* [Eng], 14). However, two years later, he seems to suggest that it would be possible to "add" to this series the "paradox of the care of the self in Christianity," that is to say, precisely, the fact that in Christianity, to seek one's salvation means, of course, to care about oneself, but that this care must take the form of renunciation of self. According to Foucault, this Christian paradox has no doubt contributed to transforming the care of self, in our societies, into something suspect: "readily denounced as a form of self-love, a form of selfishness or self-interest in contradiction with the interest to be shown in others or the self-sacrifice required." See M. Foucault, "L'éthique du souci de soi comme pratique de la liberté," *DE, II*, 1531; "The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom," *EW*, 1: 284–85.

49. Concluding his seminar at the University of Vermont, in 1982, Foucault stressed in an analogous way that, from the eighteenth century, "the techniques of verbalization have been reinserted in a different context by the so-called human sciences in order to use them without renunciation of the self but constitute, positively, a new self." See M. Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," *EW*, 1: 249.

50. In the course of a conversation with Hubert Dreyfus that took place at Berkeley on 24 October 1980, Foucault says: "My problem is that we have, in Western philosophy, or at least in French philosophy . . . a tradition in which a philosophy of a self-interpreting, self-questioning subject claims to discover an objective philosophy of the human being (which may be a humanism, an anthropology, and so on). This movement of anthropology, of anthropologism, or of humanism, this inversion, this constant tendency and what I would call hermeneutics, consists in discovering, in searching for, on the basis of the self and of its experience insofar as it is a subjective experience, something that can have universal validity as objective knowledge of the human being. That is what I want to criticize." And he continues explaining that "from a methodological point of view, the only way not to assume from the outset a human

essence that one would find again, or that one would define in such a way that one cannot rediscover it, is to analyze first of all, on the basis of practices, of practices in their historicity, what one has done. And, with this, on the one hand one avoids, of course, assuming at the outset a human nature, a human essence that would be this or that, or one avoids saying, which was the existentialist thesis, 'the human essence is such that it cannot be known.' In a way, this was, notwithstanding everything, to give oneself a human nature—it is a negative anthropologism. I think the method of the historical analysis of practices is the necessary starting point if one wants to avoid both positive and negative anthropologism." See M. Foucault, "Discussion about Books," unpublished, IMEC/Fonds Michel Foucault, C 18(1).

51. This expression might call to mind what Foucault said on 17 February 1982, in the framework of *L'herméneutique du sujet*: "[I]n this series of undertakings to reconstitute an ethic of the self, in this series of more or less blocked and ossified efforts, and in the movement we now make to refer ourselves constantly to this ethic of the self without ever giving it any content, I think we may have to suspect that we find it impossible today to constitute an ethic of the self, even though it may be an urgent, fundamental, and politically indispensable task, if it is true after all that there is no first or final point of resistance to political power other than in the relationship one has to oneself." See *HS*, 241; *HS* (Eng), 251–52. But it would equally be possible to interpret it in the light of the texts on Kant and the *Aufklärung*, in which Foucault develops the idea of "criticism" in the form of an "ontology of ourselves," which is at the same time an "ontology of present reality" and thus takes on a clear "political" value. See *GSA*, 2; *GSO*, 21; "What Is Enlightenment?" *DE, II*, no. 339, p. 1393; "What Is Enlightenment?" *EW*, 1: 315–16; "Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?" *DE, II*, no. 351, pp. 1506–07; English translation by Colin Gordon as "Kant on Enlightenment and Revolution," in M. Gane and T. Johnson, *Foucault's New Domains* (London: Routledge, 1993), 17–18. In any case, what should be emphasized is the link between political work and historical inquiry: as Foucault says in an interview in 1981, it is always a question "of making things more fragile through this type of historical analysis, or rather showing at once why and how those things could be constituted in this way, but at the same time showing that they were constituted through a precise history. . . . Our relationship to madness is a relationship that has been historically constructed; and if it is historically constituted, it can be politically destroyed. I say 'politically,'

giving the word 'political' a very large meaning. In any case, there are possibilities for action, because it is through a certain number of actions and reactions—through a certain number of struggles, of conflicts, to respond to a certain number of problems—that we chose those particular solutions." See M. Foucault, "Entretien de Michel Foucault avec André Berten," in *MFDV*, 243; "Interview with André Berten," in *WDTT*, 243.

# Discussion of "Truth and Subjectivity"

23 OCTOBER 1980

QUESTION: How do Augustine's *Confessions* fit into your scheme, don't they represent a third type of confession?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: Yes, you are absolutely right. I had prepared a rather long development about Augustine, but, of course, I had no time to read it.[1] You see, if I insisted more on what the Greek Fathers called *exomologēsis* and *exagoreusis* than on Augustine, the reason is that *exomologēsis* and *exagoreusis* were an institutionalized way of confession, and they had all the characteristics of institutions: they were constraining for people, and they had, like all institutions, an evolution through the history of the Church and through the history of Christianity. The medieval confession, the confession of sins, is something like a strange mixture of *exagoreusis* and *exomologēsis*. And that's the reason why I insisted first on those two points. I had the intention to speak about Augustine, and, well, I think what I should say about Augustine would be that in the *Confessions* you find the feature which corresponds to what the Greek Fathers called *exomologēsis*. Augustine wanted to show himself as a sinner, or to show how he had been a sinner when he was young, and so on. And I think that this public manifestation of his own being as a sinner is something quite important in his writing of the *Confessions*. There is also, of course, a feature of *exagoreusis*, since he wanted to scrutinize what happened in him, in his way of thinking, in his way of living, and so on. But, of course, there

are two main differences. The first difference is, of course, that it was a book written for his friends. Augustine belonged to a circle of intellectual Christians, and he had lived with them in Milan, and he also had a circle of friends in Hippo, where he wrote the *Confessions*, and this book was a kind of explanation of his own way of *metanoia* for his friends. And that sounds like what happened in some philosophical schools of classical Greece, for instance among the Epicureans. This way of telling friends what happened in you, what was your life, and so on, was the tradition in the philosophical schools.[2] And the second point is that there is a very great difference between the examination of thoughts in the Evagrian tradition, which Cassian represents, and the object of Augustine's *Confessions*. Augustine is not interested in thoughts, in *logismoi*, in *cogitationes*, he is interested in *cordis affectus*, not in the movements of thought but in the movements of the heart.[3] And that's something quite different, I think. But I think that it was a literary and philosophical tradition in Christianity, very important of course, but it was never institutionalized, at least not before the Counter-Reformation. And the turn back to Augustine in Western Catholicism, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, underlined the importance of *cordis affectus*. So I think that's another story.

QUESTION: So you would say he is a kind of hybrid, between the philosophical tradition and the tradition of the Church Fathers?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: Yes. And, of course, the theoretical and the practical importance of Augustine's doctrine in Christianity is huge, enormous, but the influence of the *Confessions* as such, the book itself, I think remained a theoretical or literary tradition and did not have a great influence on the institutions, on the practices, on this technology of the self. I think it had rather little importance until the seventeenth century, and then it took on a very, very great importance.

QUESTION: You always seem to be talking about the Catholic tradition. But how do you think Augustine and the Lutheran tradition connect? Is there also a kind of Protestant strand of the confession and self-examination?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: I should say in a very schematic way that, first, one of the main problems of the Reformation, and of the Lutheran Reformation, was the connection between the relationship to truth and the relationship to oneself. Is it the same to go to the light and to explore the depths of the soul? For the Catholic tradition, those are two quite different things, and with nearly no relation. Well, the problem for Luther was to discover, or to rediscover, the relationships which were really defined in early Christianity between the two ways of illumination, the illumination of oneself and the illumination through and by the divine light. The problem of the reading of the Book, of experience, and of religious experience as the main criterion for the truth is an example of those new relationships or renewed relationships between those two ways of illumination.[4] And I think that what is also quite important in Luther is that he wanted to get rid of the juridical tradition established in the Catholic Church and Catholic experience since the thirteenth century,[5] because I think that over all the structures of religious experience from the thirteenth century in Western Catholicism, or Western Christianity, a juridical form has been superimposed, which was a political one. And, for instance, the confession of sins is a mixture of the traditional *exomologēsis*,[6] which is maintained as a public penitential rite till the sixteenth century, but in a very, very small part, a very, very small role; of *exagoreusis*, which was a monastic institution; and of something else, which was the new juridical structures, the new juridical procedures with confession of the crime as the masterpiece of this structure.[7] And the confession of sins was the mixture of those three elements, and the Catholic Christian Inquisition is at the crossing point of those procedures. Luther, of course,

wanted to get rid of all that. And the idea that the relationships between man and God are of a [juridical][8] type, I think, was the great *adversaire*[9] of Luther. And he wanted to get rid of that. So I think those two points may explain the place of Luther in this history.

QUESTION: What link do you establish between confession and the hermeneutics of the self in monastic institutions and Freudian repression?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: The relationships between those monastic institutions and Freudian practice? You would like me to say something about it? Well, I would like to say something, but I am not sure I can. Because, you see, really I don't like retrospective history, at least, it's not my game to say about something: "Ah, you see, Jerome or Chrysostom have said that, and you find the same in Freud, or in Jung, or in Lacan, and so on." That's not my game; I'm really not interested in that kind of thing. But, really, when I read Cassian two or three years ago, I was amazed by different points. First, the techniques of self-examination by Cassian in the Evagrian tradition were very well elaborated and very complex and very sophisticated. Two, I think that you can't avoid this fact that the description of what the monk has to do with his own thoughts is the same thing, that Freudian censorship is the same thing in reverse. The description Freud gives of the censorship is nearly word for word Cassian's description in the metaphor of the money changer. So what to do with that? Can you say, well, that is a historical coincidence or a metahistorical coincidence? Maybe. There is another, historical explanation which would say: "Well, you see, those Christian technologies of meditation, self-examination, confession, and so on were so strong, so deep, so deeply embedded in the life and consciousness and practices of everybody in Western civilization that you can find traces or outlines of that in the psychiatry, the classical psychiatry of the nineteenth century, and

it is in this psychiatry that Freud found them and rediscovered the Christian spiritual techniques." But I am not satisfied with this explanation, because it is very difficult to find in the psychiatric techniques of the nineteenth century anything which is related to spiritual techniques. Of course, I quoted the anecdote of Leuret in my first lecture, Leuret who wanted to force his patient to confess that he was mad. But you can't say that it is exactly the Christian techniques of *exagoreusis*, and so on. So why Freud and how Freud rediscovered this thing, I don't know. Is it to be found in Hebraic tradition? I don't think so, because I am nearly sure there is nothing like *exagoreusis* or *exomologēsis* in the Hebraic tradition. So that's a problem, and I have no answer till now. But maybe I have no answer because it is an illusion, and maybe there is no analogy, no similarity between Cassian and Freud. But I doubt that there is no similarity. So it's just now for me a problem with no answer till now.

QUESTION: You speak in *Discipline and Punish* of the change from judgment which relies on torture to judgment which takes into account the emotions and drives of individuals.[10] Is there a relation between this and the change from penance to confession?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: Yes, you see, I think so. I think that Western societies have known an age of, how could you say, a judiciary age, a judiciary period, which started from the twelfth or thirteenth century and lasted till the beginning of the nineteenth century with the great political constitutions, the great civil and penal codes of the nineteenth century, and that those juridical structures are now going down and disappearing. Anyway, from the thirteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century, the hope, the dream of all Western societies has been that it could be possible to govern people through laws, through courts, through juridical institutions. And the idea of writing constitutions with human rights and so on, the

project of writing codes, which would be either universal for humanity, or at least universal inside the nation, was the dream of a juridical way of government. The coincidence between the art of governing and juridical structures has been I think one of the great trends of this long period—from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century. And now, we know—we know?—we have been told that it is not possible anymore to govern people with juridical structures. The totalitarian phenomenon is the first and the most dangerous consequence of this discovery that juridical structures are not sufficient for governing people. I don't know if it is an answer to your question.

QUESTION: If that's so, in order to begin to confront the totalitarian phenomenon should we not reach back and discover some way in which these juridical structures can be revived to some extent, but without the confession or the hermeneutics of self?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: Yes, but you see I think that is one of our main problems, political problems, just now. When you are confronted with the totalitarian phenomenon, first, everybody can agree on the fact that recourse to a code, to a legal system, the reference to human rights, is something quite important. But I think that [a] lot of people would agree to saying that it is just now—what could I say?—a tactical recourse; maybe it's useful, maybe it's possible just now, but I don't think that coming back to a juridical structure of government would be the solution of our problems now. But it's a fact that, either if you take the great political problems of the constitution—what is the State?—or small problems like, for instance, penal institutions, or the use of medicine, of psychiatry, inside the juridical institution, everywhere you'll see that governing people now cannot manage with only a juridical code, juridical structures. They, in fact, always use something else and much more than juridical structures.[11] For instance, for the penal institutions it is quite clear they are supposed to be nothing else [than juridical

structures], and the dream of the eighteenth century was to constitute penal institutions, a penal code, which should be only the law and the application of the law. And as soon as you see this dream confronted reality, you see, of course, that the penal systems functioned from the beginning of the nineteenth century till now with more and more things different from the law, from the legal system, and so on. And the introduction, the insertion of psychiatry, psychology, the human sciences, sociology, and so on in the penal institution are the signs, the witnesses to this fact.[12]

QUESTION: Does not the simple tactical recourse to juridical structures make us go beyond the juridical order and oblige us to separate what belongs to the juridical order and what to the disciplinary order?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: I agree with the way you pose the problem, and I must say, first, that I don't know. I should confess also that a few years ago, for instance, in the beginning of the seventies, I thought that it was possible to pose, to put in light the problem, the real, concrete, the actual problem, and then that a political movement could come and take this problem and, from the data of this problem, elaborate something else. But I think that I was wrong. And if I am a little disappointed just now, it's due to the fact that, well, I think not everybody, but several people have been convinced of the existence of the problem, even if they disagree about it, but nobody knows how to get through that, and the political movement, the spontaneous political movement in which, with great naïveté, I put my *espérance*,[13] hopes, well, that didn't happen.[14] But that's my naïveté.

QUESTION: You are supposed to have said that one has no right to punish rape, because sexuality is a private matter. Can you clarify?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: Good question, I think I know to which paper you refer when you say that. A friend sent me from Great Britain a photocopy of a paper that was published in a famous review, I think, and with very, rather violent criticism of the things I said. It was in a discussion with David Cooper, the antipsychiatrist, and the discussion—it was a real discussion, not a fake one—was published, I don't know exactly why.[15] And, of course, what I said there, maybe I won't agree exactly with the terms and the words I used at this moment, but that doesn't matter. What I said is this: first, I think that a good hypothesis to test the problems, to test the different issues about the relationships between law and sex would be that the law has nothing to do with sex. Sex is something which has nothing to do with law. And conversely. The fact that sexual differentiation, sexual preference, that sexual activity could be a matter of legislation, that, I think, is something which cannot be admitted. Anyway, I would like to know if it is possible to put this principle at the base of a new penal code. This idea, I added it when someone, at one point in our discussion . . . I don't know, no importance. But as soon as I said that, of course I was aware that there was a problem, which was the problem of rape.[16] And it's impossible to say that rape is not a sexual aggression, and I don't think anyway that it is possible to say rape can be condemned as an aggression without taking into account the fact that it is a sexual aggression. I think that sexuality cannot be elided from the definition, the juridical definition of rape. And then, at least in the case of rape, you have to introduce the notion of sexuality, and then sex has to be taken into account in a legal system. What I wanted to say was that there is a problem: I think that law has nothing to do with sex, but I think on the other side that rape must be condemned and that you cannot elide sexuality from rape. That's a problem, how to get through . . .

QUESTION: Many aggressions are accompanied by incidents of a sexual character. If one adopts your principle, how can the

distinction be made between what, in an aggression, is sexual and what is not, and how to deal with the criminal?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: I understand. On this point I should say, the first principle I have tried to explain, I think it can be used because the fact that a sexual feature can be discovered in criminal conduct, well, I don't know why the judges, the tribunals would have to take that into account. Maybe there is a sexual motivation to something like a murder or a theft or I don't know what, but if we have a legal code which condemns this kind of act because it is a murder or because it is a theft, it doesn't matter if the motivation is sexual or not. And I have noticed that at least in French juridical penal practice, the fact that the lawyers or the judges and so on, the prosecutor, find a sexual motive always has very uncontrollable consequences. And sometimes somebody is condemned in a very severe manner because the judges thought that it had a sexual motivation, or in another case, [it may be said,] well, it's only something that has to do with sex or it's not important and so on. That's I think one of the perverse effects of the introduction of sexuality, the introduction of the problem of sexuality into penal institutions. And against this kind of introduction of sexuality, I think we have to say sex has nothing to do with law and law has nothing to do with sex. But I maintain that rape is a sexual aggression and it is not possible to escape this fact, and we have to introduce the problem of sexuality at least about rape. I don't know if you agree with what I am saying. Anyway, in this British paper they misunderstood what I said, because what I said was not: rape has to be considered as nonsexual aggression. On the contrary, I said it has to be considered as a sexual aggression, and that is contradictory—I know it—with the principle that law has nothing to do with sex.

QUESTION: Do you think that the sexual act is not necessarily aggressive, but is political?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: Of course, that all depends on the definition of politics. If we take politics in a very broad meaning, and if you understand politics as the system of power relations, in this case, of course a sexual act is something which has to do with politics. But I should say that a sexual act in this sense has to do also with, for instance, semiotic systems and semiotic relations. All the systems of relations which are involved in a sexual relation or in a sexual act have to be taken into account when you examine this act. So there are power relations, there are semiotic relations, and sometimes there are relations of production.

QUESTION: You have described the genealogy of social practices and institutions in terms of a microphysics of power. It seems that you are now describing the genealogy of the self in different terms. Is it only the subject that you are dealing with that is new, or has your approach changed, and how?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: Maybe I agree with something, maybe it's not an answer. Please tell me if it is not an answer. You see, when I started with this problem of power, I'm sure I said a lot of stupid things about it, but I think also that people thought that I said more strange things than I have. Of course power is not for me—and I think that is clear—is not a substance, a fluid, a metaphysical instance or something like that. I think that power is relations, and relations of forces[17] between people. But the second point is that those relations are not only pure and nude relations of forces: they are organized following certain principles and according to certain techniques, to certain objectives, to certain tactics and so on. Third point: those power relations in a given society are not, we could say, equally or randomly distributed, they are oriented and organized by a type of disequilibrium which gives some people the possibility of acting on the others, and some other people do not have the same possibility as the first. And that is due to the fact that the

tactical or strategic position of the first ones is not the same as the others, and the techniques they use, and so on, and so on. And this disequilibrium is what I could call government. There are points or areas or *gradients*,[18] *vecteurs*,[19] of government in societies. Women are governed by men, children by parents, pupils by teachers, and so on, and so on. And the nation is governed by government. But political government is only one type of those numerous governing instances and governing techniques and governing institutions that we have in a given society. And my problem is now to analyze what is government, understood as a technique which permits people to conduct the life of other people despite or through the fact that there are always relations of forces between people in a society. The dissymmetry of the relations of forces, that I think can be called government, or this disequilibrium gives place to government. It's clear? So now my problem is to analyze not power relations but government.[20] And government is not a pure relation of force, or it is not pure domination, it is not pure violence. And I don't think that the idea of domination is in itself sufficient and adequate to explain or to cover all those phenomena, and one of the reasons is that in a government, in the fact of government, there are not only forces, or more forces on the one side than on the other, but in governing people there is always a structure inside those who are governed that makes them governable by the others. And the problem is to analyze this relation between governed people and governing people through what we could call structures of domination[21] and structures of the self[22] or techniques of the self.[23] You understand? Is it an answer to your question?

QUESTION: You have attributed the failure of constitutional government to the emergence of totalitarianism. Does it not come rather from the maintenance of those techniques of internalization associated with the principle of obedience to a dogma, and in this sense, would not the decline of the juridical

era be, not because of the emergence, but because of the continuation of totalitarianism?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: Because of its continuation? I'm not sure I understand exactly what you have said, or I'm not sure I could agree with the reason or with the analysis you propose. But anyway, the doom, the *crépuscule*[24] of the juridical structure is due to a considerable amount of reasons. And of course it's not the birth of totalitarianism which is the reason for the doom of the juridical structures; totalitarianism is only the consequence of this dissociation of juridical structures in the way people are governed. But it's not only the continuation of those juridical structures.

QUESTION: You said in your introductory remarks that your work was directed against the modern philosophy of the subject born with Descartes. Why do you think that to get rid of the conception of the self inherited from Descartes one also has to get rid of the hermeneutics of the self?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: No, I wouldn't say that. Yes, it's a fact that my problem, and I think the problem of most people just after the war, was to get rid of this philosophy of the subject. The way I have chosen is, of course, not my invention, it is a tradition at least since Nietzsche, maybe since Hegel—but that's another problem. Descartes, in this story, is of course a very important point. I think that Descartes is the first philosopher who used the spiritual techniques of Christianity to do something radically different from what those techniques did. I mean he founded with them a philosophical discourse. I could say it in other words: philosophy, in the medieval tradition, was of course Christian philosophy, or Catholic philosophy, but we can notice that medieval philosophy never took the form of a meditation, or of a self-examination, philosophy never took the form of those spiritual exercises that existed in the Catholic or

in the Christian tradition. Philosophical discourse had another form, even if it was a Christian tradition. With Descartes—and also with Spinoza, but that's another problem—with Descartes you find for the first time a *méditation philosophique*,[25] a philosophical meditation, that is, the project to use spiritual techniques for the foundation of a philosophical discourse, of a philosophical knowledge. The cultural, the historical reason is of course quite obvious. The diffusion, after the Reformation and, in Catholic countries, the Counter-Reformation, of those techniques of spirituality was very important. And the great age of spiritual techniques is not the medieval period in Europe, it is the seventeenth century. And so Descartes uses this method, and I think that—and this is the important[26] point— beginning in this way, of course Descartes encountered the problem of the illusion of oneself about oneself: when I think that what I am thinking is true, am I not deceived by myself, or by somebody in myself? This problem is not an invention of Descartes, it is not a philosophical hypothesis; it's not the radicality of philosophy which introduced this kind of suspicion in Descartes. It is the oldest tradition of Christian spirituality. In Christian spirituality, the first suspicion about anything coming in the mind is: "Is not somebody in me whom I know and whom I don't know, of whom I am not conscious but of whose existence I know very well, is there somebody, which means the devil, in me who suggests this idea and makes me think that it is true, or evident, even if it is not?" And Descartes has to make, for the first time in history, the partition between spiritual technique and the philosophical foundation of truth. And that's the reason why he speaks of the *malin génie*,[27] which is, once more, not at all a philosophical hypothesis, which is a traditional spiritual problem, and he says that from a philosophical point of view, even if the devil is in me and deceives me, the evidence is there, and so on, and so on.[28] And with the rule of evidence Descartes is able to use the way of the spiritual self-examination: let me see what happens in my soul, let me see, observe, scrutinize what

happens in my thought, and then I'll find not myself, or the temptation, or the deceiver, and so on, I can find the evidence, the truth, and the truth which is valid even for the external world. And so Descartes makes a revolution in the spiritual techniques: he uses all those techniques which were oriented towards the problem of what happened in the depth of the soul, he uses these techniques and finds the foundation of a scientific knowledge, of a scientific knowledge which is valid even for the external world, and he finds that at the end of the *Meditations*, in the sixth meditation.[29] I don't know exactly why I explained that. Is it an answer to your question? No, not exactly, ah yes, it was about Descartes.

QUESTION: You have not really explained why in order to overcome the problem of the Cartesian self it is also necessary to destroy the hermeneutics of the self. But in reality, is not your aim rather to undermine the hermeneutics of the self for its own sake?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: Yes, and you see the problem was to get rid of the philosophy of the subject which started with Descartes, and to try a genealogy of the subject from the point of view of those technologies of the self. Descartes is important because he uses those technologies of the self for the purpose of founding philosophical discourse. But it is that, with Descartes, we have only one use of this hermeneutics of the self. And the problem of the hermeneutics of the self is I think larger than the Cartesian problem. No?

QUESTION: I agree, but why, in order to get rid of the Cartesian conception of the self, do you also want to get rid of the hermeneutics of the self in general?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: I know, what I said last time was not clear. My idea is that the hermeneutics of the self was invented or built

up in the beginning of Christianity in a very complex process in which this hermeneutics of the self was linked to the obligation of self-sacrifice. And I think that one of the great efforts of Western culture has been to save, to use, to continue this hermeneutics of the self and without the obligation to sacrifice the self. So now the problem is: have we found, instead of self-sacrifice, the positive foundation for the hermeneutics of the self? I think that we can answer no. We tried, from at least the humanistic period of the Renaissance till now, and we didn't find it. So what can we do? Come back to the sacrifice of the self as the real historical foundation of the hermeneutic of the self? I am not sure it is possible, I'm not sure it is *souhaitable*.[30] And then the problem maybe are those hermeneutics of the self [. . .]*they are indispensable, of course, for the way people are now governed or the way they are governing themselves.[31] So the problem is now: is the necessity of the hermeneutics, which is linked to the way we are governed, is this necessity so necessary, I should say? And I have the feeling that there is a kind of *appui réciproque*,[32] a mutual support: the way we are governed tries to justify itself by reference to the hermeneutics of the self, the human sciences, and so on, and these hermeneutics of the self are referred eventually to a good political functioning and institutions and so on. You can see, all that is quite general and abstract and maybe not clear, but when you see, for instance, how pedagogical institutions function, you see very well how the way pedagogy is institutionalized is justified by psychology, by children's psychology, psychoanalysis, and so on, and these are integrated or justified by the fact that if they succeed, it is because they permit a way of governing children to work. Is it clear?

QUESTION: We must base our educational institutions on something, and presumably we base it on what we can find out about the world and about ourselves. Is this what you're

*Interruption of the recording.

questioning? Are you questioning all attempts to know about human beings, or just the psychological approach?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: I am trying to question the fact that we are obliged, or we think we are obliged, to constitute scientific knowledge about children to justify the way we are governing them. It's this fact that I'm questioning. Not the content of the knowledge.

QUESTION: But are you saying that there's nothing we can find out about children that would be relevant to governing them? Or is it just the way the human sciences are trying to find out about children?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: I think that in any case what we find out about children's psychology is necessarily relevant for the way we want to govern them because we need to know things about children's psychology because we want to govern them. And there is a constitutive relation between the will to govern and the will to know, and those relations, which are—of course, what I say is very schematic—but all those relations, which are very complicated, constitute a nexus of governing techniques and knowledge procedures.

QUESTION: What would be the status of a knowledge like that which Piaget has developed about children? Even if it is used for disciplinary ends, can it be considered as a scientific knowledge?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: The question you ask concerns my opinion about the objectivity of this kind of knowledge. Well, I think that the fact that that knowledge is, in its existence, in its historical origin, and in its social and cultural existence, linked deeply, constitutively to a technique of government does not exclude a priori the fact that this knowledge is objective. And I don't know why it should be excluded. It should be excluded if you admit that since there is a relation of knowledge, then all

other kinds of relation disappear and must disappear. If you admit that a knowledge relation cannot exist without being absolutely pure, that is, of course, I think, the thesis of all kinds of philosophy of knowledge. But I think that we have to question this philosophy of knowledge. Why should knowledge not be objective because it is historically linked to power relations, to governing techniques, and so on? Really, I don't see the reason. I see the reason [rather] in a kind, a type of philosophy, in a type of philosophy historian and philosophy of knowledge.

QUESTION: Would you say Piaget's work is a kind of hermeneutic of the self?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: Yes, if we give a large historical extension to the expression "hermeneutics of the self," of course, yes.

QUESTION: Is there anyone else's work that you think is a better example?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: Well, but you see, when I speak of hermeneutics of the self, I don't have in mind a bad form of human sciences which could be opposed to a good form. I say that the historical ground for all those human sciences has been the project of hermeneutics of the self. For instance, why, in Greek philosophy, when people were so preoccupied with *les règles de vie*,[33] the rules of life, the way of living, philosophers during centuries and centuries have told people how to behave and never had in mind the idea that they need something like the human sciences? That began, I think, with Christianity, when not only the Book, but also the self, became an object of interpretations.

QUESTION: Can we consider what is taking place in modern literature (the disruption of narrative discourse, the disintegration of the subject) as the reflection of this attempt to get rid of the hermeneutics of the subject?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: That is a very good and important and difficult question. We could say, first, that modern literature began, I think, when hermeneutics of the self gave rise to a kind of *écriture*, of writing, which begins with, for instance, Montaigne. The decline[34] of the epic and drama and the beginning of a kind of literature, like Montaigne and so on, is the moment, the cross-point, where the hermeneutics of the self, which till then had been a purely religious practice, was opened to everybody. And that was not at all the result of the decline[35] of religious experience, but the result of the extension of religious experience. Luther and the Counter-Reformation are at the root of modern literature, since modern literature is nothing else but the development of self-hermeneutics.

QUESTION: My question concerned rather contemporary literature . . .

MICHEL FOUCAULT: There is also a problem, I think, in modern literature. I think that there is something which is related to one of the most important features of the hermeneutics of the self: this is the relation between this hermeneutics and the sacrifice of self, since literature is in a way a sacrifice of the self, or is both a sacrifice of the self and the transposition of the self into another order of things, into another time, into another light, and so on. So, the modern writer is in a sense related and linked and similar to the first Christian *ascète*[36] or to the first Christian martyr. When I say that, it is of course with a *pointe d'ironie*.[37] But I think the same problem of the relations between hermeneutics of the self and the disappearing of the self, the sacrifice, the negation of the self, is the nucleus of literary experience in the modern world.

QUESTION: Why don't you trace the beginning of the hermeneutics of the self back to Plato rather than Christianity?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: But I think that it's not possible to find any hermeneutics of the self in Plato. You have a theory of the soul, but no hermeneutics of the self. Never in Plato can you find something like self-examination, the examination of the thread of thoughts, and so on. The problem for Plato is the elevation of the soul towards truth; it's not to find the truth in the depths of the soul.[38] And the *gnōthi seauton*, for instance, I would say, in a very schematic way, that following this analysis, the *gnōthi seauton* has nothing to do with self-hermeneutics. And the traditional philosophical history of consciousness from the *gnōthi seauton* till Descartes is, I think, *un contresens*,[39] and doesn't take into account the specific innovation, which appears with Christianity, with Christian spirituality.[40] And Christian spirituality is not the same as Christianity. Christianity begins with Christ, Christian spirituality begins with Pachomius, Anthony, Jerome, Athanasius, and Augustine, that means in the fourth and fifth centuries.

QUESTION: The theme of self-examination seems to be present already in Heraclitus, who in one of his fragments says: "I search myself out."[41] Why do you give so much importance to Christianity and so little to the Greek tradition?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: I think that in the Greek tradition, the problem of the self as a being is really important, but not the problem of the self as an object. The techniques which permit one to consider oneself as an object of knowledge is not the same thing, of the [same] importance as knowing or showing the self as a being. For instance, what strikes me in the first Christian penance rites is this *exomologēsis*, where the problem is not at all for the sinner to know what his sins really were, or the roots of his sins, or to explain to other people what those sins were. The problem is only to show his being as a sinner. And I think that in the Greek tradition, in the Greek societies for instance, the supplicant shows his being as supplicant, he has been exiled, he has the hope . . . or for instance Oedipus, at the end of the

tragedy: the doors of the palace are opened, and everybody can see him; Oedipus comes in front of the palace and he shows himself as the killer of his father, the husband of his mother. That's a kind of *exomologēsis*, if you want. But there is nothing like the constitution of oneself as an object.[42] And I think that neither in Plato nor in Heraclitus can you find something like the constitution of the self as an object, but that does not mean that the problem of the being of the self is not important. Is it, I'm not sure if that's clear, but maybe you can see the direction . . .

QUESTION: I have a kind of methodological question. It seems like a lot of your earlier work emphasized very much historical discontinuities, and now it seems you are emphasizing continuity from the beginning of Christendom. Is this because you had a different idea about the continuity or discontinuity of historical practices, or because you're dealing with a different kind of subject matter?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: Maybe for a third reason. You see, I think that one of the major philosophical questions of Western philosophy since the beginning of the nineteenth century is: "What is *Aufklärung*?"[43] This problem of what happened from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth century, and which is the constitution of a type of rationality, of a type of knowledge, or of a relationship between society and rationality, and so on, all that was, I think, the great, one of the great philosophical problems. I think really that there are two ways of being a philosopher since the nineteenth century. It is either to ask the old question "What is truth?" or to ask the newer question "What is *Aufklärung*?" And between those two questions there are not only differences, there are also deep relationships, because maybe it's not possible to ask the question "What is truth?" without asking the question "What is this kind of rationality we use now to answer the question?" And of course the question "What is *Aufklärung*?" cannot be answered without answering the question "What is this truth,

and the historicity of this truth, which was such that something like *Aufklärung* was possible?" Somebody after my first or second lecture asked me—I don't know if it was in a suspicious way, but it doesn't matter: "Are you a philosopher?" But I don't know, maybe I'm not a philosopher. Anyway, I think the question with which I deal and dealt was a philosophical question: it was "What is *Aufklärung*?" But I have tried to analyze this question through very concrete historical problems, and that's the reason why I have always studied this period from the sixteenth to the beginning of the nineteenth century. All my books were a way to try to answer this question.[44] And then I have been obliged, at least for this thing about sexuality, to jump *en arrière*, backwards. Maybe also we can say that there are two great philosophical moments: the pre-Socratic moment and the *Aufklärung*. And it would be very interesting to compare the way Heideggerians have interrogated the pre-Socratic moment and the way, maybe, Weberians have analyzed the *Aufklärung* moment. And now I am wondering if there is not a very interesting moment, intermediate between the two others, which would be the patristic moment, the fourth–fifth century, where something appears which is not in the pre-Socratic moment, and which was already constituted when *Aufklärung* began. And this moment, this thing is the constitution of what I call the hermeneutics of the self, the beginning of the Western self, which is something other than the disappearance of Being and something other than the beginning of modern rationality.[45] Is it clear?

QUESTION: Is there a relation, and if so, what is it, between pastoral government and the advent of the modern state, which you talked about last year at Stanford,[46] and these technologies of the self?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: You attended those lectures? If I ask the question, it's only to adjust my answer. I thought that the relationship was really clear, since in the Stanford lectures I

have tried to analyze what we could call government and this very specific type of government which is the government of individuals and not only of groups, like cities, states, and so on, and why and how in our societies we have both government of huge masses of people through states and government of individuals in their most specific individuality.[47] And the other aspect of that is the problem of the technologies of the self, which are, I think, the condition for this pastoral government, the condition for this pastoral government to exist and to work. Without technologies of the self, the pastoral government cannot work. And conversely, those technologies of the self have been supported, as you know very well, by the pastoral type of government you find in the Church, of course, and also in other institutions, like pedagogy, political institutions, and so on.

QUESTION: Is it linked to what you were saying at the beginning about the failure of government by means of a constitution?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: Yes, that's it.

QUESTION: What distinction do you draw between power and domination?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: I thought that I have explained that. Government is not a pure relation of domination in the sense that it is not only a way to impose one's will on other people. Government is a technique which permits one to use the self of people, and the self-conduct of people, for the purpose of domination. Understand?

QUESTION: Yes, but I didn't ask about government, I asked about the difference between power and domination. The reason for asking that question is because in *Discipline and Punish,* and also in *The History of Sexuality,* you don't seem to make a

clear demarcation between modifications of power relationships which lead towards more domination and modifications which lead more towards emancipation. I am referring to the difference between fascism and socialism.

MICHEL FOUCAULT: Well, I would say that, for me, the category of power is the larger, and in this category you can find relations of domination, which are the most simple, the most violent power relations. And you find also governing techniques, which are ways to, which are techniques which permit you to exercise power, but without using violence, and so on. Understand? So I would say that domination is only a way to exercise power, and not the best, and not the most secure. Governing is much more efficient. Domination is only, I could say, a crisis power relation, when you can do nothing else than dominate. But as soon as you can, if you have the possibility, the technique and so on, you govern, you do not dominate.

QUESTION: When you speak of techniques of the self as necessary for government, doesn't "government" always have for you a pejorative or negative sense?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: Well, I try not to use too much pejorative description, you know? What I would say is that I don't want to give a *laudative*[48] meaning to technologies of the self and a pejorative one to technologies of domination. Technologies of the self are not, in my analysis at least, better or worse than the others.

QUESTION: I'm confused about the way the word "self" is being used because previously, the way you used the word "self" seemed to me roughly similar to the way you use "soul" in *Discipline and Punish*, in the sense in which you say that the soul is the prison of the body.[49] Could you explain what you understand by "self"?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: That's an important and difficult question. As you know, we don't have the word "self" in French, and unfortunately, because I think it's a good word. In French, we have two words—"subject" and "subjectivity"—and I don't know if you use subjectivity very often, I don't think so. You see, by "self" I had in mind the kind of relation that the human being as a subject can have and entertain with himself.[50] For instance, the human being can be, in the city, a political subject. Political subject means he can vote, or he can be exploited by others, and so on. The self would be the kind of relation that this human being as subject in a political relation has to himself. No? That you could call in French "subjectivity," but that is not good, I think that "self" is better. And this kind of relation of the subject to himself, I think it is the target, the *cible*[51] of techniques . . . And when I said that the soul was the prison of the body it was a joke, of course, but the idea was that the body in this type of discipline is defined and delimited by a kind of relationship of the individual to himself. It is this type [of relationship] which is imposed by discipline and which gives a certain place and a certain definition to the body, a certain importance to the body, a certain value to the body, and so on. Clear, no? My English is really weak when the questions are difficult.

QUESTION: I am not sure I understand you when you say we have failed to find a foundation for the hermeneutics of the self. And I don't really understand your conception of the self founded on the relation of self to self: is it a relation of identity or are you thinking of something else? There are many scientific approaches that we pursue although we have failed to find their foundation, and sometimes we know that we will never find them, as in the case of mathematics. Do you mean that we haven't succeeded in finding a foundation for certain kinds of knowledge like the human sciences, or do you mean that we cannot arrive at a knowledge of ourselves?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: Just a remark at the beginning: the relation of oneself to oneself is not, I think, a relation of identity.[52] Now, second, the question about foundations and failure. For thousands of years, a lot of techniques about human conduct have been built. It could be mnemotechniques, for instance, it could be pedagogical techniques, it can be also self-examination and confession, and so on. For centuries, I think those techniques have been developed by people who were not concerned with the problem of, or with the science of, or the philosophy of man, of human being, which should have been both the foundation and the justification, the theoretical justification of those techniques, and would be able to give the rational roots and the rational norm of those techniques. And I think that since the sixteenth or the seventeenth century it's no longer possible to develop those techniques without looking for their theoretical foundation. And we can consider human sciences as this effort. And, well, I ask you this question: do you think really that psychology, that anthropology, that psychiatry and so on are able, first, to meet the scientific *réquisits*[53] that have been attained in other sciences? And then, do you think that we have founded a science of man, of [the] human being, which could be the general foundation of all those human techniques?

QUESTION: We could have given up on founding medicine on biology because we did not find in it a sufficiently solid foundation like, for example, that provided by physics for engineering, and, for that reason, abandoning it prematurely. Should we not rather say that there is work still to be done, that we should persevere? How is the case of the human sciences different?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: I think that's a very good example. With the relations between biology and medicine, you see very well that it is not in terms of the medical problem that the foundations of medical techniques have been found, and that they have been found in biology. And I would say the same: the

way the problem of human being has been formulated through this hermeneutics of the self for centuries is not able to give foundations to such kind of techniques, but maybe we can find for those techniques a scientific foundation in biology, in engineering, and so on, but in other terms than those of this hermeneutics of the self. Or in other words, the fundamental hypothesis of the hermeneutics of the self, that is, that we have to find in ourselves a deep truth which is hidden and which has to be deciphered as a book, an obscure book, a prophetic book, a divine book has to be deciphered, I think that is to be got rid of. And maybe we can one day, for instance, find a way to develop pedagogical techniques from, I don't know, from biology, from informatics, and so on. But not in the terms historically formulated by the hermeneutics of the self. It's not at all a criticism directed against techniques or science, and so on.

QUESTION: I thought I understood that in your view the works of Piaget could have an objective character. But now you seem to be saying the opposite, because they come under the approach of the human sciences. Isn't there a contradiction here?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: No, I don't think there is a contradiction. I should say that Piaget may be objective, since what Piaget wants to do—or at least what we can say he has done—is to give an objective description of the evolution of children in our society, and so on. And that is objective. Is Piaget on the way to give us a part or the totality of *the* science of human being? Well then I can say no.

QUESTION: So insofar as we've been objectified in a certain way . . .

MICHEL FOUCAULT: No. Since there is a series, a set of practices—historical, social, and so on—which gives, defines

a domain of possible objectivity, of possible objects, then Piaget, relating to these objects, is perfectly able to give an objective description. But the problem is, do we have with that a piece, a part, an element of the science of human being? Is that clear?

QUESTION: You have said that power is a relationship between people, whether it's a matter of individuals or not. But can there be power relations between people and institutions, ideas, or maybe physical objects?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: I won't speak about physical objects, I think the problem is quite different. But take for instance ideas. When you say that ideas exercise power, I think that it is only in a metaphorical way. You can say that ideas are influential, but what does that mean? It is that when somebody uses those ideas or expresses those ideas, then he can—because those ideas are accepted by the people or are common to a set of people—then he can use those ideas for a certain purpose, and then power relations exist. But it is only when people exercise those power relations that you can speak of power. I think that ideas have no power by themselves. Institutions have no powers by themselves. They have power to the extent that they are ruled by people. It's obvious, no?

QUESTION: Can't we say that the idea of salvation, which, in Christianity, is the motivation of confession and the justification of self-sacrifice, has a force and life of its own?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: Don't you feel that it's self-evident that an idea has no power by itself? It can be accepted, it is easy to understand, it is seducing, you can have psychological profit if you accept this idea, and so on. You can say that. But that the idea exercises a power, no. You see, this word is a terrific word, "power"—and of course I have been one of the numerous victims of the word "power"—but if we want to analyze this field,

this specific field of the interactions of individuals which are such that somebody can act on somebody else, for a certain purpose, and so on, if you want to isolate this field, of course, it is linked to the others, but if you want to analyze it, you are obliged to isolate it as a problem, then you have to give to the word "power" a relatively restricted definition and to get rid of all the metaphoric uses of this word. And to think that ideas have power by themselves, I think you have to say that the word is only being used metaphorically.

## Notes

1. Foucault talks at greater length about Saint Augustine some days later, at the beginning of November 1980, in a seminar that he conducted in English, with Richard Sennett, at the Institute for the Humanities at New York University. The seminar was published in part in 1981 with the title *Sexuality and Solitude*. See M. Foucault, "Sexuality and Solitude," *EW*, 1: 177–84. However, on this occasion, Foucault deals not with confession but with the "libidinization of sex" and the "new mode of apprehension of self as sexual being" that was proposed by Christianity, and by Saint Augustine in particular in *The City of God* and *Contra Julian*. See *EW*, 1: 180–82.

2. See *HS*, 347 and 372–74; *HS* (Eng), 365 and 389–91, where Foucault speaks, with particular reference to the Epicureans, of "the obligation to be frank with one's friends and to say everything one has on one's mind."

3. For the role of the *cordis affectus* in the *Confessions*, see P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (London: Faber & Faber, 1967), 169–70.

4. Foucault broaches this problem in the lecture of 30 January 1980 in *On the Government of the Living*, where he presents Protestantism as "a certain way of linking the regime of confession and the regime of truth," which means that adherence to the dogmatic content takes "the same form as the relation of self to self in subjectivity exploring itself." See *GV*, 83–84; *GL*, 85. In the lecture of 29 April 1981 at Louvain, Foucault explains, even more clearly, that Protestantism was "the great enterprise through which Western culture, European culture, or Western Christianity tried . . . to pose anew the link between the obligation to believe in the truth and the obligation to discover within oneself something

that is a truth, which would be at once the truth of the text and truth of oneself." See *MFDV*, 90; *WDTT*, 93.

5. In the lecture of 13 May 1981 at Louvain, Foucault maintains that, from the twelfth to the thirteenth century, the Church became "the institution within [which] the relationships between God and man became fundamentally juridified," and that "the Reform, with Luther and Calvin, was of course a tremendous effort to de-juridify the relationships between man and God." See *MFDV*, 185; *WDTT*, 187.

6. Foucault says "*exagoreusis*."

7. Foucault draws up the history of the progressive "juridification" of penance and confession, coupling it with the increasingly important place taken by confession in judicial institutions and procedures of the Middle Ages, in the lectures of 13 and 20 May 1981 at Louvain. See *MFDV*, 161–233; *WDTT*, 163–229.

8. Foucault says "judicial."

9. Foucault uses the French word.

10. See SP, 23–26; *DP*, 17–22.

11. In the lecture of 1 February 1978 of *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault explains this clearly, contrasting the point of view of government with the "juridical framework of sovereignty": if the purpose of sovereignty is submission to the law, in the perspective of government, on the contrary, it is a question of arranging (*disposer*) things, that is to say, "of employing tactics rather than laws . . . arranging things so that this or that end may be achieved through a certain number of means." See *STP*, 101–7; *STP* (Eng), 99–105.

12. See *SP*, 287–98; *DP*, 297–308, where Foucault describes the excess or series of excesses of the "carceral" in relation to the "judicial"—from the formation of a "clinical knowledge of the convict" to the elaboration of the notion of the "dangerous" individual, always authenticated by the new human sciences. See also M. Foucault, "About the Concept of the 'Dangerous Individual' in Nineteenth-Century Legal Psychiatry," in *EW*, 3: 176–200.

13. Foucault uses the French word.

14. Foucault may be alluding here to the disappointment he experienced reading the collective work *Libertés, liberté*, published in 1976, edited by Robert Badinter, to foster the reflections of the Socialist Party (see *Libertés, liberté. Réflexions du Comité pour une charte des libertés* [Paris: Gallimard, 1976]). Foucault will return to this text in 1977, in an intervention on the evolution of the judicial function in the seminar of the

Magistrate's Union (Syndicat de la magistrature), in which he criticizes what he calls the swarming of judicial functions through the social body. See "Michel Foucault à Goutelas. La redéfinition du 'judiciable,'" *Justice* 115 (June 1987): 36–39; see also D. Defert, "Chronologie," *DE, I*, 70.

15. See M. Foucault, "Enfermement, psychiatrie, prison," interview with David Cooper, J.-P. Faye, M.-O. Faye, and M. Zecca, in *DE, II*, no. 209, pp. 332–60.

16. See ibid., pp. 351–55.

17. Foucault says here, and in other instances of the same phrase, "forces relations."

18. Foucault uses the French word.

19. Foucault uses the French word.

20. See *GV*, 13–14; *GL*, 12: "Over the last two years I have . . . tried to sketch out a bit this notion of government, which seemed to me to be much more operational than the notion of power, 'government' being understood, of course, not in the narrow and current sense of the supreme instance of executive and administrative decisions in State systems, but in the broad sense, and old sense moreover, of mechanisms and procedures intended to conduct men, to direct their conduct, to conduct their conduct."

21. Foucault says "domination structures."

22. Foucault says "self structures."

23. Foucault says "self techniques." For the distinction between "strategic relations," "techniques of government," and "techniques of domination," and for an explanation of the place that the "relationship of self to self" assumes in this framework, see M. Foucault, "L'éthique du souci de soi comme pratique de la liberté," in *DE, II*, 1547–48; "The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom," in *EW*, 1: 298–99.

24. twilight; Foucault uses the French word.

25. Foucault uses the French words.

26. Foucault says "great."

27. Foucault uses the French expression.

28. For more on this point, see *GV*, 297–98; *GL*, pp. 303–4; *MFDV*, 167–68; *WDTT*, 169–70.

29. Foucault takes up and reelaborates this reading of Descartes in the first of the 1981–82 lectures at the Collège de France, where he traces the distinction between "philosophy" and "spirituality," and where he defines the "Cartesian moment" as the very complex event that marks a break in the history of truth, bringing it into its "modern age": from that moment

"knowledge (*connaissance*) itself and knowledge alone gives access to the truth." See *HS*, 15–20; *HS* (Eng), 14–19. However, it should be noted that the term "spirituality" in this context refers no longer to the "spiritual" techniques of Christianity but to the "spiritual exercises" as Pierre Hadot defined them (see P. Hadot, "Spiritual Exercises," trans. Michael Chase, in P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1995]). Two years later, Foucault slightly nuances his position vis-à-vis Descartes, noting that the *Meditations* are a "spiritual" enterprise (in the sense that they are a "practice of self"), because they permit the philosopher to accede to a certain mode of being, except that this mode of being is "defined entirely in terms of knowledge." The *Meditations* of Descartes thus realize a novel *superimposition* of the "functions of spirituality upon the ideal of a grounding for scientificity." See M. Foucault, "L'éthique du souci de soi comme pratique de la liberté," 1541–42; "The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom," 294. See also M. Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress," an interview with H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, in *EW*, 1: 278–80.

30. desirable: Foucault uses the French word.

31. See *GV*, 73–74; *GL*, 75: "Once again, the question I would like to raise is this: how is it that, in our type of society, power cannot be exercised without truth having to manifest itself, and manifest itself in the form of subjectivity, and without, on the other hand, an expectation of effects of this manifestation of the truth in the form of subjectivity that go beyond the realm of knowledge, effects that belong to the realm of the salvation and deliverance of each and all? Generally speaking, the themes I would like to take up this year [are] these: how have the relations between the government of men, the manifestation of the truth in the form of subjectivity, and the salvation of each and all been established in our civilization?"

32. Foucault uses the French words.

33. Foucault uses the French words.

34. Foucault says "doom."

35. Foucault says "doom."

36. ascetic; Foucault uses the French word.

37. touch of irony; Foucault uses the French words.

38. See *HS*, 75–76; *HS* (Eng), 76–78; *CV*, 147 and 227; *CT*, 159–60, 246. See also Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics," 275–76, where Foucault explains clearly that contemplation of oneself in Plato "is an ontological and not a psychological form of contemplation," and that knowing

oneself signifies gaining "ontological knowledge of the soul's mode of being," without therefore its being necessary to practice any examination of conscience.

39. a misinterpretation; Foucault uses the French word.

40. For more on this point, see *GV*, 224; *GL*, 228–29; *MFDV*, 114; *WDTT*, 117.

41. Heraclitus, fragment 101: "J'étais le propre objet de mon étude," in *Les Présocratiques*, trans. J.-P. Dumont, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), 169; Heraclitus, "I inquired into myself," in Jonathan Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophy* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1987), 113.

42. On 24 October 1980, in a conversation with Hubert Dreyfus, Foucault goes over some of the points touched on in the Howison Lectures and in this discussion. In the conversation with Dreyfus he notes: "What I understand [by hermeneutics of the self] is something broader than the pure use of hermeneutics for knowledge of the human being. I understand [by this] the fact that the human being as subject, or in his *subjectivity*, can be an object of knowledge (*connaissance*) for himself." See M. Foucault, "Discussion about Books," unpublished, IMEC/Fonds Michel Foucault, C 18(1).

43. Foucault begins to thematize the notion of *Aufklärung* as a specifically philosophical issue in 1978, notably in the lecture "Qu'est-ce que la critique?" ("What Is Critique?"), as well as in a passage of the introduction to the English edition of Georges Canguilhem, *On the Normal and the Pathological*. See M. Foucault, "Qu'est-ce que la critique? (Critique et *Aufklärung*)," *Bulletin de la Société française de Philosophie* 84, no. 2 (April–June 1990): 35–63; English trans., Kevin Paul Geiman, "What Is Critique?," in *What Is Enlightenment: Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*, ed. James Schmidt, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); M. Foucault, Introduction, in G. Canguilhem, *On the Normal and the Pathological*, trans. Carolyn R. Fawcett (Dordrecht: Reidl, 1978). He also devotes the first of the 1982–83 lectures to this question (see *GSA*, 3–39; *GSO*, 1–17), an extract of which was published in 1984 in *Le Magazine Littéraire*, as well as the famous article that appeared in *The Foucault Reader* the same year, "What Is Enlightenment?" republished in *EW*, 1: 303–19.

44. See M. Foucault, "Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?" in *DE, II*, 1506–7; "Kant on Enlightenment and Revolution," in M. Gane and T. Johnson, *Foucault's New Domains* (London: Routledge, 1993), 18: "it seems to me that the philosophical choice which today confronts us is the following:

one can opt for a critical philosophy which is framed as an analytical philosophy of truth in general, or one can opt for a critical thought which has the form of an ontology of ourselves, an ontology of the present; it is this latter form of philosophy which, from Hegel to the Frankfurt School by way of Nietzsche and Max Weber, has founded a form of reflection within which I have tried to work."

45. Questioned by Hubert Dreyfus about this same problem of the continuity and discontinuity in his historical analyses, Foucault explains that "the importance given to discontinuity is, for me, all the same essentially a method and not a result. I do not describe things in order to discover discontinuities, but I try, where they seem to appear, to take the measure of them and not want to reduce them straightaway. . . . And it is true that many continuous or long-term processes escaped me, and I stayed with these discontinuities that appeared to me on first reading. I did not go further because I think I was lacking a certain number of big continuous categories, lines, apparatuses (*dispositifs*), and it seems to me that what was said yesterday (during the discussion) about the pre-Socratic moment, the moment of Christian spirituality, and the moment of *Aufklärung* would no doubt allow me to situate much better now the continuity of things." See Foucault, "Discussion about Books."

46. The reference is to two lectures given at Stanford University on 10 and 16 October 1979 and published with the title "'*Omnes et Singulatim*': Toward a Critique of Political Reason," *EW*, 3: 298–325.

47. On pastoral power, apart from the Stanford lectures, see also *STP*, 127–232; *STP* (Eng), 123–226; "La philosophie analytique de la politique" and "Sexualité et pouvoir," in *DE, II*, nos. 232 and 233, especially pp. 547–51 and 559–66.

48. laudatory; Foucault uses the French word.

49. See *SP*, 34; *DP*, 30.

50. In the lecture of 12 March 1980 of *On the Government of the Living*, Foucault notes that by "subjectivity" he understands "the mode of relation of self to self." See *GV*, 220–21; *GL*, 225. In an analogous way, he writes in the entry "Foucault" of the *Dictionnaire des philosophes* that by "subjectivity" he understands "the way in which the subject experiences himself in a game of truth where he relates to himself." See M. Foucault, "Foucault," *DE, II*, 1452; trans. Robert Hurley, "Foucault," in *EW*, 2: 461.

51. Foucault uses the French word.

52. In his answer, Foucault means the relation of identity in the logical sense. But always critical with regard to the notion of "identity," in an

interview in 1982, published two years later, he will assert clearly that "the relationships we have to have with ourselves are not ones of identity, rather, they must be relationships of differentiation, of creation, of innovation." See M. Foucault, "Michel Foucault, an Interview: Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity," interview with B. Gallagher and A. Wilson, Toronto, June 1982, *The Advocate*, no. 400, 7 August 1984, 26–30 and 58; reprinted in *EW*, 1: 166.

53. requisites; Michel Foucault uses the French word.

# Interview with Michel Foucault

3 NOVEMBER 1980

MICHEL FOUCAULT: In a sense, I am a moralist. I am a moralist inasmuch as I think that one of the tasks, one of the meanings of human existence, that in which man's freedom consists, is never to accept anything as definitive, sacrosanct, self-evident, or fixed. No reality must dictate to us a definitive and inhuman law. To that extent, we may consider that what we have to rise up against is all forms of power, but not just in the narrow sense of power as a type of government, or of one social group over another— that is just one of a number of elements. I call "power" everything that actually aims to immobilize and render sacrosanct what is given to us as real, true, and good.

QUESTION: But don't we have to fix things, albeit in a provisional way?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: Of course, of course. It doesn't mean we have to live in an indefinite discontinuity. What I mean is that we should regard all points of fixation, of immobilization, as elements in a tactic, a strategy, that is to say, of an effort to restore to things their mobility, their possibility of being modified or of changing. I was just saying to you [that] the three elements of my morality are: [first,] the refusal to accept what is proposed to us as self-evident; second, the need to analyze and to know (*savoir*), because we can do nothing without reflection as well as knowledge (*connaissance*), this is the principle

of curiosity; and third, the principle of innovation, that is to say, not being inspired by a preexisting program, but looking for what has not yet been thought, imagined, or known in elements of our reflection and the way we act. So, refusal, curiosity, innovation.

QUESTION: The modern conception of the subject seems to include these three notions of refusal, curiosity, and innovation. Is it the tendency to fix this notion of the subject that you attack?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: What I tried to tell you was the field of values in which I situate my work. You asked me if I was a nihilist who refused morality. I say no. You also asked, which is an entirely legitimate question: "In the end, why do you do what you do?" I reply: "These are my values." I think that the modern theory of the subject, the modern philosophy of the subject, may well grant the subject a capacity for innovation, and so on, but that in fact it grants it in theory. Thus, in fact, it does not permit these different values that I have tried to invest in my work, and not in the theory of the subject, to be transcribed into practice.

QUESTION: Can there be an open power? Or is it intrinsically repressive?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: I think that the relations, the model of power should not be understood as an oppressive system coming from above and bearing down on individuals, forbidding this or that. I think power is a set of relations. What is it to exercise power? Exercising power is not taking this tape recorder and throwing it on the floor. It is possible for me to do this: it is materially, physically possible for me to do so, athletically it is possible for me to do so . . .

QUESTION: Maybe you have the desire to do so?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: I would not be exercising power by doing this. But on the other hand, if I take this tape recorder and throw it on the floor to get at you, at *you*, or so that you cannot repeat what I have said, or to put pressure on you and get you to behave in one way or another, or to intimidate you, that is to say, when I act on your conduct with a certain number of means, then, at that point, I am exercising a power. That is to say, power is a relation between two persons. It is a relation that is not of the same order as communication, even if you have to make use of instruments of communication. It is not the same as saying to you "the weather is fine" or telling you "I was born in this or that year." I exercise a power on you, I act or seek to act on your conduct, and I seek to conduct your conduct and direct your conduct. The simplest means, obviously, is to take you by the hand and force you to go here or there. I would say that this is, so to speak, the degree zero of power. It is the limit form, and basically at that point power ceases to be a power and becomes no more than physical force. On the other hand, when I use my age, my social situation, knowledge I may have about this or that way of getting you to conduct yourself in this or that way—that is to say, when I do not force you at all and leave you free—then that is when I exercise power. It is clear that power should not be defined in terms of a constraining violence that represses individuals, that forces them to do one thing and prevents them from doing something else; there is power when there is a relationship between two free subjects and there is an imbalance in this relationship such that one can act on the other and the other is, or lets himself be, "acted upon." Then, on that basis . . . I do not know what the starting point of the question was. Ah yes, is power always repressive? No, it can take a number of forms, and, after all, there can be power relationships which are open.

QUESTION: You mean equal?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: Never equal, because as soon as there is power there is inequality. But you could have reversible systems. Take what happens in an erotic relationship, for example. I am not talking about a love relationship; I am talking only about an erotic relationship. You know perfectly well that it is a game of power, and one in which physical strength is not necessarily the most important element. And you have, one vis-à-vis the other, a certain way of acting on the other's conduct, of determining it, even if this means that the other then uses this to determine your conduct in turn. You see that we have in this a type of power, completely local, of course, that is reversible—[I mean]* limited. But if you like, power relationships, in themselves, are not [solely]† repressive. Only, what happens is that in societies, in most societies, maybe in [all societies],‡ organizations are created to fix and maintain power relationships to the advantage of some, in a social, economic, political, institutional, et cetera, dissymmetry, which completely freezes the situation. And this is what is generally called power in the strict sense. It is actually a type of power relationship that is institutionalized, fixed, and immobilized to the advantage of some and at the expense of others.

QUESTION: And both are its victims?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: Oh no, it is a bit too facile to say that those who exercise power are victims. Well, it may be that they are actually caught in the trap, caught up in the exercise of power. Still, they are much less victims than the others.

QUESTION: How can Marxists criticize you? You are not orthodox, of course, but it seems that you are aligned with Marxist positions.

*Conjecture; some words difficult to hear
†Conjecture
‡Conjecture

MICHEL FOUCAULT: Am I aligned? I don't know. You see, I do not know what Marxism is. Moreover, I do not think it exists, in and for itself. In fact, Marx's misfortune—or good fortune, as you will—has been that his doctrine has always been taken up by political organizations. And it might even be said that it is actually the only historical theory, the only philosophical theory whose permanence, for over a century now, has always been tied to the existence of extraordinarily strong and combative socio-political organizations, even to the point of being linked to state apparatuses in the Soviet Union. So when someone speaks to me of Marxism, I would say: which one? The Marxism taught in the German Democratic Republic, *Marxismus-Leninismus*? Is it the vague, woolly, and hybrid concepts used by someone like Georges Marchais? Is it the body of doctrine that some English historians refer to? Well, for myself, I do not know what Marxism is. I try to struggle with the objects of my analysis, and when there is a concept in Marx, or a Marxist, that seems to fit, I use it. But it is all the same to me; I have never wanted and have always refused to consider conformity or nonconformity to Marxism as a differentiating criterion for accepting or eliminating what I was saying. I really couldn't care less. So when Marxists reject certain things, which I know perfectly well because I have found them in Marx [. . .],* when Marxists criticize me precisely on those points where I am closest to what Marx said, I laugh, and I am once again persuaded that among the many who do not know Marx, [it would be appropriate to place]† some Marxists in the front rank. That's all, that's all. If one adds to this that, of course, as good political militants, they never present the adversary's position correctly, honestly, authentically, and objectively, that they attribute to one things one has never said, that they construct caricatures, and so on, then I do not see why I should enter into those discussions.

*Inaudible words

†Conjecture; without the added words, the end of the sentence is incomprehensible

QUESTION: Do you have an idea of systems of power for governing, for organizing human beings, that would not be repressive?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: But, you see, a program of power can take only three forms. Either: how best to exercise power, that is to say, how to exercise power as effectively as possible, which means, roughly, how to strengthen it? Or the completely opposite position, which is: how to overturn power, what to attack so that this or that crystallization of power relations is put in question? And then there is the intermediate position, which consists in saying: how can one reduce to the minimum the power relations that are formed and solidified in a society? I am not interested in the first position—constructing a program of power so as to exercise it better. The second seems to me interesting, but it seems to me that it should be envisioned essentially in terms of its objectives, of the concrete struggles one has to conduct, and this means precisely that one does not turn it into an a priori theory. As to the intermediary forms—what are the acceptable conditions of power?—I say that these acceptable conditions of the exercise of power cannot be defined a priori: they are only ever the result of a relationship of force within society, and this means that in the state, in the state of things, it happens that such and such an imbalance permitting relations of power is, all in all, tolerated by those who are its victims, those who are [in the] more unfavorable position for a certain time. So, then, that is what is acceptable! And then one notices very quickly, and always in fact, sometimes after some months, sometimes after several years, centuries, possibly, [that] people resist, [that] this compromise no longer works. That's it. But one cannot give an optimal and definitive formula for the exercise of power.

QUESTION: You mean that something freezes in the relations between people and that after a time this becomes intolerable?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: Yes, well, sometimes it is straightaway. Once again, power such as it is, the power relations as they exist in this or that society are only ever crystallizations of relations of force, and there are no grounds for this crystallization of relations of force to be formulated as the ideal theory of the power relations in a given society. In a sense, God knows I am not a structuralist or a linguist, but well, you see, it is a bit as if a grammarian were to say: "Okay, this is how language must be, this is how English or French must be spoken." No! One can say how a language is spoken at a given moment, what can be understood and what is unacceptable, incomprehensible, and that is all one can say. And this does not mean, however, that this work on language does not allow any innovations.

QUESTION: You refuse to speak in positive terms, except for the present moment.

MICHEL FOUCAULT: When one conceives of power as a set of relations, of relations of force, there cannot be any programmatic definition of an optimum state of forces; one can do this only if one takes sides by saying: "I want it to be, for example, the white, Aryan, pure race that takes power and exercises it." Or: "I want the proletariat to exercise power, and to do so in a total fashion [. . .]*" Then, yes, it is a given, a program for the construction of power.

QUESTION: Is it inherent in human existence that their organization will result in a repressive form of power?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: Of course. Whenever there are people, in the system of relations of power, who find themselves in the position of being able to act on others and determine the conduct of others, well, the conduct of others will not be wholly

*Some inaudible words

free. Consequently, according to the thresholds of tolerance, according to a whole range of variables, it will be more or less accepted, more or less refused, but it will never be totally accepted, there will always be some who are recalcitrant, there will always be people who will not want to accept, there will always be a point where people will revolt, resist.

QUESTION: Should we not distinguish between conscious will and unconscious will? I may choose to submit, to accept a power: can one speak of domination in that case? One may also say to me: "Even if you do not choose, it is good for you, you want it in fact, and I know it." In such a case can one speak of domination?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: Well, I do not know what an unconscious will is. The subject of will wants what it wants, and as soon as you introduce a split that consists in saying: "You do not know what you want. I am going to tell you what you want," it is clear that this is one of the fundamental means for exercising power.

QUESTION: But can one speak of domination when people accept power being exercised over them?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: Well yes, you accept being dominated, that's all.

QUESTION: But for them, it is not domination.

MICHEL FOUCAULT: Yes, they accept being governed, they accept being directed.

QUESTION: A concrete question: how would you act to resolve the problem of criminality? Or another example which Professor Dreyfus gave me: he said that his child wanted to write

on the walls and that, according to you, stopping him would be an act of repression. Should one let him do it or say "that's enough!"?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: No, with regard to Professor Dreyfus's child who wanted to write on the walls, I absolutely did not say that to prevent him doing so was to oppress him. [. . .] Not being married, or a father of a family, I would be very careful not to say anything. If I had the idea of power that is often attributed to me, that it is something horrible and repressive, in short, something horrible whose function is to repress the individual, it is clear that to prevent a child from writing on a wall would be an unbearable tyranny. But this is not what I say. [Power] is a relationship, a relationship by which one conducts the conduct of others. And there is no reason for this conduct, this way of conducting the conduct of others, not to have in the end effects that are positive, valuable, interesting, and so on. If I had a kid, I promise you that he would not write on the walls, or he would do so, but against my will.

QUESTION: So, one must always examine . . .

MICHEL FOUCAULT: [Yes,] that's exactly it; it is exactly as you say: an exercise of power should never go without saying. It is not because you are a father that you have the right to slap your child. You are right that when you act on his conduct—and often even by not punishing him, that is also a way of acting on his conduct—you enter into a very complex system that actually demands infinite reflection. When one thinks, if you like, of the care with which, in our society, semiotic systems have been questioned to find out the signifying values for lots of different things, I would say that, in comparison, systems of the exercise of power have been relatively neglected, with insufficient attention given to the complex consequences of the linkages they give rise to.

QUESTION: Your position continually escapes theorization. It is something that has to be remade again and again.

MICHEL FOUCAULT: [Yes,] it has to be remade again and again. It is a theoretical practice, if you like, a way of theorizing practice, not a theory. I think that what I am saying is not contradictory when one analyzes power relations in a certain way, as I am trying to do now.

QUESTION: Your position is very different from what I imagined . . .

MICHEL FOUCAULT: People have the idea that I am a kind of radical anarchist who has a kind of absolute hatred of power, and so on. No! With regard to this extremely important and difficult phenomenon in a society, the exercise of power, I try to adopt the most carefully considered and, I would say, most prudent attitude possible; prudent in the point of view of the analysis, that is to say, in fact, in its possible moral as well as theoretical postulates: [we need to know]* what is involved. But questioning relations of power in the most scrupulous and attentive way possible, and in every domain in which they may be exercised, does not mean [constructing] a mythology of power as the beast of the Apocalypse [. . .].†

QUESTION: What principles guide your action towards others?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: I have told you: refusal, curiosity, and innovation.

QUESTION: Aren't they all negative?

*Conjecture; some words difficult to hear
†Inaudible words

MICHEL FOUCAULT: But you know that the only ethic one can have with regard to the exercise of power is the freedom of others. So, once again, I am not going to constrain them by telling them: "Make love like this! Have children! Work!"

QUESTION: I confess that I feel a bit lost, without orientation, because there is too much openness . . .

MICHEL FOUCAULT: But listen, listen. How difficult it is! I am not a prophet! I am not a programmer, I don't have to tell [people] what they have to do, I don't have to tell them: "This is good for you; this isn't good for you." I try to analyze a situation in all its complexity, with the function, [for] this task of analysis, of allowing at once refusal, curiosity, and innovation. That's it. [. . .] I don't have to tell people: "This is good for you."

QUESTION: And for you personally?

MICHEL FOUCAULT: It's nobody's business. I think that at the center of this there is in fact a misunderstanding about the function of, how to put it, philosophy, or the intellectual, or knowledge in general, which is that it is for them to tell us what is good. Well, no! That is not their role. They are only too inclined to play this role. They have been telling us what is good for two thousand years, with the catastrophic consequences this entails. So, you see, there is a terrible game, a game that is a trap, in which intellectuals [. . .]* offer to say what is good, the people ask only one thing, that one tells them what is good, and no sooner are they told what's good than they cry out: "That's really bad!" Well, let's change the game! Let's say that intellectuals will no longer have to say what is the good, and, on the basis of analyses of realities that are put forward, it will be up to people to work, or to conduct themselves spontaneously in

*Some inaudible words

such a way that they define for themselves what is good for them. [. . .]

The good comes from innovation. The good does not exist, just like that, in a timeless heaven, with people who would be like astrologers of the good, able to determine the favorable conjunction of the stars. The good is defined, practiced, invented. But this requires the work not just of some, [but] a collective work. Is it clearer now?

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