ABOUT THE BEGINNING OF THE HERMENEUTICS OF THE SELF
Two Lectures at Dartmouth

MICHEL FOUCAULT

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

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In the fall of 1980, Michel Foucault visited a number of cities and universities in the United States. He gave lectures at Dartmouth College, the University of California at Berkeley, and Princeton University and gave a month-long seminar and a public lecture at New York University. The two lectures published here were delivered at Dartmouth on November 17 and 24, 1980 under the titles "Subjectivity and Truth" and "Christianity and Confession." Foucault delivered the lectures from texts handwritten in English. An earlier version of these lectures was transcribed and edited by Thomas Keenan. I have re-edited them, but very lightly, to preserve their spoken quality, using tapes provided by Dartmouth's Office of Instructional Services and Educational Research: all the notes were added during the editing process. Earlier, Foucault had given more or less the same papers as the Howison Lectures at Berkeley on October 20-21. I have added in the notes some passages transcribed from the Howison Lectures for the sake of filling out the lectures published here, and I thank Paul Rabinow for his assistance in this. (For instance, at one point in Berkeley, Foucault remarked that "the title of these two lectures could have been, and should have been, in fact, 'About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self,' " a wish I have honored here.) On a few occasions, these lectures overlap slightly with other published work by Foucault, which I have marked in the notes.

These lectures mark a transition in Foucault's work from studying systems of power relations (*Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*) to studying the creation of ethical agency (*The History of Sexuality, Vols. 2, 3, and 4*). Indeed, with this transition and from his earlier works on

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the history of systems of thought (*Madness and Civilization*, *The Birth of the Clinic*, *The Order of Things*, and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*), Foucault begins to complete the analysis of three axes of experience: truth, power, and ethics. The lectures that follow hint at the themes that would appear later in volumes 2 and 3 of *The History of Sexuality*, works largely and undeservedly overlooked by political theorists. However, Foucault said in a late interview upon their publication, when asked if he wrote these last books "for" contemporary liberation movements, that he wrote them not "for" them but "as a function of a present situation." He said of volume 2, *The Use of Pleasure*, the volume most about "sex," that the problem of recent liberation movements was similar to the one he studied in this book about Ancient Greece: to elaborate an ethics through sex. The third volume, *The Care of the Self*, can be read (at least in part) as a perspective on how to adapt and direct the power exercised by medical, quasi-medical, and moral experts in the time of the AIDS epidemic. Finally, the fourth volume, *The Confession of the Flesh*, completed but as yet unpublished, is about early Christian sexual ethics. Its relevance to what concerns us today can be gleaned from a discussion (recorded on the tape but not included here) between Foucault and a gay graduate student after one of the lectures printed here. The student questioned Foucault's endorsement of John Boswell's *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago, 1980) because of the patent hostility of Catholicism toward homosexuality and sexuality generally. Foucault countered that an antisexual Judeo-Christian morality is a dangerous myth that is not supported by historical evidence and has political implications. Rather, said Foucault, what is significant for sexuality is that Christianity inaugurated a new attitude of people not so much toward sexual acts and the code of sexual ethics, but toward themselves, and this new relationship of people to themselves, the necessity to scrutinize and discover the truth about oneself and then verbalize this truth to others, affected people's attitude toward sexuality. Both Freudian discourse on sexuality as well as the discourse of self-disclosure as a talking cure are recognizable in the "small origins" analyzed in these two lectures.

The significance for political theory of these lectures is indicated by Foucault at the end of the second one: "one of the main political problems would be nowadays . . . the politics of ourselves." The lectures trace the genealogy of the self: its constitution through a continuous analysis of one's thoughts under a hermeneutic principle of making sure they are really one's own; and the self's iteration and social reinforcement through an ongoing verbalization of this self-decipherment to others. Foucault elsewhere analyzed (*The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*) how techniques inherited from the Christian confession allow for the self to be created and subjected within

relations of power that constitute modern social institutions. A politics of our selves would entail a recognition that if the self is "nothing else than the historical correlation of the technology" that has come to create it, then the aim would be to get rid of the "sacrifice which is linked to those technologies." This sacrifice is twofold: it is the creation of a positive foundation for the self by means of procedures that at once makes us amenable to social control and dependent upon it, as well as the production and then marginalization of entire categories of people who do not fit what the foundation posits as "normal." We can rid ourselves of the imposed sacrifice through what Foucault called a "critical ontology of ourselves." This is, he wrote, "at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them . . . in the care brought to the process of putting historico-critical reflection to the test of concrete practices" (*The Foucault Reader*, p. 50).

SUBJECTIVITY AND TRUTH

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

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

The patient hesitates, then promises.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Another shower.

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

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To make someone suffering from mental illness recognize that he is mad is a very ancient procedure. Everybody in the old medicine, before the middle of the nineteenth century, everybody was convinced of the incompatibility between madness and recognition of madness. And in the works, for instance, of the seventeenth and of the eighteenth centuries, one finds many examples of what one might call truth-therapies. The mad would be cured if one managed to show them that their delirium is without any relation to reality.

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

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

In the years that preceded the second war, and even more so after the second war, philosophy in France and, I think, in all continental Europe, was dominated by the philosophy of the subject. I mean that philosophy set as its task *par excellence* the foundation of all knowledge and the principle of all signification as stemming from the meaningful subject. The importance given to this question of the meaningful subject was of course due to the impact of Husserl—only his *Cartesian Meditations* and the *Crisis* were generally known in France[2]—but the centrality of the subject was also tied to an institutional context. For the French university, since philosophy began with Descartes, it could only advance in a Cartesian manner. But we must

also take into account the political conjuncture. Given the absurdity of wars, slaughters, and despotism, it seemed then to be up to the individual subject to give meaning to his existential choices.

With the leisure and distance that came after the war, this emphasis on the philosophical subject no longer seemed so self-evident. Two hitherto-hidden theoretical paradoxes could no longer be avoided. The first one was that the philosophy of consciousness had failed to found a philosophy of knowledge, and especially scientific knowledge, and the second was that this philosophy of meaning paradoxically had failed to take into account the formative mechanisms of signification and the structure of systems of meaning. I am aware that another form of thought claimed then to have gone beyond the philosophy of the subject—this, of course, was Marxism. It goes without saying—and it goes indeed better if we say it—that neither materialism nor the theory of ideologies successfully constituted a theory of objectivity or of signification. Marxism put itself forward as a humanistic discourse that could replace the abstract subject with an appeal to the real man, to the concrete man. It should have been clear at the time that Marxism carried with it a fundamental theoretical and practical weakness: the humanistic discourse hid the political reality that the Marxists of this period nonetheless supported.

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

These were not the directions I took. Let me announce once and for all that I am not a structuralist, and I confess with the appropriate chagrin that I am not an analytic philosopher—nobody is perfect. I have tried to explore another direction. I have tried to get out from the philosophy of the subject through a genealogy of this subject, by studying the constitution of the subject across history which has led us up to the modern concept of the self. This has not always been an easy task, since most historians prefer a history of social processes,[3] and most philosophers prefer a subject without history. This has neither prevented me from using the same material that certain social historians have used, nor from recognizing my theoretical debt to those philosophers who, like Nietzsche, have posed the question of the historicity of the subject.[4]

Up to the present I have proceeded with this general project in two ways. I have dealt with the modern theoretical constitutions that were concerned with the subject in general. I have tried to analyze in a previous book theories

of the subject as a speaking, living, working being.[5] I have also dealt with the more practical understanding formed in those institutions like hospitals, asylums, and prisons, where certain subjects became objects of knowledge and at the same time objects of domination.[6] And now, I wish to study those forms of understanding which the subject creates about himself. Those forms of self-understanding are important I think to analyze the modern experience of sexuality.[7]

But since I have started with this last type of project I have been obliged to change my mind on several important points. Let me introduce a kind of autocritique. It seems, according to some suggestions by Habermas, that one can distinguish three major types of techniques in human societies: the techniques which permit one to produce, to transform, to manipulate things; the techniques which permit one to use sign systems; and the techniques which permit one to determine the conduct of individuals, to impose certain wills on them, and to submit them to certain ends or objectives. That is to say, there are techniques of production, techniques of signification, and techniques of domination.[8]

Of course, if one wants to study the history of natural sciences, it is useful if not necessary to take into account techniques of production and semiotic techniques. But since my project was concerned with the knowledge of the subject, I thought that the techniques of domination were the most important, without any exclusion of the rest. But, analyzing the experience of sexuality, I became more and more aware that there is in all societies, I think, in all societies whatever they are, another type of techniques: techniques which permit individuals to effect, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their own bodies, on their own souls, on their own thoughts, on their own conduct, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves, modify themselves, and to attain a certain state of perfection, of happiness, of purity, of supernatural power, and so on. Let's call this kind of techniques a techniques or technology of the self.[9]

I think that if one wants to analyze the genealogy of the subject in Western civilization, he has to take into account not only techniques of domination but also techniques of the self. Let's say: he has to take into account the interaction between those two types of techniques—techniques of domination and techniques of the self. He has to take into account the points where the technologies of domination of individuals over one another have recourse to processes by which the individual acts upon himself. And conversely, he has to take into account the points where the techniques of the self are integrated into structures of coercion or domination. The contact point, where the individuals are driven[10] by others is tied to the way they conduct themselves,[11] is what we can call, I think, government.[12] Governing

people, in the broad meaning of the word,[13] governing people is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself.

When I was studying asylums, prisons, and so on, I insisted, I think, too much on the techniques of domination. What we can call discipline is something really important in these kinds of institutions, but it is only at one aspect of the art of governing people in our society. We must not understand the exercise of power as pure violence or strict coercion. Power consists in complex relations: these relations involve a set of rational techniques, and the efficiency of those techniques is due to a subtle integration of coercion-technologies and self-technologies. I think that we have to get rid of the more or less Freudian schema—you know it—the schema of interiorization of the law by the self. Fortunately, from a theoretical point of view, and maybe unfortunately from a practical point of view, things are much more complicated than that. In short, having studied the field of government by taking as my point of departure techniques of domination, I would like in years to come to study government—especially in the field of sexuality—starting from the techniques of the self.[14]

Among those techniques of the self in this field of the self-technology, I think that the techniques oriented toward the discovery and the formulation of the truth concerning oneself are extremely important; and, if for the government of people in our societies everyone had not only to obey but also to produce and publish the truth about oneself, then examination of conscience and confession are among the most important of those procedures. Of course, there is a very long and very complex history, from the Delphic precept, *gnothi seauton* ("know yourself") to the strange therapeutics promoted by Leuret, about which I was speaking in the beginning of this lecture. There is a very long way from one to the other, and I don't want, of course, to give you even a survey this evening. I'd like only to underline a transformation of those practices, a transformation which took place at the beginning of the Christian era, of the Christian period, when the ancient obligation of knowing oneself became the monastic precept "confess, to your spiritual guide, each of your thoughts." This transformation is, I think, of some importance in the genealogy of modern subjectivity. With this transformation starts what we would call the hermeneutics of the self. This evening I'll try to outline the way confession and self-examination were conceived by pagan philosophers, and next week I'll try to show you what it became in the early Christianity.

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

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

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

Epicureans, and it is also tied to the value accorded to the medical model, either in the Epicurean or the Stoician schools.

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

> What could be more beautiful than to conduct an inquest on one's day? What sleep better than that which follows this review of one's actions? How calm it is, deep and free, when the soul has received its portion of praise and blame, and has submitted itself to its own examination, to its own censure. Secretly, it makes the trial of its own conduct. I exercise this authority over myself, and each day I will myself as witness before myself. When my light is lowered and my wife at last is silent, I reason with myself and take the measure of my acts and of my words. I hide nothing from myself; I spare myself nothing. Why, in effect, should I fear anything at all from amongst my errors whilst I can say: "Be vigilant in not beginning it again; today I will forgive you. In a certain discussion you spoke too aggressively or you did not correct the person you were reproaching, you offended him, . . . " etc.[15]

There is something paradoxical in seeing the Stoics, such as Seneca and also Sextus, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, and so on, according so much importance to the examination of conscience whilst, according to the terms of their doctrine, all faults were supposed equal. It should not therefore be necessary to interrogate themselves on each one of them.

But, let's look at this text a little more closely. First of all, Seneca employs a vocabulary which at first glance appears, above all, judicial. He uses expressions like *cognoscere de moribus suis*, and *me causam dico*—all that is typical judicial vocabulary. It seems, therefore, that the subject is, with regard to himself, both the judge and the accused. In this examination of conscience it seems that the subject divides itself in two and organizes a judicial scene, where it plays both roles at once. Seneca is like an accused confessing his crime to the judge, and the judge is Seneca himself. But, if we look more closely, we see that the vocabulary used by Seneca is much more administrative than judicial. It is the vocabulary of the direction of goods or territory. Seneca says, for instance, that he is *speculator sui*, that he inspects himself, that he examines with himself the past day, *totum diem meum scrutor*; or that he takes the measure of things said and done; he uses the word *remetior*. With regard to himself, he is not a judge who has to punish; he is, rather, an administrator who, once the work has been done or the year's

business finished, does the accounts, takes stock of things, and sees if everything has been done correctly. Seneca is a permanent administrator of himself, more than a judge of his own past.[16]

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

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

This evening examination has its logical place among a set of other Stoic exercises[17]: continual reading, for instance, of the manual of precepts (that's for the present); the examination of the evils which could happen in life, the well-known *premeditatio malorum* (that was for the possible); the enumeration each morning of the tasks to be accomplished during the day (that was for the future); and finally, the evening examination of conscience (so much

for the past). As you see, the self in all those exercises is not considered as a field of subjective data which have to be interpreted. It submits itself to the trial of possible or real action.

Well, after this examination of conscience, which constitutes a kind of confession to one's self, I would like to speak about the confession to others: I mean to say the exposé of one's soul which one makes to someone, who may be a friend, an adviser, a guide. This was a practice not very developed in philosophical life, but it had been developed in some philosophical schools, for instance among the Epicurean schools, and it was also a very well known medical practice. The medical literature is rich in such examples of confession or exposé of the self. For instance, the treatise of Galen *On the Passions of the Soul*[18] quotes an example like that; or Plutarch, in the *De Profectibus in Virtute* writes, "There are many sick people who accept medicine and others who refuse them; the man who hides the shame of soul, his desire, his unpleasantness, his avarice, his concupiscence, has little chance of making progress. Indeed, to speak one's evil reveals one['s] nastiness; to recognize it instead of taking pleasure in hiding it. All this is a sign of progress."[19]

Well, another text of Seneca might also serve us as an example here of what was confession in the Late Antiquity. It is in the beginning of *De Tranquillitate Animi*.[20] Serenus, a young friend of Seneca, comes to ask him for advice. It is very explicitly a medical consultation on his own state of soul. "Why," says Serenus, "should I not confess to you the truth, as to a doctor? . . . I do not feel altogether ill but nor do I feel entirely in good health." Serenus feels himself in a state of malaise, rather as he says, like on a boat which does not advance, but is tossed about by the rolling of the ship. And, he fears staying at sea in this condition, in view of firm land and of the virtues which remain inaccessible. In order to escape this state, Serenus therefore decides to consult Seneca and to confess his state to Seneca. He says that he wants *verum fateri*, to tell the truth, to Seneca.[21]

Now what is this truth, what is this *verum*, that he wants to confess? Does he confess faults, secret thoughts, shameful desires, and things like that? Not at all. The text of Serenus appears as an accumulation of relatively unimportant, at least for us unimportant, details; for instance, Serenus confesses to Seneca that he uses the earthenware inherited from his father, that he gets easily carried away when he makes public speeches, and so on and so on. But, it is easy, beneath this apparent disorder, to recognize three distinct domains for this confession: the domain of riches, the domain of political life, and the domain of glory; to acquire riches, to participate in the affairs of the city, to gain public opinion. These are—these were—the three types of activity possible for a free man, the three commonplace moral questions that

are asked by the major philosophical schools of the period. The framework of the exposé of Serenus is not therefore defined by the real course of his existence; it is not defined by his real experiences, nor by a theory of the soul or of its elements, but only by a classification of the different types of activity which one can exercise and the ends which one can pursue. In each one of these fields, Serenus reveals his attitude by enumerating that which pleases him and that which displeases him. The expression "it pleases me" (*placet me*) is the leading thread in his analysis. It pleases him to do favors for his friends. It pleases him to eat simply, and to have not other than that which he has inherited, but the spectacle of luxury in others pleases him. He takes pleasure also in inflating his oratorical style with the hope that posterity will retain his words. In thus exposing what pleases him, Serenus is not seeking to reveal what are his profound desires. His pleasures are not the means of revealing what Christians later call *concupiscensia*. For him, it is a question of his own state and of adding something to the knowledge of the moral precepts. This addition to what is already known is a force, the force which would be able to transform pure knowledge and simple consciousness in a real way of living. And that is what Seneca tries to do when he uses a set of persuasive arguments, demonstrations, examples, in order not to discover a still unknown truth inside and in the depth of Serenus's soul but in order to explain, if I may say, to which extent truth in general is true. Seneca's discourse has for an objective not to add to some theoretical principle a force of coercion coming from elsewhere but to transform them in a victorious force. Seneca has to give a place to truth as a force.

Hence, I think, several consequences. First, in this game between Serenus's confession and Seneca's consultation, truth, as you see, is not defined by a correspondence to reality but as a force inherent to principles and which has to be developed in a discourse. Two, this truth is not something which is hidden behind or under the consciousness in the deepest and most obscure part of the soul. It is something which is before the individual as a point of attraction, a kind of magnetic force which attracts him towards a goal. Three, this truth is not obtained by an analytical exploration of what is supposed to be real in the individual but by rhetorical explanation of what is good for anyone who wants to approach the life of a sage. Four, the confession is not oriented toward an individualization of Serenus by the discovery of some personal characteristics but towards the constitution of a self which could be at the same time and without any discontinuity subject of knowledge and subject of will. Five,[22] we can see that such a practice of confession and consultation remains within the framework of what the Greeks for a long time called the *gnomé*. The term *gnomé* designates the unity of will and knowledge; it designates also a brief piece of discourse through which truth

appeared with all its force and encrusts itself in the soul of people.[23] Then, we could say that even as late as the first century A.D., the type of subject which is proposed as a model and as a target in the Greek, or in the Hellenistic or Roman, philosophy, is a gnomic self, where force of the truth is one with the form of the will.

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In this model of the gnomic self, we found several constitutive elements: the necessity of telling truth about oneself, the role of the master and the master's discourse, the long way that leads finally to the emergence of the self. All those elements, we find them also in the Christian technologies of the self, but with a very different organization. I should say, in sum, and I'll conclude there, that as far as we followed the practices of self-examination and confession in the Hellenistic or Roman philosophy, you see that the self is not something that has to be discovered or deciphered as a very obscure text. You see that the task is not to put in the light what would be the most obscure part of our selves. The self has, on the contrary, not to be discovered but to be constituted, to be constituted through the force of truth. This force lies in[24] the rhetorical quality of the master's discourse, and this rhetorical quality depends for a part on the exposé of the disciple, who has to explain how far he is in his way of living from the true principles that he knows.[25] And I think that this organization of the self as a target, the organization of what I call the gnomic self, as the objective, the aim, towards which the confession and the self-examination is oriented, is something deeply different of what we meet in the Christian technologies of the self. In the Christian technologies of the self, the problem is to discover what is hidden inside the self; the self is like a text or like a book that we have to decipher, and not something which has to be constructed by the superposition, the superimposition, of the will and the truth. This organization, this Christian organization, so different from the pagan one, is something which is I think quite decisive for the genealogy of the modern self, and that's the point I'll try to explain next week when we meet again. Thank you.

CHRISTIANITY AND CONFESSION

The theme of this lecture is the same as the theme of last week's lecture.[26] The theme is: how was formed in our societies what I would like to call the interpretive analysis of the self; or, how was formed the hermeneutics of the

self in the modern, or at least in the Christian and the modern, societies? In spite of the fact that we can find very early in the Greek, in the Hellenistic, in the Latin cultures, techniques such as self-examination and confession, I think that there are very large differences between the Latin and Greek—the Classical—techniques of the self and the techniques developed in Christianity. And I'll try to show this evening that the modern hermeneutics of the self is rooted much more in those Christian techniques than in the Classical ones. The *gnothi seauton* is, I think, much less influential in our societies, in our culture, than is supposed to be.

As everybody knows, Christianity is a confession. That means that Christianity belongs to a very special type of religion, the religions which impose on those who practice them obligation of truth. Such obligations in Christianity are numerous; for instance, a Christian has the obligation to hold as true a set of propositions which constitutes a dogma; or, he has the obligation to hold certain books as a permanent source of truth; or,[27] he has the obligation to accept the decisions of certain authorities in matters of truth.[28]

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

A few remarks. These two ensembles of obligations, those regarding the faith, the book, the dogma, and the obligations regarding the self, the soul, the heart, are linked together. A Christian is always supposed to be supported by the light of faith if he wants to explore himself, and, conversely, access to the truth of the faith cannot be conceived of without the purification of the soul. As Augustine said, in a Latin formula I'm sure you'll understand, *qui facit veritatem venit ad lucem.* That means: *facite veritatem*, "to make truth inside oneself," and *venire ad lucem*, "to get access to the light." Well, to make truth inside of oneself, and to get access to the light of God, and so on, those two processes are strongly connected in the Christian experience. But those two relationships to truth, you can find them equally connected, as you know, in Buddhism, and they were also connected in all the Gnostic movements of the first centuries. But there, either in Buddhism or in the Gnostic movements, those two relationships to truth were connected in such a way that they were almost identified. To discover the truth inside oneself, to decipher the real nature and the authentic origin of the soul, was considered by the Gnosticists as one thing with coming through to the light.[29]

On the contrary, one of the main characteristics of orthodox Christianity, one of the main differences between Christianity and Buddhism, or between

Christianity and Gnosticism, one of the main reasons for the mistrust of Christianity toward mystics, and one of the most constant historical features of Christianity, is that those two systems of obligation, of truth obligation—the one concerned with access to light and the one concerned with the making of truth, the discovering of truth inside oneself—those two systems of obligation have always maintained a relative autonomy. Even after Luther, even in Protestantism, the secrets of the soul and the mysteries of the faith, the self and the book, are not in Christianity enlightened by exactly the same type of light. They demand different methods and put into operation particular techniques.

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Well, let's put aside the long history of their complex and often conflictual relations before and after the Reformation. I'd like this evening to focus attention on the second of those two systems of obligation. I'd like to focus on the obligation imposed on every Christian to manifest the truth about himself. When one speaks of confession and self-examination in Christianity, one of course has in mind the sacrament of penance and the canonic confession of sins. But these are rather late innovations in Christianity. Christians of the first centuries knew completely different forms for the showing forth of the truth about themselves, and you'll find these obligations of manifesting the truth about oneself in two different institutions—in penitential rites and monastic life. And I would like first to examine the penitential rites and the obligations of truth, the truth obligations which are related, which are connected with those penitential rites. I will not enter, of course, into the discussions which have taken place and which continue until now as to the progressive development of these rites. I would like only to underline one fundamental fact: in the first centuries of Christianity, penance was not an act. Penance, in the first centuries of Christianity, penance is a status, which presents several characteristics. The function of this status is to avoid the definitive expulsion from the church of a Christian who has committed one or several serious sins. As penitent, this Christian is excluded from many of the ceremonies and collective rites, but he does not cease to be a Christian, and by means of this status he can obtain his reintegration. And this status is therefore a long-term affair. This status affects most aspects of his life— fasting obligations, rules about clothing, interdictions on sexual relations—and the individual is marked to such an extent by this status that even after his reconciliation, after his reintegration in the community, he will still suffer from a certain number of prohibitions (for instance, he will not be

able to become a priest). So penance is not an act corresponding to a sin; it is a status, a general status in the existence.

Now, amongst the elements of this status, the obligation to manifest the truth is fundamental. I don't say that enunciation of sins is fundamental; I employ a much more imprecise and obscure expression. I say that manifestation of the truth is necessary and is deeply connected with this status of penance. In fact, to designate the truth games or the truth obligations inherent to penitents, the Greek fathers used a word, a very specific word (and very enigmatic also); the word *exomologesis*. This word was so specific that even Latin writers, Latin fathers, often used the Greek word without even translating it.[30]

What does this term *exomologesis* mean? In a very general sense, the word refers to the recognition of an act, but more precisely, in the penitential rite, what was the *exomologesis*? Well, at the end of the penitential procedure, at the end and not at the beginning, at the end of the penitential procedure, when the moment of the reintegration came, an episode took place which the texts regularly call *exomologesis*. Some descriptions are very early and some very late, but they are quite identical. Tertullian, for instance, at the end of the second century, describes the ceremony in the following manner. He wrote, "The penitent wears a hair shirt and ashes. He is wretchedly dressed. He is taken by the hand and led into the church. He prostrates himself before the widows and the priest. He hangs on the skirts of their garments. He kisses their knees."[31] And much later after this, in the beginning of the fifth century, Jerome described in the same way the penitence of Fabiola. Fabiola was a woman, a well-known Roman noblewoman, who had married a second time before the death of her first husband, which was something quite bad, and she then was obliged to do penance. And Jerome describes thus this penance: "During the days which preceded Easter," which was the moment of the reconciliation,

> during the days which preceded Easter, Fabiola was to be found among the ranks of the penitents. The bishop, the priests, and the people wept with her. Her hair disheveled, her face pale, her hands dirty, her head covered in ashes, she chastened her naked breast and the face with which she had seduced her second husband. She revealed to all her wound, and Rome, in tears, contemplated the scars on her emaciated body.[32]

No doubt Jerome and Tertullian were liable to be rather carried away by such things; however, in Ambrose and in others one finds indications which show clearly the existence of an episode of dramatic self-revelation at the moment of the reconciliation of the penitent. That was, specifically, the *exomologesis*.

But the term of *exomologesis* does not apply only to this final episode. Frequently the word *exomologesis* is used to designate everything that the

penitent does to obtain his reconciliation during the time in which he retains the status of penitent. The acts by which he punishes himself must be indissociable from the acts by which he reveals himself. The punishment of oneself and the voluntary expression of oneself are bound together.

A correspondent of Cyprian in the middle of the third century writes, for instance, that those who wish to do penance must, I quote, "prove their suffering, show their shame, make visible their humility, and exhibit their modesty."[33] And, in the *Paraenesis*, Pacian says that the true penance is accomplished not in a nominal fashion but finds its instruments in sackcloth, ashes, fasting, affliction, and the participation of a great number of people in prayers. In a few words, penance in the first Christian centuries is a way of life acted out at all times out of an obligation to show oneself. And that is, exactly, *exomologesis*.[34]

As you see, this *exomologesis* did not obey to a judicial principle of correlation, of exact correlation, adjusting the punishment to the crime. *Exomologesis* obeyed a law of dramatic emphasis and of maximum theatricality. And, neither did this *exomologesis* obey a truth principle of correspondence between verbal enunciation and reality. As you see, no description in this *exomologesis* is of a penance; no confession, no verbal enumeration of sins, no analysis of the sins, but somatic expressions and symbolic expressions. Fabiola did not confess her fault, telling to somebody what she has done, but she put under everybody's eyes the flesh, the body, which has committed the sin. And, paradoxically, the *exomologesis* is this time to rub out the sin, restitute the previous purity acquired by baptism, and this by showing the sinner as he is in his reality—dirty, defiled, sullied.[35]

Tertullian has a word to translate the Greek word *exomologesis*; he said it was *publicatio sui*, the Christian had to publish himself.[36] Publish oneself, that means that he has two things to do. One has to show oneself as a sinner; that means, as somebody who, choosing the path of the sin, preferred filthiness to purity, earth and dust to heaven, spiritual poverty to the treasures of faith. In a word, he has to show himself as somebody who preferred spiritual death to earthen life. And that was the reason why *exomologesis* was a kind of representation of death. It was the theatrical representation of the sinner as dead or as dying. But this *exomologesis* was also a way for the sinner to express his will to get free from this world, to get rid of his own body, to destroy his own flesh, and get access to a new spiritual life. It is the theatrical representation of the sinner as willing his own death as a sinner. It is the dramatic manifestation of the renunciation to oneself.

To justify this *exomologesis* and this renunciation to oneself in manifesting the truth about oneself, Christian fathers had recourse to several models. The well-known medical model was very often used in pagan philosophy:

one has to show his wounds to the physicians if he wants to be healed. They also used the judicial model: one always appeases the court when spontaneously confessing the faults.[37] But the most important model to justify the necessity of *exomologesis* is the model of martyrdom. The martyr is he who prefers to face death rather than to abandon his faith.[38] The sinner abandons the faith in order to keep the life of here below; he will be reinstated only if in his turn he exposes himself voluntarily to a sort of martyrdom to which all will be witnesses, and which is penance, or penance as *exomologesis*.[39] Such a demonstration does not therefore have as its function the establishment of the personal identity. Rather, such a demonstration serves to mark this dramatic demonstration of what one is: the refusal of the self, the breaking off from one's self. One recalls what was the objective of Stoic technology: it was to superimpose, as I tried to explain to you last week, the subject of knowledge and the subject of will by means of the perpetual rememorizing of the rules. The formula which is at the heart of *exomologesis* is, in contrary, *ego non sum ego*. The *exomologesis* seeks, in opposition to the Stoic techniques, to superimpose by an act of violent rupture the truth about oneself and the renunciation of oneself. In the ostentatious gestures of maceration, self-revelation in *exomologesis* is, at the same time, self-destruction.

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Well, if we turn to the confession in monastic institutions, it is of course quite different from this *exomologesis*. In the Christian institutions of the first centuries another form of confession is to be found, very different from this one. It is the organized confession in the monastic communities. In a certain way, this confession is close to the exercise practiced in the pagan schools of philosophy. There is nothing astonishing in this, since the monastic life presented itself as the true form of philosophical life, and the monastery was presented as the school of philosophy. There is an obvious transfer of several technologies of the self in Christian spirituality from practices of pagan philosophy.

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

> It is in the morning that we must take account of our expenses, then it is in the evening, after our meal, when we have gone to bed and no one troubles us and disquiets us, that

> we must ask ourselves to render account of our conduct to ourselves. Let us examine what is to our advantage and what is prejudicial. Let us cease spending inappropriately and try to set aside useful funds in the place of harmful expenses, prayers in place of indiscrete words.[40]

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

Another feature distinguishes monastic discipline from the philosophical life. In the monastic life, the supreme good is not the mastership of oneself; the supreme good in the monastic life is the contemplation of God. The obligation of the monk is continuously to turn his thoughts to that single point which is God, and his obligation is also to make sure that his heart, his soul, and the eye of his soul is pure enough to see God and to receive light from him.

Placed under this principle of obedience, and oriented towards the objective of contemplation, you understand that the technology of the self which develops in Christian monasticism presents peculiar characteristics. John Cassian's *Institutiones* and *Collationes* give a rather systematic and clear exposé of self-examination and of the confession as they were practiced among the Palestinian and Egyptian monks.[41] And I'll follow several of the indications you can find in those two books, which were written in the beginning of the fifth century. First, about the self-examination, the first point about the self-examination in the monastic life is that the self-examination in this kind of Christian exercise is much more concerned with thoughts than with actions. Since he has to turn his thought continuously towards God, you understand very well that the monk has to take in hand not the course of his actions, as the Stoic philosopher; he has to take in hand the course of his

thoughts. Not only the passions which might make vacillate the firmness of his conduct; he has to take in hand the images which present themselves to the spirit, the thoughts which come to interfere with contemplation, the diverse suggestions which turn the attention of the spirit away from its object, that means away from God. So much so that the primary material for scrutiny and for the examination of the self is an area anterior to actions, of course, anterior to will also, even an area anterior to the desires—a much more tenacious material than the material the Stoic philosopher had to examine in himself. The monk has to examine a material which the Greek fathers call (almost always pejoratively) the *logismoi*, that is in Latin, *cogitationes*, the nearly imperceptible movements of the thoughts, the permanent mobility of soul.[42] That's the material which the monk has to continuously examine in order to maintain the eye of his spirit always directed towards the unique point which is God. But, when the monk scrutinizes his own thoughts, what is he concerned with? Not of course with the relation between the idea and the reality. He is not concerned with this truth relation which makes an idea wrong or true. He is not interested in the relationship between his mind and the external world. What he is concerned with is the nature, the quality, the substance of his thoughts.

We must, I think, pause for a moment on this important point. In order to make comprehensible what this permanent examination consists in, Cassian uses three comparisons. He uses first the comparison of the mill. Thought, says Cassian, thought is like a millstone which grinds the grains. The grains are of course the ideas which present continuously themselves in the mind. And in the comparison of the millstone, it is up to the miller to sort out amongst the grains those which are bad and those which can be admitted to the millstone because they are good. Cassian has recourse also to the comparison of the officer who has the soldiers file past him and makes them pass to the right or to the left, allotting to each his task according to his capacities. And lastly, and that I think is the most important, the most interesting, Cassian says that one must be with respect to oneself like a moneychanger to whom one presents coins, and whose task consists in examining them, verifying their authenticity, so as to accept those which are authentic whilst rejecting those which are not. Cassian develops this comparison at length. When a moneychanger examines a coin, says Cassian, the moneychanger looks at the effigy the money bears, he considers the metal of which it is made, to know what it is and if it is pure. The moneychanger seeks to know the workshop from which it comes, and he weighs it in his hand in order to know if it has been filed down or ill-used. In the same way, says Cassian, one must verify the quality of one's thoughts, one must know if they really bear the effigy of God; that is to say, if they really permit us to

contemplate him, if their surface brilliance does not hide the impurity of a bad thought. What is their origin? Do they come from God, or from the workshop of the demon? Finally, even if they are of good quality and origin, have they not been whittled away and rusted by evil sentiments?

I think that this form of examination is at the same time new and historically important. Perhaps I have insisted a little too much with regard to the Stoics on the fact that their examination, the Stoic examination, was concerned with acts and rules. One must recognize, however, the importance of the question of truth with the Stoic, but the question was presented in terms of true or false opinions favorable to forming good or bad actions. For Cassian, the problem is not to know if there is a conformity between the idea and the order of external things; it is a question of examining the thought in itself. Does it really show its true origin, is it as pure as it seems, have not foreign elements insidiously mixed themselves with it? Altogether, the question is not "Am I wrong to think such a thing?" but "Have I not been deceived by the thought which has come to me?" Is the thought which comes to me, and independently of the truth as to the things it represents, is there not an illusion about myself on my part? For instance, the idea comes to me that fasting is a good thing. The idea is certainly true, but maybe this idea has been suggested not by God but by Satan in order to put me in competition with other monks, and then bad feelings about the other ones can be mixed to the project of fasting more than I do. So, the idea is true in regard to the external world, or in regard to the rules, but the idea is impure since from its origin it is rooted in bad sentiments. And we have to decipher our thoughts as subjective data which have to be interpreted, which have to be scrutinized, in their roots and in their origins.

It is impossible not to be struck by the similarity of this general theme, and the similarity of this image of the moneychanger, and several texts of Freud about censorship. One could say that Freudian censorship is both the same thing and the reverse of Cassian's changer; both the Cassian changer and the Freudian censorship have to control the access to consciousness—they have to let some representations in and to reject the others. But Cassian's changer has for a function to decipher what is false or illusory in what presents itself to consciousness and then to let in only what is authentic. For that purpose the Cassian moneychanger uses a specific aptitude that the Latin fathers called *discretio*.[43] The Freudian censorship is, compared to the Cassian changer, both more perverse and more naive. The Freudian censorship rejects that what presents itself as it is, and the Freudian censorship accepts that what is sufficiently disguised. Cassian's changer is a truth-operator through *discretio*; Freudian censorship is a falsehood-operator through symbolization. But I don't want to go further in such a parallel; it's only an

indication, but I think that the relations between Freudian practice and the Christian techniques of spirituality could be, if seriously done, a very interesting field of research.[44]

But we have to go further, for the problem is, how is it possible to perform, as Cassian wishes, how is it possible to perform continuously this necessary self-examination, this necessary self-control of the tiniest movements in the thoughts? How is it possible to perform this necessary hermeneutics of our own thoughts? The answer given by Cassian and his inspirators is both obvious and surprising. The answer given by Cassian is, well, you interpret your thoughts by telling them to the master or to your spiritual father. You interpret your thoughts by confessing not of course your acts, not confessing your faults, but in confessing continuously the movement you can notice in your thought. Why is this confession able to assume this hermeneutical role? One reason comes to the mind: in exposing the movements of his heart, the disciple permits his *seigneur* to know those movements and, thanks to his greater experience, to his greater wisdom, the *seigneur*, the spiritual father, can better understand what's happening. His seniority permits him to distinguish between truth and illusion in the soul of the person he directs.

But that is not the principal reason that Cassian invokes to explain the necessity of confession. There is for Cassian a specific virtue of verification in this act of verbalization. Amongst all the examples that Cassian quotes there is one which is particularly enlightening on this point. Cassian quotes the following anecdote: a young monk, Serapion, incapable of enduring the obligatory fast, stole every evening a loaf of bread. But of course he did not dare to confess it to his spiritual director, and one day this spiritual director, who no doubt guessed all, gives a public sermon on the necessity of being truthful. Convinced by this sermon, the young Serapion takes out from under his robe the bread that he has stolen and shows it to everyone. Then he prostrates himself and confesses the secret of his daily meal, and then, not at the moment when he showed the bread he has stolen, but at the very moment when he confesses, verbally confesses, the secret of his daily meal, at this very moment of the confession, a light seems to tear itself away from his body and cross the room, in spreading a disgusting smell of sulphur.

One sees that in this anecdote the decisive element is not that the master knows the truth. It is not even that the young monk reveals his act and restores the object of his theft. It is the confession, the verbal act of confession, which comes last and which makes appear, in a certain sense, by its own mechanics, the truth, the reality of what has happened. The verbal act of confession is the proof, is the manifestation, of truth. Why? Well, I think it is because what marks the difference between good and evil thoughts, following Cassian, is that the evil ones cannot be referred to without difficulty. If one blushes in

recounting them, if one seeks to hide his own thoughts, if even quite simply one hesitates to tell his thoughts, that is the proof that those thoughts are not good as they may appear. Evil inhabits them. Thus verbalization constitutes a way of sorting out thoughts which present themselves. One can test their value according to whether they resist verbalization or not. Cassian gives the reason of this resistance: Satan as principle of evil is incompatible with the light, and he resists when confession drags him from the dark caverns of the conscience into the light of explicit discourse. I quote Cassian: "A bad thought brought into the light of day immediately loses its veneer. The terrible serpent that this confession has forced out of its subterranean lair, to throw it out into the light and make its shame a public spectacle, is quick to beat a retreat."[45] Does that mean that it would be sufficient for the monk to tell his thoughts aloud even when alone? Of course not. The presence of somebody, even if he does not speak, even if it is a silent presence, this presence is requested for this kind of confession, because the *abbé*, or the brother, or the spiritual father, who listens at this confession is the image of God. And the verbalization of thoughts is a way to put under the eyes of God all the ideas, images, suggestions, as they come to consciousness, and under this divine light they show necessarily what they are.

From this, we can see (1) that verbalization in itself has an interpretive function. Verbalization contains in itself a power of *discretio*.[46] (2) This verbalization is not a kind of retrospection about past acts. Verbalization, Cassian imposes to monks, this verbalization has to be a permanent activity, as contemporaneous as possible of the stream of thoughts. (3) This verbalization must go as deep as possible in the depth of the thoughts. These, whatever they are, have an inapparent origin, obscure roots, secret parts, and the role of verbalization is to excavate these origins and those secret parts. (4) As verbalization brings to the external light the deep movement of the thought, it leads also and by the same process the human soul from the reign of Satan to the law of God. That means that verbalization is a way for the conversion[47] (for the *metanoia*, said the Greek fathers), for the conversion to develop itself and to take effect. Since under the reign of Satan the human being was attached to himself, verbalization as a movement toward God is a renunciation to Satan, and a renunciation to oneself. Verbalization is a self-sacrifice. To this permanent, exhaustive, and sacrificial verbalization of the thoughts which was obligatory for the monks in the monastic institution, to this permanent verbalization of the thoughts, the Greek fathers gave the name of *exagoreusis*.[48]

Thus, as you see, in the Christianity of the first centuries, the obligation to tell the truth about oneself was to take two major forms, the *exomologesis* and the *exagoreusis*, and as you see they are very different from one another.

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

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Let's stop here. I have been both too long and much too schematic. I would like you to consider what I have said only as a point of departure, one of those small origins that Nietzsche liked to discover at the beginning of great things. The great things that those monastic practices announced are numerous. I will mention, just before I finish, a few of them. First, as you see, the apparition of a new kind of self, or at least a new kind of relationship to our selves. You remember what I told you last week: the Greek technology, or the philosophical techniques, of the self tended to produce a self which could be, which should be, the permanent superposition in the form of memory of the subject of knowledge and the subject of the will.[49]

I think that in Christianity we see the development of a much more complex technology of the self. This technology of the self maintains the difference between knowledge of being, knowledge of word, knowledge of nature, and knowledge of the self, and this knowledge of the self takes shape

in the constitution of thought as a field of subjective data which are to be interpreted. And, the role of interpreter is assumed by the work of a continuous verbalization of the most imperceptible movements of the thought—that's the reason we could say that the Christian self which is correlated to this technique is a gnosiologic self.

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

Even in these hermeneutical techniques derived from the *exagoreusis* the production of truth could not be met, you remember, without a very strict condition: hermeneutics of the self implies the sacrifice of the self. And that is, I think, the deep contradiction, or, if you want, the great richness, of Christian technologies of the self: no truth about the self without a sacrifice of the self.[50] I think that one of the great problems of Western culture has been to find the possibility of founding the hermeneutics of the self not, as it was the case in early Christianity, on the sacrifice of the self but, on the contrary, on a positive, on the theoretical and practical, emergence of the self. That was the aim of judicial institutions, that was the aim also of medical and psychiatric practices, that was the aim of political and philosophical theory—to constitute the ground of the subjectivity as the root of a positive self, what we could call the permanent anthropologism of Western thought. And I think that this anthropologism is linked to the deep desire to substitute the positive figure of man for the sacrifice which for Christianity was the condition for the opening of the self as a field of indefinite interpretation.[51] During the last two centuries, the problem has been: what could be the positive foundation for the technologies of the self that we have been developing during centuries and centuries? But the moment, maybe, is coming for us to ask, do we need, really, this hermeneutics of the self?[52] Maybe the problem of the self is not to discover what it is in its positivity, maybe the problem is not to discover a positive self or the positive foundation of the self. Maybe our problem is now to discover that the self is nothing else than the historical correlation of the technology built in our history. Maybe the problem is to change those technol-

ogies.[53] And in this case, one of the main political problems would be nowadays, in the strict sense of the word, the politics of ourselves.

Well, I thank you very much.

NOTES

1. See Francois Leuret, *Du traitement morale de la folie* (Paris: J. B. Bailliere, 1840), and Foucault, *Maladie mentale et psychologie*, 3rd ed. (Paris: PUF, 1966), 85-86; *Mental Illness and Psychology*, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 72.

2. Edmund Husserl, *Méditations Cartésiennes*, translated by Gabrielle Peiffer and Emmanuel Lewis (Paris: Arman Colin, 1931); *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, translated by Dorian Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973).

3. "where society plays the role of subject" [Howison].

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

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

I would like to add one final word about the practical significance of this form of analysis. For Heidegger, it was through an increasing obsession with *techné* as the only way to arrive at an understanding of objects, that the West lost touch with Being. Let's turn the question around

and ask which techniques and practices form the Western concept of the subject, giving it its characteristic split of truth and error, freedom and constraint. I think that it is here where we will find the real possibility of constructing a history of what we have done and, at the same time, a diagnosis of what we are. This would be a theoretical analysis which has, at the same time, a political dimension. By this word 'political dimension,' I mean an analysis that relates to what we are willing to accept in our world, to accept, to refuse, and to change, both in ourselves and in our circumstances. In sum, it is a question of searching for another kind of critical philosophy. Not a critical philosophy that seeks to determine the conditions and the limits of our possible knowledge of the object, but a critical philosophy that seeks the conditions and the indefinite possibilities of transforming the subject, of transforming ourselves" [Howison].

5. *Les Mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966); *The Order of Things*, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1970).

6. *Naissance de la clinique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963, 1972); *The Birth of the Clinic*, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1973) and *Surveiller et punir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975); *Discipline and Punish*, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977).

7. *La Volonté de savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976); *The History of Sexuality, vol. 1: An Introduction*, translated by Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1978); *L'Usage des plaisirs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984); *The Use of Pleasure*, translated by Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1985); *Le Souci de soi* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984); *The Care of the Self*, translated by Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1986).

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

9. *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, edited by Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988).

10. "and known" [Howison].

11. "and know themselves" [Howison].

12. *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, edited by Graham Burchell et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

13. "as they spoke of it in the sixteenth century, of governing children, or governing family, or governing souls" [Howison].

14. *Resumé de cours, 1970-1982* (Paris: Julliard, 1989), 133-66; "Sexuality and Solitude," *London Review of Books* 3, no. 9 (May 21-June 3, 1981): 3, 5-6.

15. Seneca, "On Anger," *Moral Essays, Volume 1*, translated by John W. Basore, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), 340-41.

16. *Le Souci de soi*, 77-79; *The Care of the Self*, 60-62; "L'écriture de soi," *Corps écrit* 5 (February 1983): 21.

17. "all of them being a way to incorporate in a constant attitude a code of actions and reactions, whatever situation may occur" [Howison].

18. Galen, "On the Diagnosis and Cure of the Soul's Passions," in *On the Passions and Errors of the Soul*, translated by Paul W. Harkins (Ohio State University Press, 1963).

19. Plutarch, "How a Man May Become Aware of His Progress in Virtue," in *Moralia, Volume 1*, translated by Frank Cole Babbitt, Loeb Classical Library (New York: Putnam, 1927), 400-57, esp. 436-57.

20. Seneca, "On Tranquility of Mind," in *Moral Essays, Volume 2*, translated by John W. Basore, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), 202-85, esp. 202-13.

21. "But, through this confession, through this description of his own state, he asks Seneca to tell him the truth about his own state. Seneca is at the same time confessing the truth and lacking in truth" [Howison].

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

23. "In the earliest form of Greek philosophy, poets and divine men told the truth to ordinary mortals through this kind of *gnomé*. *Gnomai* were very short, very imperative, and so deeply illuminated by the poetical light that it was impossible to forget them and to avoid their power. Well, I think you can see that self-examination, confession, as you find them, for instance, in Seneca, but also in Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, and so on, even as late as the first century A.D., self-examination and confession were still a kind of development of the *gnomé*" [Howison].

24. "the mnemonic aptitude of the individual and" [Howison].

25. "These depend in part on arts of memory and acts of persuasion. So, technologies of the self in the ancient world are not linked with an art of interpretation, but with arts such as mnemotechnics and rhetoric. Self-observation, self-interpretation, self-hermeneutics won't intervene in the technologies of the self before Christianity" [Howison].

26. [At the beginning of the second Howison lecture, Foucault said the following:] "Well, several persons asked me to give a short résumé of what I said last night. I will try to do it as if it were a good TV series. So, what happened in the first episode? Very few important things. I have tried to explain why I was interested in the practice of self-examination and confession. Those two practices seem to me to be good witnesses for a major problem, which is the genealogy of the modern self. This genealogy has been my obsession for years because it is one of the possible ways to get rid of a traditional philosophy of the subject. I would like to outline this genealogy from the point of view of techniques, what I call techniques of the self. Among these techniques of the self, the most important, in modern societies, is, I think, that which deals with the interpretive analysis of the subject, with the hermeneutics of the self. How was the hermeneutics of the self formed? This is the theme of the two lectures. Yesterday night, I spoke about Greek and Roman techniques of the self, or at least about two of these techniques, confession and self-examination. It is a fact that we meet confession and self-examination very often in the late Hellenistic and Roman philosophies. Are they the archetypes of Christian confession and self-examination? Are they the early forms of the modern hermeneutics of the self? I have tried to show that they are quite different from that. Their aim is not, I think, to decipher a hidden truth in the depth of the individual. Their aim is something else. It is to give force to truth in the individual. Their aim is to constitute the self as the ideal unity of the will and the truth. Well, now let us turn toward Christianity as the cradle of Western hermeneutics of the self."

27. "at least in the Catholic branch of Christianity" [Howison].

28. "obligations not only to believe in certain things but also to show that one believes in them. Every Christian is obliged to manifest his faith" [Howison].

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

30. *Technologies of the Self*, 39-43.

31. Tertullian, "On Repentance," in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, edited by A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, n.d., repr. 1979), 657-68, esp. " Exomologesis," chaps. 9-12, 664-66.

32. Jerome, "Letter LXXVII, to Oceanus," in *The Principal Works of St. Jerome*, translated by W. H. Freemantle, vol. 6 in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (New York: Christian Literature Co., 1893), 157-62, esp. 159-60.

33. Cyprian, "Letter XXXVI, from the Priests and Deacons Abiding in Rome to Pope Cyprian," in *Saint Cyprian: Letters (1-81)*, 90-94 at 93, translated by Sister Rose Bernard Donna, C.S.J., vol. 51 in *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1964).

34. "This form, attested to from the end of the second century, will subsist for an extremely long time in Christianity, since one finds its after-effects in the orders of penitents so important in the fifteenth and sixteenth century. One can see that the procedure for showing forth the truth are multiple and complex in it. Certain acts of *exomologesis* take place in private but most are addressed to the public" [Howison].

35. "The greater part of the acts which constitute penance has the role not of telling the truth about the sin; it has the role of showing the true being of the sinner, or the true sinful being of the subject. The Tertullian expression, *publicatio sui*, is not a way to say the sinner has to explain his sins. The expression means he has to produce himself as a sinner in his reality of sinner. And now the question is why the showing forth of the sinner should be efficient to efface the sins" [Howison].

36. "On Repentance," chap. 10.

37. "The day of judgment, the Devil himself will stand up to accuse the sinner. If the sinner has already anticipated him by accusing himself, the enemy will be obliged to remain quiet" [Howison].

38. "It must not be forgotten that the practice and the theory of penitence were elaborated to a great extent around the problem of the relapsed. . . . The relapsed abandons the faith in order to keep the life of here below" [Howison].

39. "In brief, penance insofar as it is a reproduction of martyrdom is an affirmation of change—of rupture with one's self, with one's past *metanoia*, of a rupture with the world, and with all previous life" [Howison].

40. See esp. St. John Chrysostom, "Homily XLII," on Matthew 12:33, in *St. Chrysostom: Homilies on the Gospel of St. Matthew*, edited by Phillip Schaff, vol. 10 in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, repr. 1975), 271.

41. John Cassian, *De Institutiones Coenobiorum* and *Collationes Patrum*, edited by Phillip Schaff, in vol. 11 of *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, repr. 1973).

42. "This is the soul that Cassian described with two Greek words [undecipherable]. It means that the soul is always moving and moving in all directions" [Howison].

43. "and the Greek fathers called *diacrisis*" [Howison].

44. "What I would like to insist upon this evening is something else, or, at least, something indirectly related to that. There is something really important in the way Cassian poses the problem of truth about the thought. First of all, thoughts (not desires, not passions, not attitudes,

not acts) appear in Cassian's work and in all the spirituality it represents as a field of subjective data which have to be considered and analyzed as an object. And I think that is the first time in history that thoughts are considered as possible objects for an analysis. Second, thoughts have to be analyzed not in relation to their object, according to objective experience, or according to logical rules, they have to be suspected since they can be secretly altered, disguised in their own substance. Third, what man needs if he does not want to be the victim of his own thoughts is a perpetual hermeneutics interpretation, a perpetual work of hermeneutics. The function of this hermeneutics is to discover the reality hidden inside the thought. Fourth, this reality which is able to hide in my thoughts is a power, a power which is not of another nature than my soul, as is, for instance, the body. The power which hides inside my thoughts, this power is of the same nature of my thoughts and of my soul. It is the Devil. It is the presence of somebody else in me. This constitution of the thoughts as a field of subjective data needing an interpretive analysis in order to discover the power of the other in me is, that is, I think, if we compare it to the Stoic technologies of the self, a quite new manner to organize the relationships between truth and subjectivity. I think that hermeneutics of the self begins there" [Howison].

45. John Cassian, *Second Conference of Abbot Moses*, chap. 11, 312-13 at 312, in vol. 11 of *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaft and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1955).

46. "a power of *diacrisis*, of differences" [Howison].

47. "for the rupture of the self" [Howison].

48. *Technologies of the Self*, 43-49.

49. ", what I call the *gnomic* self. In the beginning of the lecture, I indicated that the Gnostic movements were a question of constituting an ontological unity, the knowledge of the soul and the knowledge of the being. Then, what could be called the gnostic self could be constituted in Christianity" [Howison].

50. "The centrality of the confession of sins in Christianity finds an explanation here. The verbalization of the confession of sins is institutionalized as a discursive truth-game, which is a sacrifice of the subject" [Howison].

51. "In addition, we can say that one of the problems of Western culture was: how could we save the hermeneutics of the self and get rid of the necessary sacrifice of the self which was linked to this hermeneutics since the beginning of Christianity" [Howison].

52. "which we have inherited from the first centuries of Christianity? Do we need a positive man who serves as the foundation of this hermeneutics of the self?" [Howison].

53. "or maybe to get rid of those technologies, and then, to get rid of the sacrifice which is linked to those technologies" [Howison].

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