

REVIEW SYMPOSIUM

The Christian Art of Being Governed

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ABSTRACT: Like all previously published volumes of his lectures, the content of *The Government of the Living* defies brief summary. It shows us Foucault in 1980 mapping out a major new phase in his work in terms that complicate our existing understanding of his unfinished project. My review looks in turn at the two parts of the course: an unusually lengthy discussion of method and heuristics, followed by a tightly focused study of early Christian regimes of truth. I suggest that the complex opening theoretical reflections in these lectures go well beyond mapping the course of the immediately following historical analysis. They need to be seen in coordination with other conceptual innovations introduced over the following years, putting a task that Foucault calls here a “history of the power of truth” on his agenda alongside, and in integral connection with the previously defined tasks of a history of governmentality and a history of the subject. A newly published discussion in Berkeley later in 1980 adds crucial context to these Paris lectures, spelling out the linkage of structures of subjectivation to governability and of penitential ascetics to pastoral power. Taken together, the later books and lectures can now be seen to establish a framework of what I suggest we can call “alethic” or “aletheological” analysis, analysing and mapping across the span of Western history the modes of engagement of life and truth, with a view to enabling a renewed analysis of the political present.

Keywords: alethurgy; force of truth; regime of truth; government; governmentality; anarcheology

To read these lectures¹ in context, we need to rid ourselves of some assumptions. There are several versions in Foucault's later writing and teaching of a new overall theme or scheme of his work — the study of technologies of the self, considered alongside and together with technologies of knowledge and power (1982); the tri-axial model of the engagements of philosophy with knowledge, ethics, and politics (1983); the project of a history of problematisations (1983-4). Beginning with the ill-judged invention of a 'final Foucault', a large amount of tendentious interpretation has been created by commentators' resolute assumption that the last things

¹ Michel Foucault, *On the Government of the Living: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1979-1980* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). In text references refer to this work, and it will be referred to in shorthand as *GL*.

Foucault lived to say were his intended last word on the topics in question. There is no reason to impose such a terminal status on any of the above mentioned conceptions. There is no final word and no definitive schema. All the evidence and precedent indicates that if Foucault had not died in 1984, his thinking would have evolved further in unpredicted and unpredictable directions—though nothing prohibits us from making what we can of any available hints on where he might have been heading. As far as the 1980 volume is concerned, it marks the point where antiquity and Christian patristics become the exclusive overt topic of his lectures for the short remainder of his lifetime, but there is no simple and neat way to encapsulate what this event means in terms of the bigger picture questions mentioned above.

Foucault doesn't tell us how his theme for this year relates to the history of governmentality, which he had described as the theme of his previous two years courses. There is a displacement, but the audience is left to work out for ourselves what it is. Foucault does not use the term "governmentality" in the 1980 course, except very fleetingly in the opening lecture. Is "government of men (sic) though truth" an intended synonym or a preferred substitute for "governmentality"? We don't have enough information to answer with precision, but I suspect that it is neither.

Foucault's 1980 lectures sprang a bigger than usual surprise on his faithful and numerous College de France audience with his laconic announcement (6th February 1980, 103) that the lectures of that year would focus on early Christian baptism, penitence, and spiritual direction. I remember hearing one of the lectures on baptism, speaking to Foucault afterwards, and confessing to finding the Patristic subject-matter recondite and challenging (the challenge, in my case, intensified by the somewhat primitive audio relay of his lecture from the packed amphitheatre into an equally packed overflow auditorium). Foucault was visibly pleased by my feedback, hoping that it presaged a reduction in the audience numbers his lectures had been attracting. This hope was not fulfilled.

Today's reader will be likely to feel less disoriented at this turn in Foucault's work, thanks to successive publications since the early 80s which have made us familiar with the later direction of his research, which he termed, in introductory remarks at the start of his last lecture series in 1984, his "Greco-Latin trip." Events have made us more sensitive to the present relevance of the history of religion, while a golden period of historical writing has given us the means to be better informed. It was, of course, far from Foucault's intention that this five-year excursion would continue indefinitely, or that it would be the final phase of his researches. In that same opening 1984 lecture, Foucault promised his Paris audience that he would bring the 'trip' to a close during that course, in order to revisit "some contemporary problems," "questions like those I dealt with previously [and] to which I would now like to return, that is to say the analysis of certain practices and institutions in modern society." As often, things did not go according to plan: in his last lecture, Foucault was still immersed in Late Antiquity, discussing Christian *parresia*, and had indeed just suggested that he might move on in 1985 to look further at Christian asceticism—that is, to continue into a later period the themes of *GL*. Paul Rabinow has recalled that Foucault spoke of the possibility of moving on to the study of Byzantine Greek materials—a plan that seems

understandable when one recalls the importance of the East/West, Catholic/Orthodox Christian bifurcation in Foucault's 1978 discussions of pastoral power; contemporary East/West issues were also of active political concern to Foucault during these years.² Meanwhile in Berkeley, Foucault was due to start directing a set of PhD projects covering the biopolitics and governmentality of the American New Deal, fascism, and soviet communism.³

We now have, or will soon have, a rich if still incomplete intertextuality of materials to help plot and locate Foucault's shift of direction in 1980 and the purposes of his work in the following years. These include, as well as the published volumes of the 1981-84 Paris courses (only the first of which still awaits translation) the lectures given the following winter at Louvain, now published and translated as *Wrong-Doing, Truth-Telling*; the Dartmouth/Berkeley lectures *About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self*, now available with an important, recently published discussion session; the talk on "Sexuality and Solitude"; the seminar and discussion on "Technologies of the self"; the later separate publications on "The Combat of Chastity" and "Writing the Self"; the Berkeley lectures on parresia, published as *Fearless Speech*, and a recently published Grenoble lecture from late 1983 on the same theme.

We are also now in a position to see *GL* as the largest installment in a series of strategically important treatments in Foucault's lectures of Christian materials and themes: beginning with some material on inquisition in the Paris lectures of 1972 (due for publication in spring 2015) and further developed in the 1973 Brazil lectures "Truth and Juridical Power," and the Paris lectures of 1974 (communal forms of discipline and pedagogy)—themes later revisited in *Discipline and Punish*, with interesting remarks on the "practice of direction," 1975 (confession and spiritual direction), followed by discussion in *The History of Sexuality 1* and 1978 (pastoral power), along with the brief, highly influential lecture "What is Critique?," and the recap given in later 1978 to an American audience in the Tanner Lectures); followed after the 1980 lectures by discussions and comparative references, of various extent, in each of the four following courses, plus a number of relevant comments in later interviews, notably those with Paul Rabinow. This set of materials invites, if it does not compel, exploration of how far Foucault's work can be seen to provide an integrated, overall analysis of Christianity, and to reflect how far the consideration of Christianity *per se* or *in toto* is essential to Foucault's overall intellectual project. The most substantial and erudite contribution to this discussion to date has been the book by Philippe Chevallier *Michel Foucault et le Christianisme*,⁴ based on intensive pre-publication study of the 1980 course notes and

² Oleg Kharkhordin's remarkable study *The Collective and the Individual in Russia; A Study of Practices* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), based on a Berkeley PhD co-supervised by Paul Rabinow, draws on key ideas from *GL* to propose an Orthodox genealogy for Soviet technologies of the individual and the social.

³ Stephen Kotkin, *The Magnetic Mountain; Stalinism as a Civilisation* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995); David Horn, *Social Bodies: Science, Reproduction, and Italian Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

⁴ Philippe Chevallier, *Michel Foucault et le Christianisme* (Lyon: ENS Editions, Lyon 2011).

transcripts, published at around the same time as the lectures, and extensively referenced by Michel Senellart in his editorial apparatus. This set of questions—does Foucault have an overall take on Christianity, does he provide a distinctive way of analysing Christianity, and how far is his engagement with Christianity essential or crucial to his project?—have been further addressed in a series of thoughtful papers by both Philippe Chevallier and Michel Senellart,⁵

Alongside or behind this considerable body of available material, at least two key sources remain, for the time being at least, inaccessible: the manuscripts of *La chair et le corps* (1978) and *Les Aveux de la Chair* (c 1983), respectively the discarded second volume of the originally planned *History of Sexuality*, and the unpublished manuscript of the scheduled fourth and final volume of the revamped *History of Sexuality*, announced as forthcoming at the time of the publication of volumes 2 and 3 shortly before Foucault's death.

La chair et le corps was reported to have been destroyed, but at least one chapter draft is known to survive and its content is briefly discussed in Chevallier's book. It now appears that the entire manuscript—which was understood to focus on developments in the technique of Catholic confession and spiritual direction in the Counter-Reformation period—may survive in draft. Further information on this should emerge following the recent acquisition of Foucault's papers by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF). The BNF has confirmed that its holdings include the manuscript of *Les aveux de la chair*. Foucault's heirs are understood, in the light of Foucault's instructions, to have hitherto decided against publishing this document. Michel Senellart in preparing his edition of *GL*, had access to Foucault's lecture notes and other relevant manuscript material, but it appears from his “Course Context” that he was not able to consult *Les Aveux de la Chair*. Writing elsewhere he has stated that the content and significance of *GL* cannot be fully appreciated without access to Foucault's concurrent work addressing the same authors and historical period in the history of sexuality—without, that is to say, publishing *Les aveux de la chair*. I understand that editors working more recently on the forthcoming Pléiade edition of Foucault works and on the separate editions of some texts have now begun to be able to access and

⁵ Philippe Chevallier, “Foucault et les sources patristiques,” *Cahiers de l’Herne*, 95 (Paris: Édition de l’Herne, 2011); Philippe Chevallier, “Foucault et le ‘soi’ chrétien,” *Astérian*, 11 (2013). Available online at: <http://asterion.revues.org/2403>; Philippe Chevallier, “Étudier l’Église comme ‘gouvernementalité,’” *Bulletin du centre d’études médiévales d’Auxerre*, Hors-série, no. 7 (2013). Available online at: <http://cem.revues.org/12874>; Philippe Chevallier, “Vers l’éthique; La notion de ‘régime de vérité’ dans le cours Du gouvernement des vivants,” in Daniele Lorenzini, Ariane Revel and Arianna Sforzini (eds.), *Foucault : éthique et vérité, 1980-1984* (Paris: Vrin, 2013); M. Senellart “La pratique de la direction de conscience,” in F. Gros and Carlo Lévy (eds.), *Foucault et la philosophie antique* (Paris: Kimé, 2003); M. Senellart, “Verite et subjectivite: une autre histoire du christianisme?” in Herve Oulc’hen (ed.), *Usages de Foucault* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2014); M. Senellart, “Le christianisme dans l’optique de la gouvernementalité: l’invention de l’obéissance,” in D. Boquet, B. Dufal, and P. Labey (eds.), *Une histoire au présent; Les historiens et Foucault* (Paris: CNRS, 2013), 205-224; M. Senellart, “Le cours de 1980, Du gouvernement des vivants, dans la perspective de l’Histoire de la sexualité,” in D. Lorenzini, A. Revel, A. Sforzini (eds.), *Foucault : éthique et vérité, 1980-1984* (Location: J. Vrin, 2013), 31-51.

reference some of the major unpublished manuscripts. Researchers are beginning to undertake and present studies of some of these texts. This is clearly a welcome and promising development.

So much by way of some contexts, both the known knowns and the known unknowns. I will look below at these lectures' political context, concerns, and the import of the lectures.

Legitimation, truth and method: “No hegemony without alethurgy”

It has been noticed that Foucault was often in the custom early in a year's lectures to situate its theme within the framework of his overall project, while at the same time proposing some overarching remarks on method and programme, which not infrequently introduced a certain programmatic shift in relation to his preceding work. In 1976 he compares his trajectory to the undersea wanderings of the cachalot, in 1979 to the sideways gait of the cuttlefish. 1980 is a vintage year in these terms.

In the now already considerable body of commentaries on the 80s lectures—often dating from well before their French publication—remarkably little appears to have been written about the first lecture of the 1980 course. It is noticeable, and in the circumstances understandable, that Michel Senellart starts his editorial overview of the course contents with lecture 2. Lecture 1 nevertheless contain some remarks—some of which are revisited and elaborated in the fourth and fifth lectures—that are of some potential significance for understanding both the evolution of Foucault's project and its overall terms.

GL has an opening almost as arresting as those of *The Order of Things* or *Discipline and Punish*: the story of the Roman emperor Septimius Severus and his audience chamber with its dome depicting the aspect of the stars at the moment of his birth, foretelling his destiny to rule. Lectures 2 to 4 then provide a further, more extended set-piece, the analysis of *Oedipus Rex*, which revisits and reiterates, often in detail, an analysis presented a decade earlier, but with some significant revision in terms of its conclusion. This is followed by a further, dense and intense methodological discussion, before Foucault embarks in lecture 5 on his analysis of the Christian regime of truth composed on the rituals of baptism, penitence and monastic direction. The content of this whole preliminary section of the course is less familiar to us from other sources and previous discussion, so I seek to give it closer attention here. It may be useful first to enumerate, (with page references) and rapidly summarise the key points of this section; I shall then comment more fully on some of the points.

1. (1-11) Foucault introduces the historical anecdote about the Roman emperor Septimius Severus (very possibly prompted by its mention in an article by Denise Grodzinsky, which he goes on to cite). This inspires him to coin the part-neologism “alethurgy” (manifestation of truth) and to put forward the hypothesis that every form of “hegemony” (accepted exercise of sovereignty) depends on the existence an accompanying form of “alethurgy.”
2. (11-13) Foucault says that his recent work (in effect since the introduction of the notion of governmentality in 1978) has been moving away from the framework of power-knowledge to

the framework of what he calls “the government of human beings through truth.” This change comprises two linked parts: the shift from the notion of power to the notion of government (accomplished in the previous two years' lectures), and a shift from knowledge to truth, which he proposes to develop here. Foucault says he thinks this shift is as important as his previous shift from the theory of ideology to the perspective of power/knowledge, although he at once downplays the radicality of the second shift. We do not in fact get here a full account of what was wrong with the power/knowledge approach, or how the substantive analyses it had generated would be better treated by different means. Nor, I think, do we get here a full account of what an overall framework of analysis in terms of “government through truth” would look like. But from remarks later and elsewhere it is evident that the shift from power to government is intended to help shift away from a persisting perception of power as involving pure domination towards a perspective where the default model is action on (free) action, and that the shift from knowledge to truth is intended to highlight a non-utilitarian cognitive component over and above the purely instrumental functioning of knowledge in its coupling with power. This idea is amplified in his following remarks.

3. (13-17) Foucault presents five historical exemplars of systems of coupled hegemony and alethurgy, each associated with an eponymous author: Botero (rule in accordance with the truths of reason of state), Quesnay (rule in accordance with the truth of physiocratic political economy), Saint-Simon (rule by technicians, in accordance with the truth of social science), Rosa Luxemburg (capitalist rule in accordance with the suppression of truth about capitalism), Solzhenitsyn (socialist rule by the naked truth of terror). Foucault does not dwell here at length on these examples, which offer a strikingly heterogeneous set of possible relations between truth and sovereignty.

4. (17) Foucault makes a remark in response to those who doubt whether governmental power really has need of alethurgy: “It is often said that, in the final analysis, there is something like a kernel of violence behind all relations of power and that if one were to strip power of its showy garb one would find the naked game of life and death. Maybe. But can there be power without showy garb?”⁶

5. (23-74) In lectures 2, 3 and 4 Foucault presents a new, “alethurgic” reading of Sophocles' tragedy *Oedipus Rex*, which he had previously discussed on several occasions in the early 70s.

⁶ Foucault's implied answer to his question would seem to be no. This might seem to confer a paradoxical status on the case of contemporary Soviet power, which he has just identified precisely as one of naked terror. Foucault was not, in 1980, predicting the imminent fall of the Soviet system — nor was anyone else. In his 1979 lectures, he had characterised both Soviet and National Socialist regimes as systems of party government. Stephen Kotkin (*The Magnetic Mountain*, 290ff), whose book is dedicated to Foucault, identifies the key functions of the Soviet party as 'inquisition' and 'verification': testing and ensuring the production of true socialist life.

The earlier reading had been a prologue to analyses of power-knowledge, the repressed and hidden truth of Western political culture; this one focuses instead on the necessity of the sovereignty-alethurgy linkage, and the new and essential function in justice and public ethics of first-person testimony, in which verification consists not in the speaker's status (he or she may be a slave) but in their immediate relation to a fact ("*I myself did/saw...*").

6. (76) Foucault comments on his own habit of regularly changing his theoretical approach, about which he says here (I think for the first time) that this habit of change *is* his method—which has the consequence that his work cannot be arranged into an architectural unity. (One might wish to consider how far this credo is linked to the following point).

7. (76-80) Foucault introduces another neologism to describe his preferred theoretical approach: "anarchaeology," so-called in part-tribute to Paul Feyerabend's recent book *Against Method*, which was at that time subtitled *Outlines of an anarchistic theory of knowledge*. "Anarchaeology" means not a commitment to political anarchy, but a style of analysis based on the suspension of the presumption that any form of power is intrinsically legitimate or necessary. This is where Foucault suggests the thought-experiment of supposing that "social contract is a bluff and civil society a children's story" (77). The purpose of the experiment is to discover what it becomes possible to see or think as a result of suspending a customary assumption. Foucault illustrates the idea from his own past work on psychiatric and penal power.

8. (80-100) This year's topic is to be "the government of men (*sic*) through the manifestation of truth in the form of subjectivity" (80). Here he slips in the information that this will "of course" involve a study of early Christianity. Foucault introduces two concepts to frame this analysis: *acts of truth* and *regimes of truth*. "Act of truth"—the mode of "insertion of the subject [...] in the procedures of the manifestation of truth" (81) is a term borrowed by Foucault from a later theologian of confession. (It could also be read as one of Foucault's experimental extensions of speech-act theory, not necessarily as approved by John Searle.) A regime of truth is defined as a system of obligations organized around the performance of truth acts. Foucault's chosen focus here will be one of the two major Christian regimes of truth: the one relating to the truth of self, rather than to the one relating to the truth of faith. In conclusion, he cites a Biblical commentary by the 1st-century Jewish Neoplatonist Philo, illustrating the notion that "it is necessary that individuals tell the truth about themselves for power actually to be re-established" (89).

9. (100-102) Foucault now reintroduces the term "anarcheology," in what seems to be a further, modified sense, defining what he here calls an "anarchaeology of knowledge" as a history of the force or power of truth. The force of truth is understood here as something

additional to truth itself, namely the effect that truth has of placing subjects under obligations of various possible kinds, obligations which may be interlinked in turn to the obligations imposed by political or juridical regimes, in some cases through the mediation of what Foucault terms regimes of knowledge.

And with this, Foucault states his planned topics for the following lectures: the regimes of truth relating to Christian baptism, penitence, and direction of conscience, and without further ado embarks on the first of these.

So we have in these first four lectures and the first part of the fifth, up to the point of entry into the Patristic world, a complex sequence of preliminary remarks and considerations of a methodical or problem-theoretic nature, of which we can say that (a) they go well beyond the function of a methodological prelude to the immediately following analyses, (b) they stand in a partly enigmatic relation to these analyses, (c) they suggest a profounder shift around this point in his work than may have previously been appreciated, and (d) they hint especially, in the first lecture, at an extension in the overall structure of his enquiries which appears to have gone relatively unnoticed to date. All of which, I think, makes them worthy of some further consideration here.

About lectures 1 to 5: thoughts in movement

What, in these nine mini-analyses, propositions, and proposals, gets applied or implemented in the following lectures of this course (and or subsequently)? The answer in summary is, I think, as follows.

a) We never hear again, at least under that name, of anarchaeology, in either of the two different senses Foucault give it here. However, a fragment at least of “anarchaeology of knowledge” in the sense of a history of the force of truth, does get done in these lectures, and we get considerably more, though not necessarily labeled as such, as a major element in the lectures that follow, especially in *Wrong-Doing, Truth-Telling, The Hermeneutics of the Subject, The Government of Self and Others, Fearless Speech* and *The Courage of Truth*. One can say that the 1980 course is where this theme becomes big and remains big in Foucault's work.

b) We don't—somewhat to my disappointment then and now—hear more, either here or later, of the story about alethurgy and hegemonia. Foucault does acknowledge at the end of this course that this is unfinished business, and he does say something more in America later that year, as I shall report below. The notion of alethurgy returns in a further important role in Foucault's 1984 lectures, where it is used to characterise a certain form of philosophical life.

c) The first sense that Foucault gives to anarchaeology, that is the suspense of a presumption of legitimacy with respect to some location of form of power, does not seem to feature overtly

in Foucault's analyses in 1980 or later, though it makes sense, as he shows, as a retrospective gloss on what he did in previous work. I think it does make sense to see this as one of the ways by which Foucault performs the heuristic, problem-shifting changes of theoretical position which he says (this year) are essential to his entire *démarche*. Suspending a standard or customary assumption, including a legitimacy-assumption, is not necessarily the only way to perform a progressive problem-shift, but it can be one way. The purpose of Foucault's shifts is to augment the freedom and capability of thought: power-legitimation assumptions, as well as the more general class of assumptions of naturalness or going-without-sayingness (with which legitimacy-assumptions are commonly entwined) are things whose suspension intrinsically offers additional degrees of freedom for thought). There might seem to be a tension in Foucault's discussion between the suggestion that power is never naked and the method of an archeology which proposes (at least for purposes of thought-experiment) precisely to strip power of its legitimation, that is to say of those manifestations of truth that give it its acceptable clothing. The two notions are consistent, however, if we allow that the history of the force of truth involves measuring and verifying the necessary added-value which the force of truth confers on an otherwise naked power.

d) Alethurgy as a word does not occur much after the end of the fourth lecture, but its vernacular equivalent, the manifestation of truth, certainly does, although, as noted above, its use becomes detached from the coupling with hegemony in its political and sovereign sense. The notions of regime and act of truth, especially the latter, which serve further to specify certain particular forms of alethurgy, also get put to serious work in what follows.

e) The other thing to be said about these introductory remarks is in some ways the most important. Foucault goes ahead in lecture five and does what he has just said he will do in point 9. However there is a significant and not fully explained sidestep or segue between what is originally proposed in point 1 and the final, revised program of point 9. I felt a pang of disappointment at the time, and to a certain extent still do, that Foucault seemed to change his plan. The disappointment had a political element, and the answering explanation which I tend to discern was also political, and was mentioned by Foucault in his Berkeley discussion later that year. The earlier leftist analysis (shared and promoted by Foucault, and focused precisely on the stripping naked of locations and relations of power, and acting on them directly by practices of resistance and revolt) whose lack of traction had become apparent after the mid-70s, in France perhaps not later than the election of the centre-right government of Giscard in 74, had underrated on the one hand the credibility of existing and emerging rationalities of government, and on the other the factors (other than ideological deceptions and opiates) that disposed the governed to continue to be governable under existing regimes. In his 1978-79 lectures Foucault went some way towards diagnosing the first part of this deficit, and gave the impression at the start of 1980 that he wanted to add to this analysis, accompanying the analysis of governmental capability with a stronger analysis of

governmental acceptability, indeed legitimacy. Foucault's point in reply to his imaginary critic who, in effect, says that the parable of Septimius Severus and his birth-stars is no better than a theory of ideology in explaining the survival of governments which in fact rely on capabilities of a more material and utilitarian form, is that, as Foucault illustrates through his new reading of Sophocles, more is required of a government than capability, and even delivery.

f) As things turned out, however, the revised plan for 1980 as of lecture 5 seemed to mean that these expectations had been left hanging, while the following analysis of the Christian materials was left in a state of rather tenuous connection to the explanation of "our obedience" in the present. But it may be better to put these expectations and discontents on side for the moment in order to first do some justice to what Foucault actually did deliver in the rest of this course.

g) The notion of "government through truth" is not much explicated by Foucault after its original introduction here, either in these lectures or later, but nevertheless it merits some further attention. It evidently involves more than just the acknowledgement of freedom and a need for more than purely instrumental rationalities. It is a notion cognate with that of the power or force of truth, which Foucault proposes here as his grand historical theme, while doubting whether he will be able to produce more than some fragments. My feeling is that by this stage Foucault is beyond any version of Nietzsche which would think that the power of truth (*alias* the will to truth) is something whose rule over us should be overthrown. He says in one of the last interviews, "Those who think truth does not exist for me are simple-minded."⁷ In another of these interviews (responding to the question "Does truth exist in politics?") he says, "I believe too much in truth not to suppose that there are different truths and different ways of telling the truth."⁸

h) The notions introduced here and discussed above—*alethurgy*, act of truth, régime of truth, belong to a larger, cognate set of themes which pervade and dominate Foucault's thought in his lectures from here on: the other key terms in this set are *parresia*, *veridiction*, and *avowal/confession*. These respective categories have some conceptual and empirical overlaps and subsumptions, and each covers a variety of forms of action and life, historical settings and domains of existence. These categories are not set in stone and are not ends in themselves. Their status—a matter to which Foucault does not devote extended overt consideration—is always exploratory, instrumental and experimental. But they appear to have a complementary and cumulative function, which is precisely to itemise and explore historical

⁷ Foucault, "'The Concern for Truth': An Interview with François Ewald," in L. D. Kritzman (ed.), *Michel Foucault: Philosophy, politics, culture* (London: Routledge), 255-270.

⁸ Foucault, "'An Aesthetics of Existence,' interview with Alessandro Fontana," in *ibid.*, 47-56.

modes through which the power of truth exercises itself or is exercised through and over human conducts, experiences and relationships. The end-purpose, as he explains in Berkeley, is, of course, still to enable an effective political critique in and of the present. I have argued elsewhere that these 80s lectures are working towards a toolkit for a genealogy of political life and conduct. I have suggested that the foregoing considerations would warrant us in describing Foucault's new direction in the 80s as his "alethic" turn, and characterising the distinctive kinds of new analysis he develops during these years as "aletheological." Imitating Foucault's occasional taste for neologism, one could say that the kind of analysis that he proposes in these lectures under the title of an "anarcheology" is also an aletheology. As noted earlier, Foucault cites an article by Denise Grodzynski in relation to the anecdote about Septimius Severus. The theme of her article is the strict laws by which the Roman emperors prohibited, as treasonable and on pain of death, all private consultations of astrologers and other soothsayers, and any use of astrology or divination to foretell a person's death date. The main objective here was to suppress all attempts to foretell the emperor's own death date. (In the story of Septimius's dome, the part of the heavens that would allow his death-date to be predicted was supposed to have been left blank.) Foucault goes on to mention that Jean Bodin, a major 16th century theorist of sovereignty and government, had written a treatise on demonology and had taken a keen interest in the suppression of witches and illicit soothsayers. Foucault mentions here two factors: the first is the significant presence in royal courts, up to the renaissance period, of sorcerers, astrologers, and seers: "Where there is power, where power is necessary, where one wishes to show effectively that this is where the power lies, there must be truth. And where there is no truth, where there is no manifestation of truth, it is because there is no power, or it is too weak, or incapable of being power. Power's strength is not independent of something like the manifestation of truth that goes far beyond what is merely useful or necessary to govern well" (9). The second factor, linked to Bodin's peculiar combination of interests (which has embarrassed some historians of political thought), concerns "the relation there must be between the constitution of a rationality specific to the art of government in the form, let us say, of a State reason in general and, on the other hand, the casting out of that alethurgy that, in the form of demon-mania, but also of divination, occupied a place in the knowledge of princes that *raison d'État* had to take over" (10-11). This comment may illustrate Foucault's suggestion which we noted above that a regime of truth may need to be linked to a regime of power though a regime of knowledge (102).

The Christian regime of truth

Foucault's analyses in lectures five to twelve, covering the three alethurgic domains of Christian baptism, penitence and direction over a period between the 2nd and 5th centuries, fall into two segments, relating respectively to two areas of Christian life which were then in a process of formation: baptism and penitence relate to the Christian life of secular congregations embedded or embattled within wider Roman society, while the discussion of direction relates to the religious

life of ascetic hermits and communities, first in the Egyptian desert and later elsewhere. The developments of interest to Foucault in these respective social and existential domains are closely bound up with their material circumstances. Foucault briefly identifies a number of contextual factors which historians have suggested as influences on changes in the Church in the later 2nd century: dilution of moral strictness through an influx of new converts; the impact and aggravation of persecutions, resulting in the apostasy of weaker Christian believers; conflict and rivalry with Pagans, prompting the need for stronger doctrinal formation and higher moral standards; competition with other Christian and para-Christian sects; rivalry with mystery religions; internal struggles against heresy and the effort to establish and stabilise orthodox belief (147). One could note here that there was also some local rivalry and friction with Judaism, something which was certainly a matter of concern to one of Foucault's key authors, Tertullian. Alongside these material threats and challenges, Foucault mentions “the prodigious invasion of demonology in Christian thought and practice which begins in the 3rd century” (157). One should bear in mind that there is time span of around two centuries between Foucault's key author on baptism and penitence—Tertullian (160-220)—and his key author on direction—John Cassian (360-435). By the later date, persecutions of Christians have ceased, Christianity is the approved religion of the Empire and the official suppression of paganism is under way.

Government and salvation of all and each are distinctive concerns of the Christian institution from an early stage. The entire existence of the community was periodically menaced by persecutions in which imperial authority applied pressure under threat of death on each Christian to perform civic pagan observances which the Church prohibited. Those who yielded to persecution, committing apostasy instead of martyrdom, were then liable to exclusion from the Church. The ritual and practices of baptism were the route of admission to full membership of the Church and an indispensable precondition for assurance of salvation. Purification and preparation before baptism involved a dual pedagogy of faith and conduct, both of which required to be examined and verified; there was an early form of general confession as an element in this process. From the later 2nd century there additionally became available to baptised Christians guilty of apostasy or other grievous sins a second, single further chance of salvation, through a ritual of penitence known as *exomologesis*, a public act and process of expiation involving the acknowledgement and repudiation of one's sin and one's former, sinful self, together with public acts and signs of mortification, humiliation, abjection, and supplication, after which the penitent entered a prolonged regime of mandatory privations and prohibitions, being assigned to a distinct, inferior status in the Christian community and subject to a dedicated regime of governance known as the order of penitents, for a prolonged, sometimes lifelong period, with the prospect of eventual reconciliation and a partial, qualified readmission to the community of the baptised.

Following Tertullian's “invention” of the doctrine of original sin, meanwhile, all Christians were considered, even after the purifying ritual of baptism, to remain in a state of spiritual hazard, obliged to sustain an unending inner struggle with the incursions of Satan though lifelong practice of a *disciplina penitentiae*, involving regular and collective public expressions of penitence.

Conversion, from a one-off event presumed to admit the faithful to a state of assured election, becomes a permanent, life-long praxis. Early Christianity is a risk society: the Christian's life is a permanent agonism, a recurring exorcism, an unending war against demonic terror. Foucault shows that Christianity also invents a new form of interior danger: the realm of Satan is hidden within us. Fear of self is its major ethical innovation. It also has its own *laissez-faire*, the "*liberalitas*" which must be accorded to (not by!) God, the less reassuring aspect of divine providence: God must be free to choose whether we are to be saved; God's judgement cannot be "enslaved" by human works or rituals.

Meanwhile in the Egyptian desert, at the physical margins of the world Christian community, the eremitic and cenobitic pioneer sectors of proto-monasticism develop their own intensive and dramatic rituals, tests and disciplines of admission and novitiate, again in a situation of constant, indeed aggravated exposure to demonic assaults and incursions. In these experimental laboratories of asceticism, there develops a new mode of life in which the relationship between truth and subjectivity is transformed and intensified in unprecedented ways, subject to a regimen called *exagoreusis*, comprising exhaustive, continuous self-examination, the continual, confessional verbalisation of thoughts in frequent consultations with a spiritual director, and the detailed direction of life under conditions of total obedience and abnegation of self. Foucault has here a point-by-point comparison between examination of conscience in Stoicism (Seneca) and in Christian monasticism (Cassian): this contrast had been first presented in his lectures two years earlier, and is revisited again two years later. In both practices there are metaphors of self-testing as an assaying procedure to tell good coinage from bad: in Seneca, the good coinage is the state of freedom from passions induced by contingent sensation, in Cassian it is selfless transparency before the director and God.

These contrasted regimes, in their respective settings of early Christian life, of what Foucault terms acts and manifestations of truth—*exomologesis*, with its dramatic and public performance of self-repudiation, and *exagoreusis*, with its exhaustive and mortifying rendering of inner experiences into discourse for purposes of externally supervised moral triage, are both seen by Foucault as fateful innovations in the relations between subjectivity and truth, destined to have significant long-term effects on Western culture. Foucault is obviously interested in the genealogical significance of these two intense and strongly contrasted styles of Christian alethurgy. Exomologesis is a powerfully dramaturgic and performative practice, in the senses of 'performative' developed respectively by both Austin and Butler. Exagoreusis is an intensification of inner-directed diagnostic, forensic and probative suspicion, linked to verbalisation. Performance and verbalisation are both conceived as painful practices of self-renunciation linked to a permanent process of becoming other than oneself. The analysis in *GL* is largely devoid of sexual thematic content, although as Senellart remarks, it is seamlessly congruent with a similar analysis of spiritual direction and concupiscence in "The Combat of Chastity," the sole currently published fragment of *Les Aveux de la Chair*. The history of the power of truth does not reduce to the history of sexuality (nor vice versa), but the two histories sometimes run on the same tracks.

Foucault says relatively little here about the government of the early Christian secular community, either before or after the Christianisation of the Roman empire, not does his analysis here enter much into the progressive transposition, over the following millennium and more, into Christian society, via Western monastic foundations, of the techniques developed in the desert; though one can surely recognise descriptions of parts of these processes in his earlier books and lectures. We will find elements of this narrative elsewhere in the work other historians, some of whom I will mention below, notably Peter Brown. One of the inspirations to the “Greco-Latin” trip is known to have been an article by Pierre Hadot (1978) which Pasquale Pasquino drew to Foucault's attention in the late 70s. But whereas Hadot's big idea was the rediscovery of a pre-Christian practice of spirituality in Hellenistic philosophy, one of Foucault's themes in his 1980 lectures is an inverse observation: the fact that Christian monasticism was explicitly and at its outset conceived as a particular form of the philosophical life.

The findings of genealogy: some queries

“By this [the Christian] shows that putting his own truth into discourse is not just an essential obligation; it is one of the basic forms of our obedience” (313). With these words, Foucault concluded this series of lectures.

There may, though, be some problems in establishing the precise genealogical import of the avowing Christian subject as an avatar of Western political obedience. Does the practice of religious confession, or does religion in general, make people more governable? Foucault himself raises some doubts about this idea. In his talk “Sexuality and solitude,” Foucault discounts the idea of a direct transference of Christian confessional technique to the contemporary therapeutic culture of psychoanalysis; in the seminar “Technologies of the self,” he discerns a major break between the Christian, self-abnegating self and the affirmative self of the modern human sciences—albeit that the modern self remains perversely coupled to what Foucault considers the unwarranted persistence of a Christian hermeneutic of self. In his 1978 lectures, Foucault rejects the hypothesis of a direct transposition of beliefs from Christian theology to secular political ideology. Yet Foucault says several times in 1980 that developments in early Christianity, by transforming the relation of truth to subjectivity, have decisive effects for the history of the Christian and western subject, down to and including our own present.

What is the genealogical benefit of the stories Foucault tells in 1980 and afterwards about the passage from antiquity to Christianity? What are the benefits of returning upstream from Reformation and Counter-Reformation (as in 1978), or from the Lateran Council of 1215 (as in 1975), to the early centuries of the church? We may have a more complete answer when it is possible to read *Les aveux de la chair* and the book manuscript of *Le gouvernement de soi et des autres*. Foucault gave an explanation in his 1981 Paris lectures, which was simply to say that certain of our core contemporary questions are inseparable from respective critical episodes in our history: for questions of politics, the critical episode is the French Revolution; for questions of science, it is the period from Galileo to Newton; for questions of morals and sexuality, it is the passage from pagan to Christian moral systems. One way to think of genealogical narrative is as serving to

trace, within a persistent civilisational order, the beginnings of a series of instabilities, tensions and polarities—some associated with the persistence, within Christianity, in adapted or latent guises, of pre-Christian legacies—which carry a potential to subsequently recur or resurface, according to circumstance, in the form of new crises and mutations. One can even start to sketch the outlines a story like this, combining materials in Foucault with the findings of others, chronologically linking the period covered in his 1980-84 courses to the point of emergence of modern governmentalities as outlined in the 1978-79 lectures, this latter theme being one that Foucault indicated in 1983 he was keen to revisit.

One causally decisive factor in Foucault's tightly focused historical narrative is what he—quite legitimately, it would seem—terms Tertullian's "invention" of the doctrine of original sin. This involves the invasion and occupation of the human being, and the Christian church in particular, by the forces of the demonic and Satanic realm, a condition to which humanity is exposed by the inherited sinful defect of the Fall, a condition that disqualifies the ambition to self-mastery which is the core idea of Hellenistic philosophy and ethics. Foucault's analysis does not investigate where the Christian idea of original sin comes from or why it finally prevails—in the face of vigorous Christian and para-Christian (Gnostic) resistances—so decisively. Its demonological preoccupation persists and recurs, as Foucault briefly notes in reference to Bodin's treatise on demonology, down through the history of Christian governmentality to the onset of early modernity. We can look to the work of Peter Brown for a comprehensive and graphic political cosmology of the late antique world as a theatre of demonic-angelic agencies and conflicts. Early developments in Christian penitential practice correspond, we have noted, to the situation of a Church under the assault of periodic devastating persecutions; Christians had for their part reclassified the entire pantheon of pagan deities (along with lesser and local immaterial beings such as nymphs and genii) as demonic. Peter Brown has suggested that the Christianisation of the Roman Empire was judged by some to shift the balance of forces in the war in heaven and the upper airs, and to have gradually allowed to be made visible throughout the world, and through the death of the pagan gods, the emerging effects of Christ's supernatural victory on the cross. These stabilising developments, and the accompanying consolidation of Christian ecclesiastical authority, may have been a factor in mitigating and diluting some of the severe early measures of penitential policing that had been imposed in the early, minority Christian congregation.

The politics of direction: answers and questions

Quite a lot of *GL* is not wholly new material: the *Oedipus Rex* commentary is recycled (with a new conclusion) from a lost lecture in 1971; the material on Christian monastic direction of conscience, and its contrast with Stoicism, was presented in essentially similar terms during his discussion of pastoral power in 1978. The central genealogical theme of a hermeneutics, interrogation, diagnosis, and avowal of self, linked to a distinctive Western regime of subjectification-subjection is already set out in *History of Sexuality 1*.

Just before the conclusion of these lectures, Foucault says that he “of course” did not want to address here the question, which he nevertheless very pertinently puts to himself, of the “form of power” whose existence and functioning make it possible to conceive of the new truth-subjectivity assemblage whose emergence he has been describing. Whether there was any “of course” about the choice not to answer it, the question of the nature of this “form of power” was indeed the question that remained to be asked. In the following year’s lectures, *Subjectivity and Truth*, a first draft of the core content of *The Use of Pleasures* and *The Care of the Self*, i.e. the history of sexuality in pre-Christian antiquity, there are very interesting discussions of changes in the Roman-Hellenic socio-political environment as a possible factor of historical explanation and intelligibility for ethical problematisations of conduct, with brief tantalising glimpses forward to the advent of the Christian era. But the focus here was on continence and conjugal life, rather than obedience.

Foucault does, in fact, answer his question later that year in Berkeley, where after a condensed presentation of the material in *GL* his responses to wide-ranging questions provide a number of valuable clarifications, including the following:

So, now my problem is to analyze not power relations but government. 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 others*. And the problem is to analyze this relation between governed people and governing people through what we could call structures of domination and structures of the self or techniques of the self.⁹

Nothing would seem more appropriate than to view the regime of Christian truth Foucault describes in *GL* as installing a “structure inside those who are governed that makes them governable by others.” A little further Foucault answers his unanswered question from Paris, regarding the matching “structure of domination,” after being asked it by an auditor in Berkeley. The answer, as one might anyway have surmised, had already been provided in the 1978 Paris lectures, summarised afterwards at the Tanner lectures in Stanford:

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, 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

⁹ Michel Foucault, *L’Origine de L’Herméneutique de Soi: Conférences Prononcées à Dartmouth College 1980* (Paris: Vrin, 2013), 118, emphasis added; English edition translated by Graham Burchell, (Chicago: Chicago UP, forthcoming); French edition, 118, *emphasis added*.

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. 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.¹⁰

So the Christian pastorate and the Christian technology of self, the Christian *ars artium* of governing and the Christian art of being governed, seem to fit together like the two parts of a symbolon. We can note that Peter Brown cites Foucault's analysis of pastoral power with warm approval in his recent study of early Christian government, *The Eye of the Needle*.

It is also clear that the practices of baptism, penitence and monastic direction that Foucault describes here involve roles, qualities, and commitment on the side of the pastor, monastic elder, or abbot as well as on the side of the catechumen, penitent, monk, or consecrated virgin. The former role, as Foucault makes evident in 1978, is just as distinctive and essential to the pastoral *dispositif* as the latter. The roles can even be interchangeable, or iterable, and the one role can be a preparation for the other, as in the careers of the famous monk-bishops, described by Brown and Markus,¹¹ in fifth-century Gaul. Already in the desert, in a limited, microscopic and modular form, the obedience-government coupling is at the core Foucault's exposition of the relation of monastic direction: the monk's self-transformation forms a single *dispositif* with the abbot's or elder's pastorate and command. Robert Markus writes of the "ascetic invasion" in fifth-century Gaul, where the monastic mode of communal life begins to be promoted as a model for the communal order and pastoral government of society in general. Humility is promoted as a generalised idea for social behaviour in a society of rich and poor in a letter by an anonymous 5th century Augustinian: "men outdo each other in showing honour' (Romans 12.10), each holding the other in greater esteem, ready to serve those subject to them, not elated with pride if placed in a position of authority; when the poor man does not hesitate to defer to the rich, and to rich to hold the poor as his equal."¹² In an important mitigation of the ultra-steep social gradients of Antiquity, inequality begins to become, in a certain sense, the same for all Christians, at least in the possibilities it offers for the practice of humility. The ascetic director/pastor, as Foucault had already described in 1978, integrated self-abnegation into the practice of the rule and care of souls. Some historians of monasticism have added that the Benedictine rule, in contrast to the early Pachomic model imported by Cassian and described by Foucault, offered a model of "horizontal" as opposed to "vertical" obedience, one in which a consensual practice of common life allows

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 129 (French edition).

¹¹ Robert A Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991).

¹² *Ibid.*, 157.

space for an element of personal liberty and communal equality. If the monk was a kind of philosopher, philosophy, according to Plato—as Foucault discusses in his 1983 lectures—was the right training for a ruler, and the community of spiritual direction a utopian template for worldly society.

The gap in the structure of Foucault's 1980 agenda which may still seem to remain unbridged concerns the alethurgy of sovereignty, the new item which Foucault introduces in the opening lecture and which seems to represent an extension to the model of governmentality as introduced and developed over the two previous years. What Foucault has shown us in his Christian studies in *GL* is an ascetic practice that demands and works through a required manifestation of truth, in the form of a publication and/or verbalisation of self, on the part of an obedient subject. What Foucault talks about on the other hand in the first lecture of *GL* is the “halo” of truth on the side of sovereignty, which confirms a title to rule and a claim to obedience (or fails to do so, as the case may be). What is the halo of truth that Christian practice confers on sovereignty? Averil Cameron has suggested that the existing late Roman model of sovereignty was already receptive to a pastoral model of the relation of government: “the imagery of the ruler as good shepherd, God as father of all, man made in the image of God, the magnanimity of the good ruler—all are part of the common language of ruler theory since Plato, and available to Christians and pagan alike.”¹³ This ancient Eastern model of pastoral rule had been acknowledged by Foucault in the 1978 lectures, although he considers it there as having been marginalised and effectively disqualified as a core theme of Greek political philosophy. The Christian emperor, from an early date, has his own halo—literally, as was documented and illustrated in Ernst Kantorowicz's *The King's Two Bodies*.

Foucault says, in his conclusion to the year's lectures:

So Septimius Severus had the truth of the world displayed above his head, except the part concerning him, and it was from this truth of the world from which he had subtracted his own truth, it was from this manifestation of the truth of the world that he asked for the sign and promise of the durability of his own power. The Christian does not have the truth of the world above his head, with the exception of his own truth, the truth concerning himself. The Christian has the truth deep within himself and he is yoked to this deep secret, indefinitely bent over it and indefinitely constrained to show to the other the treasure that his work, thought, attention, conscience, and discourse ceaselessly draw out from it (312).

However, as Peter Brown's studies consistently remind us, Christians of late antiquity did have in the world above them a starry heaven thinly concealing heaven itself, inhabited by God and the angels, saints and martyrs. Six centuries after Septimius Severus, in Charlemagne's palace at Aix, the apse above the imperial throne represented not an imperial horoscope but the divine monarch

¹³Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire; The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 132. See also her “Redrawing the Map: Early Christian Territory after Foucault,” *Journal of Roman Studies*, vol. 76 (1986), 266-271.

and judge in majesty, Christ who is also the exemplar and model of kingship, of which the anointed earthly ruler is both worldly vicar and type. In the lower levels of the world, Foucault's account of the history of baptism and penitence gives its due, as we have seen, to the "prodigious invasion of demonology in Christian thought and practice which begins in the 3rd century": it is the partial empire of Satan within fallen man and his world that, starting with Tertullian, introduces the component of fear into the Christian relation of self to self: it is the vivid presence and agency of the demons that gives the spiritual life its dramatic edge of danger. Foucault, as we have noted above, consciously and methodically brackets out from his detailed study that other regime of truth governing Christian faith, the content of belief and its various demands and effects on the subject. Using his terminology when discussing the Hellenistic philosophies in 1982, we could say here that Foucault does not fully analyse here the ethopoietic, or one might say the cosmopoietic effects of the act of faith, the way the content of faith and belief may in itself construct the ethos and cosmos of the believing subject, an ethos that is already obedience, a cosmos that, as the scene of the divine economy of salvation, commands obedience. The properties of the Christian universe defined by its fundamental cosmology, ontology, and eschatology, its economy of salvation, would, as Foucault was of course fully aware, come over time to impact increasingly and fundamentally on the economy of manifested truth, on the sides of relations of government and governed alike, in the ecclesiastical and in the secular imperium. The economy of salvation, as Peter Brown's recent studies are showing, would also impact on the material organization of early Christian society and its monetary economy, the economy of wealth.¹⁴ It is within this framework, the view of the above and the hereafter, that the complex interplay of the respective, complementary and competing powers of secular and religious government, from late antiquity to early modernity, some of which are addressed by Kantorowicz and some of which Foucault brilliantly sketches in the 1978 lectures and elsewhere, need to be situated and understood.

Peter Brown writes memorably of his first conversation with Foucault: "a lively two-hour argument on the relation between Augustine's notion of concupiscence and John Cassian's notion of the spiritual struggle in the Bear's Lair at Berkeley, in late 1980, formed the basis of an intellectual friendship, which led to further encounters at the Coffee Shop of University Books on Bancroft and at the French Hotel on Shattuck."¹⁵ In one of his recollections, he acknowledges a debt to Foucault's unequalled capacity to evoke the strangeness of the past. Brown's own unequalled genius may lie in inventing thought-procedures through which to think ourselves into that strangeness. Foucault himself was perhaps more concerned to help us recover our own strangeness, to discover how not to be who or where we are, by retracing the long track record of

¹⁴ Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012); Peter Brown, *The Ransom of the Soul: Afterlife and Wealth in Early Western Christianity* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2015).

¹⁵ Peter Brown, "A life of learning," *American Council of Learned Societies* (2003). Available online at: https://www.acls.org/uploadedFiles/Publications/OP/Haskins/2003_PeterBrown.pdf

our previous ways of becoming other. This volume of the lectures makes some key contributions to that history. As quite often seems to be the case, some of his most telling formulations on this point occur in notes appended by the editor which Foucault did not find time to include in oral delivery. Such as these remarks, attached to the seventh lecture:

Whereas ancient conversion qualifies men to govern (Plato) or puts them in a position of externality or indifference with regard to the life of the city, Christian conversion will be linked to a whole practice and a whole art of governing men, to the exercise of a pastoral power.

The paradox of a form of power with the intended purpose of being exercised universally over all men insofar as they have to convert, i.e., gain access to the truth by a radical and fundamental change that must be authenticated by manifesting the truth of the soul. Governing the being-other through the manifestation of the truth of the soul, so that each can earn his salvation. [...] Christianity assures the salvation of each by authenticating that they have in fact become completely other. The relation government of men/manifestation of the truth is entirely recast. Government by the manifestation of the Completely Other in each (160-1).

The lifelong “discipline of penitence” prescribed to the baptized—even in the absence of those grave relapses which in the early Church might demand the drastic public expiation of *exomologesis*—amounts to a life in which the becoming-other of *metanoia*-conversion is a continuous, permanent state or process. Foucault at one point draws a parallel with modern ideas of permanent revolution. One may see here an anticipation of Foucault 1984 investigation of the Cynic philosophical ethic and its alethurgic-parresiastic life of publicly manifested and embodied otherness, and their concluding note:

There is no establishment of truth without an essential positing of otherness; the truth is never the same; there can be truth only in the form of the other world and the other life.¹⁶

As in his other lecture series, Foucault inserts brief signals and pointers back to the political history of the present. One has to look at these often apparently casual remarks, preferably in combination, to fully understand what is going on in these lectures.¹⁷ Foucault remarks in passing that the three universal modes of Western morality and soteriology—doctrines of the two ways, of the stain and of the Fall—are respectively instantiated within Marxism by Mao, Stalin and Marx himself (Tertullian, on Foucault's account, marks the point of Christianity's transition from a morality of the two ways to a morality of the stain.) In his discussion of the practice of direction, Foucault carefully spells out in lecture 10 a number of important links between techniques of direction and the political domain:

¹⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 341.

¹⁷ I suggest a joined-up reading of these materials, pointing towards an intended future focus on a genealogy of the political, in my “Plato in Weimar. Weber revisited via Foucault: two lectures on legitimation and vocation” *Economy & Society*, vol. 43, no. 3 (2014).

it would be completely wrong to imagine that there is no relation, no connection between the structure of political authority and the practice of direction. After all, most, if not all, well, a great many political utopias are precisely dreams of the exercise of a political power that takes the form of, or at any rate is extended to the real and effective direction of individuals. The Platonic city or Thomas More's city are political structures developed to the point at which they end up with the complete and exhaustive direction of individuals. We could also say that in the political functioning of both Catholic and Protestant societies at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, we had very subtle, thought out, and organized combinations of the development of an administrative political power and a whole series of institutions of spiritual direction, of the direction of souls and individuals, again both Protestant and Catholic. So forms of direction and forms of political functioning may well be heterogeneous, but their coexistence, linkages, and reciprocal supports are none the less evident (228).

The heterotopias of the Egyptian desert are the ancestors of *Utopia* and its modern avatars. Foucault adds: "We could say that it would be interesting to study the organization of political parties in the contemporary world inasmuch as a whole part comprises institutions and practices of direction in addition to the specifically political structure of the organization" (ibid). At a more general level Foucault from the outset rejects an "opium of the people" notion of the ideological function of religious practices as conducive to political quietism.

Roughly speaking, this amounts to saying: inasmuch as men worry more about salvation in the other world than about what happens down here, inasmuch as they want to be saved, they remain quiet and peaceful and it is easier to govern them. The government of men by that truth they effectuate in themselves and that is good (*salutaire*) for them, in the strong sense, would reside precisely in those effects peculiar to what we call "ideology." Now I have to say that the idea that the more men are concerned for their salvation in the hereafter the easier it is to govern them down here on earth does not seem to me to be in proper accord with a number of little things we are familiar with in the ancient or recent history of relations between revolution and religion. (75)

The final remark would have been understood by the original audience as an allusion, among other things, to the ongoing revolution in Iran: the American embassy hostage crisis was continuing throughout 1980 in the run-up to the presidential election where it would help seal Carter's defeat by Reagan, opening a path to fateful global changes in capitalist government. Foucault had reported on the mass popular uprising in Iran of autumn 1978 and had perceived the distinctive component of religious feeling in the uprising as manifesting a desire to "become completely other." Foucault had already described in lectures given in 1978 the anti-pastoral "counter-conducts" of late mediaeval Europe up to and during the Reformation, when the poles of spirituality came again to be reversed so as to generate voluntary insubmission to government instead of willing obedience. In an interview given during one of his stays in Iran, Foucault had spoken of the striking historical similarities between forms of political spirituality in Christianity and Shiism.

Perhaps it is worth noting that in Foucault's key formulation of his theme in these lectures, the third, linking term between poles of subjectivity and government, the individual and collective, is the dimension of the salvation "of each and all":

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? (75, *emphasis added*)

It appears that in the prelude and main body of these lectures Foucault is talking about different stories with a single common element: (a) the salvation in Sophocles' play of the city of Thebes from plague, by the identification of Oedipus's guilt ultimately thanks to the first-person testimony of two slaves, and (b) the salvation of individual Christians via first-person processes of visibly displaying the fact, or verbally articulating the inner sign, of their sin. The two cases could in Christian practice assume much closer and linked forms: a community that tolerated the sins of a few was liable to suffer collectively the wrath of Divine Providence; in 590, Pope Gregory summoned all and each Roman Christian to public penance in order that the city might be delivered from a plague.

So, although Foucault does not deal in political theology (or in any other kind), his study of Western histories gives some centrality to political soteriology: the connections between the salvation of all and each, and between salvation in this life—the sphere of the secular sovereign and pastor—and salvation in the hereafter—the sphere of ecclesiastical pastorate. Running through Christian culture, from its Hellenic prehistory to its secular post-history, is another theme that Foucault highlights as a challenge for the early Church, the difficult coordination of the order of salvation with that of law (178ff).

An art of being governed

Foucault develops some formulations in his American lectures and discussions of late 1980 that are sometimes bolder, more explicit and more synthetic in explaining the shifting of his problem than in the Paris lectures. One of these is in his "autocritical" remarks on the too-exclusive stress on techniques of domination in *Discipline and Punish*, and on his concern, by way of compensating for this deficit, with what he calls the "interaction," the "unstable balance, with complementarities and conflicts," and the "subtle alliance" between techniques of domination and techniques of the self. This might have been the most comprehensive statement of Foucault's unfinished agenda. In relation to this challenge, the 1980 Paris lectures, with their valuable American summaries and supplements, offer a distinctively and uniquely interesting resource. Once again, the volume

editor, Michel Senellart and the translator, Graham Burchell have done an outstanding job in delivering this work to us in a form that perfectly serves its intent and its content.

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