



## SPECIAL ISSUE INTRODUCTION

### **Foucault's Legacy on Contemporary Thinking: Forty Years Later (1984-2024)**

#### SPECIAL ISSUE EDITORS

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Michel Foucault was undoubtedly one of the most important and influential philosophers and intellectuals of the twentieth century. He is the author of seminal works that are now considered veritable classics of contemporary thought, including: *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (1961), *Naissance de la clinique* (1963), *Les mots et les choses* (1966), *L'archéologie du savoir* (1969), *Surveiller et punir* (1975), and *Histoire de la sexualité* (vol. 1, 1976; vol. 2, 1984; vol. 3, 1984). But that is not all. In addition to the texts published during Foucault's lifetime, many other works of Foucault have become essential over the past forty years. These works have, in fact, made it possible to take a new look at his work; a perspective that, in many respects, is not merely different but also renewed. This perspective leads to a reinterpretation, reworking, and, in some cases, even correction of many analyses of Foucault's *oeuvre* developed in the previous years.

Already in 1994, with the publication of the volumes of the collection *Dits et écrits*—which grouped, in chronological order, almost all the texts that had appeared during Foucault's life (interviews, articles, conferences, etc.) and also some confidentially disseminated writings—it was possible to begin examining, with greater precision, the state and development of his intellectual work. Subsequently, in 2015, a new fundamental stage was reached: the completion, after 25 years, of the publication of all the thirteen courses taught by Foucault at the Collège de France (from 1970 to 1984, with the sole exception of 1977), which convey and in a certain sense capture the distinctly in-progress nature of Foucauldian research. Finally, the most recent step. This path of “emergence” of Foucauldian thought—which, preliminarily, we can define as a path of “reconstruction”—is accompanied indeed by another novelty that, until about a decade ago, seemed absolutely unthinkable. Today we have at our disposal Foucault's

manuscripts (for the most part still unpublished), some drafted during his formative years, others in preparation for published texts, conferences, lectures, and courses. More precisely, the archives of the “Fonds Michel Foucault,” preserved since 2013 at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), consist of 117 boxes totaling approximately 37,000 sheets. It is especially from a thorough analysis of these materials that, in recent years, not only the texts of many of Foucault’s courses have been edited and published (including some of those held at the Collège de France) but new, extremely significant editorial projects have also taken shape. Among these: *Les aveux de la chair*, the fourth volume of the *Histoire de la sexualité*; *La sexualité. Cours donné à l’université de Clermont-Ferrand* in 1964 suivi de *Le Discours de la sexualité. Cours donné à l’université de Vincennes* in 1969; *Binswanger et l’analyse existentielle*; *Phénoménologie et Psychologie* of 1953-1954; *La Question anthropologique. Cours* of 1954-1955; *Le discours philosophique*; *La constitution d’un transcendantal historique dans la Phénoménologie de l’esprit de Hegel. Mémoire du diplôme d’études supérieures de philosophie* of 1949; and finally, the latest arrival, *Nietzsche*, which collects Foucault’s courses, conferences, and texts dedicated to the German philosopher.

The almost incredible fact that requires consideration here is that the plan for the publication of Foucauldian texts and materials is not yet complete but will continue to accompany and guide us in the coming years as well. For this reason, rather than a “reconstruction” of Foucault’s thought, we can—not improperly—speak of a true process of its discovery and rediscovery. By this, we mean exactly that the forty years that separate us from June 25, 1984—the exact date of Foucault’s death—witness an extreme vitality of his thought with which different generations of scholars are confronted; in this regard the numerous conferences, events, centers (one among all: the Centre Michel Foucault) and publications dedicated to it are countless. Foucault’s philosophy is indeed a thought that does not cease to question us, not only with specific reference to the political and intellectual *actualité* of Foucault himself but also, more precisely, about our own *actualité*. In this sense, “discovering” here also means “actualizing.” Therefore, when we talk about the Foucauldian toolbox (*boîte à outils*), we must first of all refer to what Foucault still allows us to think and say today. Even and especially today, he is in fact one of the main reference authors for many studies, researches, and analyses dealing with a wide variety of concepts and themes. More precisely, we can underline that Foucault is one of the most cited authors—if not the most cited, at least with reference to the field of humanities and social sciences—and that the translation of many of his works is now available almost globally.

In light of what has been stated so far, it is not surprising that in 2024, on the fortieth anniversary of Foucault’s death, an abundance of tributes paid to the thought and work of this author has emerged (consider, for example, the “World Congress: Foucault 40 Years After”). Among these, the tribute of the journal *Foucault Studies*, one of the main international “places” for analysis and reflection on the French philosopher, could not be missing. The journal indeed aims to celebrate Foucault with a special issue focused not only on his life and work as such but also on his legacy and *Wirkungsgeschichte* (freely

using here the famous concept of “history of effects,” which we borrow from the tradition of philosophical hermeneutics): that is, on the enduring relevance and impact of his thought. This special issue—the title of which, “Foucault’s Legacy in Contemporary Thinking: Forty Years Later (1984-2024),” is precisely aimed at evoking the stakes that have guided its design—includes a wide selection of original contributions. To be precise, the present volume—that we are pleased and honored to present here to the readers of *Foucault Studies*—consists of eighteen articles, which (in alphabetical order) are authored by: Valentina Antoniol, Didier Bigo, Silvia Capodivacca and Gabriele Giacomini, André Duarte and Maria Rita De Assis César, Adam Geczi and Viki Karaminas, Manlio Iofrida, Orazio Irrera, Dušan Marinković and Dušan Ristić, Stefano Marino, Lotar Rasiński, Enrico Redaelli, Lucile Richard, Martin Saar and Frieder Vogelmann, Richard Shusterman, Attasit Sittidumrong, Rodolpho Venturini, Kaspar Villadsen, Alessandro Volpi and Alessio Porrino.

As guest editors of this special issue, we have thus chosen to welcome the contributions of various scholars from different disciplines and with different backgrounds—many of whom are outstanding and well-known authors in the international field of Foucault studies (and not only)—who have presented essays addressing diverse aspects of Foucault’s philosophy and covering a wide range of themes. Among these, to name just a few: the questions of language, reason, madness, discourse, archaeology, genealogy, knowledge, society, prison, the dangerous individual, space, war, disciplinary power, biopolitics, pastoral power, security, governmentality, neoliberalism, critical attitude, enlightenment, revolt and revolution, temporality, ethics, care of the self, existence, subjection and subjectivation, sexuality, Greek, Roman, and Christian culture, *parrhesia*, *actualité*, and many others. Furthermore, the collected essays aim not only to offer accurate interpretations of multifaceted Foucauldian research but also to provide original reconstructions of the relationship between Foucault’s thought and other prominent thinkers from various contemporary philosophical traditions (such as Marxism, pragmatism, analytic philosophy, somaesthetics, phenomenology, Frankfurt critical theory, and, more generally, other forms of so-called continental philosophy, etc.). Finally, we deemed it essential to dedicate significant space to essays aimed at assessing the importance of Foucault’s work in the context of current debates on topics such as feminism, ecology, social justice, the digital society, security, post-truth, fashion semiology, etc., also starting from a critical comparison with the conceptions of other authors who have addressed similar or at least comparable problems, albeit with different approaches and conceptual tools.

In conclusion, we believe that our guest-edited special issue of *Foucault Studies* is capable not only of confirming the fundamental influence of Foucault’s thought on today’s intellectual debates but also of testifying to its unprecedented ability to offer fruitful, penetrating, and original conceptual tools which can help us decipher the physiognomy of our time in its diversity and complexity. Forty years after Foucault’s death, we can thus say: Michel Foucault is dead, long live Michel Foucault!

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Italian a book of Richard Shusterman and a book of Carolyn Korsmeyer. He has co-edited several volumes and special issues of philosophical journals: *Foucault's Aesthetics of Existence and Shusterman's Somaesthetics* (2024), *Perspectives on Nancy Fraser's Thought* (2023), *Varieties of the Lifeworld* (2022), *Popular Culture and Feminism* (2022), *Pearl Jam and Philosophy* (2021), *The "Aging" of Adorno's Aesthetic Theory* (2021), *Popular Culture and Social Criticism* (2021), *Aesthetics and Affectivity* (2021), *Romanticism and Popular Music* (2021), *Kant's "Critique of Aesthetic Judgment" in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (2020), *"Be Cool!" Aesthetic Imperatives and Social Practices* (2020), *Adorno and Popular Music* (2019), *Philosophical Perspectives on Fashion* (2017), *Theodor W. Adorno: Truth and Dialectical Experience* (2016), *Nietzsche nella Rivoluzione Conservatrice* (2015), *Domandare con Gadamer* (2011), and *I sentieri di Zarathustra* (2009).