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# THE POLITICS OF TRUTH

**Michel Foucault**

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## What is Critique?

HENRI GOUHIER: Ladies and Gentlemen, I would first like to thank Mr. Michel Foucault for having made time in his busy schedule this year for this session, especially since we are catching him, not the day after, but only about two days after his long trip to Japan. This explains why the invitation for this meeting was rather terse. Since Michel Foucault's paper is in fact a surprise and, as we can assume, a good surprise, I will not have you wait any longer for the pleasure to hear it.

MICHEL FOUCAULT: I thank you very much for having invited me to this meeting before this Society. I believe that about ten years ago I gave a talk here on the subject entitled *What is an author?*<sup>2</sup>

For the issue about which I would like to speak today, I have no title. Mr. Gouhier has been indulgent enough to say that the reason for this was my trip to Japan. Truthfully, this is a very kind attenuation of the truth. Let's say, in fact, that up until a few days ago, I had hardly been able to find a title; or rather there was one that kept haunting me but that I didn't want to choose. You are going to see why: it would have been indecent.

Actually, the question about which I wanted to speak and about which I still want to speak is: *What is critique?* It might be worth

trying out a few ideas on this project that keeps taking shape, being extended and reborn on the outer limits of philosophy, very close to it, up against it, at its expense, in the direction of a future philosophy and in lieu, perhaps, of all possible philosophy. And it seems that between the high Kantian enterprise and the little polemical professional activities that are called critique, it seems to me that there has been in the modern Western world (dating, more or less, empirically from the 15th to the 16th centuries) a certain way of thinking, speaking and acting, a certain relationship to what exists, to what one knows, to what one does, a relationship to society, to culture and also a relationship to others that we could call, let's say, the critical attitude. Of course, you will be surprised to hear that there is something like a critical attitude that would be specific to modern civilization, since there have been so many critiques, polemics, etc. and since even Kant's problems presumably have origins which go back way before the 15th and 16th centuries. One will be surprised to see that one tries to find a unity in this critique, although by its very nature, by its function, I was going to say, by its profession, it seems to be condemned to dispersion, dependency and pure heteronomy. After all, critique only exists in relation to something other than itself: it is an instrument, a means for a future or a truth that it will not know nor happen to be, it oversees a domain it would want to police and is unable to regulate. All this means that it is a function which is subordinated in relation to what philosophy, science, politics, ethics, law, literature, etc., positively constitute. And at the same time, whatever the pleasures or compensations accompanying this curious activity of critique, it seems that it rather regularly, almost always, brings not only some stiff bit of utility it claims to have, but also that it is supported by some kind of more general imperative—more general still than that of eradicating

errors. There is something in critique which is akin to virtue. And in a certain way, what I wanted to speak to you about is this critical attitude as virtue in general.

There are several routes one could take to discuss the history of this critical attitude. I would simply like to suggest this one to you, which is one possible route, again, among many others. I will suggest the following variation: the Christian pastoral, or the Christian church inasmuch as it acted in a precisely and specifically pastoral way, developed this idea—singular and, I believe, quite foreign to ancient culture—that each individual, whatever his age or status, from the beginning to the end of his life and in his every action, had to be governed and had to let himself be governed, that is to say directed towards his salvation, by someone to whom he was bound by a total, meticulous, detailed relationship of obedience. And this salvation-oriented operation in a relationship of obedience to someone, has to be made in a triple relationship to the truth: truth understood as dogma, truth also to the degree where this orientation implies a special and individualizing knowledge of individuals; and finally, in that this direction is deployed like a reflective technique comprising general rules, particular knowledge, precepts, methods of examination, confessions, interviews, etc. After all, we must not forget what, for centuries, the Greek church called *technè technôn* and what the Latin Roman church called *ars artium*. It was precisely the direction of conscience; the art of governing men. Of course, this art of governing for a long time was linked to relatively limited practices, even in medieval society, to monastic life and especially to the practice of relatively restricted spiritual groups. But I believe that from the 15th century on and before the Reformation, one can say that there was a veritable explosion of the art of governing men. There was an explosion in two ways: first, by displacement in

relation to the religious center, let's say if you will, secularization, the expansion in civil society of this theme of the art of governing men and the methods of doing it; and then, second, the proliferation of this art of governing into a variety of areas—how to govern children, how to govern the poor and beggars, how to govern a family, a house, how to govern armies, different groups, cities, States and also how to govern one's own body and mind. *How to govern* was, I believe, one of the fundamental questions about what was happening in the 15th or 16th centuries. It is a fundamental question which was answered by the multiplication of all the arts of governing—the art of pedagogy, the art of politics, the art of economics, if you will—and of all the institutions of government, in the wider sense the term government had at the time.

So, this governmentalization, which seems to me to be rather characteristic of these societies in Western Europe in the 16th century, cannot apparently be dissociated from the question “how not to be governed?” I do not mean by that that governmentalization would be opposed in a kind of face-off by the opposite affirmation, “we do not want to be governed and we do not want to be governed at all.” I mean that, in this great preoccupation about the way to govern and the search for the ways to govern, we identify a perpetual question which would be: “how not to be governed *like that*, by that, in the name of those principles, with such and such an objective in mind and by means of such procedures, not like that, not for that, not by them.” And if we accord this movement of governmentalization of both society and individuals the historic dimension and breadth which I believe it has had, it seems that one could approximately locate therein what we could call the critical attitude. Facing them head on and as compensation, or rather, as both partner and adversary to the arts of governing, as an act of defiance, as a

challenge, as a way of limiting these arts of governing and sizing them up, transforming them, of finding a way to escape from them or, in any case, a way to displace them, with a basic distrust, but also and by the same token, as a line of development of the arts of governing, there would have been something born in Europe at that time, a kind of general cultural form, both a political and moral attitude, a way of thinking, etc. and which I would very simply call the art of not being governed or better, the art of not being governed like that and at that cost. I would therefore propose, as a very first definition of critique, this general characterization: the art of not being governed quite so much.

You will tell me that this definition is both very general and very vague or fluid. Well, of course it is! But I still believe that it may allow us to identify some precise points inherent to what I try to call the critical attitude. These are historical anchoring points, of course, which we can determine as follows:

1. First anchoring point: during a period of time when governing men was essentially a spiritual art, or an essentially religious practice linked to the authority of a Church, to the prescription of a Scripture, not to want to be governed like that essentially meant finding another function for the Scriptures unrelated to the teaching of God. Not wanting to be governed was a certain way of refusing, challenging, limiting (say it as you like) ecclesiastical rule. It meant returning to the Scriptures, seeking out what was authentic in them, what was really written in the Scriptures. It meant questioning what sort of truth the Scriptures told, gaining access to this truth of the Scriptures in the Scriptures and maybe in spite of what was written, to the point of finally raising the

very simple question: were the Scriptures true? And, in short, from Wycliffe to Pierre Bayle, critique developed in part, for the most part, but not exclusively, of course, in relation to the Scriptures. Let us say that critique is biblical, historically.

2. Not to want to be governed, this is the second anchoring point. Not to want to be governed like that also means not wanting to accept these laws because they are unjust because, by virtue of their antiquity or the more or less threatening ascendancy given them by today's sovereign, they hide a fundamental illegitimacy. Therefore, from this perspective, confronted with government and the obedience it stipulates, critique means putting forth universal and infeasible rights to which every government, whatever it may be, whether a monarch, a magistrate, an educator or a pater familias, will have to submit. In brief, if you like, we find here again the problem of natural law.

Natural law is certainly not an invention of the Renaissance, but from the 16th century on, it took on a critical function that it still maintains to this day. To the question "how not to be governed?" it answers by saying: "What are the limits of the right to govern?" Let us say that here critique is basically a legal issue.

3. And finally "to not to want to be governed" is of course *not* accepting as true, here I will move along quickly, what an authority tells you is true, or at least not accepting it because an authority tells you that it is true, but rather accepting it only if one considers valid the reasons for doing so. And this time, critique finds its anchoring point in the problem of certainty in its confrontation with authority.

The Bible, jurisprudence, science, writing, nature, the relationship to oneself; the sovereign, the law, the authority of dogmatism. One sees how the interplay of governmentalization and critique has brought about phenomena which are, I believe, of capital importance in the history of Western culture whether in the development of philological sciences, philosophical thought, legal analysis or methodological reflections. However, above all, one sees that the core of critique is basically made of the bundle of relationships that are tied to one another, or one to the two others, power, truth and the subject. And if governmentalization is indeed this movement through which individuals are subjugated in the reality of a social practice through mechanisms of power that adhere to a truth, well, then! I will say that critique is the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth. Well, then!: critique will be the art of voluntary insubordination, that of reflected intractability. Critique would essentially insure the desubjugation of the subject in the context of what we could call, in a word, the politics of truth.

I would have the arrogance to think that this definition, however empirical, approximate and deliciously distant its character in relation to the history it encompasses, is not very different from the one Kant provided: not to define critique, but precisely to define something else. It is not very far off in fact from the definition he was giving of the *Aufklärung*. It is indeed characteristic that, in his text from 1784, *What is the Aufklärung?*, he defined the *Aufklärung* in relation to a certain minority condition in which humanity was maintained and maintained in an authoritative way. Second, he defined this minority as characterized by a certain incapacity in

which humanity was maintained, an incapacity to use its own understanding precisely without something which would be someone else's direction, and he uses *leiten*, which has a religious meaning, well-defined historically. Third, I think that it is telling that Kant defined this incapacity by a certain correlation between the exercise of an authority which maintains humanity in this minority condition, the correlation between this excess of authority and, on the other hand, something that he considers, that he calls a lack of decision and courage. And consequently, this definition of the *Aufklärung* is not simply going to be a kind of historical and speculative definition. In this definition of the *Aufklärung*, there will be something which no doubt it may be a little ridiculous to call a sermon, and yet it is very much a call for courage that he sounds in this description of the *Aufklärung*. One should not forget that it was a newspaper article. There is much work to be done on the relationship between philosophy and journalism from the end of the 18th century on, a study... Unless it has already been done, but I am not sure of that... It is very interesting to see from what point on philosophers intervene in newspapers in order to say something that is for them philosophically interesting and which, nevertheless, is inscribed in a certain relationship to the public which they intend to mobilize. And finally, it is characteristic that, in this text on the *Aufklärung*, Kant precisely gives religion, law and knowledge as examples of maintaining humanity in the minority condition and consequently as examples of points where the *Aufklärung* must lift this minority condition and in some way majoritize men. What Kant was describing as the *Aufklärung* is very much what I was trying before to describe as critique, this critical attitude which appears as a specific attitude in the Western world starting with what was historically, I believe, the great process of society's governmentalization.

And in relation to this *Aufklärung* (whose motto you know and Kant reminds us is "*sapere aude*," to which Frederick II countered: "Let them reason all they want to as long as they obey") in any case, in relation to this *Aufklärung*, how will Kant define *critique*? Or, in any case, since I am not attempting to recoup Kant's entire critical project in all its philosophical rigor... I would not allow myself to do so before such an audience of philosophers, since I myself am not a philosopher and barely a critic... in terms of this *Aufklärung*, how is one going to situate what is understood by critique? If Kant actually calls in this whole critical movement which preceded the *Aufklärung*, how is one going to situate what *he* understands as critique? I will say, and these are completely childish things, that in relation to the *Aufklärung*, in Kant's eyes, critique will be what he is going to say to knowledge: do you know up to what point you can know? Reason as much as you want, but do you really know up to what point you can reason without it becoming dangerous? Critique will say, in short, that it is not so much a matter of what we are undertaking, more or less courageously, than it is the idea we have of our knowledge and its limits. Our liberty is at stake and consequently, instead of letting someone else say "obey," it is at this point, once one has gotten an adequate idea of one's own knowledge and its limits, that the principle of autonomy can be discovered. One will then no longer have to hear the *obey*; or rather, the *obey* will be founded on autonomy itself.

I am not attempting to show the opposition there may be between Kant's analysis of the *Aufklärung* and his critical project. I think it would be easy to show that for Kant himself, this true courage to know which was put forward by the *Aufklärung*, this same courage to know involved recognizing the limits of knowledge. It would also be easy to show that, for Kant, autonomy is not at all

opposed to obeying the sovereign. Nevertheless, in his attempt to desubjugate the subject in the context of power and truth, as a prolegomena to the whole present and future *Aufklärung*, Kant set forth critique's primordial responsibility, to know knowledge.

I would not like to insist any further on the implications of this kind of gap between *Aufklärung* and critique that Kant wanted to indicate. I would simply like to insist on this historical aspect of the problem which is suggested to us by what happened in the 19th century. The history of the 19th century offered a greater opportunity to pursue the critical enterprise that Kant had in some way situated at a distance from the *Aufklärung*, than it did for something like the *Aufklärung* itself. In other words, 19th century history—and, of course, 20th century history, even more so—seem to have to side with Kant or at least provide a concrete hold on this new critical attitude, this critical attitude set back from the *Aufklärung*, and which Kant had made possible.

This historical hold, seemingly afforded much more to Kantian critique than to the courage of the *Aufklärung*, was characterized very simply by the following three basic features: first, positivist science, that is to say, it basically had confidence in itself, even when it remained carefully critical of each one of its results; second, the development of a State or a state system which justified itself as the reason and deep rationality of history and which, moreover, selected as its instruments procedures to rationalize the economy and society; and hence, the third feature, this stitching together of scientific positivism and the development of States, a science of the State, or a statism, if you like. A fabric of tight relationships is woven between them such that science is going to play an increasingly

determinant part in the development of productive forces and, such that, in addition, state-type powers are going to be increasingly exercised through refined techniques. Thus, the fact that the 1784 question, *What is Aufklärung?*, or rather the way in which Kant, in terms of this question and the answer he gave it, tried to situate his critical enterprise, this questioning about the relationships between *Aufklärung* and *Critique* is going to legitimately arouse suspicion or, in any case, more and more skeptical questioning: for what excesses of power, for what governmentalization, all the more impossible to evade as it is reasonably justified, is reason not itself historically responsible?

Moreover, I think that the future of this question was not exactly the same in Germany and in France for historical reasons which should be analyzed because they are complex.

Roughly, one can say this: it is less perhaps because of the recent development of the beautiful, all-new and rational State in Germany than due to a very old attachment of the Universities to the *Wissenschaft* and to administrative and state structures, that there is this suspicion that something in rationalization and maybe even in reason itself is responsible for excesses of power, well, then!: it seems to me that this suspicion was especially well-developed in Germany and let us say to make it short, that it was especially developed within what we could call the German Left. In any case, from the Hegelian Left to the Frankfurt School, there has been a complete critique of positivism, objectivism, rationalization, of *technè* and technicalization, a whole critique of the relationships between the fundamental project of science and techniques whose objective was to show the connections between science's naïve presumptions, on one hand, and the forms of domination characteristic of contemporary society, on the other. To cite the example presumably the most

distant from what could be called a Leftist critique, we should recall that Husserl, in 1936, referred the contemporary crisis of European humanity to something that involved the relationships between knowledge and technique, from *épistèmè* to *technè*.

In France, the conditions for the exercise of philosophy and political reflection were very different. And because of this, the critique of presumptuous reason and its specific effects of power do not seem to have been directed in the same way. And it would be, I think, aligned with a certain kind of thinking on the Right, during the 19th and 20th centuries, where one can again find this same historical indictment of reason or rationalization in the name of the effects of power that it carries along with it. In any case, the block constituted by the Enlightenment and the Revolution has no doubt prevented us in a general way from truly and profoundly questioning this relationship between rationalization and power. Perhaps it is also because the Reformation, that is to say, what I believe was a very deeply rooted, first critical movement of the art of not being governed, the fact that the Reformation did not have the same degree of expansion and success in France as it had in Germany, clearly shows that in France this notion of the *Aufklärung*, with all the problems it posed, was not as widely accepted, and moreover, never became as influential a historical reference as it did in Germany. Let us say that in France, we were satisfied with a certain political valorization of the 18th century philosophers even though Enlightenment thought was disqualified as a minor episode in the history of philosophy. In Germany, on the contrary, the *Aufklärung* was certainly understood, for better or worse, it doesn't matter, as an important episode, a sort of brilliant manifestation of the profound destination of Western reason. In the *Aufklärung* and in the whole period that runs from the 16th to the 18th century and serves as the

reference for this notion of *Aufklärung*, an attempt was being made to decipher and recognize the most accentuated slope of this line of Western reason whereas it was the politics to which it was linked that became the object of suspicious examination. This is, if you will, roughly the chasm between France and Germany in terms of the way the problem of the *Aufklärung* was posed during the 19th and the first half of the 20th century.

I do believe that the situation in France has changed in recent years. It seems to me that in France, in fact, (just as the problem of the *Aufklärung* had been so important in German thought since Mendelssohn, Kant, through Hegel, Nietzsche, Husserl, the Frankfurt School, etc...) an era has arrived where precisely this problem of the *Aufklärung* can be re-approached in significant proximity to the work of the Frankfurt School. Let us say, once again to be brief—and it comes as no surprise—that the question of what the *Aufklärung* is has returned to us through phenomenology and the problems it raised. Actually, it has come back to us through the question of meaning and what can constitute meaning. How is it that meaning could be had out of nonsense? How does meaning occur? This is a question which clearly is the complement to another: how is it that the great movement of rationalization has led us to so much noise, so much furor, so much silence and so many sad mechanisms? After all, we shouldn't forget that *La Nausée* is more or less contemporaneous with the *Krisis*. And it is through the analysis, after the war, of the following, that meaning is being solely constituted by systems of constraints characteristic of the signifying machinery. It seems to me that it is through the analysis of this fact whereby meaning only exists through the effects of coercion which are specific to these structures that, by a strange shortcut, the problem between *ratio* and *power* was discovered. I also think (and this would

definitely be a study to do) that—analyzing the history of science, this whole problematization of the history of the sciences (no doubt also rooted in phenomenology which, in France, by way of Cavaillès, via Bachelard and through Georges Canguilhem, belongs to another history altogether)—the historical problem of the historicity of the sciences has some relationships to and analogies with and echoes, to some degree, this problem of the constitution of meaning. How is this rationality born? How is it formed from something which is totally different from it? There we have the reciprocal and inverse problem of that of the *Aufklärung*: how is it that rationalization leads to the furor of power?

So it seems that whether it be the research on the constitution of meaning with the discovery that meaning is only constituted by the coercive structures of the signifier or analyses done on the history of scientific rationality with the effects of constraint linked to its institutionalization and the constitution of models, all this, all this historical research has done, I believe, is break in like a ray of morning light through a kind of narrow academic window to merge into what was, after all, the deep undertow of our history for the past century. For all the claim that our social and economic organization lacked rationality, we found ourselves facing I don't know if it's too much or too little reason, but in any case surely facing too much power. For all the praises we lavished on the promises of the revolution, I don't know if it is a good or a bad thing where it actually occurred, but we found ourselves faced with the inertia of a power which was maintaining itself indefinitely. And for all our vindication of the opposition between ideologies of violence and the veritable scientific theory of society, that of the proletariat and of history, we found ourselves with two forms of power that resembled each other like two brothers: Fascism and Stalinism. Hence, the

question returns: what is the *Aufklärung*? Consequently, the series of problems which distinguished the analyses of Max Weber is reactivated: where are we with this rationalization which can be said to characterize not only Western thought and science since the 16th century, but also social relationships, state organizations, economic practices and perhaps even individual behaviors? What about this rationalization with its effects of constraint and maybe of obnubilation, of the never radically contested but still all massive and ever-growing establishment of a vast technical and scientific system?

This problem, for which in France we must now shoulder the responsibility, is this problem of what is the *Aufklärung*? We can approach it in different ways. And the way in which I would like to approach this—you should trust me about it—is absolutely not evoked here to be critical or polemical. For these two reasons I am seeking nothing else than to point out differences and somehow see up to what point we can multiply them, disseminate them, and distinguish them in terms of each other, displacing, if you will, the forms of analyses of this *Aufklärung* problem, which is perhaps, after all, the problem of modern philosophy.

In tackling this problem which shows our fellowship with the Frankfurt School, I would like, in any case, to immediately note that making the *Aufklärung* the central question definitely means a number of things. First, it means that we are engaging a certain historical and philosophical practice which has nothing to do with the philosophy of history or the history of philosophy. It is a certain historical-philosophical practice, and by that I mean that the domain of experience referred to by this philosophical work in no way excludes any other. It is neither inner experience, nor the fundamental structures of scientific knowledge. It is also not a group of historical contents elaborated elsewhere, treated by historians and

received as ready-made facts. Actually, in this historical-philosophical practice, one has to make one's own history, fabricate history, as if through fiction, in terms of how it would be traversed by the question of the relationships between structures of rationality which articulate true discourse and the mechanisms of subjugation which are linked to it. This is evidently a question which displaces the historical objects familiar to historians towards the problem of the subject and the truth about which historians are not usually concerned. We also see that this question invests philosophical work, philosophical thought and the philosophical analysis in empirical contents designed by it. It follows, if you will, that historians faced with this historical or philosophical work are going to say: "yes, of course, yes, maybe." In any case, it is never exactly right, given the effect of interference due to the displacement toward the subject and the truth about which I was speaking. And even if they don't take on an air of offended guinea-fowls, philosophers generally think: "philosophy, in spite of everything, is something else altogether." And this is due to the effect of falling, of returning to an empiricity which is not even grounded in inner experience.

Let us grant these sideline voices all the importance they deserve, and it is indeed a great deal of importance. They indicate at least negatively that we are on the right path, and by this I mean that through the historical contents that we elaborate and to which we adhere because they are true or because they are valued as true, the question is being raised: "what, therefore, am I," I who belong to this humanity, perhaps to this piece of it, at this point in time, at this instant of humanity which is subjected to the power of truth in general and truths in particular? The first characteristic of this historical-philosophical practice, if you will, is to desubjectify the philosophical question by way of historical contents, to liberate

historical contents by examining the effects of power whose truth affects them and from which they supposedly derive. In addition, this historical-philosophical practice is clearly found in the privileged relationship to a certain period which can be determined empirically. Even if it is relatively and necessarily vague, the Enlightenment period is certainly designated as a formative stage for modern humanity. This is the *Aufklärung* in the wide sense of the term to which Kant, Weber, etc. referred, a period without fixed dates, with multiple points of entry since one can also define it by the formation of capitalism, the constitution of the bourgeois world, the establishment of state systems, the foundation of modern science with all its correlative techniques, the organization of a confrontation between the art of being governed and that of not being quite so governed. Consequently, this is a privileged period for historical-philosophical work, since these relationships between power, truth and the subject appear live on the surface of visible transformations. Yet it is also a privilege in the sense that one has to form a matrix from it in order to transit through a whole series of other possible domains. Let us say, if you will, that it is not because we privilege the 18th century, because we are interested in it, that we encounter the problem of the *Aufklärung*. I would say instead that it is because we fundamentally want to ask the question, *What is Aufklärung?* that we encounter the historical scheme of our modernity. The point is not to say that the Greeks of the 5th century are a little like the philosophers of the 18th or that the 12th century was already a kind of Renaissance, but rather to try to see under what conditions, at the cost of which modifications or generalizations we can apply this question of the *Aufklärung* to any moment in history, that is, the question of the relationships between power, truth and the subject.

Such is the general framework of this research I would call historical-philosophical. Now we will see how we can conduct it.

I was saying before that I wanted in any case to very vaguely trace possible tracks other than those which seemed to have been up till now most willingly cleared. This in no way accuses the latter of leading nowhere or of not providing any valid results. I would simply like to say and suggest the following: it seems to me that this question of the *Aufklärung*, since Kant, because of Kant, and presumably because of this separation he introduced between *Aufklärung* and *critique*, was essentially raised in terms of knowledge (*connaissance*), that is, by starting with what was the historical destiny of knowledge at the time of the constitution of modern science. Also, by looking for what in this destiny already indicated the indefinite effects of power to which this question was necessarily going to be linked through objectivism, positivism, technicism, etc., by connecting this knowledge with the conditions of the constitution and legitimacy of all possible knowledge, and finally, by seeing how the exit from legitimacy (illusion, error, forgetting, recovery, etc.) occurred in history. In a word, this is the procedure of analysis that seems to me to have been deeply mobilized by the gap between *critique* and *Aufklärung* engineered by Kant. I believe that from this point on, we see a procedure of analysis which is basically the one most often followed, an analytical procedure which could be called an investigation into the legitimacy of historical modes of knowing (*connaître*). It is in this way, in any case, that many 18th century philosophers understood it, it is also how Dilthey, Habermas, etc. understood it. Still, more simply put: what false idea has knowledge gotten of itself and

what excessive use has it exposed itself to, to what domination is it therefore linked?

Well, now! Rather than this procedure which takes shape as an investigation into the legitimacy of historical modes of knowing, we can perhaps envision a different procedure. It may take the question of the *Aufklärung* as its way of gaining access, not to the problem of knowledge, but to that of power. It would proceed not as an investigation into legitimacy, but as something I would call an examination of “*eventualization*” (*événementialisation*). Forgive me for this horrible word! And, right away, what does it mean? What I understand by the procedure of eventualization, whilst historians cry out in grief, would be the following: first, one takes groups of elements where, in a totally empirical and temporary way, connections between mechanisms of coercion and contents of knowledge can be identified. Mechanisms of different types of coercion, maybe also legislative elements, rules, material set-ups, authoritative phenomena, etc. One would also consider the contents of knowledge in terms of their diversity and heterogeneity, view them in the context of the effects of power they generate inasmuch as they are validated by their belonging to a system of knowledge. We are therefore not attempting to find out what is true or false, founded or unfounded, real or illusory, scientific or ideological, legitimate or abusive. What we are trying to find out is what are the links, what are the connections that can be identified between mechanisms of coercion and elements of knowledge, what is the interplay of relay and support developed between them, such that a given element of knowledge takes on the effects of power in a given system where it is allocated to a true, probable, uncertain or false element, such that a procedure of coercion acquires the very form and justifications of a rational, calculated, technically efficient element, etc.

Therefore, on this first level, there is no case made here for the attribution of legitimacy, no assigning points of error and illusion.

And this is why, at this level, it seems to me that one can use two words whose function is not to designate entities, powers (*puissances*) or something like transcendentals, but rather to perform a systematic reduction of value for the domains to which they refer, let us say, a neutralization concerning the effects of legitimacy and an elucidation of what makes them at some point acceptable and in fact, had them accepted. Hence, the use of the word knowledge (*savoir*) that refers to all procedures and all effects of knowledge (*connaissance*) which are acceptable at a given point in time and in a specific domain; and secondly, the term power (*pouvoir*) which merely covers a whole series of particular mechanisms, definable and defined, which seem likely to induce behaviors or discourses. We see right away that these two terms only have a methodological function. It is not a matter of identifying general principles of reality through them, but of somehow pinpointing the analytical front, the type of element that must be pertinent for the analysis. It is furthermore a matter of preventing the perspective of legitimation from coming into play as it does when the terms knowledge (*connaissance*) or domination are used. It is also important at every stage in the analysis, to be able to give knowledge and power a precise and determined content: such and such an element of knowledge, such and such a mechanism of power. No one should ever think that there exists *one* knowledge or *one* power, or worse, *knowledge* or *power* which would operate in and of themselves. Knowledge and power are only an analytical grid. We also see that this grid is not made up of two categories with elements which are foreign to one another, with what would be from knowledge on one side and what would be from power

on the other—and what I was saying before about them made them exterior to one another—for nothing can exist as an element of knowledge if, on one hand, it does not conform to a set of rules and constraints characteristic, for example, of a given type of scientific discourse in a given period, and if, on the other hand, it does not possess the effects of coercion or simply the incentives peculiar to what is scientifically validated or simply rational or simply generally accepted, etc. Conversely, nothing can function as a mechanism of power if it is not deployed according to procedures, instruments, means and objectives which can be validated in more or less coherent systems of knowledge. It is therefore not a matter of describing what knowledge is and what power is and how one would repress the other or how the other would abuse the one, but rather, a nexus of knowledge-power has to be described so that we can grasp what constitutes the acceptability of a system, be it the mental health system, the penal system, delinquency, sexuality, etc.

In short, it seems that from the empirical observability for us of an ensemble to its historical acceptability, to the very period of time during which it is actually observable, the route goes by way of an analysis of the knowledge-power nexus supporting it, recouping it at the point where it is accepted, moving toward what makes it acceptable, of course, not in general, but only where it is accepted. This is what can be characterized as recouping it in its positivity. Here, then, is a type of procedure which, unconcerned with legitimizing and consequently, excluding the fundamental point of view of the law, runs through the cycle of positivity by proceeding from the fact of acceptance to the system of acceptability analyzed through the knowledge-power interplay. Let us say that this is, approximately, the *archeological* level.

Secondly, one sees right away from this type of analysis that there are several dangers which cannot fail to appear as its negative and costly consequences.

These positivities are ensembles which are not at all obvious in the sense that whatever habits or routines may have made them familiar to us, whatever the blinding force of the power mechanisms they call into play or whatever justifications they may have developed, they were not made acceptable by any originally existing right. And what must be extracted in order to fathom what could have made them acceptable is precisely that they were not at all obvious, that they were not inscribed in any *a priori*, nor contained in any precedent. There are two correlative operations to perform: bring out the conditions of acceptability of a system and follow the breaking points which indicate its emergence. It was not at all obvious that madness and mental illness were superimposed in the institutional and scientific system of psychiatry. It was not a given either that punishment, imprisonment and penitentiary discipline had come to be articulated in the penal system. It was also not a given that desire, concupiscence and individuals' sexual behavior had to actually be articulated one upon the other in a system of knowledge and normality called sexuality. The identification of the acceptability of a system cannot be dissociated from identifying what made it difficult to accept: its arbitrary nature in terms of knowledge, its violence in terms of power, in short, its energy. Hence, it is necessary to take responsibility for this structure in order to better account for its artifices.

The second consequence is also costly and negative for these ensembles are not analyzed as universals to which history, with its particular circumstances, would add a number of modifications. Of course, many accepted elements, many conditions of acceptability

may have a long history, but what has to be recovered in some way through the analysis of these positivities are not incarnations of an essence, or individualizations of a species, but rather, pure singularities: the singularity of madness in the modern Western world, the absolute singularity of sexuality, the absolute singularity of our moral-legal system of punishment.

There is no foundational recourse, no escape within a pure form. This is, without a doubt, one of the most important and debatable aspects of this historical-philosophical approach. If it neither wants to swing toward the philosophy of history, nor toward historical analysis, then it has to keep itself within the field of immanence of pure singularities. Then what? Rupture, discontinuity, singularity, pure description, still tableau, no explanation, dead-end, you know all that. One may say that the analysis of positivities does not partake in these so-called explicative procedures to which are attributed causal value according to three conditions:

1) causal value is only recognized in explanations targeting a final authority, valorized as a profound and unique agency; for some, it is economics; for others, demography;

2) causal value is only recognized for that which obeys a pyramid formation pointing towards the cause or causal focus, the unitary origin;

3) and, finally, causal value is only recognized for that which establishes a certain unavoidability, or at least, that which approaches necessity.

The analysis of positivities, to the degree that these are pure singularities which are assigned not to a species or an essence, but to simple conditions of acceptability, well then, this analysis requires the deployment of a complex and tight causal network, but presumably of another kind, the kind which would not obey

this requirement of being saturated by a deep, unitary, pyramidal and necessary principle. We have to establish a network which accounts for this singularity as an effect. Hence there is a need for a multiplicity of relationships, a differentiation between different types of relationships, between different forms of necessity among connections, a deciphering of circular interactions and actions taking into account the intersection of heterogeneous processes. There is, therefore, nothing more foreign to such an analysis than the rejection of causality. Nevertheless, what is very important is not that such analyses bring a whole group of derived phenomena back to a cause, but rather that they are capable of making a singular positivity intelligible precisely in terms of that which makes it singular.

Let us say, roughly, that as opposed to a genesis oriented towards the unity of some principal cause burdened with multiple descendants, what is proposed instead is a *genealogy*, that is, something that attempts to restore the conditions for the appearance of a singularity born out of multiple determining elements of which it is not the product, but rather the effect. A process of making it intelligible but with the clear understanding that this does not function according to any principle of closure. There is no principle of closure for several reasons.

The first is that this singular effect can be accounted for in terms of relationships which are, if not totally, at least predominantly, relationships of interactions between individuals or groups. In other words, these relationships involve subjects, types of behavior, decisions and choices. It is not in the nature of things that we are likely to find support. Support for this network of intelligible relationships is in the logic inherent to the context of interactions with its always variable margins of non-certainty.

There is also no closure because the relationships we are attempting to establish to account for a singularity as an effect, this network of relationships must not make up one plane only. These relationships are in perpetual slippage from one another. At a given level, the logic of interactions operates between individuals who are able to respect its singular effects, both its specificity and its rules, while managing along with other elements interactions operating at another level, such that, in a way, none of these interactions appear to be primary or absolutely totalizing. Each interaction can be re-situated in a context that exceeds it and conversely, however local it may be, each has an effect or possible effect on the interaction to which it belongs and by which it is enveloped. Therefore, schematically speaking, we have perpetual mobility, essential fragility or rather the complex interplay between what replicates the same process and what transforms it. In short, here we would have to bring out a whole form of analyses which could be called *strategies*.

In speaking of archeology, strategy and genealogy, I am not thinking of three successive levels which would be derived, one from the other, but of characterizing three necessarily contemporaneous dimensions in the same analysis. These three dimensions, by their very simultaneity, should allow us to recoup whatever positivities there are, that is, those conditions which make acceptable a singularity whose intelligibility is established by identifying interactions and strategies within which it is integrated. It is such research accounting for... [a few sentences are missing here where the tape was turned over]... produced as an effect, and finally *eventualization* in that we have to deal with something whose stability, deep rootedness and foundation is never such that we cannot in one way or another envisage, if not its disappearance, then at least identifying by what and from what its disappearance is possible.

I was saying before that instead of defining the problem in terms of knowledge and legitimation, it was necessary to approach the question in terms of power and eventualization. As you see, one does not have to work with power understood as domination, as mastery, as a fundamental given, a unique principle, explanation or irreducible law. On the contrary, it always has to be considered in relation to a field of interactions, contemplated in a relationship which cannot be dissociated from forms of knowledge. One always has to think about it in such a way as to see how it is associated with a domain of possibility and consequently, of reversibility, of possible reversal.

Thus you see that the question is no longer through what error, illusion, oversight, or illegitimacy has knowledge come to induce effects of domination manifested in the modern world by the hegemony of [*inaudible*]. The question instead would be: how can the indivisibility of knowledge and power in the context of interactions and multiple strategies induce both singularities, fixed according to their conditions of acceptability, and a field of possibilities, of openings, indecisions, reversals and possible dislocations which make them fragile, temporary, and which turn these effects into events, nothing more, nothing less than events? In what way can the effects of coercion characteristic of these positivities not be dissipated by a return to the legitimate destination of knowledge and by a reflection on the transcendental or semi-transcendental that fixes knowledge, but how can they instead be reversed or released from within a concrete strategic field, this concrete strategic field that induced them, starting with this decision not to be governed?

In conclusion, given the movement which swung critical attitude over into the question of critique or better yet, the movement

responsible for reassessing the *Aufklärung* enterprise within the critical project whose intent was to allow knowledge to acquire an adequate idea of itself—given this swinging movement, this slippage, this way of deporting the question of the *Aufklärung* into critique—might it not now be necessary to follow the opposite route? Might we not try to travel this road, but in the opposite direction? And if it is necessary to ask the question about knowledge in its relationship to domination, it would be, first and foremost, from a certain decision-making will not to be governed, the decision making will, both an individual and collective attitude which meant, as Kant said, to get out of one's minority. A question of attitude. You see now why I could not, did not dare, give a title to my conference since if I had, it would have been: "What is the *Aufklärung*?"

GOUHIER: I thank Michel Foucault very much for having given us such a well-coordinated group of reflections which I would call philosophical, although he said *not being a philosopher myself*. I have to say right away that after having said "not being a philosopher myself," he added "barely a critic," that is to say, anyway, a bit of a critic. And after his presentation I wonder if being a bit of a critic is not being very much a philosopher.

NOËL MOULOU: I would like to make, perhaps, two or three remarks. The first is the following: Mr. Foucault seems to have confronted us with a general attitude of thought, the refusal of power or the refusal of the constraining rule which engenders a general attitude, a critical attitude. He went from there to a problematic that he presented as an extension of this attitude, an actualization of this attitude. These are problems which are presently raised concerning the relationships of knowledge, technology and power. I

would see, in a way, localized critical attitudes, revolving around certain core problems with, that is to say, to a great extent, sources or, if you will, historical limits. We first have to have a practice, a method which reaches certain limits, which posits problems, which ends up at certain impasses, in order for a critical attitude to emerge. And thus, for example, there are the successful methodologies of positivism which, notwithstanding the difficulties raised, have elicited the well-known critical reactions that appeared a half-century ago, that is to say, logicist reflection and criticist reflection. I am thinking of the Popperian school or Wittgensteinian school on the limits of a normalized scientific language. Often, in these critical periods, we see a new resolution appear, the search for a renewed practice, for a method which itself has a regional aspect, an aspect of historical research.

FOUCAULT: You are absolutely right. It is very much in this way that the critical attitude got started and developed its consequences in a privileged manner in the 19th century. I would say that this is precisely the Kantian channel, that the strong period, the essential phase of critical attitude should be the problem of questioning knowledge on its own limits or impasses, if you like, which it encounters in its primary and concrete exercise.

Two things struck me. On one hand, if you like, this Kantian use of critical attitude—and to tell the truth, in Kant, the problem is very explicitly posed—did not prevent critique from asking this question. (We can argue whether or not this is a fundamental issue.) This question is: what is the use of reason, what use of reason can carry its effects over to the abuses of the exercise of power, and consequently, to the concrete destination of liberty? I think that this problem was far from being ignored by Kant and that there was,

especially in Germany, a whole movement of reflection around this theme. If you like, generalizing it some, it displaced the strict critical problem that you cited towards other regions. You cite Popper, but after all, excesses of power were also a very fundamental problem for him.

On the other hand, what I wanted to point out is that—and please forgive me for the sketchiness in all this—the history of the critical attitude, as it unfolds specifically in the West and in the modern Western world since the 15th–16th centuries must have its origin in the religious struggles and spiritual attitudes prevalent during the second half of the Middle Ages, precisely at the time when the problem was posed: how should one be governed, is one going to accept being governed like that? It is then that things are at their most concrete level, the most historically determined: all the struggles around the pastoral during the second half of the Middle Ages prepared the way for the Reformation and, I think, were the kind of historical limit upon which this critical attitude developed.

HENRI BIRAULT: I do not wish to play the upset guinea-fowl here! I completely agree with the way in which the question of the *Aufklärung* was explicitly taken over by Kant in order to simultaneously undergo a decisive theoretical restriction in terms of the moral, religious and political imperatives, etc., which are characteristic of Kant's philosophy. I think that we are in total agreement on this point.

Now, concerning the more directly positive part of the exposition, when it was a matter of studying the crossfire between knowledge and power, on the ground level, somehow on the level of the event, I wonder if there still is not some space there all the same for an underlying question and, let us say, one which is more

essentially or traditionally philosophical and would be a backdrop to this precious and minute study of the interplay between knowledge and power in different areas. This metaphysical and historical question might be formulated in the following way: can we not say that at a point in our history and in a certain region of the world, knowledge in and of itself, knowledge as such, took on the form of a power (*pouvoir*) or a potency (*puissance*) while on the side of power, always defined as a *savoir-faire*, a certain way of knowing how to take or how to take on something finally manifested the properly dynamic essence of the noetic? It comes as no surprise that this had to be so and that Michel Foucault is then able to find and disentangle the networks or multiple relations established between knowledge and power since at least from a certain period on, knowledge is down deep a power, and power down deep a knowledge, knowledge and power of the same will, of the same will I must call a will to power.

FOUCAULT: Would your question be about the generality of this type of relationship?

BIRAULT: Not so much its generality as its radicality or occult foundation this side of the duality of the two terms knowledge-power. Is it not possible to rediscover a sort of common essence of knowledge and power, knowledge defining itself as knowledge of power and power defining itself as knowledge of power (to then carefully explore the multiple meaning of this double genitive)?

FOUCAULT: Absolutely. I was insufficiently clear about this very point, inasmuch as what I would like to do, what I was suggesting, is above or below a kind of description. Roughly, there are intellectuals

and men in power, there are scientists and the requirements of industry, etc. In fact, we have an entirely interwoven network. Not only with elements of knowledge and power; but for knowledge to function as knowledge it must exercise a power. Within other discourses of knowledge in relation to discourses of possible knowledge, each statement considered true exerts a certain power and it creates, at the same time, a possibility. Inversely, all exercise of power, even if it is a question of putting someone to death, implies at least a *savoir-faire*. And, after all, to savagely crush an individual is also a way of taking something on. Therefore, if you will, I completely agree and this is what I was trying to bring out: there is a kind of shimmering under the polarities which, to us, seem very distinct from those of power...

MOULOUD: I return to our common reference, for both Mr. Birault and myself: Popper. One of Popper's intentions is to show that in the constitution of spheres of power, whatever their nature, that is, dogmas, imperative norms, paradigms, it is not knowledge itself which is active and responsible, but a deviant rationality which is no longer truly knowledge. Knowledge—or rationality, inasmuch as it is formative, itself stripped of paradigms, stripped of recipes. On its own initiative it questions its own assurances, its own authority and engages in a "polemics against itself." It is precisely for this reason that it is indeed rationality, and the methodology Popper conceives of is to separate these two behaviors, to decide between them in order to make any confusion or mixture impossible between the use of recipes, the management of procedures and the invention of reasons. And I would wonder, although it is more difficult, if in the human, social, historical domain, social sciences as a whole are not equally and primarily responsible for this opening; yet, it is a very

difficult situation because social sciences are, in fact, allied with technology. Between a science and the powers that use it, there is a relationship which is not truly essential; although important, it remains “contingent” in a certain way. The technical conditions for the use of knowledge are in a more direct relationship with the exercise of a power, a power which dodges exchange or examination, rather than the conditions of knowledge itself. And it is in this sense that I do not altogether understand the argument. Otherwise, Mr. Foucault made some enlightening remarks which he will surely develop. But I ask myself the question: is there a really direct link between the obligations or requirements of knowledge and those of power?

FOUCAULT: I would be thrilled if one could do it like that, that is, if one could say: there is a good science, one which is both true and does not partake of nasty power; and then obviously the bad use of science, either in its opportunistic application or in its errors. If you can prove to me that this is the case, then, well! I will leave here happy.

MOULOUD: I am not saying as much. I recognize that the historical connection, the factual link is strong. But I observe several things: that new scientific investigations (those in biology, the social sciences) are again putting man and society in a situation of non-determination, opening up inroads to liberty for them, and thus constraining them, to put it this way, to once again making decisions. Besides that, oppressive powers rarely rely on scientific knowledge, but prefer to rely on non-knowledge, a science which has first been reduced to a “myth.” Racism founded on a “pseudogenetics” or political pragmatism founded on a neo-Lamarckian

deformation of biology are familiar examples. And finally, I also understand very well that a science’s positive information calls for the distance of critical judgment. Yet it seems to me and this was approximately my argument—that humanist critique, which assumes cultural and axiological criteria, cannot be entirely developed or succeed without the support that knowledge brings to it, criticizing its bases, its presuppositions and its antecedents. This especially concerns explanations provided by the human sciences and history. And it seems to me that Habermas, in particular, includes this analytic dimension in what he calls the critique of ideologies, even of those very ones engendered by knowledge.

FOUCAULT: I think that this is precisely the advantage of critique!

GOUHIER: I would like to ask you a question. I completely agree with your historical distinctions and the importance of the Reformation. But it seems to me that throughout all of Western tradition, there is a critical ferment due to Socratic thought. I wanted to ask you if the word *critique* as you defined it and used it, could not be an appropriate term with which to call what I would provisionally label a critical ferment of Socratism in Western thought, which played a role in the 16th and 17th centuries with the return to Socrates?

FOUCAULT: You confront me with a more difficult question. I will say that the return to Socratism (we feel it, identify it, see it historically, it seems, between the 16th and 17th centuries) was only possible in the context of these—for me far more important—issues which were the pastoral struggles and this problem of governing men, using the term government in the very full and broad meaning that it had at the end of the Middle Ages. To govern men was to take

them by the hand and lead them to their salvation through an operation, a technique of precise piloting, which implied a full range of knowledge concerning the individual being guided, the truth towards which one was guiding...

GOUHIER: Would you be able to do your analysis all over again if you were giving a paper on Socrates and his times?

FOUCAULT: This indeed is the real problem. Here again, I am responding rapidly to something rather difficult. It seems to me that fundamentally when one investigates Socrates like that, or rather—I dare not say it—I wonder if Heidegger investigating the Presocratics doesn't do it...no, not at all, it is not at all a matter of resorting to anachronism and of projecting the 18th century on the 5th... But this question of the *Aufklärung* which is, I think, quite fundamental for Western philosophy since Kant, I wonder if it is not a question which somehow scans all possible history down to the radical origins of philosophy. In this light, the trial of Socrates can, I think, be investigated in a valid manner, without any anachronism, but starting with a problem which is and which was, in any case, perceived by Kant as the problem of the *Aufklärung*.

JEAN-LOUIS BRUCH: I would like to ask a question about an expression which is central to your presentation, but which was formulated in two ways which seemed different to me. At the end, you spoke of "the decision-making will not to be governed" as a foundation or a reversal of the *Aufklärung* which was the subject of your talk. In the beginning, you spoke of "not being governed *like that*," of "not being governed so much," of "not being governed at such a price." In one case, the expression is absolute, in the other, it is relative, and according to what

criteria? Is it because of having felt the abuse of governmentalization that you come to the radical position, "the decision-making will not to be governed" I am asking this question, and finally, doesn't this last position need to be in turn the object of an investigation, a questioning that would, in essence, be philosophical?

FOUCAULT: Two good questions. On the point you raise about the variations in the expressions: I do not think that the will not to be governed at all is something that one could consider an originary aspiration. I think that, in fact, the will not to be governed is always the will not to be governed thusly, like that, by these people, at this price. As for the expression of not being governed at all, I believe it is the philosophical and theoretical paroxysm of something that would be this will not to be relatively governed. And when at the end I was saying "decision-making will not to be governed," then there, an error on my part, it was not to be governed thusly, like that, in this way. I was not referring to something that would be a fundamental anarchism, that would be like an originary freedom, absolutely and wholeheartedly resistant to any governmentalization. I did not say it, but this does not mean that I absolutely exclude it. I think that my presentation stops at this point, because it was already too long, but also because I am wondering...if one wants to explore this dimension of critique that seems to me to be so important because it is both part of, and not a part of, philosophy. If we were to explore this dimension of critique, would we not then find that it is supported by something akin to the historical practice of revolt, the non-acceptance of a real government, on one hand, or, on the other, the individual experience of the refusal of governmentality? What strikes me in particular—but I am perhaps haunted by this because I am working on it a lot right now—is that, if this

matrix of critical attitude in the Western world must be sought out in religious attitudes and in connection with the exercise of pastoral power in the Middle Ages, all the same it is surprising that mysticism is seen as an individual experience while institutional and political struggles are viewed as absolutely unified, and in any case, constantly referring to one another. I would say that one of the first great forms of revolt in the West was mysticism. All the bastions of resistance to the authority of the Scriptures, to mediation by the pastor, were developed either in convents or outside convents by the secular population. When one sees that these experiences, these spiritual movements have very often been used as attire, vocabulary, but even more so as ways of being, and ways of supporting the hopes expressed by the struggle that we can define as economic, popular, and in Marxist terms as the struggle between the classes, I think we have here something that is quite fundamental.

In following the itinerary of this critical attitude whose history seems to begin at this point in time, should we not now investigate what the will not to be governed thusly, like that, etc., might be both as an individual and a collective experience? It is now necessary to pose the problem of will. In short, you will say that this is obvious, one cannot confront this problem, sticking closely to the theme of power without, of course, at some point, getting to the question of human will. It was so obvious that I could have realized it earlier. However, since this problem of will is a problem that Western philosophy has always treated with infinite precaution and difficulties, let us say that I tried to avoid it as much as possible. Let us say that it was unavoidable. Here I have given you some considerations on my work in progress.

ANDRÉ SERNIN: To which side do you lean more? Would it be towards Auguste Comte, schematically speaking, who rigorously

separates spiritual from temporal power or, on the contrary, towards Plato who said that things would never go well until philosophers were themselves made the leaders of temporal power?

FOUCAULT: Do I really have to choose?

SERNIN: No, you don't have to choose between them, but which one would you tend to lean to more?

FOUCAULT: I would try to inch my way out from between them!

PIERRE HADJI-DIMOU: You have successfully presented us with the problem of critique in its connection to philosophy and you have arrived at the relationships between power and knowledge. I wanted to contribute a little clarification on the subject of Greek thought. I think that the problem was already formulated by our President. "To know" (*connaître*) is to have *logos* and *mythos*. I think that with the *Aufklärung*, we are not able "to know." Knowledge is not only rationality, it is not only *logos* in historical life, there is a second source, *mythos*. If we refer to the discussion between Protagoras and Socrates, when Protagoras is asking the question about the right of the *Politeia* to punish, about its power, he says that he will specify and illustrate his thought about *mythos*. *Mythos* is linked to *logos* because there is rationality: the more it teaches us, the more beautiful it is. Here is the question I wanted to add: is it in suppressing a part of thought, irrational thought which arrives at *logos*, that is to say, is it by suppressing the *mythos* that we are able to know the sources of knowledge, the knowledge of power which also has a mythic sense to it?

FOUCAULT: I agree with your question.

SYLVAIN ZAC: I would like to make two remarks. You said, and rightly so, that critical attitude could be considered a virtue. In fact, there is a philosopher, Malebranche, who studied this virtue: it is freedom of spirit. On one hand, I do not agree with you about the relationships you establish in Kant between his article on the *Enlightenment* and his critique of knowledge. The latter obviously assigns limits, but does not itself have any limit; it is total whereas when one reads the article on the *Enlightenment*, one sees that Kant makes a very important distinction between public use and private use. In the case of public use, this courage must disappear. Which means that...

FOUCAULT: It's the opposite, since what he calls public use is...

ZAC: When someone has, for example, a tenured position in a philosophy department at a university, there, he can speak publicly and he must not criticize the Bible: on the other hand, in private, he can do so.

FOUCAULT: It's quite the contrary and that is what is so very interesting. Kant says: "There is a public use of reason which must not be limited." What is this public use? It is what circulates from scholar to scholar, appears in newspapers and publications, and appeals to everyone's conscience. These uses, these public uses of reason must not be limited, and curiously what he calls private use is, in some way, the government employee's use of reason. And the functionary or government employee, the officer, he says, does not have the right to tell his superior: "I will not obey you and your order is absurd." Curiously, what Kant defines as private use is each individual's obedience, inasmuch as he is a part of the State, to his superior, to the Sovereign or his representative.

ZAC: I agree with you. I made a mistake. Nevertheless, the result is that there are limits to the manifestation of courage in this article. And these limits, I found them all over, in all the *Aufklärer* obviously in Mendelssohn. There is a good deal of conformist writing in the German *Aufklärung* movement which we do not find in the French Enlightenment of the 18th century.

FOUCAULT: I agree completely. I don't exactly see how this challenges what I said.

ZAC: I do not believe that there is an intimate historical link between the *Aufklärung* movement that you have given as a central focus and the development of critical attitude, of the attitude of resistance, from either the political or the intellectual point of view. Don't you think that we could admit this point?

FOUCAULT: I do not think, on the one hand, that Kant felt like a stranger to the *Aufklärung* which was for him his actuality and within which he was getting involved, not only through the article on the *Aufklärung*, but also in many other affairs...

ZAC: The word *Aufklärung* is found again in *Religion according to the Limits of Simple Reason*, but then it is applied to the purity of sentiments, to something internal. An inversion occurred, as with Rousseau.

FOUCAULT: I would like to finish up what I was saying... Therefore, Kant feels perfectly connected to this present that he calls the *Aufklärung* and that he attempts to define. And regarding this movement of the *Aufklärung*, it seems to me that he introduces a dimension we

can consider as more specific or, to the contrary, more general and more radical which is this: the first bold move that one must make when it is a matter of knowledge and knowing is to know what it is that one can know. This is the radicality and for Kant, moreover, the universality of his enterprise. I believe in this kinship, whatever limits, of course, the boldness of the *Aufklärer* has. I do not see how the fact that the *Aufklärer* were timid would in any way change anything in this kind of movement that Kant went through and of which, I believe, he was relatively conscious.

BIRAULT: I think that critical philosophy represents a movement which both restricts and radicalizes *Aufklärung* in general.

FOUCAULT: But its link to the *Aufklärung* was the question everyone was asking at that time. What are we saying, what is this movement that immediately preceded us and to which we still belong called the *Aufklärung*? The best proof is that it was in a newspaper that the series of articles by Mendelssohn and Kant were published... It was a current event. A little like how we ourselves might ask the question: what is the present crisis in values?

JEANNE DUBOUCHET: I would like to ask you what material you place within knowledge. Power, I believe I understood, since it was a matter of not being governed: but what kind of knowledge?

FOUCAULT: If I use that word it is once again essentially to neutralize everything that might either legitimize or simply hierarchize values. If you like, for me—as scandalous as this may be and must seem to be in the eyes of a scientist or a methodologist or even a historian of sciences—for me, between a statement by a psychiatrist and a

mathematical operation, when I am speaking of knowledge, for now, I make no distinction between them. The only point through which I would introduce differences is to know which are the effects of power, if you like, of induction—not in the logical sense of the term—that this proposition can have, on one hand, within the scientific domain in which it is formulated—mathematics, psychiatry, etc.—and, on the other, what are the non-discursive, non-formalized, not especially scientific networks of institutional power to which it is linked as soon as it is being circulated. This is what I would call knowledge (*savoir*): elements of knowledge (*connaissance*) which, whatever their value in relation to us, in relation to a pure spirit, exercise effects of power inside and outside their domain.

GOUHIER: It is my honor to thank Michel Foucault for having provided us with such an interesting session which is certain to become an especially important publication.

FOUCAULT: Thank you.

—Translated by Lysa Hochroth

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1. Henri Gouhier is an historian of philosophy and a specialist in Malebranche and Bergson. Although part of the academic establishment, he remained open to new ideas (he directed Lucien Goldmann's dissertation). The discussion which follows Foucault's lecture involved various specialists in philosophy: Mouloud (aesthetics); Bruch (Kant); Zac (Spinoza); Birault (Heidegger); etc.

2. "What is an Author," first published in the *Bulletin de la Societe francaise de philosophie*, was translated from the French by Josue V. Harari in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, edited by Josue V Harari (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1979). It was reprinted in *Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).