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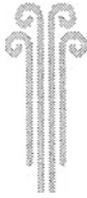
MICHEL FOUCAULT



Subjectivity and Truth

LECTURES AT THE COLLÈGE DE FRANCE

1980-1981



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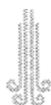
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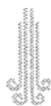
CONTENTS

Foreword: François Ewald and Alessandro Fontana	ix	
Abbreviations	xv	
one	7 JANUARY 1981	1
<i>The fable of the elephant in Saint Francis of Sales. ∪ Versions of the fable in the Middle Ages and sixteenth century. ∪ The Physiologus. ∪ Versions of the fable in Greek and Latin antiquity. ∪ The endpoint with Aristotle. ∪ The “subjectivity and truth” relationship: philosophical, positivist, historico-philosophical formulations of the problem. ∪ Subjectivity as historical relationship to the truth, and truth as historical system of obligations. ∪ Principles of monogamous sexual ethics. ∪ The privileged historical question.</i>		
two	14 JANUARY 1981	25
<i>Return to the fable of the elephant. ∪ The arts of living: typology and evolution. ∪ Mathēsis, meletē, askēsis: relationship to others, the truth, and oneself. ∪ Notes on the concepts of “paganism,” “Judeo-Christianity,” “capitalism,” as categories of self-analysis of Western societies. ∪ Problem of the pre-existence of “Christian sexual morality” in Stoicism.</i>		
three	21 JANUARY 1981	47
<i>The question of the relations between subjectivity and truth and the problem of the dream. ∪ The oneirocriticism of Artemidorus.</i>		

- ∪ *The ethical system of sexual acts through the analysis of dreams.*
 ∪ *Distinction between dreams-rêves and dreams-songes.* ∪ *The economic and social signification of dreams.* ∪ *The social-sexual continuum.* ∪ *Sexual relations in accordance with nature and the law.* ∪ *Sexual relations contrary to the law.* ∪ *Sexual relations contrary to nature.* ∪ *Principle of the naturalness of penetration.*
- four** 28 JANUARY 1981 75
The ethical perception of aphrodisia. ∪ *Principle of social-sexual isomorphism and principle of activity.* ∪ *Valorization of marriage and definition of adultery.* ∪ *Modern experience of sexuality: localization of sexuality and division of the sexes.* ∪ *Penetration as natural and non-relational activity.* ∪ *The discrediting of passive pleasure.* ∪ *Paradox of the effeminate womanizer.* ∪ *Problematization of the relationship with boys.* ∪ *The desexualized pedagogical erotics.*
- five** 4 FEBRUARY 1981 97
Process of valorization and illusion of the code. ∪ *Experience of the flesh and codification.* ∪ *The philosophers' new sexual ethics: hyper-valorization of marriage and devalorization of pleasure.* ∪ *Comparative advantages and disadvantages of marriage.* ∪ *Should a philosopher marry?* ∪ *The negative answer of the Cynics and Epicureans.* ∪ *The duty of marriage in the Stoics.* ∪ *The exception of marriage for the philosopher in the present catastasis, according to Epictetus.*
- six** 11 FEBRUARY 1981 123
The kata phusin character of marriage. ∪ *Xenophon's Oeconomicus: study of the speech of Ischomachus to his young wife.* ∪ *The classical ends of marriage.* ∪ *The naturalness of marriage according to Musonius Rufus.* ∪ *The desire for community.* ∪ *The couple or the herd: the two modes of social being according to Hierocles.* ∪ *The relationship to the spouse or the friend in Aristotle: differential intensities.* ∪ *The form of the conjugal bond: organic unity.*

- seven** 25 FEBRUARY 1981 147
The new economy of aphrodisia. ∪ *Traditional mistrust of sexual activity: religious restrictions.* ∪ *Double relationship of sexuality: symmetry with death, incompatibility with the truth.* ∪ *Sexual activity and philosophical life.* ∪ *The medical description of the sexual act.* ∪ *Comparison of the sexual act and epileptic crisis.* ∪ *Christian transformation of the death-truth-sex triangle.* ∪ *Consequences of the conjugalization of sexual pleasure in the first two centuries CE in philosophical texts; the man-woman symmetry; objectivation of matrimonial sexuality.*
- eight** 4 MARCH 1981 175
The three great transformations of sexual ethics in the first centuries CE. ∪ *A reference text: Plutarch's Erōtikos.* ∪ *Specificity of Christian experience.* ∪ *Plan of The Dialogue on Love.* ∪ *The comic situation.* ∪ *The young boy's place: central and position of passivity.* ∪ *The portrait of Ismenodora as pederast woman.* ∪ *The break with the classical principles of the ethics of aphrodisia.* ∪ *The transfer of the benefits of the pederastic relationship to within marriage.* ∪ *The prohibition of love of boys: unnatural and without pleasure.* ∪ *The condition of acceptability of pederasty: the doctrine of the two loves.* ∪ *Plutarch's establishment of a single chain of love.* ∪ *The final discredit of love of boys.* ∪ *The wife's agreeable consent to her husband.*
- nine** 11 MARCH 1981 203
The new ethics of marriage. ∪ *Evolution of matrimonial practices: the historians' point of view.* ∪ *Institutional publicization, social extension, transformation of the relationship between spouses.* ∪ *The evidence of writers: the poems of Statius and Pliny's letters.* ∪ *Games of truth and reality of practices.*
- ten** 18 MARCH 1981 227
The problem of redundant discourse (discours en trop). ∪ *The Christian re-appropriation of the Hellenistic and Roman*

	<i>matrimonial code. √ Problematization of the relation between discourse and reality. √ First explanation: representative reduplication. √ Four characteristics of the game of veridiction in relation to reality: supplementary, pointless, polymorphous, efficient. √ Second explanation: ideological disavowal. √ Third explanation: universalizing rationalization</i>	
eleven	25 MARCH 1981	249
	<i>The spread of the matrimonial model in the Hellenistic and Roman period. √ The nature of the discourse on marriage: tekhnai peri bion. √ Definition of tekhnē and bios. √ The three lives. √ Christian (or modern) subjectivity and Greek bios. √ From paganism to Christianity: breaks and continuities. √ Incompatibilities between the old system of valorization and the new code of conduct. √ Adjustment through subjectivation: caesura of sex and self-control.</i>	
twelve	1 APRIL 1981	269
	<i>Situation of the arts of living at the point of articulation of a system of valorization and a model of behavior. √ The target-public of techniques of self: competitive aristocracies. √ Historical transformation of the procedures of the distribution of power: court and bureaucracy. √ Re-elaboration of the principle of activity and socio-sexual isomorphism in marriage. √ Splitting of sex and doubling of self on self. √ Cultural consequence: fantasy of the prince's debauchery. √ Problem of the government of self of the prince. √ Subjectivation and objectivation of aphrodisia. √ The birth of desire.</i>	
Course summary		293
Course context		301
Index of Concepts and Notions		317
Index of Name		329



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 30 November 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 12 April 1970.¹ He was 43 years old.

Michel Foucault’s inaugural lecture was delivered on 2 December 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 seminars).³ 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 student but 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.



With their development and refinement in the 1970s, Foucault's desk was quickly invaded by cassette recorders. The courses—and some seminars—have thus been preserved.

This edition is based on the words delivered in public by Foucault. It gives a transcription of these words that is as literal as possible.⁸ We would have liked to present it as such. However, the transition from an oral to a written presentation calls for editorial intervention: at the very least it requires the introduction of punctuation and division into paragraphs. Our principle has been always to remain as close as possible to the course actually delivered.

Summaries and repetitions have been removed whenever it seemed to be absolutely necessary. Interrupted sentences have been restored and faulty constructions corrected. Suspension points indicate that the recording is inaudible. When a sentence is obscure there is a conjectural integration or an addition between square brackets. An asterisk directing the reader to the bottom of the page indicates a significant divergence between the notes used by Foucault and the words actually uttered. Quotations have been checked and references to the texts used

are indicated. The critical apparatus is limited to the elucidation of obscure points, the explanation of some allusions and the clarification of critical points. To make the lectures easier to read, each lecture is preceded by a brief summary that indicates its principle articulations.

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” for which the course editors are responsible. 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.

Subjectivity and Truth, the course delivered in 1981, is edited by Frédéric Gros.

A new aspect of Michel Foucault’s “œuvre” is published with this edition of the Collège de France courses.

Strictly speaking it is not a matter of unpublished work, since this edition reproduces words uttered publicly by Foucault. The written material Foucault used to support his lectures could be highly developed, as this volume attests.

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.

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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, ed., 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 *Untying the Text*, ed., Robert Young, (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. Bouchard 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.
 8. We have made use of the recordings made by Gilbert Burlet and Jacques Lagrange in particular. These are deposited in the Collège de France and the Institut Mémoires de l'Édition Contemporaine.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in the endnotes:

- DE*, I-IV, *Dits et écrits, 1955-1988*, ed., D. Defert and F. Ewald avec la collaboration de Jacques Lagrange (Paris: Gallimard, 1994) 4 volumes.
- “Quarto,” I *Dits et écrits, 1954-1975*, ed., D. Defert and F. Ewald avec la collaboration de Jacques Lagrange (Paris: Gallimard, “Quarto,” 2001).
- “Quarto,” II *Dits et écrits, 1976-1988*, ed., D. Defert and F. Ewald avec la collaboration de Jacques Lagrange (Paris: Gallimard, “Quarto,” 2001).
- 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).