

MICHEL FOUCAULT



PENAL THEORIES AND INSTITUTIONS

LECTURES AT THE COLLÈGE DE FRANCE
1971–1972

EDITED BY BERNARD E. HARCOURT
GENERAL EDITORS: FRANÇOIS EWALD & ALESSANDRO FONTANA
ENGLISH SERIES EDITOR: ARNOLD I. DAVIDSON
TRANSLATED BY GRAHAM BURCHELL

Penal Theories and Institutions

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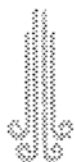
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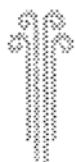
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LECTURES AT THE COLLÈGE DE FRANCE

1971-1972



Edited by Bernard E. Harcourt

With:

Elisabetta Basso (transcription of the text)

Claude-Olivier Doron (notes and critical apparatus)
and the assistance of Daniel Defert.

General Editors: François Ewald and Alessandro Fontana

English Series Editor: Arnold I. Davidson

TRANSLATED BY GRAHAM BURCHELL

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one 24 NOVEMBER 1971	1
<i>Methodological principle: analysis of the penal system (penal theory, institutions and practice) to be set in the context of systems of repression in order to throw light on the historical development of moral, sociological, and psychological notions; political crime and common law crime. ~ Historical object: to study the repression of popular riots at the beginning of the seventeenth century in order to trace the birth of the State; the penal ritual deployed by the Chancellor Séguier against the uprising of the Nu-pieds (Barefeet) in Normandy (1639). ~ The Nu-pieds uprising: an anti-tax riot against a system of power (against the tax collector, against the homes of the wealthy); the attitude of the privileged classes, of members of the Parlement: neutrality, refusal to intervene.</i>	

two

1 DECEMBER 1971

17

Summary of stages: (1) a popular revolt aimed at the State tax system; (2) evasion of nobility, bourgeoisie, and members of the Parlement; (3) the army as sole guarantor: towards the century of “armed justice”; (4) royal power introduces the new repressive system. ~ How to do the history of this new repressive system? Objection: earlier existence of the State apparatus of repression. Answer: continuous development of legislative institutions, but break within those concerning justice; on the one hand, attachment to the old system; on the other, production of a new system. In contrast with the post-revolutionary bourgeoisie which, behind the mask of the independence of justice, establishes a unitary repressive system of State, justice, and police at the same time. ~ Return to the Nu-pieds of Normandy. They take on the signs of power and assume its prerogatives. Rejection of the law by the imposition of a law. Rejection of justice as exercise of a justice. ~ The signs of this exercise of power: their name with reference to their “beggary”; their symbolic leader, chimerical personage; their orders “in the name of the King”. ~ The acts committed in this exercise of power (military, administrative, financial, of justice). ~ Repression is really carried out against a different power.

three

15 DECEMBER 1971

37

An “armed justice”: the repressive tactic as series of circumstantial operations; deferred doubling of the military by the civil: chronological gap between slow intervention by the army and the entry on the scene of the civil power. ~ Analysis in terms of relations of force: formation of an armed repressive apparatus, distinct from the body of the army, controlled by the civil State and not by the privileged ~ Analysis in terms of politico-military strategy: separation of town and country, of the people and bourgeoisie enabling the violent repression of popular strata, then a punitive treatment of the privileged and members of the Parlement. ~ Analysis in terms of manifestation of power: dramatization of power hiding the strategy pursued, designating the rebels as enemies of the king, therefore subject to the custom of war, and not as civil

delinquents. Each performs his role, and the Chancellor the role not of victor, but as dispenser of justice who discriminates and differentiates between the good and wicked.

four

22 DECEMBER 1971

57

Reminder: Analysis at three levels of the first episode of repression by armed justice (relations of force, strategic calculations, manifestations of power). ~ Development on the basis of the third level: a dramatization in four acts. (1) Royal power designates the population as "social enemy". (2) The local powers bring their submission but try to limit and moderate royal power: an application of the theory of the three checks. (3) The Chancellor's refusal and his invocation of the Final Judgment in his support: "the good will be rewarded, the wicked will be punished". (4) The privileged protect themselves by accusing "the low populace" and dividing it into good and wicked. ~ Dramatization which produces a redistribution of the repressive instruments and powers.

five

12 JANUARY 1972

67

I. Entry of the civil power into Rouen and formation of the visible body of the State. ~ The Chancellor goes beyond the traditional judicial rules and unites the orders of justice and military force: the State takes on a repressive power. ~ Appearance of that third purely repressive function of the State assured, independently of the King, by the Chancellor (member of the King's Council). Replacement of royal power and the absent king by a visible body of the State. The fiscal apparatus is doubled by a repressive apparatus. II. New forms of control without new institutions. ~ Questioning of local authorities: provisional suspensions. Provisional replacement of local institutions by commissioners. ~ Military measures and system of tax penalties in order to bind the privileged to their engagement. All in all, an unstable system of control which still depends upon feudal structures, anticipating the creation of a specialized repressive State apparatus.

six

19 JANUARY 1972

85

A remarkable system of repression for several reasons. I. Internal coherence: interplay of differentiated sanctions aiming to break the previous alliances of social groups; financial profit given to the privileged in return for maintenance of order; formation of a third (neither military nor juridical) instance as (juridico-military) administrative instrument of the State, but basic lack of a specific apparatus of repression. II. Visible precariousness: differentiated arming (problems of bourgeois militias and popular arming), ruinous intervention by the army; drop in income from property as from tax levies; rent/taxes antinomy; bringing two contradictions into play. III. Resolution of the rent/taxes antinomy and stabilization of the army. From 1640, setting up of a new institution and distinct repressive apparatus within the State apparatus (intendants of justice, police and finance), acting as administrative tribunal and exceptional jurisdiction; establishment of a centralized and local police; a levy on the "dangerous population", confinement and deportation. ~ Birth of the prison conjointly with birth of capitalism.

seven

26 JANUARY 1972

101

The failure of the repression carried out by the Chancellor Séguier and then the Fronde gave rise to the setting up of three new institutions: a centralized justice (intendants of justice); the police; a punitive system by removal from the population, confinement, deportation. In response to popular struggles, the repressive penal system produces the notion of delinquency: the penal system–delinquency couple as effect of the repressive system–sedition couple. ~ The new institutions do not replace the feudal institutions, they are juxtaposed to them. ~ The exercise of political power is linked to nascent capitalism. The new repressive system, conceived of as an element of protection of the feudal economy, is linked functionally to the development of the capitalist economy. It takes shape in the penal code and will be ratified at the end of the eighteenth century: production of the penalty/delinquency coding.

eight	2 FEBRUARY 1972	111
	<i>Opposition of the new repressive system to the old one: antagonism between processes which gives rise to the birth of justice as both a specific and a state controlled apparatus.</i> <i>I. History of the judicial apparatus in the eighteenth century: political struggles, operational conflicts, and determinant contradictions forged the different discourses of penality, crime, and penal justice. ~ Need to return to feudal justice and Germanic law. II. History of Germanic penal law. The juridical order defined by the rules of the dispute; the act of justice is not organized by reference to the truth, nor by the judicial instance, but through a regulated struggle. ~ Closure of war by payment of an indemnity (rachat), and not sanction for the offense. ~ The activity of judging as risk-taking, the danger of private war producing a system of assurances (oaths, compensations, pledges (gages)).</i>	
nine	9 FEBRUARY 1972	127
	<i>I. History of Germanic penal law (continued): its residues in penal law of the Middle Ages. (A) The accusatory procedure, the diffamatio. (B) The system of proof: a test which determines the winner. The truth is not at stake in the oaths, ordeals, and judicial duel. (C) Private war as modality of law in the Middle Ages. The dispute outside the judicial. II. History of the transformation into judicial penal system with public action and establishment of a truth of the crime. (A) Not simply due to the influence of Roman law or Christianity, it is inscribed rather in the interplay of relations of appropriation and relations of force. (B) Criminal justice carries out a significant economic levy and contributes to the circulation of wealth. ~ Elements of this circulation: pledges (gages), dues, fines, confiscation, compensation. ~ Consequences: circulation of wealth and concentration of political power. ~ General remarks: The penal system of the Middle Ages produces its major effects at the level of the levy of goods; the contemporary penal system, at the level of the removal of individuals; comparison: fiscal/carceral, exchange/exclusion, compensation/prisons.</i>	

- ten** **16 FEBRUARY 1972** **149**
- Distinction between medieval pre-State structures and the State apparatuses which replace them. Penal practice in the Middle Ages, which is inserted between civil dispute and violent despoilment, consists in a political-economic correlation; it redistributes property, wealth, and goods: it is the "joust of fortunes". ~ Fiscalization of justice. Importance of peace institutions and peace pacts (suspension of acts of private war, pacts, contracts; ritualized development). Pax et justitia, principle of peace councils. Social war falls under penalty. ~ System of penalty linked to the problem of the possession, concentration, and distribution of arms. ~ Crisis of the thirteenth to fourteenth century: toppling of feudalism; call for foreign mercenaries; seigneurs rely on royal justice. Application of a system with an anti-seditious function to the parliamentary apparatus and fiscal apparatus. Development of royal justice, as first form of an institutionalized power, into judicial State apparatus.*
- eleven** **23 FEBRUARY 1972** **167**
- I. Endogenous process. The function of peace institutions in the Middle Ages: 1/ constitution of a space of justitia guaranteed by the judiciary as public authority; 2/ constitution of better assured zones of taxation which double the procedure; 3/ distribution of arms, intervention of force, and formation and development of the professional army. Concentration, centralization, and virtual State takeover of justice. II. Exogenous processes. The fourteenth and fifteenth century crises and major social struggles transform justice. Important phenomena: 1/ the functioning of Parlement as center of every practice of justice; 2/ the king is justiciar as sovereign; 3/ Parlement becomes a component of a State apparatus.*
- twelve** **1 MARCH 1972** **183**
- Summary: crises and social struggles of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries lead to the centralization of royal power and the setting up of a royal justice which appears in the institution of a Parlement. Three characteristics of State*

justice: universal, compulsory, delegated. ~ Two other measures: 1/ The development of cases coming under the king: extension of his jurisdiction with, as effects, a new definition of the kingdom-State and a new dimension of penalty for breaches of public order. New domain of penalty which sanctions breaking a rule stated by the public power. 2/ Establishment of royal procurators: extension of their role to indictment, with the consequences that every crime is an offense against the public power, and the king becomes both judge and interested party. ~ Double effect on the functioning of the penal system: (1) Separation of the penal and the civil; (2) replacement of war and redress by obedience and punishment. Penalty is organized by reference to a political structure. Crime becomes an attack on the public power. Opposition between political crime and common law crime as central component of the penalty of the nineteenth century, concealing the political function of the penal system.

thirteen 8 MARCH 1972

197

I. After analysis of the function and power relations of penal justice in the Middle Ages, studying its knowledge effects: not in the sense of ideological operations, but of production of truth. ~ In Germanic law, the test establishes the superiority of one over the other. ~ In the new penal regime with royal procurators, the inquiry establishes the truth that makes it possible to pass from accusation to sentence. The inquiry as restoration of order. ~ The test is replaced by the truth established by witnesses and writing which records.

II. Complementary comments. Inquiry and confession (aveu) as privileged sources of the discovery of truth in the new penal regime. ~ Torture's point of insertion. ~ The system of legal proofs. Contrast between inquiry and measure. Measure as the instrument and form of a power of distribution; inquiry as instrument and form of a power of information. Inquiry-bureaucratic system in the Middle Ages. ~ Analysis of the types of extraction of surplus-power. Relation to the 1970-1971 lectures on "the will to know". Final comment on the appearance of the examination form in the eighteenth-nineteenth century. The birth of the human sciences.

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FOREWORD

MICHEL FOUCAULT TAUGHT AT the Collège de France from January 1971 until his death in June 1984 (with the exception of 1977 when he took a sabbatical year). The title of his chair was “The History of Systems of Thought”.

On the proposal of Jules Vuillemin, the chair was created on November 30, 1969 by the general assembly of the professors of the Collège de France and replaced that of “The History of Philosophical Thought” held by Jean Hyppolite until his death. The same assembly elected Michel Foucault to the new chair on April 12, 1970.¹ He was 43 years old.

Michel Foucault’s inaugural lecture was delivered on December 2, 1970.²

Teaching at the Collège de France is governed by particular rules. Professors must provide 26 hours of teaching a year (with the possibility of a maximum of half this total being given in the form of seminars³). Each year they must present their original research and this obliges them to change the content of their teaching for each course. Courses and seminars are completely open; no enrolment or qualification is required and the professors do not award any qualifications.⁴ In the terminology of the Collège de France, the professors do not have students, only auditors.

Michel Foucault’s courses were held every Wednesday from January to March. The huge audience made up of students, teachers, researchers

and the curious, including many who came from outside France, required two amphitheatres of the Collège de France. Foucault often complained about the distance between himself and his “public” and of how few exchanges the course made possible.⁵ He would have liked a seminar in which real collective work could take place and made a number of attempts to bring this about. In the final years he devoted a long period to answering his auditors’ questions at the end of each course.

This is how Gérard Petitjean, a journalist from *Le Nouvel Observateur*, described the atmosphere at Foucault’s lectures in 1975:

When Foucault enters the amphitheater, brisk and dynamic like someone who plunges into the water, he steps over bodies to reach his chair, pushes away the cassette recorders so he can put down his papers, removes his jacket, lights a lamp and sets off at full speed. His voice is strong and effective, amplified by the loudspeakers that are the only concession to modernism in a hall that is barely lit by light spread from stucco bowls. The hall has three hundred places and there are five hundred people packed together, filling the smallest free space ... There is no oratorical effect. It is clear and terribly effective. There is absolutely no concession to improvisation. Foucault has twelve hours each year to explain in a public course the direction taken by his research in the year just ended. So everything is concentrated and he fills the margins like correspondents who have too much to say for the space available to them. At 19.15 Foucault stops. The students rush towards his desk; not to speak to him, but to stop their cassette recorders. There are no questions. In the pushing and shoving Foucault is alone. Foucault remarks: “It should be possible to discuss what I have put forward. Sometimes, when it has not been a good lecture, it would need very little, just one question, to put everything straight. However, this question never comes. The group effect in France makes any genuine discussion impossible. And as there is no feedback, the course is theatricalized. My relationship with the people there is like that of an actor or an acrobat. And when I have finished speaking, a sensation of total solitude ...”⁶

Foucault approached his teaching as a researcher: explorations for a future book as well as the opening up of fields of problematization were formulated as an invitation to possible future researchers. This is why the courses at the Collège de France do not duplicate the published books.

They are not sketches for the books even though both books and courses share certain themes. They have their own status. They arise from a specific discursive regime within the set of Foucault's "philosophical activities." In particular they set out the program for a genealogy of knowledge/power relations, which are the terms in which he thinks of his work from the beginning of the 1970s, as opposed to the program of an archeology of discursive formations that previously orientated his work.⁷

The course also performed a role in contemporary reality. Those who followed his courses were not only held in thrall by the narrative that unfolded week by week and seduced by the rigorous exposition, they also found a perspective on contemporary reality. Michel Foucault's art consisted in using history to cut diagonally through contemporary reality. He could speak of Nietzsche or Aristotle, of expert psychiatric opinion or the Christian pastorate, but those who attended his lectures always took from what he said a perspective on the present and contemporary events. Foucault's specific strength in his courses was the subtle interplay between learned erudition, personal commitment, and work on the event.

*

The text of the course is followed by the summary published by the *Annuaire du Collège de France*. Foucault usually wrote these in June, some time after the end of the course. It was an opportunity for him to pick out retrospectively the intention and objectives of the course. It constitutes the best introduction to the course.

Each volume ends with a "context": It seeks to provide the reader with elements of the biographical, ideological, and political context, situating the course within the published work and providing indications concerning its place within the corpus used in order to facilitate understanding and to avoid misinterpretations that might arise from a neglect of the circumstances in which each course was developed and delivered.

*

No recordings of the lectures Michel Foucault gave for the 1971-1972 course have been found. This edition of *Penal Theories and Institutions* gives the transcript of the notes Foucault used as preserved by Daniel Defert and recently given to the Bibliothèque nationale de France. The principle of the transcription has been the most scrupulous respect for Foucault's notes, reproducing as much as possible the presentation of the

manuscript sheets, with its meaningful layout. We thank Nathalie Mauriac for her advice on the presentation of the course. The precise rules for editing the text are given before the first lecture.

Michel Foucault developed elements of this course on two specific occasions: in a lecture at the University of Minnesota on April 7, 1972 on “Ceremony, Theater, and Politics in the Seventeenth Century”, and in a series of lectures at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro from May 21 to 25, 1973 (published May 1974 in Brazil with the title “*A verdade et as formas jurídicas*”). The French translation of *A verdade e as formas jurídicas* was published in *Dits et Écrits*, volume II, no. 139 as, “La vérité et les formes juridiques”, and an English translation of this was published in *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, Volume Three, as “Truth and Juridical Forms”.

This volume is edited by Bernard E. Harcourt. Elisabetta Basso transcribed the manuscript under the supervision of Alessandro Fontana. The text has been fully checked, corrected, and edited by Daniel Defert and Bernard Harcourt on the basis of the original manuscript notes which are now kept in the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Claude-Olivier Doron edited the critical apparatus which contains many contextual elements including a note on how Michel Foucault’s analysis of the *Nu-pieds* sedition may be situated with regard to the debate between Boris Porchnev and Roland Mousnier (reproduced as an appendix to the “Course context”).

*

Those responsible for this edition would like to express their gratitude to Bruno Racine and the team of the manuscript department of the BNF, and in particular to Marie-Odile Germain, General Keeper of the Libraries, responsible for the “Manuscripts modernes et contemporains” collections, for having facilitated their access to the sources in conditions as excellent as those that Daniel Defert had previously provided for them.

The editors also benefited from exchanges with Yves-Marie Bercé, distinguished specialist of French popular movements in the seventeenth century. Albert Riguadière, distinguished historian law in the Middle Ages, who kindly helped us establish the bibliography for the eighth (2 February 1972) and subsequent lectures. Arnaud Teyssier provided us with his knowledge of Richelieu. We have also had enlightening exchanges with Jacques Krynen and Dominique Lecourt. Étienne

Balibar, who read the manuscripts of the lectures, offered us an analysis of the relations between this course, Marxism, and the work of Louis Althusser (also reproduced as an appendix to the “Course context”).

This volume brings to a close the publication of Michel Foucault’s courses at the Collège de France which began almost 20 years ago with the publication of “*Il faut défendre la société*” by Alessandro Fontana and Mauro Bertani.

*

This edition of the Collège de France courses was authorized by Michel Foucault’s heirs who wanted to be able to satisfy the strong demand for their publication, in France as elsewhere, and to do this under indisputably responsible conditions. The editors have tried to be equal to the degree of confidence placed in them.

FRANÇOIS EWALD AND ALESSANDRO FONTANA

Alessandro Fontana died on 17 February 2013 before being able to complete the edition of Michel Foucault’s lectures at the Collège de France, of which he was one of the initiators. Because it will maintain the style and rigor that he gave to it, the edition will continue to be published under his authority until its completion. —F.E.

NOTES

1. Michel Foucault concluded a short document drawn up in support of his candidacy with these words: "We should undertake the history of systems of thought." "Titres et travaux," in *Dits et Écrits, 1954-1988*, four volumes, eds. Daniel Defert and François Ewald (Paris: Gallimard, 1994) vol. 1, p. 846; English translation by Robert Hurley, "Candidacy Presentation: Collège de France" in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984, vol. 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997) p. 9.

2. It was published by Gallimard in May 1971 with the title *L'Ordre du discours*, Paris, 1971. English translation by Ian McLeod, "The Order of Discourse," in Robert Young, ed., *Untying the Text* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981).

3. This was Foucault's practice until the start of the 1980s.

4. Within the framework of the Collège de France.

5. In 1976, in the vain hope of reducing the size of the audience, Michel Foucault changed the time of his course from 17.45 to 9.00. See the beginning of the first lecture (7 January 1976) of "*Il faut défendre la société*". *Cours au Collège de France, 1976* (Paris: Gallimard/Seuil, 1997); English translation by David Macey, "*Society Must be Defended*." *Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-1976* (New York: Picador, 2003).

6. Gérard Petitjean, "Les Grands Prêtres de l'université française," *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 7 April 1975.

7. See especially, "Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire," in *Dits et Écrits*, vol. 2, p. 137; English translation by Donald F. Brouchard and Sherry Simon, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984, vol. 2: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed., James Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1998) pp. 369-392.



TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The lack of recordings for Foucault's 1971-1972 course at the Collège de France, and so having to work with a text based on what are his occasionally quite cryptic notes for the lectures, adds to the normal difficulties faced by the translator. The difficulties increase when the text contains numerous terms referring to French institutions and practices in the seventeenth century and earlier. Most of these institutions and practices are described at various points in the endnotes.

It seems likely that in the lectures themselves Foucault would have elaborated orally at greater length and in more detail regarding some of these practices than he does in his notes. The lack of his oral presentation adds a degree of uncertainty to the precise sense in which he employs certain terms. This is particularly the case for two important terms referring to practices for which, exceptionally, no account is provided in the endnotes: *engagement* and *gages*.

Foucault refers to "the feudal form of *engagement*". In its more restricted sense, *engagement* refers to a quasi-contractual, or exchange relationship between lord and vassal in which part of the former's domain is provisionally ceded or sold to someone, the *engagiste*, for private exploitation and profit. The *engagement* could be in the form of both physical property—a fief along with its dues and rents—and incorporeal property—offices, jurisdictions, public functions. Broadly speaking it was, on the one hand, a way to raise finance (especially by the king, for example), and, on the other, it was often the way for a bourgeois or member of the

lesser gentry to acquire a fief, become a noble, and/or purchase public authority. Based on this form, *engagement* refers more generally to a much wider historical field of quasi-contractual exchange between lord and vassal, in which privileges or benefits are 'exchanged' for obligatory undertakings, with penalties in cases of failure to perform the undertaking or *engagement*.

The term *gage* has a restricted sense of the sum paid annually to the purchaser of a venal office, or the latter's income from the purchase of an office. However, in some contexts it also has the more general sense of a pledge, in the sense of a surety or guarantee regarding an obligation (as in the sense of the English term 'gage').

The following abbreviations are used in the footnotes and endnotes:

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| DÉ, I-IV | <i>Dits et écrits, 1954-1988</i> , ed., D. Defert et F. Ewald, avec la collaboration de Jacques Lagrange (Paris: Gallimard, 1994) 4 volumes |
| “Quarto”, I | <i>Dits et écrits, 1954-1975</i> , ed., D. Defert et F. Ewald, avec la collaboration de Jacques Lagrange (Paris: Gallimard, “Quarto”, 2001) |
| “Quarto”, II | <i>Dits et écrits, 1976-1988</i> , ed., D. Defert et F. Ewald, avec la collaboration de Jacques Lagrange (Paris: Gallimard, “Quarto”, 2001) |
| EW, 1 | <i>The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984. Volume 1: Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth</i> , ed., Paul Rabinow (New York: New Press, 1997) |
| EW, 2 | <i>The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984. Volume 2: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology</i> , ed., James D. Faubion (New York: New Press, 1998) |
| EW, 3 | <i>The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume 3: Power</i> , ed., James D. Faubion (New York: New Press, 2000) |
| BNF | Collections of the Bibliothèque nationale de France |



RULES FOR EDITING THE TEXT

The principle of the transcription has been the most scrupulous respect for Foucault's manuscript, reproducing as much as possible the presentation of the manuscript sheets, with their meaningful layout. The editors take full responsibility for the presentation of the text (format and content).

The double pagination in the margin correspond, for the first number, to the pagination of the manuscript conserved at the BNF and, for the second number, to Foucault's manuscript pagination.

Important passages which have been crossed out in the manuscript have been restored in footnotes. Some indications on the state of the manuscript are also noted. Subdivisions (dashes and numbering) are those used by Foucault in the manuscript. The use of quotation marks reproduces those of the manuscript; passages underlined in the manuscript are indicated in footnotes.

Every intervention in the manuscript is indicated by square brackets. Footnotes clarify the editors' choices wherever they have encountered a difficulty.



INTRODUCTION: READ EVERYTHING^{*}

Arnold I. Davidson

Penal Theories and Institutions brings to a close the English language edition of Foucault's courses at the Collège de France. We all owe a deep debt of gratitude to Graham Burchell, who has translated all but the first volume of this series. Graham's extraordinary translations, combining philosophical depth and literary elegance, have set a new standard for the translation of Foucault, and, indeed, for the translation of French philosophical works more generally. When I first agreed to serve as the series editor of this project, I had no concrete idea how long it would take to publish these thirteen volumes nor how time-consuming it would be. After more than fifteen years of work, I am relieved to say that the remarkable richness of Foucault's courses justifies the time, sweat, and occasional tears that went into producing this edition. Who could have imagined a body of lectures that ranges from ancient Greek practices of truth-telling to contemporary economic neoliberalism, from medieval Christianity's organization of pastoral power to modern psychiatry's construction of abnormality, from the history of sexuality and marriage to the emergence of the punitive society? Whatever else one might say about Foucault, he never learned the common academic vice of being boring. Looking back over these courses, I am reminded of

^{*} All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated. I dedicate this introduction to the people who have most sustained me during the many years of my work on this project—Diane Brentari, Daniele Lorenzini, Roberto Righi and Bianca Torricelli.

Foucault's remarks in the "Introduction" to the second volume of his history of sexuality, *The Use of Pleasures*. He is speaking of the "quite simple" motive that drove him to undertake these studies:

It is curiosity—the only kind of curiosity, in any case, that is worth the trouble of being put into practice with a bit of obstinacy: not that curiosity that tries to assimilate what it is advisable to know, but that which allows one to detach oneself from oneself.¹

It is this detachment that provokes one's losing one's way or going astray in the search for knowledge (*l'égaré de celui qui connaît*), a thoroughly positive intellectual virtue in Foucault's eyes. This straying curiosity allows one to "think differently than one thinks and perceive differently than one sees," and thus to go on looking and reflecting.²

And Foucault adds, in a beautiful moment of self-description:

As to those for whom to create difficulties for themselves, to begin and begin again, to try, to be mistaken, to take everything up again from top to bottom, and still find the means to hesitate from one step to the next, as to those for whom, in short, to work while behaving with reserve and restlessness is tantamount to resignation, well we are not, it is obvious, from the same planet.³

The inhabitants of Foucault's planet do not yield to the temptation of static complacency, they are unafraid to get lost in the unknown, taking the chance, and the risk, of emerging with a genuinely different perspective.

In his last course at the Collège de France, at the very end of his final lecture, and after telling us that he has more to say, Foucault concludes:

But, well, it is too late. So, thank you.⁴

Quite apart from the retrospective pathos of these words, thanks to the continuing posthumous publication of his work, it was not too late for Foucault—his voice continues to resound—and it is most certainly not too late for us. The scholarly exegesis of Foucault's work will persist as long as scholars do. Yet surely it is time to think more intensively and systematically about the uses of Foucault. Rereading his work opens up new possibilities, not always envisioned by Foucault himself, and it is

the active creation of these new, Foucault-inspired possibilities that remains critical to our work. I am not at all surprised that some of the most accomplished Foucault scholars have also been the most creative users of his work. I am thinking, for example, of Daniele Lorenzini, Judith Revel and Frédéric Gros. With respect to Foucault, scholarly interpretation and productive use ought to go together. Foucault is not only a corpus, but also an attitude.

In the famous debate on “Philosophy and Truth,” in which Foucault participated, Georges Canguilhem scandalously argued that philosophies cannot be judged according to a criterion of truth and falsity. On Canguilhem’s view, philosophies can be great or small and narrow, but not true or false:

... perhaps a great philosophy is a philosophy that has left an adjective in popular language: the Stoics have given us stoic, Descartes has given us cartesian, Kant has given us kantian and the categorical imperative; otherwise put, there are philosophies that have indeed totalized the experience of an epoch, that have succeeded in being diffused into that which is not philosophy, into the modes of culture...and that which have had in this sense a direct impact on everything that one can call ordinary life, everyday life.⁵

Foucault has indeed bequeathed us “foucauldean”; it is not uncommon to hear people talk about the panoptic gaze or the repressive hypothesis who have no clear idea that these are terms of foucauldean provenance. Our modes of culture are suffused with Foucault. If these courses have helped to solidify Foucault’s adjectival status, their publication has been justly rewarded.

Anyone who attended Foucault’s courses felt the electricity of his lectures. His voice, his laugh, his gestures, his movements, even his pauses, all worked together to produce his unforgettable *éclat*. Listening to and reading Foucault was (and still is) an experience that left us with those vibrations of intensity, a sort of, as it were, physical enthusiasm, that revived one from his or her intellectual torpor.⁶ It was as if his very presence was a field of energy that agitated one into action. Gilles Deleuze once remarked that when Foucault entered a room, the atmosphere changed—that is what I think of as the Foucault effect.

Foucault did not like to talk directly about himself, but one of those moments that I think best describes his own attitude occurs in his *homage* to Gaston Bachelard. Entitled “Piéger sa propre culture” (“Trapping one’s own culture”), and less than a page long, this text is—and in more than one way—a miniature masterpiece:

What very much strikes me about Bachelard is that, so to speak, he plays against his own culture with his own culture. In traditional teaching—and not only in traditional teaching, in the culture we receive—there are a certain number of established values, things that one should say and others that one should not say, works that are respectable and then others that are negligible, the great and the unimportant; there is, in short, a hierarchy, this entire celestial world with its Thrones, Dominations, Angels, and Archangels!... All of this is very hierarchical. Well, Bachelard undertakes his own detachment (*se déprendre*) from this entire set of values, and he brings about his own detachment from it by reading everything and playing off everything against everything.

He makes one think, if you like, of those skillful chess players who succeed in taking the important pieces with the little pawns. Bachelard does not hesitate to oppose to Descartes a minor philosopher or a scientist... a scientist of the eighteenth century, well, a bit ... a bit imperfect or whimsical. He does not hesitate to put into the same analysis the greatest poets and then a little minor one that he will have discovered like that, by chance, at a second-hand bookseller... And while doing this, it is not at all for him a matter of reconstituting the great global culture which is that of the West, or of Europe, or of France. It is not a matter of showing that it is always the same great spirit that lives, swarms everywhere, that finds itself the same; I have the impression, on the contrary, that he is trying to trap his own culture with its cracks, its deviancies, its minor phenomena, its little discordancies, its false notes.⁷

Foucault himself never inhabited a celestial world of fixed values; he did not believe in an immobile or intrinsic hierarchy, one determined, for example, by the intrinsic value of the texts one reads—Descartes *versus* a whimsical eighteenth-century scientist. In some contexts a “minor”

figure or an ordinary, seemingly banal, set of texts may be more significant than the works of the “great” philosophers. Reading everything and playing everything off against everything ensures that the hierarchy is not already established, given in advance, frozen in stone; when one chooses to discuss certain texts and particular events, and not others, as one inevitably does, it is due to one’s questions, one’s diagnosis, one’s perspective or angle of thought, and not because of some purportedly fixed hierarchy of values. *Historie de la folie à l’âge classique* and *Surveiller et punir*, for instance, are full of so-called “minor” events whose status is overturned in Foucault’s account: the minor becomes major. Foucault played history against philosophy and vice versa. He challenged philosophical claims with historical archives, and subjected supposedly ‘bare’ historical events to philosophical diagnosis and analysis. He was, at one and the same time, both a philosopher and an historian, or, as he sometimes liked to say, neither a philosopher nor an historian. In the contemporary academic world, Foucault was *atopos*, unclassifiable and disconcerting. No doubt that that is one of the reasons why his work is loved by some and despised by others, a source of both admiration and anathema.

I distinctly remember one California evening when, over dinner, a quite unremarkable pizza, Foucault smiled and said to me: “I have only one methodological rule.” I was a young Assistant Professor and I took a deep breath of youthful naiveté, and asked: “Well...” Foucault’s smile became a laugh, and he replied: “Read everything.” I didn’t realize the seriousness, the full significance, of that remark until much later; it was not a mere witticism nor a vague personal aspiration, but a genuine, if ideal, rule of method. Foucault, like Bachelard, lived by this precept. We can see how central it was to his work by focusing on an extraordinary moment at the end of the conversation, “Le jeu de Michel Foucault.” We can discern a person’s deepest commitments by seeing what provokes his or her shame. At the very conclusion of this discussion, a question comes up about the date of the invention of the modern baby bottle. Foucault confesses to not knowing this date. When he is given the answer, he responds with these forever memorable words:

I renounce all my public and private functions! Shame rains down on me! I cover myself with ashes! I did not know the date [of the invention] of the baby bottle!⁸

I can imagine no other philosopher who would be ashamed of not knowing such a date. Even Foucault could not read everything, but he inflicted a price on himself for this failure. This is the foucauldean attitude that I find not only singular but exemplary, and that I continuously admire as I read through his courses.

In *Pirkei Avot*, a tractate of the Mishnah, one finds the following remark:

Ben Zoma says: Who is wise? He who learns from every person...⁹

If we pursue this idea of being wise, Foucault radiated wisdom. He learned from everyone, every book, every event. His life was, until the very end, a model of transformative knowledge:

But what therefore is philosophy today—I mean philosophical activity—if it is not the critical work of thought on itself? And if it does not consist, instead of legitimating what one already knows, in undertaking to know how and to what extent it would be possible to think differently... The “essay”—which one should understand as a modifying test of oneself in the game of truth, and not as the simplifying appropriation of others for the ends of communication—is the living body of philosophy, as long as philosophy is still now what it was in the past, that is an “asceticism,” an exercise of oneself, in thought.¹⁰

Testing and transforming himself, Foucault also put us to the test. Whether, and how, we respond to his example is a constant challenge that remains for each of us: the restless energy of asceticism or the somnolent inertia of self-satisfaction—restiveness or repose.

NOTES

1. Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité 2, L'usage des plaisirs* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1954) p. 15.
2. Ibid., pp. 15-16.
3. Ibid., p. 14.
4. Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1983-1984* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) p. 338.
5. Michel Foucault et al, Philosophie et vérité" in *Dits et écrits I, 1954-1975* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2001) pp. 488-489.
6. I have in mind here the opening pages of Michel Foucault, "La vie des hommes infâmes" in *Dits et écrits II, 1976-1988* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2001) pp. 237-239.
7. Michel Foucault, "Piéger sa propre culture" in *Dits et écrits I, 1954-1975*, op. cit. p. 1250.
8. Michel Foucault, "Le jeu de Michel Foucault" in *Dits et écrits II, 1976-1988*, op. cit. p. 329.
9. *Pirkei Avot* (Brooklyn: Artscroll Mesorah Series, 1989) 4,1.
10. Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité 2, L'usage des plaisirs*, op. cit. p. 16. On a related theme, see my essay "Hilary Putnam: cambiar de idea como ejercicio espiritual" in Arnold I. Davidson and Hilary Putnam, *Una espiritualidad no dogmática* (Barcelona: Ediciones Alpha Decay, 2017).



24 NOVEMBER 1971

Methodological principle: analysis of the penal system (penal theory, institutions and practice) to be set in the context of systems of repression in order to throw light on the historical development of moral, sociological, and psychological notions; political crime and common law crime. ~ Historical object: to study the repression of popular riots at the beginning of the seventeenth century in order to trace the birth of the State; the penal ritual deployed by the Chancellor

Séguier against the uprising of the Nu-pieds (Barefeet) in Normandy (1639). ~ The Nu-pieds uprising: an anti-tax riot against a system of power (against the tax collector, against the homes of the wealthy); the attitude of the privileged classes, of members of the Parlement: neutrality, refusal to intervene.

No introduction

[1/-]

- The reason for these lectures?
 - One has only to open one's eyes.
 - those who may find this distasteful will find the same thing in what I will be talking about.¹
- The object:
 - penal theory and institution
 - a missing third term: practice
 - seventeenth and eighteenth centuries
- The method:
 - to approach it neither on the basis of penal theories
 - nor on the basis of penal legislation or institutions
 - but to situate both of these in their overall operation, that is to say in systems of repression:
 - double-sided systems:
 - who represses and who is repressed
 - the means of repression and what is repressed