The Intellectual and Politics

Foucault and the Prison

Gilles Deleuze is a Professor of Philosophy at the Université de Paris (Saint Denis). He is the author of books on Nietzsche, Spinoza, and two recent works on the cinema. He is now at work on a book on Michel Foucault and philosophy.

HOP: *Before turning to the broader question of the intellectual and politics, could you tell us of your involvement with Michel Foucault and the Groupe d'information sur les prisons?*

Deleuze: Yes, let's start with the GIP.

I must stress that the GIP was a joint venture, an invention of Michel and Daniel Defert. I call the group an invention because it was the first of its kind—at least in France. The GIP was independent of political parties like the Gauche prolétarienne that were started before '68. And it had nothing to do with movements that sought alternatives to particular situations, such as the movement to transform psychiatry. The GIP was an image of Michel and Daniel in the sense that it had nothing to do with a party or with an enterprise.

An interview with Gilles Deleuze
CONDUCTED BY PAUL RABINOW
WITH KEITH GANDAL
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HOP: *Before his death Foucault stressed repeatedly that '68 had no importance for him; he was in Tunisia at the time and the events of '68 did not influence him.*

Deleuze: No, they did not. This explains why he did not have a "past." I mean, he had the past of a philosopher, of a great philosopher already, but he was not dragging the legacy of '68 behind him. This is probably what enabled him to create such a new type of group, a group on an equal footing with others. For instance, it allowed him to retain his independence vis-à-vis the Gauche prolétarienne, and at the same time to deal with them.

Michel called the GIP an information group, but "information" is not quite the right word: the GIP was a kind of experiment in thinking. Michel always considered the process of thinking to be an experiment; this was his Nietzschean heritage. In this case, the point was not to experiment with prisons, but to comprehend the prison as a place where a certain experience is lived prisoners, an experience that intellectuals—or at least intellectuals as conceived by Foucault—should also think about. It was this link between thinking and the lived experience that constituted an experiment.

Michel also had a political intuition: the feeling that something is going to happen at a particular point, and nowhere else. People rarely have such intuitions. Michel sensed that there was some movement and unrest in the prisons, and that these were not just small problems. Needless to say, he did not seek to take advantage of this situation, nor to precipitate events, had he been able to. But he saw something at a time when no one else did.

Foucault always had this side; he was in some fashion a seer. He saw things, and like all people who know how to see, who see something and see it deeply, he found what he saw to be intolerable. For him, to think meant to react to the intolerable, to something intolerable he had seen. And the intolerable never was the visible; it was something more. One had to be a bit of a seer to grasp it. This, too, was part of Michel's genius: thinking was an experiment, but it was also a vision, a grasping of something intolerable.

HOP: *Did this have to do with ethics?*

Deleuze: I believe for him it functioned as ethics. But the intolerable was not a matter of ethics. That is, his ethics were to apprehend or to see something as intolerable, but it was not in the name of morals that something was intolerable. This was his way of philosophizing, his way of thinking. In other words, if thinking did not reach the intolerable, it was not worthwhile to think. To think always meant to think about the limits of a situation. But it also meant to see. Foucault was an extraordinary seer, as evidenced by the way he perceived people, the way he saw everything, whether it was comic or horrible. This seeing power was very much linked to his writing power.

To return to our subject, Michel and Daniel wanted to create a prison information group, focused on a variety of topics related to prisons. They really started in the dark, and were unsure how to proceed. In the beginning, Daniel would hand out leaflets to families when they came to visit the prisons. He had a few people to help him, including Michel, and they were soon identified as "agitators." But they did not want to agitate; they wanted to write a questionnaire for both families and prisoners.

The first questionnaires dealt with food and medical care. Michel was both surprised and intrigued by the answers: most said not that food was unimportant, but that there was something else much worse: the constant humiliations. Then Foucault the seer gave way to Foucault the thinker. His strategy was to use this as a ground for experiments—in the best sense of the word- until he wrote *Discipline and Punish.* It greatly helped him in his own thinking to realize immediately the tremendous difference between the theoretical or juridical status of the prison—the prison as deprivation of freedom—

, and the practice of the prison, which is something else altogether. Because in practice it is not enough to deprive the prisoner of his or her liberty for several years—although this is itself an awesome thing to do. On top of this there is a whole system of humiliation, a system that breaks people and that is not part of the system of deprivation of freedom.

Things were discovered in this fashion that, as Michel pointed out, everybody already knew. People discovered in more concrete detail that there was an uncontrolled justice inside the prison, a prison within the prison the French call the *mitard*. Prisoners could be condemned to punishments without being able to defend themselves.

HOP: *How did you join the group? Did it strike you as an interesting cause?*

Deleuze: Well, I already admired Michel a lot. I had met him for the first time before '68, when he was teaching in Clermont. Then the GIP was created in 1971.

I was convinced beforehand that he was right, that he had indeed created a group of a wholly new type. It was extremely localized, but as with everything Michel did, the more localized it was, the more impact it had. The GIP was almost as beautiful as one of his books.

The GIP worked both with the families of prisoners and with former prisoners. There were moments of great fun, particularly during the first encounters with former prisoners. There was a kind of rivalry among them, and it was hard to have two or three together as each one badly wanted to be more of a prisoner than the others. If one had served five years, the other would say "I did seven," always outdoing the first. "And where were you? Oh, that's an easy prison."

Thus there were people connected to prisons, but it was the outsiders, people in a position to help the GIP, who were the most numerous by far. Totally unexpected people joined the group, including the widow of the poet Paul Eluard, who went out of her way to help us. All things considered, this was an opportunity that Foucault could not fail to utilize.

The group was moving in all kinds of directions. At the same time, movements and revolts were developing within the prisons. Michel and Daniel had to deal with an infinite number of tasks, writing pamphlets and questionnaires, and establishing contacts with prison psychiatrists, prison doctors and prisoners' families.

After a certain time, however, Michel decided to dissolve the group. Serge Livrozet and his wife carried on by creating the Comité d'action des prisonniers (Prisoners' Action Committee). Serge was a former prisoner and the author of *De la prison à la révolte* (1973), for which Michel wrote a very good preface. Thus the GIP gave way to the CAP, a group led by prisoners themselves.

In my opinion, Foucault had both won and lost. But he was extremely modest—very proud in some ways, but very modest too—and he thought he had lost, even though the GIP had accomplished a great deal. The prisoners' movement had developed, and a report from a high-ranking civil servant had created a stir. Michel had every right to think that some things had changed, perhaps not fundamental things, but they had changed nevertheless. Three or four years later, however, the situation was exactly as before, and Michel had the feeling that it had all been of no use.

At the same time, he had to know it had been tremendously helpful. The GIP's purpose was to allow prisoners and their families to speak out. Indeed they had never spoken for them-

Inside

A Newsletter

In this issue, *History of the Present* examines the relationship between intellectuals and politics, an issue of long-standing concern in the life and work of Michel Foucault. We present two interviews with Gilles Deleuze and Robert Bono (of the labor union CFDT) on some of Foucault's political activities in France. These, together with an article by Keith Gandal, are meant not only to shed light on Foucault's work, but also to explore new political possibilities for intellectuals. Foucault and those we interviewed provide examples of writers whose research is an integral part of their political activity. In addition, we present reports on meetings, work in progress, and recent publications. Since the previous issue, we have received letters, articles and books from many countries, and we have tried, whenever possible, to include information on these correspondances. We encourage you to continue to write to us.

selves before—not because they did not speak; they did, but it was as if they did not: no one listened. Which means that they had no other recourse besides rioting. One of the purposes of the GIP, therefore, was not so much to make prisoners speak as to create a place where people would be forced to listen to them, a place other than the roof of a prison during a riot.

Well, today there is a place for prisoners to voice their concerns, so that what prisoners say won't, as Michel used to say, be "worse than repressed." What often happened was not at the level of repression, it was better still: someone spoke and it was as if he didn't. It used to be quite common for television

Intellectuals and Labor Unions

Robert Bono is a former national secretary of the Confédération francaise démocratique de travail, and head of the social services section. The CFDT, a secular labor union, was formed in 1964 out of the earlier Confédération des travailleurs chrétiens. It is now one of the largest labor unions in France, and describes itself as dedicated to a principle of socialist self-management.

An interview with Robert Bono
CONDUCTED BY PAUL RABINOW
WITH KEITH GANDAL
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HOP: *We are particularly interested in the contacts Michel Foucault and other intellectuals made outside the university, especially in France. So, could we begin with the relationship between Foucault and the CFDT?*
Bono: Well, our contact with Foucault dates back to 1981 and the coup d'état in Poland by Jaruzelski. The CFDT is, of course, very interested in supporting the autonomy of unions, whether in an eastern country or elsewhere. The rapidity of our reaction served to draw the attention of intellectuals who also were concerned about the coup and the threat it posed to the existence of Solidarity. It was in trying to organize a response, and trying to bring public opinion to bear on the Polish government, that we were led to set up meetings between the CFDT and what one could generically label intellectuals.

These were intellectuals who were concerned with freedom and human rights, and who were looking for an effective way to cooperate with a mass organization. We assembled what we might call the "libertaires"—Pierre Bourdieu, Laurence Choise, Pierre Rosanvallon, Alain Touraine, Foucault and others—that is, all those for whom freedom and human rights are inseparable from the fight for life itself. They do not selectively choose their interventions in support of human rights based on whether it is an eastern or western country, but rather are willing to defend these rights wherever they are threatened, regardless of the political regime.

These encounters with intellectuals to organize and publicize our support for Solidarity pleased Michel Foucault enormously. Foucault had been searching a long time for an honest relationship with a mass organization. He refused the existing model of using intellectuals that prevailed in the period between 1945 and 1965 in our country, the prototype of which was the relationship between the Communist Party and Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre was not a communist, but he had always been tied in his role as intellectual to serving what he believed to be the working class (which was not, in fact, the working class but rather the class of "apparatchiks"). The confusion was understandable and the intentions were laudable. Nevertheless, the role of the intellectual was one of straightforward submission in the service of what one believed to be the masses, either by adding prestige to a cause by signing one's name at the bottom of petitions, or by serving as a cultural or scientific force behind the party.

Foucault did not wish to continue this relationship of dependency between intellectuals and the Communist Party, nor did he wish to start up with another party because he believed the temptation would be great to do more or less the same thing: to call intellectuals to the rescue as they were needed, but to ignore them when it came to developing new projects or proposals—in other words, to continue to use them merely as support.

Foucault's contacts with the CFDT let him discover a new way of cooperating. That is, a mass organization could have egalitarian relations with intellectuals; it could have discussions with them about proposals and projects, whether for a demonstration supporting Solidarity or something else entirely, without denying each other's independence or autonomy. There could be meetings, agreements as well as disagreements, and out of the agreements, common projects could be developed, all the while respecting the individual personality of each of the participants. It is nevertheless true that there is necessarily an imbalance in the relationship between an organization and an intellectual. We looked for ways to avoid this imbalance and we came up with our study groups, first on Poland, and then on social security.

HOP: *Since Foucault was not a specialist, and did not have an economic approach or a technical understanding of these matters, what did he represent for you?*
Bono: Foucault was a critic, but in the Enlightenment sense of "esprit critique." He had a perspective on social security and related problems that was not that of the economist, although he didn't scorn the financial questions. His was the perspective of the philosopher and *honnête homme* of the seventeenth century, transposed to the twentieth century—that is, an *honnête homme* with everything society has gained since the Enlightenment. I found in him the same persistence and dedication to understand the events of his time, and to apprehend them not in a partial or prejudiced fashion, but rather in their totality and their interactions.

What appealed to syndicalists was first this commitment to understand our reality, to attain an ideal, and secondly, the fact that Foucault dealt a lot with inequalities in the subjects he chose to study—whether madness, sexuality or deviance. And the raison d'être of a union is to fight against inequality. So we formed a work group, composed of intellectuals and people from our section, to talk freely and non-dogmatically about the problems posed by social security. At first it seemed that nothing predisposed Foucault for this subject; he wasn't an economist who might be concerned with financial questions of health and social security. But Foucault was passionate about the subject; the issues of autonomy and marginalization fit perfectly with his interests and work.

The book *Sécurité Sociale: l'Enjeu* is one outcome of our discussions about social security. I talked with Foucault, Bernard Brunhes, René Lenoir and Pierre Rosanvallon. The

The Risks of Security

Security and dependency: a diabolical pair?[1]

Bono: *Traditionally, social security protects individuals against a certain number of risks in connection with sickness, family structure, and old age. Clearly, it must continue to fulfill this function.*

However, between 1946 and today, things have changed. New needs have appeared. Thus we are witnessing a growing desire for independence among individuals and groups: the aspirations of children vis-à-vis their parents, of women vis-à-vis men, of the sick vis-à-vis doctors, and of the handicapped vis-à-vis all sorts of institutions. It is becoming equally clear that we need to put an end to the phenomenon of marginalization, attributable in large part to unemployment, but also, in certain cases, to the deficiencies of our system of social protection.

A discussion between
Michel Foucault and Robert Bono
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN *SÉCURITÉ SOCIALE: L'ENJEU* (Paris: Syros, 1983) under the title "UN SYSTÈME FINI FACE À UNE DEMANDE INFINIE."

We believe that at least these two needs must be taken into account by the next social security administration, in order that the system take on newly defined functions that entail a remodelling of its system of allocations. Do you believe that these needs really exist in our society? Would you call attention to others? And how, in your opinion, can social security respond to them?

Foucault: I believe that it is necessary to emphasize three things right at the beginning.

First of all, our system of social guarantees, as it was established in 1946, has now reached its economic limits.

Secondly, this system, elaborated during the interwar years —that is, during a period when one of the goals was to attenuate or to minimize a certain number of social conflicts, and when the conceptual model was informed by a rationality born around the Great War—today reaches its limits as it stumbles against the political, economic, and social rationality of modern societies.

Thirdly, social security, whatever its positive effects, has also had some "perverse effects": the growing rigidity of certain mechanisms and the creation of situations of dependency. This is inherent in the functioning of the system: on the one hand, we give people greater security and, on the other, we increase their dependency. Instead, we should expect our system of social security to free us from dangers and from situations that tend to debase or to subjugate us.

Bono: *If indeed people seem willing to give up some liberty and independence provided that the system extend and rein-force their security, how can we manage this "diabolical pair" of security and dependency?*

Foucault: We have before us a problem the terms of which are negotiable. We must try to appreciate the capacity of people who undertake such negotiation and the level of compromise that they are able to attain.

The way in which we look at these things has changed. In the 1930s and after the war the problem of security was so acute and so immediate that the question of dependency was practically ignored. From the fifties on, in contrast, and even more from the sixties on, the notion of security began to be associated with the question of independence. This inflection was an extremely important cultural, political, and social phenomenon. We cannot ignore it.

It seems to me that certain proponents of anti-security arguments reject, in a somewhat simplistic manner, everything that might be dangerous in "security and liberty" law. We must be more prudent in considering this opposition.

There is indeed a positive demand: a demand for a security that opens the way to richer, more numerous, more diverse, and more flexible relationships with ourselves and others, all the while assuring each of us real autonomy. This is a new fact that should weigh on present-day conceptions of social protection.

Very schematically, that is how I would situate the question of the demand for independence.

Bono: *The negotiation of which you speak can be conducted only along a narrow line. On one side we can see that certain rigidities in our apparatus of social protection, combined with its interventionist nature, threaten the independence of groups and individuals, enclosing them in an administrative yoke that (if one goes by the Swedish experience) becomes intolerable in the end. On the other side, the form of liberalism described by Jules Guesde when he spoke of "free foxes in free chicken coups" is no more desirable—one has only to look at the United States to be convinced of this.*

Foucault: It is precisely the difficulty of establishing a compromise along this narrow line that calls for as subtle an analysis as possible of the actual situation. By "actual situation" I do not mean the system of economic and social mechanisms, which others describe better than I could. I speak rather of this interface between, on the one hand, people's sensibilities, their moral choices, their relations to themselves and, on the other hand, the institutions that surround them. It is here that dysfunctions, malaise and, perhaps, crises arise in the social system.

Considering what one might call the "negative effects" of the system, it is necessary, it seems to me, to distinguish two tendencies. We can see that dependency results not only from integration, but also from marginalization and exclusion. We need to respond to both threats.

I believe that there are instances when it is necessary to resist the phenomenon of integration. An entire mechanism of social protection, in fact, does not fully benefit the individual unless

he finds himself integrated into a family milieu, a work milieu, or a geographic milieu.

Bono: *Could we also pose the question of integration in the context of the relationship of the individual to the State?*

Foucault: In this regard, too, we are witnessing an important phenomenon: before the "crisis," or more precisely, before the emergence of the problems that we now encounter, it is my impression that the individual never questioned his relationship to the State, insofar as this relationship (keeping in mind the way in which the great centralizing institutions worked) was based on an "input"—the dues which he paid—and an "output"—the benefits that accrued to him.

Today a problem of limits intervenes. What is at stake is no longer the equal access of all to security, but the infinite access of each to a certain number of possible benefits. We tell people: "You cannot consume indefinitely." And when the authorities claim, "You no longer have a right to that," or "you will no longer be covered for such operations," or yet again, "you will pay a part of the hospital fees," or in the extreme case, "It would be useless to prolong your life by three months, we are going to let you die," then the individual begins to question the nature of his relationship to the State and starts to feel his dependency on institutions whose power of decision he had heretofore misapprehended.

Bono: *Doesn't this problem of dependency perpetuate the ambivalence that reigned, even before the establishment of a mechanism of social protection, at the creation of the first health institutions? Was it not the objective of the Hôtel-Dieu both to relieve misery and to withdraw the poor and the sick from society's view, at the same time reducing their threat to the public order?*

And can we not, in the twentieth century, leave behind a logic that links charity to isolation in order to conceive of less alienating systems, which the people could—let us use the word —"appropriate"?

Foucault: It is true, in a sense, that in the long run certain problems manifest themselves as permanent.

That said, I am very suspicious of two intellectual attitudes, the persistence of which over the last two decades is to be deplored. One consists in presupposing the repetition and extension of the same mechanisms throughout the history of our societies. From this, one derives the notion of a kind of cancer that spreads in the social body. It is an unacceptable theory. The way in which we used to confine certain segments of the population in the seventeenth century, to return to this example, is very different from the hospitalization we know from the nineteenth century, and even more from the security mechanisms of the present.

Another attitude, every bit as frequent, maintains the fiction of "the good old days" when the social body was alive and warm, when families were united and individuals independent. This happy interlude was cut short by the advent of capitalism, the bourgeoisie, and industrialization. Here we have an historical absurdity.

The linear reading of history as well as the nostalgic reference to a golden age of social life still haunts a great deal of thinking, and informs a number of political and sociological analyses. We must flush these attitudes out.

Bono: *With this remark, we come perhaps to the question of marginality. It seems that our society is divided into a "protected" sector and an exposed or precarious sector. Even though social security alone cannot remedy this situation, it remains the case that a system of social protection can contribute to a decline in marginalization and segregation through adequate measures directed towards the handicapped, immigrants, and all categories of precarious status. At least this is our analysis. Is it also yours?*

Foucault: No doubt we can say that certain phenomena of marginalization are linked to factors of separation between an "insured" population and an "exposed" population. Moreover, this sort of cleavage was foreseen explicitly by a certain number of economists during the seventies, who thought that in post-industrial societies the exposed sector would, on the whole, have to grow considerably. Such "programming" of society, however, was not often realized, and we cannot accept this as the sole explanation of the process of marginalization.

There are in certain forms of marginalization what I would call another aspect of the phenomenon of dependency. Our systems of social coverage impose a determined way of life that subjects individuals. As a result, all persons or groups who, for one reason or another, cannot or do not want to accede to this way of life, find themselves marginalized by the very game of the institutions.

What is at stake is no longer the equal access of all to security, but the infinite access of each to a certain number of possible benefits.

Bono: *There is a difference between marginality which one chooses and marginality to which one is subjected.*

Foucault: True, and it would be necessary to distinguish them in a more detailed analysis. In any case, it is important to shed light on the relationship between the working of social security and ways of life, the ways of life that we began to observe about ten years ago. But this is a study that demands more thorough investigation, at the same time that it needs to be disengaged from a too strict "sociologism" that neglects ethical problems of paramount importance.

A Certain Conceptual Deficiency

Bono: *Our goal is to give people security as well as autonomy. Perhaps we can come closer to this goal by two means: on the one hand, by rejecting the absurd juridicism of which we are so fond in France, and which raises mountains of paperwork in everyone's way (so as to discriminate yet a bit more against the marginals) in favor of an experiment with a posteriori legislation which would facilitate access to social benefits and amenities; and, on the other hand, by achieving real decentralization with a staff and appropriate places for welcoming people.*

What do you think? Do you subscribe to the objectives I just stated?

Foucault: Yes, certainly. And the objective of an optimal social coverage joined to a maximum of independence is clear enough. As for reaching this goal . . . .

I think that such an aim requires two kinds of means. On the one hand, it requires a certain empiricism. We must transform the field of social institutions into a field of experimentation, in order to determine which levers to turn and which bolts to

Intellectual Work as a Political Tool

I

Michel Foucault was a new kind of political activist. It is ironic that he has generally been understood as an obscure and apolitical thinker because "he was the opposite of the thinker with his head in the clouds," says Claude Mauriac, a former aide to General de Gaulle and a colleague of Foucault's on a number of political projects.[2] Foucault challenged the intellectual activism whose claim to a progressive politics is a correct set of values, a theoretical apparatus or a program for a legitimate political system. He believed that a progressive politics needed, not a vision of what should be, but a sense of what was intolerable and an historical analysis that could help

The Example of Michel Foucault
BY KEITH GANDAL

determine possible strategies in political struggles. Because Foucault spoke about power in terms of tactics and because he presented critiques of institutions and practices without proposing alternative, legitimate forms of power, he has been thought a nihilist. In fact, Foucault believed that the exercise of power always involved dangers and that one needed to think strategically to avoid these dangers and to change social practices for the better. "Whereas other politics recognize only ideal necessities . . . or the free play of individual initiatives," said Foucault, "a progressive politics is one which recognizes the historic conditions . . . of a practice . . . [and thus] defines in a practice the possibilities of transformation."[3]

Now, more than a year after his death, Foucault has been honored in France. And it was not the academic establishment commemorating his intellectual production; during October and November of last year, his brand of intellectual politics was remembered by the French Democratic Labor Federation (CFDT), a labor union. The exposition concerned Foucault's life, the essential questions in his work, and his militancy.

Foucault and a number of other intellectuals had teamed up with the CFDT for demonstrations in support of Solidarity in Poland. But this sort of cooperation was not at all unusual. The prototype of the activist intellectual, Jean-Paul Sartre, had long run interference for the Communist Party, adding his cultural prestige to their causes and his signature to their petitions. What was different about the relation between the CFDT and Foucault was that they developed a form of teamwork in which the intellectual was politically valuable, not simply for his name, but for his thinking. Foucault had "a wholly new conception" of the political position of the intellectual, says Gilles Deleuze, the well-known French philosopher. "Sartre . . . shared the classical conception of the intellectual. That is, he intervened in the name of superior values: truth, justice, the good. [Foucault's] conception was, in a way, much more functional. . . . He asked: what is there to see? What is there to say" Or to think?" Foucault aimed to think to political effect. And in this new relationship between Foucault and the CFDT, the intellectual wasn't taking directions from the organization; he retained his autonomy. The cooperation over Poland led to the formation of a working

group of syndicalists and academics that developed common political projects; their major project was to consider problems of dependence that arise out of social security.

But even this role of the intellectual seems familiar to us in the example of the think-tank. What was unusual—and set Foucault apart from both the Sartrean model and the model of the think tank—was the kind of thinking in which he engaged and the process of reform to which he was committed. Foucault investigated the historical production of individual experiences —experiences such as mental illness, crime, sexuality, and dependency—because he thought such histories could play a tactical role in political struggles, and he believed that the task of working out changes should involve all the concerned parties, including the individuals who underwent them: mental patients, prisoners, welfare recipients.

The CFDT exposition may seem surprising to academics in America. Here, his politics have often been attacked as hopeless and despairing. His histories are seen to be interesting or even compelling, but, finally, exasperating. He tells us that we create delinquents and a criminal milieu with our prisons and our paroles; he tells us that, from the Catholic confessional to the psychiatrist's couch, we have produced ourselves as beings with a sexuality that must be explored and managed; he tells us that in our asylums, our prisons, our schools, our workplaces, and even our homes, we subject ourselves to practices of surveillance, classification and differentiation that manufacture the identities which we have to recognize in ourselves and which others have to see in us, but he doesn't tell us what we should do. He doesn't tell us how we could liberate ourselves and what sort of society we should have instead. If not prisons, then what? What kind of sexuality should we have? What sorts of identities should we have instead of the ones we have now? In fact, by his silence on these questions, say his critics, he suggests that we are trapped in our history, that there is nothing we can do.

Foucault was "dumfounded to ascertain that people were able to see in his historical studies the affirmation of a determinism from which there was no escape."[4] "I don't believe we are caught in our history," said Foucault in an interview in 1984. "On the contrary, all of my work consists in showing that history is traversed by strategic relations that are consequently mobile and that we can change."[5]

Those who come to Foucault's work looking for solutions will be perpetually disappointed. Foucault's project—in both his politics and his histories—was not to lay out solutions, but rather to identify and characterize problems. "It's true that certain people, such as those who work in the institutional setting of the prison," said Foucault in 1981, "are not likely to find advice or instructions in my books that tell them 'what is to be done.' But my project is precisely to bring it about that they 'no longer know what to do,' so that the acts, gestures, discourses which up until then had seemed to go without saying become problematic, difficult, dangerous. The effect is intentional."[6] His project was not to consider and set forth the Good, but rather to explore, make problematic and stop the Unbearable. "For him," as Deleuze says, "to think meant to react to the intolerable."

For Foucault, Truth did not reside in a set of ideas about the way things should be, but in a practice that talked about problems in a manner that opened up new possibilities for action. Identifying and sizing up a problem was the most determinate act of thought. It was for this reason that Foucault came to see his brand of history as a history of "problematizations." He hoped that his histories not only described the formation of problems, but also developed new problematics: new conceptions of problems that would open up, and shape, new fields of possible solutions. "It is necessary for historical analysis to be a part of the political struggle," Foucault said in an interview. "The point is not to give to the movement a direction or a theoretical apparatus, but to set up possible strategies."[7]

He struggled for changes, but he eschewed any impulse to lay out a blueprint for society; he was well acquainted with the usual political futility of such theorizing, and he had also seen the extreme dangers involved in the realization of these totalitarian impulses. Society as a whole was never even his object of criticism; he pursued what he referred to as "local" problems—the incarceration of the mentally ill, the marginalization of delinquents and criminals, the government of sexuality. One had to grasp a situation in its specificity and its history, in the particular conditions that produced it and maintained it, in order to change it.

II

What were Foucault's political struggles? He was the treasurer for Polish Solidarity in France; he worked with the CFDT on problems of social security; together with other intellectuals and public figures he founded committees against racism; near the end of his life he began to work with "Doctors Without Frontiers" and planned to participate in their medical enterprise to aid Southeast Asian "boat people." His work with the prisons is one of many examples that illuminates the character of his unique political activism. It was with the Prison Information Group (GIP) in 1971 that he began to develop a political practice that could interest an organization like the CFDT.[8]

Leftists in France had been particularly interested in the prison since the events and imprisonments of May '68; they considered their incarcerated colleagues to be political prisoners, and they wanted the government to afford them that official status as well as special rights. Their friends, like all other prisoners, had virtually no contact with the world outside —no radios or televisions, no newspapers and no visitors except family members and lawyers—and little was written about what went on inside. When the Gauche prolétarienne (a Maoist group) decided to take political action in regards to jails, they asked Foucault to lead the project. He accepted, but immediately made it his own. As Daniel Defert, Foucault's close friend and then a member of the Gauche prolétarienne remembers, the Maoist leaders had thought that "Foucault should go to the jails and say, 'I am from the GIP; I want to visit the jails,' and of course they will refuse and we will make a big protest against the jails in the press." Foucault didn't do this at all.

What Foucault decided to do instead was to take his colleagues to the jails on visiting days, to suggest the idea of surveys of prison life to family members who were lining up, and to give them questionnaires for the prisoners. He and his friends talked to prison doctors, psychiatrists and social workers about what went on inside the jails. Foucault invited ex-cons to his home for dinner and talk. Members of the GIP went out into the suburbs and into the factories to talk about prison life. In effect, says Defert, we said, "you, citizens, are in favor in jails, but do you know what you are in favor of? You protest about the conditions of work in factories yet you accept the conditions of work in jails? Why?" Members of the GIP met with civil servants of the judicial system and the Ministry of the Interior; they held press conferences and wrote articles. The GIP published the information from the surveys and conversations in the mainstream press and in a series of pamphlets entitled "Intolerable." It printed completed questionnaires concerning visits, letters, cells, food, leisure, work, medical care and discipline in prison; it published prisoners' writing about the constant humiliations of the prison, information about riots, hunger strikes, the training of guards, the use of drugs to quiet unruly prisoners. Jean Genêt and other members of the GIP wrote about the "accidental" prison death of Black Panther George Jackson as a political assassination; the GIP put together accounts of prison suicides and reprinted suicide notes. It gave wide publicity to movements inside the jails that were beginning to organize prisoners. When the group did hold demonstrations for the press and the public, it was not to protest against the existence of the prison, but to publicize the conditions in the jails. When there were prison revolts, members of the GIP talked to the press about what was going on.

The GIP struggled for changes but did not call for prison reform. As one issue of "Intolerable" claimed: "the goal of the GIP is not reformist; we don't dream of an ideal prison." The idea of prison reform bought into an understanding of the prison question that was for Foucault part of the problem. Prison reformers took for granted that the prison was necessary; the GIP did not. The GIP did not want to reform the prison; it wanted to reform punishment.

Foucault investigated the historical production of individual experiences because he thought such histories could play a tactical role in political struggles, and he believed that the task of working out changes should involve all the concerned parties, including the individuals who underwent them.

It aimed to describe an entire experience—the experience of prison life as well as the experience of the ex-con—to protest what was intolerable in that experience and to call into question the entire penal apparatus that produced it. "We want to enable prisoners to say what is *intolerable* in the system of penal repression," claimed the GIP. Foucault realized that our practices of punishment have brought about a set of effects that were neither foreseen nor intended. The GIP discovered and characterized, on top of the judicial sanction of imprisonment, "a system of humiliation." That is how Gilles Deleuze, who was a member of the GIP, puts it: "a system that breaks people and that is not part of the system of deprivation of freedom. . . . People discovered in more concrete detail that there was an uncontrolled justice inside the prison, a prison within the prison the French call the *mitard*. . . . Prisoners could be

Bio-Power

By François Ewald

By combining life (bio) and power in a single expression, Foucault wanted to question our usual notion of power as repressive and, strictly speaking, juridical. He wanted to call attention to the fact that power today is often exercised to promote, optimize and manage life, health and well-being. Medicine, psychiatry and welfare—various forms of "bio-power"—are among the practices that shape how we live, who we are and the problems with which we concern ourselves.

Francois Ewald is studying the relations between life and power. His most recent work, L'Etat Providence, *has just been published by Grasset.*

One of the characteristic features of modernity is the rise of the problematic of the living, the biological objectification of man and his environment. Power is not asked to attack or defend values that divide the population. It is enough if power can insure the preservation of the living beings that citizens have become, if it can allow them to realize their potential as living beings. And our individualistic morality consists of the care we take in the maintenance of our own lives.

One might argue that the preoccupation with the living in political problematics obeys a logic of scientific discovery. It is true that biological and medical sciences have made formidable progress. Yet the living being is no longer a spectator intrigued with himself; he has by now acquired the mastery of himself as a living being. Ours is the era of biotechnologies, of the industrial and controlled production and reproduction of the living.

We often discuss these new powers as if they were a surprise. As if we, apprentice sorcerers, had been overtaken by the power of our own conquests. But we forget that this new mastery would not have been possible without the remarkable reorientation that, in the Classical Age, transformed the nature of political power, giving birth to what Michel Foucault calls "bio-power." In light of this hypothesis, what we now experience as anxiety and confusion should be analyzed not as a rupture, but as an accomplishment.

The "bio-power" hypothesis is as follows:

> The old power of death that symbolized sovereign power was now carefully supplanted by the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life. During the classical period, there was a rapid development of various disciplines—universities, secondary schools, barracks, workshops; there was also the emergence, in the field of political practices and economic observation, of the problems of birthrate, longevity, public health, housing and migration. Hence there was an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations. . . . [*The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction,* pp. 139-140]

Thus, beginning with the classical age,

> Western man was gradually learning what it meant to be a living species in a living world, to have a body, conditions of existence, probabilities of life, an individual and collective welfare, forces that could be modified, and a space in which they could be distributed in an optimal manner. For the first time in history, no doubt, biological existence was reflected in political existence . . . . For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question. [pp. 142-143]

The welfare state accomplishes the dream of bio-power. It is born at the end of the nineteenth century, out of a reform of the problematic of security. The welfare state is a state whose primary aim is no longer to protect the freedom of each individual against the attacks of others, but rather to assume responsibility for the very manner in which the individual manages his life. Its master-word is prevention: the life of each individual represents a risk-factor for others. We have only to think of the phenomenon of contagion described by Pasteur at the end of the nineteenth century: one cannot but be a danger to others. Thus, it is the responsibility of the state to ensure that everyone behave in the most prophylactic manner possible. Through institutions such as social insurance, and later social security, the state is soon able to manage the life of the population, in such a way as to preserve it against itself and to allow it to realize its potential.

The welfare state crystallizes around the idea of the protection of the living. If, as in the liberal state, the economy is a central preoccupation, it is no longer an economy of material wealth, but an economy of life.

The welfare state accuses the liberal state of managing life poorly; there is, in the right of the strong to crush the weak, and in free competition, considerable waste. In effect, there is no other wealth than life, and all life is wealth. Consequently, life must be protected. In the age of the welfare state, the rights of man are understood only as a right to life. Rights are no longer the result of what one does with one's life, but of the mere fact that one is a living being, with needs that must be satisfied. This is the important shift: value no longer consists in freedom, but in the fact of being alive. This explains the insistence on the management of the handicapped and the abnormal. There is a wealth that must be tapped.

The welfare state crystallizes around the idea of the protection of the living. If, as in the liberal state, the economy is a central preoccupation, it is no longer an economy of material wealth, but an economy of life. What could be more natural, within the framework of such a political program, than the growth of medical power and the power of the life specialists?

The institutionalization of this modern form of the state occurred through the development of a positivist type of thought, which objectified society as a living being, or more precisely as a being from which each individual draws his existence. Modern man draws his life from the society to which, in the literal sense of the word, he belongs. The biological ideologies of racism and eugenics have been repeatedly denounced. But it is forgotten that the official ideology of the Third Republic—indeed, of the twentieth century—the doctrine of solidarity, is a biological ideology. Its basis is a kind of social Darwinism: men stand together, live off one another, but these natural solidarities are deficient. It is necessary to correct them. It is the task of society to organize itself as a remedy to the ills that naturally threaten life. The models, as

well as the objectives, of solidaristic politics are of a medical type. One cannot overemphasize the importance of the fight against tuberculosis, social malady par excellence, for the formation of modern political thought. The "social," as pursued by our modern politics and objectified by the human sciences, may be, in its political expression, the result of the class struggle; it is the most legitimate child of bio-politics. The social, one might say, appears when the class struggle has been coded in the order of biology.

Solidarism has become outmoded. Still, we are not finished with life-centered ideologies and politics. How can we fail to see that, today, ecology has taken over? Ecology was able to pass as a rebel ideology, a critique of capitalism, of industrial societies and their unbridled development; once again, it is in the name of the protection of the living. The philosophies of solidarity were inspired by the model of animal societies, yet man and animal were not put on the same level. Ecology adds another dimension, uniting in the concept of the eco-system all living things. Man is no longer privileged. Anything living has the same value and is entitled to the same protection. Animals, and even plants and natural resources, can now have rights. The notion of the rights of man has the ring of a reprehensible imperialism. Is ecology a rupture? Not at all. It is rather the amplification of previous policies. Ecology accomplishes the dream of bio-politics.

Modernity is characterized by a conjunction of power/knowledge relations around the theme of life a life that science, by now, makes it possible to master technically. There has been a great take-off of bio-technologies, which may seem so threatening because it implies the unbounding of bio-power. Science and biological technologies have meant that the living need no longer obey any law; it seems indefinitely manipulable. The unbounding of the power of life over life, the possibility of exercising bio-politics freed of all constraints, this is what explains the great anxiety associated with the problems of procreation and filiation. We ask for laws, for new guides, for new prohibitions, for new constraints to replace those that nature no longer offers.

The problem does not lie only in the localized fears of destruction by atomic or chemical pollution, of extinction of animal species or the exhaustion of natural resources; the idea that a malevolent power could take over bio-technologies to achieve evil ends is only a screen, a way of masking a genuine metaphysical anxiety that coincides with the mastery of life by itself. We are now discovering that the more we thought we could, thanks to science, move closer to ourselves, the more we move away from ourselves; the more we thought we could find out about ourselves, the more we are lost. Science transforms the living; it pulverizes it. Instead of turning it into a base on which it could find support, science makes it more and more artificial. The more the living learns about itself through biology, the more it knows it will never be able to draw any information about the way it should live. The split between what is and what should be has never been as strong as today. If the present state of biotechnologies is so agonizing for modern man, it is because he knows that there is not a single being that could serve as a moral referent for him. What he finds so harrowing is not that he could have the possibility of *doing* everything — man is not and never will be God—but the far more fascinating possibility of *being* everything.

1. This article appeared in a special issue of *Magazine littéraire* (no. 218, April 1985, pp. 42-43) entitled "Les enjeux de la biologie."

Bono Interview

objective was not to find a solution to the problem of social security, but to understand the stakes of social security by studying it from a variety of perspectives, without censorship of any kind.

HOP: *For Americans, it is striking and pleasing to witness the respect you have in France for intellectuals. In some circles in the United States it is quite the opposite; there is, rather, contempt.*

Bono: Here, too, on the right there is a pejorative sense to the word intellectual—as someone who is completely abstract, lost in his ideas, who doesn't understand anything about the world in which he lives. Foucault was exactly the opposite of that definition. For me an intellectual is not someone who does work that appeals to the mind; it is someone who understands his or her world. I, too, am an intellectual, and work like mine, which tries to alter the conditions of labor, is also intellectual work. I translate my aspirations and those of my co-workers into demands and discussions with the bosses. I concretize and synthesize them. Thus, my respect for people who seek to understand and change positively the world around them. It is not a servile respect. I do not consider them superior or inferior, but rather as equals among other individuals in society.

HOP: *We would like to ask you about the limits of participation of intellectuals in a union. Have you learned any lessons from these encounters? That is, are you interested in attracting more intellectuals to work with you? Was this a positive experience and has it changed your method of operation?*

Bono: One limit to participation of intellectuals in a union or any political organization is that we refuse to set them up as "gurus" of any sort. We desire egalitarian relations: we don't "use" them; both sides benefit from these common reflections. We increase the intellectual patrimony through our interaction. Each side takes away what it can from its participation. But there is a temptation for intellectuals to regard themselves as the "thinkers" for the poor, ignorant working class, who give workers "the word" and the ideas they presumably lack. That is certainly a limit, one that exists and must be recognized.

A second limit is that each intellectual tends to be fairly specialized, immersed in his or her own little field. Sometimes, when one is stuck in a specific field, it is not easy to work together or take action together. This is one of the problems for the groups we set up regarding Poland: how to continue working on other problems in society. But this is not an insurmountable problem. We have continued to meet with intellectuals on the subject of Poland, and the ties are not broken.

A third limit is that we cannot yet be completely sure where these cooperations will lead, nor how each of us will benefit. This is still unclear and in flux. It isn't that we don't want intellectuals working in the CFDT; we have seen what the interaction can bring to our mutual understanding of social problems. But I really don't see how this can be institutionalized, and I don't know if that would even be desirable.

There will always be a great deal of imprecision, fuzziness, and unclear objectives. We will need to see as we go along. As

we have more joint projects, it may be possible to increase our collaboration. For the moment, however, it still is not very clear.

HOP: *Your answer is interesting because it suggests that you make contacts concerning specific historical problems as they arise, and that sometimes this is helpful, and sometimes it is not. This is more a possibility of dialogue.*

Bono: Yes, there are short-term interests, but there may be long-term interests as well, the consequences of which we are not even aware of now. In the case of Poland, we wanted to lay open a problem and come up with concrete objectives. But not everything we do is of that order.

A certain degree of mutual impregnation occurs, changing us imperceptibly. This is much less palpable, but it alters our method of procedure and behavior nonetheless. After all, our method of action is very important as well. Our principles and perspectives are one thing, but unfortunately our practices are another. A desire for coherence between ideals and practices is shared by intellectuals and the union, and we can try to approximate that coherence together in a modest fashion.

HOP: *Was this type of exchange with intellectuals completely new? Had there been anything like it before?*

Bono: I think it is fairly recent. There had been interchanges between intellectuals and unions before. But the way our exchanges were held broke with the previous problematics and methods of interaction; there were no gurus, nor exploitation of each other. This is fairly new, and we would like to see it expand and develop in every possible direction.

But we still haven't found the method or the means; these remain to be discovered. There are still a lot of holes and obstacles on the CFDT's side as well. For example, I have spoken about the narrow focus of intellectuals and the problems we have with them. But in the unions we also have become locked into our own concerns. Many may wonder what there is to gain from intellectuals, and argue that it would be better to pay attention to the working class. But of course, one doesn't negate the other; they are not contradictory. We need to consider the working class, but this doesn't prevent us from talking with others about how to act upon the evolution of ideas, or how to use this to influence the course of society.

So, resistance to cooperation came from both sides. Since 1981, however, we have improved noticeably. The Mitterand government has undoubtedly helped. People who placed all their hopes in the political apparatus have come to see the limits of political action. Political action does not eliminate or replace intellectual movements.

We have made some rough beginnings, but more can be done to find ways of confronting and exchanging ideas that will benefit us all. One of the things that we admired so much in Poland was the intelligent and extraordinary rapport between Solidarity and intellectuals. These were not relations of domination or dependency; they were all working together for the same goal. This was fascinating. The best example of successful syndicalist collaboration with intellectuals is not in France, but in Poland. It is too bad that they have been militarily persecuted and unable to come out of hiding. I think it would have been very productive if it had been allowed to continue. This is the model of interaction that we tried to reproduce in France.

HOP: *You have organized an exposition on Foucault. Could you tell us something about it and whether you have ever done anything like this before?*

Bono: Well, we have organized other expositions on sculpture and painting, but never before on a person. But Foucault was something else entirely. We were transformed by having met him. I said when he died that society had lost a great man, and the CFDT a friend. He deserved an exposition.

The exposition is both an homage to Foucault and a reminder of the very burning relevance today of the questions that he raised. It is also a search for a way that the union can participate in the production of culture. (I am not distinguishing here between bourgeois and popular culture, but rather referring to a common human culture.) There is a constant concern to achieve a more complete form of syndicalism, one which includes the cultural dimension of human relations. Culture is the foundation of society, and helps us to understand the world in which we live: Picasso is as relevant to understanding a certain period as the social movements taking place. I'm not being snobbish and saying that one has to admire Picasso, but one has to take his work for what it is in order to understand that period. According to this perspective, the artists and poets help us to understand our world as much as the intellectuals, the more scientific intellectuals, that is.

So, we have organized expos on contemporary sculpture, a recent one that was free to the public, and now one on Foucault, all in the effort to understand our society through the intellectual movements taking place.

HOP: *Few people know that practically the only homage paid to Foucault was by the CFDT. This seems extraordinary— nothing from the universities, and the socialists express only contempt. But in the United States there has been a lot of attention.*

Bono: Well, I think that part of the explanation lies in the extreme specialization of intellectuals. Foucault delved into several different terrains. He was not one to shut himself off in a field of expertise. He sought to apprehend a problem in all of its dimensions and this provoked rivalries and jealousies.

Secondly the problems he studied are so global that not everyone has yet realized the importance of his contribution. Most people just don't understand the importance of what he has done.

HOP: *That is surprising, especially in France. Might another reason for this be that he did not make himself into a social institution?*

Bono: That's true. He did not cultivate disciples; that was against his nature and his method.

HOP: *Yet this is a bit ambiguous because, especially in France, if one doesn't build something, get some kind of social basis, it is all over. The question is whether it is possible to build something that does not become simply another doctrine. This is a problem not only for intellectuals, as we defined them earlier, but also for anyone concerned with freedom.*

Bono: Yes, there must be some kind of support system, but maybe a support which would have been acceptable to Foucault remains to be invented. Foucault would not have allowed his own institutionalization. Perhaps one can find a different, less cumbersome support, a less organized form of consensus. Maybe, I don't know. Maybe our expo will help.

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loosen in order to bring about the desired effects. It is indeed important to undertake a campaign of decentralization, for example, in order to bring the users closer to the decision-making centers on which they depend, and to tie them into the decision-making process, avoiding the type of great, globalizing integration that leaves people in complete ignorance about the conditions of particular judgments. We must then multiply these experiments wherever possible on the particularly important and interesting terrain of the social, considering that an entire institutional system, now fragile, will probably undergo a restructuring from top to bottom.

On the other hand—and it is a nodal point—there would be a considerable amount of work to do in order to renovate the conceptual categories that inspire our way of approaching all of these problems of social guarantees and of security. We are still thinking inside a mental framework framed between 1920 and 1940, essentially under the influence of Beveridge,[2] a man who would be over 100 years old today.

For the moment, we lack completely the intellectual instruments to envisage in new terms the framework within which we could achieve our goals.

We must transform the field of social institutions into a field of experimentation, to determine which levers to turn and which bolts to loosen in order to bring about the desired effects.

Bono: *To illustrate the obsolescence of the mental frameworks of which you speak, don't we need a linguistic study of the sense of the word "subject" in the language of social security?*
Foucault: Absolutely! And the question is what to do so that the person would no longer be a "subject" in the sense of subjugation.

As for the intellectual deficiency that I have just outlined, one may well wonder from where new forms of analysis, new conceptual frameworks, will spring.

What stands out in my mind, to be schematic, is that at the end of the eighteenth century in England, and in the nineteenth century in certain European countries, the parliamentary life was able to constitute a place to work out and discuss new projects (such as the fiscal and customs laws in Great Britain). That is where great campaigns of reflection and exchange were ignited. In the second half of the nineteenth century, many problems, many projects, were born from what was then a new associative life, that of labor unions, of political parties, of various associations. In the first half of the twentieth century, a very important task—a conceptual effort—was carried out in the political, economic, and social domains by people such as Keynes or Beveridge, as well as by a certain number of intellectuals, academics and administrators.

But, let us admit, the crisis that we are undergoing, and that soon will be ten years old, has not elicited anything interesting or new from these intellectual milieux. It seems that in those quarters there has been a sort of sterilization: one cannot find any significant innovation there.

Bono: *Can the unions be those "loci of illumination?"*
Foucault: If it is true that the current malaise brings into question everything on the side of state institutional authority, it is a fact that the answers will not come from those who exercise this authority: rather, they should be raised by those who intend to counter-balance the state prerogative and to constitute counter-powers. What comes out of union activity might then eventually, in fact, open up a space for innovation.

Bono: *Does this need to renovate the conceptual framework of social protection give a chance to "civil society"—of which the unions are a part—in relation to the State?*
Foucault: If this opposition between civil society and the State could, with good reason, be used at the end of the eighteenth century and in the nineteenth century, I am not sure that it is still operative today. The Polish example in this case is very interesting: when one likens the powerful social movement that has swept across that country to a revolt of civil society against the State, one underestimates the complexity and the multiplicity of confrontations. It was not only against the State that the Solidarity movement had to fight.

The relationship between the political power, the systems of dependency that it generates, and individuals is too complex to be captured by this schema. In fact the idea of an opposition between civil society and the State was formulated in a given context in response to a precise intention: some liberal economists proposed it at the end of the eighteenth century to limit the sphere of action of the State, civil society being conceived of as the locus of an autonomous economic process. This was a quasi-polemical concept, opposed to administrative options of states of that era, so that a certain liberalism could flourish.

But something bothers me even more: the reference to this antagonistic pair is never exempt from a sort of Manichaeism, afflicting the notion of State with a pejorative connotation at the same time as it idealizes Society as something good, lively and warm.

What I am attentive to is the fact that all human relationships are to a certain degree relationships of power. We evolve in a world of perpetual strategic relations. All power relations are not bad in and of themselves, but it is a fact that they always entail certain risks.

Let's take the example of penal justice, which is more familiar to me than that of social security. An entire movement is now developing in Europe and in the United States in favor of an "informal justice," or even of certain forms of arbitration conducted by the groups themselves. It requires a very optimistic view of society to think it capable, by simple internal regulation, of resolving the problems that it faces.

In short, returning to our topic, I remain quite circumspect about playing with the opposition between State and civil society. As for the project of transferring to civil society a power of initiative and action annexed by the State and exercised in an authoritarian manner: whatever the scenario, a relationship of power would be operating and the question would be to know how to limit the effects of this relationship, this relationship being in itself neither good or bad but dangerous, so that it would be necessary to think, on all levels, about the way in which to channel its efficacy in the best possible direction.

Bono: *What we have very much on our minds at this time is the fact that social security, in its present form, is perceived as a remote institution, with a statist character—even if this is not*

the case—because it is a big centralized machine. Our problem, then, is the following: in order to open up the channel of participation to the users, it is necessary to bring them closer to the centers of decision. How?

Foucault: This problem is empirical more than a matter of the opposition between civil society and the State: it is what I would call a matter of "decisional distance." In other words, the problem is to estimate an optimal distance between a decision taken and the individual concerned, so that the individual has a voice in the matter and so that the decision is intelligible to him. At the same time, it is important to be able to adapt to his situation without having to pass through an inextricable maze of regulations.

What right to health?

Bono: *What is your position regarding the idea of "right to health," which plays a part in the claims of the CFDT?*

Foucault: Here we find ourselves at the heart of an extremely interesting problem.

When the system of social security that we know today was put in place on a large scale, there was a more or less explicit consensus on what could be called "the needs of health." It was, in sum, the need to deal with "accidents"—that is, with invalidating deviations linked to sickness and to congenital or acquired handicaps.

From that point on, two processes unfolded. On the one hand, there was a technical acceleration of medicine that increased its therapeutic power but increased many times faster its capacity for examination and analysis. On the other hand, there was a growth in the demand for health, which demonstrates that the need for health (at least as far as it is felt) has no internal principle of limitation.

Consequently, it is not possible to set objectively a theoretical and practical threshold, valid for all, from which one could say that the needs of health are entirely and definitively satisfied.

The question of rights appears particularly thorny in this context. I would like to make a few simple remarks.

It is clear that there is no sense in talking about a "right to health." Health—good health—cannot arise from a right; good and bad health, however rough or fine the criteria used, are facts: states of things and also states of consciousness. And even if we correct for this by pointing out that the border separating health from sickness is in part defined by the capacity of doctors to diagnose a sickness, by the sort of life or activity of the subject, and by what in a given culture is recognized as health or sickness, this relativity does not preclude the fact that there is no right to be on this side or that of the dividing line.

On the other hand, one can have a right to working conditions that do not increase in a significant manner the risk of sickness or various handicaps. One can also have a right to compensation, care and damages when a health accident is, in one way or another, the responsibility of an authority.

But that is not the current problem. It is, I believe, this: must a society endeavor to satisfy by collective means the need for health of individuals? And can individuals legitimately demand satisfaction of health needs?

It appears—if these needs are liable to grow indefinitely—that an affirmative answer to this question would be without an acceptable or even conceivable translation into practice. On the other hand, one can speak of "means of health"—and by that I mean not just hospital installations and medications, but

everything that is at society's disposal at a given moment for effecting those corrections and adjustments of health that are technically possible. These means of health define a mobile line —which results from the technical capacity of medicine, from the economic capacity of the collectivity, and from what society wishes to devote as resources and means to health. And we can define the right to have access to these means of health, a right that presents itself under different aspects. There is the problem of equality of access—a problem that is easy to answer in principle, though it is not always easy to assure this access in practice. There is the problem of indefinite access to the means of health; here we must not delude ourselves: the problem undoubtedly does not have a theoretical solution. The important thing is to know by what arbitration, always flexible, always provisional, the limits of access will be defined. It is necessary to keep in mind the fact that these limits cannot be established once and for all by a medical definition of health, nor by the idea of "needs of health" expressed as an absolute.

..."health" is a cultural fact in the broadest sense of the word, a fact which is political, economic, and social as well, a fact which is tied to a certain state of individual and collective consciousness.

Bono: *That poses a certain number of problems, among which is this, a rather mundane problem of inequality: the life expectancy of a manual laborer is much lower than that of an ecclesiastic or a teacher; how would we proceed so that the arbitration from which a "norm of health" will result takes this situation into account?*

Besides, the expenditures on health care today represent 8.6% of the gross national product. That was not planned. The cost of health—this is the tragedy—is fed by a multiplicity of individual decisions and by a process of renewal of those decisions. Are we not, therefore, even while we demand equality of access to health, in a situation of "rationed" health?

Foucault: I believe that our concern is the same: it is a question of knowing. It remains a formidable political, economic, as well as cultural problem to select the criteria according to which we could establish a norm which would serve to define, at any given moment, the right to health.

The question of costs, which intrudes in a familiar manner, adds a new dimension to this interrogation.

I do not see, and nobody can explain to me, how technically it would be possible to satisfy all the needs of health along the infinite line on which they develop. And even though I do not know what would limit them, it would be impossible in any case to let expenditures grow under this rubric at the pace of recent years.

An apparatus made to assure the security of people in the domain of health has thus reached the point in its development at which it will be necessary to decide that such an illness, such a suffering, will no longer benefit from any coverage—a point at which even life, in certain cases, will no longer enjoy any protection. And that poses a political and moral problem somewhat related, observing due proportion, to the question of the right of the State to ask an individual to die in a war. This question, without having lost any of its acuteness, has been integrated perfectly, through long historical developments,

into the consciousness of people, so that soldiers have in effect agreed to be killed—thus placing their lives outside of protection. The question today is to know how the people will accept being exposed to certain risks without preserving the benefit of coverage by the Welfare State.

Bono: *Does this mean that we will call into question incubators, consider euthanasia, and thus return to what social security fought, namely certain forms of eliminating the most biologically fragile individuals? Will the prevailing word of order be: "It is necessary to choose; let us choose the strongest"? Who will choose among unrelenting therapy, development of neonatal medicine, and the improvement of working conditions (every year, in French companies, twenty out of every one hundred women suffer nervous breakdowns)?*

Foucault: Such choices are being made at every instant, even if left unsaid. They are made according to the logic of a certain rationality which certain discourses are made to justify.

The question that I pose is to know whether a "strategy of health"—this problematic of choice—must remain mute. Here we touch upon a paradox: this strategy is acceptable, in the current state of things, insofar as it is left unsaid. If it is explicit, even in the form of a more or less acceptable rationality, it becomes morally intolerable. Take the example of dialysis: how many patients are undergoing dialysis, how many others are unable to benefit from it? Suppose we expose the choices that culminated in this sort of inequality of treatment: this would bring to light scandalous rules! It is here that a certain rationality itself becomes a scandal.

I have no solution to propose. But I believe that it is futile to cover our eyes: we must try to go to the bottom of things and to face up to them.

Bono: *Would there not be room, moreover, to do a fairly detailed analysis of costs in order to pinpoint some possibilities of economizing before making more painful and indeed "scandalous" choices? I am thinking in particular of iatrogenic ailments, which currently represent (if one believes certain figures) 8% of all health problems. Is this not an example of a "perverse effect" precisely attributable to some defect in rationality?*

Foucault: To reexamine the rationality that presides over our choices in the matter of health—this is indeed a task to which we should apply ourselves resolutely.

Thus we can point out that certain troubles like dyslexia, because we view them as benign, are but minimally covered by social security, whereas their social cost can be tremendous. For example, have we evaluated all that dyslexia can entail in educational investment beyond simply considering the treatments available? This is the type of situation to be reconsidered when we reexamine what could be called "normality" in matters of health. There is an enormous amount of work in the way of investigation, experimentation, measure-taking, and intellectual and moral reformulation to be done on this score.

Clearly, we have come upon a turning-point that must be negotiated.

A Matter of Conscience and Culture

Bono: *The definition of a norm in health, the search for a consensus about a certain level of expenditure or about the modes of allocation of these expenditures, constitute an extraordinary opportunity for people to take responsibility for matters that concern them fundamentally, matters of life and*

well-being. *But it is also a task of such magnitude as to inspire some hesitation, is it not?*

How can we bring the debate to all levels of public opinion?
Foucault: It is true that certain contributions to this debate have aroused an outcry.[3] What is significant is that the protests address proposals that touch on matters that are by nature controversial: life and death. By evoking these health problems, we enter into a system of values that allows for an absolute and infinite demand. The problem raised is therefore that of reconciling an infinite demand with a finite system.

This is not the first time that mankind has encountered this problem. After all, was religion not made to solve it? But today, we must find a solution to it in technical terms.

Bono: *Does the proposal to make the individual responsible for his or her own choices contain an element of the answer? When we ask a smoker to pay a surcharge, for example, does this not amount to obliging him financially to assume the risk that he runs? Can we not, in the same way, bring home to people the meaning and implication of their individual decisions instead of marking out boundaries beyond which life would no longer have the same price?*

Foucault: I totally agree. When I speak of arbitration and normativity, I do not have in mind a sort of committee of wisemen who can proclaim each year: "Given the circumstances and state of our finances, such a risk will be covered and such another will not." I picture, in a more global sense, something like a cloud of decisions arranging themselves around an axis that would roughly define the retained norm. It remains to be seen how to ensure that this normative axis is as representative as possible of a certain state of consciousness of the people— that is, of the nature of their demand and of that which can be the object of consent on their part. I believe that results of arbitration should be the effect of a kind of ethical consensus, so that the individual can recognize himself in the decisions made and in the values behind the decisions. It is under this condition that the decisions will be acceptable, even if someone protests and rebels.

Given this, if it is true that people who smoke and those who drink must know that they are running a risk, it is also true that to have a salty diet when one has arteriosclerosis is dangerous, just as it is dangerous to have a sugar-laden diet when one is diabetic. I point this out to indicate just how complex are the problems, and to suggest that arbitration, or a "decisional cloud" should never assume the form of a univocal rule. All uniform, rational models arrive very quickly at paradoxes!

It is quite obvious, for all that, that the cost of diabetes and of arteriosclerosis are minuscule compared to the expenses incurred by tobacco addiction and alcoholism.

Bono: *Which rank as veritable plagues, and the cost of which is also a social cost. I am thinking of a certain delinquency, of martyred children, of battered wives . . . .*
Foucault: Let us also remember that alcoholism was literally implanted in the French working-class, in the nineteenth century, by the authority's opening of bars; let us also remember that neither the problem of home distillers nor that of viticulture have ever been solved. One can speak of a veritable politics of organized alcoholism in France. Perhaps we are at a point at which it becomes possible to take the bull by the horns and to move towards a reduced coverage of the risks linked to alcoholism.

Whatever the case, it goes without saying that I do not advocate that savage liberalism that would lead to individual cover-

age for those who have the means to pay for it, and to a lack of coverage for the others.

I am merely emphasizing that the fact of "health" is a cultural fact in the broadest sense of the word, a fact which is political, economic, and social as well, a fact which is tied to a certain state of individual and collective consciousness. Every era outlines a "normal" profile of health. Perhaps we should direct ourselves towards a system that defines, in the domain of the *abnormal,* the pathological, the sicknesses *normally* covered by society.

Bono: *Do you not think, in order to clarify the debate, it would also behoove us to distinguish, in attempting to define a norm of health, between that which arises from the medical sphere and that which arises from social relationships? Have we not witnessed, in the last thirty years, a kind of "medicalization" of what could be called society's problems? We have, for example, brought a type of medical response to the problem of absenteeism on the job, when we should have instead improved working conditions. This type of "displacement" puts a strain on the health budget.*

Foucault: A thousand things, in fact, have been "medicalized" or even "over-medicalized," things that arise from phenomena other than medicine. It so happened that, faced with certain problems, we judged the medical solution to be the most useful and the most economical. This was the case for certain scholastic problems, for sexual problems, for detention problems . . . . Clearly, we should revise many of the options of this kind.

Death becomes a non-event. Most of the time, people die in a cloud of medication, if it is not by accident, so that they entirely lose consciousness in a few hours, a few days, or a few weeks: they fade away.

A Happier Old Age — Until the Non-Event?

Bono: *We have not touched upon the problem of old age. Doesn't our society tend to relegate its old people to rest homes, as if to forget about them?*

Foucault: I confess that I am somewhat reserved and taken back by all that is being said about older people, about their isolation and misery in our society.

It's true that the rest homes of Nanterre and of Ivry offer a rather sordid image. But the fact that we are scandalized by this sordidness is indicative of a new sensibility, which is itself linked to a new situation. Before the war, families shoved the elderly into a corner of the house, complaining of the burden they placed on them, making them pay for their presence in the household with a thousand humiliations, a thousand hatreds. Today, the older people receive a pension on which they can live, and in cities all over France there are "senior citizens' clubs" frequented by people who meet each other, who travel, who shop and who constitute an increasingly important sector of the population. Even if a certain number of individuals are still marginalized, the over-all condition of the senior citizen has improved considerably within a few decades. That is why we are so sensitive—and it is an excellent thing—to what is still happening in certain establishments.

Bono: *How, when all is said and done, can social security contribute to an ethic of the human person?*

Foucault: Without recounting all of the elements of the answer to this question brought out in the course of this interview, I would say that social security contributes to an ethic of the human person at least by posing a certain number of problems, and especially by posing the question about the value of life and the way in which we face up to death.

The idea of bringing individuals and decision centers closer together should imply, at least as a consequence, the recognized right of each individual to kill himself when he wants to under decent conditions. . . . If I won a few billion in the lottery, I would create an institute where people who would like to die would come spend a weekend, a week or a month in pleasure, under drugs perhaps, in order to disappear afterwards, as if erased.

Bono: *A right to suicide?*
Foucault: Yes.

Bono: *What is there to say about the way in which we die today? What are we to think of this sterilized death, often in a hospital, without the company of family?*

Foucault: Death becomes a non-event. Most of the time, people die in a cloud of medication, if it is not by accident, so that they entirely lose consciousness in a few hours, a few days, or a few weeks: they fade away. We live in a world in which the medical and pharmaceutical accompaniment to death removes much of the suffering and drama.

I do not really subscribe to all that is being said about the "sterilization" of death, which makes reference to something like a great integrative and dramatic ritual. Loud crying around the coffin was not always exempt from a certain cynicism: the joy of inheritance could be mixed in. I prefer the quiet sadness of disappearance to this sort of ceremony.

The way we die now seems to me indicative of a sensibility, of a system of values, which prevails today. There would be something chimerical in wanting to reinstate, in a fit of nostalgia, practices that no longer make any sense.

Let us rather try to give sense and beauty to an effacing death.

1. This interview first appeared in *Sécurité sociale: l'enjeu* (Paris: Syros, 1983) under the title, "Un système fini face à une demande infinie." The English translation has been edited slightly.
2. Lord William Henry Beveridge (1879-1963), English economist and administrator, author of a social security plan in 1942.
3. Foucault refers here to the polemics following the publication of *L'ordre cannibale* by Jacques Attali.

Intellectual Work

condemned to punishment without being able to defend themselves." The "mitard" had no legal basis; in fact, many people in jail were being held there illegally. "We were most interested," says Defert, "in people who were in jail before being judged. According to the law, they had no reason to be in jails. . . . The problem was not to destroy jails, but to press the law. . . ." "The prison," Foucault said, "in its real and daily functioning, escapes to a large degree the control of the judicial apparatus. . . ; it also escapes the control of opinion; finally, it escapes the rules of the law."[9]

The GIP did more than muckrake and agitate for change. To begin with, the GIP aimed for practices that could have immediate effects on prisoners and their relation to the rest of society. Rather than lobbying the government for future changes in the penal system, it opened up a channel of communication between the prison and the public, talked to ex-cons as human beings who should be listened to and invited them into its circle, and spoke about prisoners as citizens who deserved to have, besides freedom of movement, the same rights as everybody else. In effect, these practices questioned ethical values: should prisoners and ex-cons be treated as completely other, or as citizens?

The GIP gave prisoners a chance to speak. Unlike reformers and the leftist vanguard, "the GIP does not propose to speak for the inmates of various prisons," as one pamphlet proclaimed; "it proposes on the contrary to give them the possibility to speak themselves." But it went beyond bringing the prisoners into the discussion: it raised a new question about the prisons. Its question was neither that of the leftists about the special rights of political prisoners nor that of the penitentiary reformers about the end and the means of the prison. The GIP asked: how does the prison really work? What are its effects on people? "The heart of the matter," says Gilles Deleuze, "was to produce *énoncés* (statements) about prisons, including *énoncés* produced by the prisoners themselves. . . . The point was . . . to comprehend the prison as a place where a certain experience is lived by prisoners." "The GIP," said Foucault in 1984, "was, I believe, an enterprise of 'problematization,' an effort to make problematic and to throw into question the practices, the rules, the institutions, the habits and the self-evidences that have piled up for decades and decades. And that in relation to the prison itself, but also, across it, in relation to penal justice, the law, and, still more generally, punishment."[10] According to Deleuze, the main achievement of the GIP was to throw into question the prison, to put the struggle around the prisons on a new footing. "There is now a type of *énoncé* about prisons which normally is produced by prisoners and sometimes by non-prisoners, and which would have been unthinkable before. In that sense, the GIP was successful."

III

But, say his critics, isn't a politics like Foucault's finally just a cop out? He may have been protesting intolerable conditions, but in the name of what? Even if questioning is important, even if the characterization of a problem is of supreme importance, why couldn't Foucault also lay out solutions? The problem with Foucault, say his critics, is that he lacked a normative perspective. He showed us that all social practices involve power, but he provided no basis for distinguishing between acceptable and unacceptable forms of power, so he seemed to reject all power; he appeared "to endorse a . . . wholesale rejection of modernity."[11] The reason Foucault didn't propose solutions, conclude his critics, is that without a normative criterion for distinguishing between legitimate and illegitimate forms of power, no solution was possible.

Those who come to Foucault's work looking for solutions will be perpetually disappointed. Foucault's project—in both his politics and his histories—was not to lay out solutions, but rather to identify and characterize problems.

Foucault did not outline an "acceptable form of power" because he believed such a thing impossible; that is, he thought impossible a form of power that was guaranteed not to produce intolerable effects. For him, questioning was not the first stage in a process that led to a legitimate system. It was an ongoing task that would never be finished because the Good Society is never established; there is no "liberation"; there will always be problems and dangers. Foucault's analyses of power had demonstrated that people were often led to participate in their own subjection; this meant that not even a truly democratic power was free from dangers. "At the present time we very often see," said Foucault, "in the name of consensus, of liberation, of self-expression and all that, an . . . operation of power . . . which is not strictly domination, but which is nevertheless not very attractive." On the other hand, consensus was a "critical principle"[12] for Foucault; non-democratic forms of power had the added danger that they did not allow acts of criticism and protest.

The inevitable dangerousness of power did not mean that all forms of power were equally perilous or that all practices were bad. In Foucault's mind, for instance, the deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill was certainly a gain over their long history of incarceration (which he had described in *Madness and Civilization*). It presented the hope that individuals who had before been seen and treated as completely other and deprived of freedom might be integrated in some way into the community. If Foucault did not lay out the conditions for a proper form of power, he did have normative criteria for distinguishing between practices: he protested against practices of power that involved the marginalization and the submission of individuals. Foucault saw his own work as part of a "series of oppositions which have developed over the last few years: opposition to the power of men over women, of parents over children, of psychiatry over the mentally ill, of medicine over the population, of administration over the ways people live." These were struggles against certain forms of subjection, against "the government of individualization," against scientific or administrative knowledges which determine who one is, against a "form of power [that] applies itself to immediate everyday life, categorizes the individual . . ., attaches him to his own identity," "breaks his links with others," and, in the extreme, constitutes, segregates or incarcerates him as absolutely different.[13]

In the case of the prisons, what Foucault was attempting to struggle against were the forms of subjection that constituted

best valorization of the stakes and typifies the whole strategy of struggles. As in judo, the best answer to the opponent's manoeuver never is to step back, but to re-use it to you own advantage as a base for the next phase. . . . Now it is our turn to reply."[21]

Foucault hoped that if the refusal became strong enough, if the prison became a problem for enough people involved with it, the struggle might inspire an ongoing process of reform that incorporated all the concerned parties. Such a process was for him a practical and an ethical way to solve problems—even if it too involved dangers of subjection. The fact is, Foucault didn't have answers to the problems he raised, and he knew that it didn't work, in any case, to impose solutions from above. He thought the problems he raised were difficult ones that required great projects of examination and rethinking. And it was just such a project of criticizing and thinking—and not a social program—that he wanted to inspire. "The work that I did on the historical relativity of the 'prison' form," said Foucault, "was an incitation to try to think of other forms of punishment." It "was not an effort to find then and there some substitutes. What is to be radically rethought is what it is to punish, what one punishes, why punish, and, finally, how punish."[22] Faced with the problem of the prison, it did not suffice to lay down theoretical propositions. As Foucault had discovered in his researches on jails, "the techniques of punishment could bring with them significance beyond the general theories that might have justified them at the outset. The very logic of these techniques of punishment involved consequences which were neither foreseen nor desired and which, being what they were, have been reutilized in other tactics, other strategies; in the end, a whole complicated nexus has developed around these techniques of punishment themselves."[23] Given the fact that one cannot anticipate the consequences of a given practice of punishment, Foucault said, "the problem cannot be resolved by some theoretical propositions. It requires a good deal of debate, a good number of experiments, many hesitations, trials and scruples . . . ."[24]

The inevitable dangerousness of power did not mean that all forms of power were equally perilous or that all practices were bad.

In point of fact, Foucault did discuss possible alternatives to the present system; he talked about the possibility of dissociating punishment from rehabilitation, but he insisted that nothing be decided in advance of a thorough examination, discussion and experimentation. "We don't have a solution," he said. "We are in great difficulties. People have, however, reflected on certain possible modifications of the procedures of punishment: how, for example, to substitute for incarceration other more intelligent forms. But all that is not sufficient. If I am partisan of a certain radicalism, it's not to say, 'in any case, every system of punishment will be catastrophic; there is nothing to do; whatever you do, it will be bad,' but rather to say: taking into consideration the problems that have been posed and are still posed now in regards to the practices of punishment that have been ours for more than a century, how can we think today what a punishment might be? Now, that is a task for many to take up."[25] Near the end of his life, Foucault

was occupied in establishing a "federation of research groups" that could begin the task. He was trying to gather together, under the aegis of his chair at the Collège de France, historians, philosophers, lawyers, judges, psychiatrists and doctors concerned with law and punishment.[26]

IV

Foucault, in effect, developed a new politics of genealogy and problematization, challenged the traditional political rhetoric of the Left, and imagined a new practice of reform. He conceived of an ongoing and collective process of transformation; he envisioned what one might call radical reform, or reform from below or within. His radicalism did not involve a commitment to revolution; "I don't feel myself capable," he said in 1981, "of effecting the 'subversion of all codes,' 'dislocation of all orders of knowledge,' 'revolutionary affirmation of violence,' 'overturning of all contemporary culture. . . .'" Rather, his radicalism consisted in his dedication to questioning just what seemed most obvious and least open to question, to giving "some assistance in wearing away certain self-evidences and commonplaces about madness, normality, illness, crime and punishment; to bring it about, together with many others, that certain phrases can no longer be spoken so lightly, certain acts no longer, or at least no longer so unhesitatingly performed, to contribute to changing certain things in people's ways of perceiving and doing things, to participate in this difficult displacement of forms of sensibility and thresholds of tolerance—I hardly feel capable of attempting much more than that."[27]

The first step in changing the system of punishment was not to produce a plan of reform; it amounted to making it difficult, impossible for those who carried on the daily work of the prisons. "The problem," Foucault said, "is one for the subject who acts—the subject of action through which the real is transformed. If prisons and punitive mechanisms are transformed, it won't be because a plan of reform found its way into the heads of the social workers; it will be when those who have to do with that penal reality, all those people, have come into collision with each other and with themselves, run into dead ends, problems and impossibilities, been through conflicts and confrontations; when critique has been played out in the real, not when reformers have realized their ideas."[28] Even at this point, when, for many, the problem had become real, Foucault would not turn to reformers to work out a new program. The second step in changing punishment was not to produce a plan of reform either; Foucault did not advocate the idea of a think-tank for working out new forms of punishment. Rather, he imagined a process of exchange and experiment among a number of parties that would include the prisoners themselves. "It seems to me," said Foucault, "that 'what is to be done' ought not to be determined from above by reformers, be they prophetic or legislative, but by a long work of comings and goings, of exchanges, reflections, trials, different analyses."[29] Such a cautious process might be able to confront the dangers of any new system of punishment that was devised. Foucault didn't imagine that he had discovered a safe form of power in his idea of ongoing reform, but he did feel that reform from within, that political participation in social policy, was an improvement over the practice of expert reform from without.

In a process of either reform or struggle, one needed, Foucault felt, to proceed with an historical understanding of the present moment, an appreciation of the relations between

the practice one was criticizing and other practices of the society, a strategic sense of what sorts of criticisms and what sorts of transformations were palatable and possible in a particular society. Movements face "the risk of being unable to develop . . . ," said Foucault, "for want of a global strategy or outside support; the risk too of not being followed, or only by very limited groups." According to Foucault, this is precisely the risk to which the prison movement succumbed after the GIP stepped aside to let the prisoners and ex-cons take over. "The struggle around the prisons, the penal system and the police-judicial system, because it has developed 'in solitary,' among social workers and ex-prisoners, has tended increasingly to separate itself from the forces which would have enabled it to grow. It has allowed itself to be penetrated by a whole naive, archaic ideology which makes the criminal at once into the innocent victim and the pure rebel—society's scapegoat, and the young wolf of future revolutions. This return to anarchist themes of the late nineteenth century was possible only because of a failure of integration of current strategies. And the result has been a deep split between this campaign with its monotonous, lyrical little chant, heard only among a few small groups, and the masses who have good reason not to accept it as valid political currency, but who also—thanks to the studiously cultivated fear of criminals—tolerate the maintenance, or rather the reinforcement, of the judicial and police apparatuses."[30]

Shortly before his death, Foucault spoke of the need for a "joint reflection that could articulate projects concerning penality, medicine and social security."[31] It was just such a joint task of thinking—this time about problems of social security—that Foucault had begun with the CFDT. Together, they were trying to work out new forms of social coverage that would not threaten the individual's independence.

The CFDT teamed up with Foucault, not for his prestige, nor for any ideology, but for his brand of thinking. For Robert Bono, head of Social Services at the union, Foucault represented the "*honnête homme* of the seventeenth century, transposed to the twentieth century—that is, an *honnête homme* with everything society has gained since the Enlightenment. I found in him the same persistence and dedication to understand the events of his time, and to apprehend them not in a partial or prejudiced fashion, but rather in their totality and their interactions."

For me, Foucault demonstrated the role that intellectual work can play in creating problems that we badly need.

1. I would like to thank Daniel Defert, Walter Benn Michaels, Paul Rabinow, the Institute of International Studies and the French Studies Program at the University of California, Berkeley. However, I take full responsibility for the views expressed in this paper.
2. The comments of Claude Mauriac, Daniel Defert, Gilles Deleuze and Robert Bono are taken from interviews conducted in 1985. The interviews with Deleuze and Bono are reproduced in this issue.
3. Michel Foucault, "Politics and the Study of Discourse," *I&C*, no. 3 (Spring 1978), p. 24.
4. "Interview de Michel Foucault," *Actes*, June 1984, p. 5
5. *Actes*, p. 4.
6. "Questions of Method: An Interview with Michel Foucault," *I&C*, no. 8 (Spring 1981), p. 12.
7. Interview with Michel Foucault, *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, 17 March 1975.
8. On the GIP see Daniel Defert and Jacques Donzelot, "La charnière des prisons," *Magazine Littéraire*, May 1976.
9. *Actes*, p. 3.
10. *Actes*, p. 3.
11. This critique of Foucault's politics is levelled by a number of commentators; the quote is from Nancy Fraser, "Foucault on Modern Power: Empirical Insights and Normative Confusions," *Praxis International*, p. 286.
12. Michel Foucault, "Politics and Ethics: An Interview," in *The Foucault Reader*, Paul Rabinow, ed. (New York: Pantheon, 1984), p. 379.
13. Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 211-212.
14. *Actes*, p. 5.
15. Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures," in *Power/Knowledge*, Colin Gordon, ed. (New York: Pantheon, 1980), p. 82.
16. "Truth and Power," in *Power/Knowledge*, p. 126.
17. "Two Lectures," p. 83. In the case of imprisonment, Foucault provided the erudite knowledge of the history of the practice in *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).
18. "Two Lectures," p. 85.
19. André Glucksmann, *Libération*, 30 June and 1 July 1984, p. 22.
20. "Questions of Method," p. 13.
21. *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*.
22. *Actes*, p. 5.
23. *Actes*, p. 5.
24. *Actes*, p. 3.
25. *Actes*, p. 5.
26. From a document prepared by Foucault and his colleagues in 1984. Foucault suggested two research projects on "the anthropology of punishment": one concerning "recent changes . . . in social thresholds of tolerance in regards to criminality and the severity of penal practice" (or the social factors that determine "fluctuations in the need to punish"), and another considering "the relations between medical and psychiatric knowledge and penal justice" and "how to adjust today penal institutions and medical practice."
27. "Questions of Method," pp. 11-12.
28. "Questions of Method," p. 13.
29. "Questions of Method," pp. 12-13.
30. "Truth and Power," p. 130.
31. *Actes*, p. 4.

Conference Notes: Effetto Foucault

Less than a year after the death of Michel Foucault, the Province of Milan, in collaboration with the Centre Culturel Français and the publishing house Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, joined in the international commemoration and evaluation of the man and his work. The ostensible goal of the conference was to explore the effects produced by Foucault's work in a variety of fields: politics, historical research, psychiatry and philosophy. According to Pier Aldo Rovatti, co-organizer of the conference and an editor of the journal *Aut aut:* "If the conference has an objective, it is certainly not to find labels or systemizations, but to try to reopen, to explode once again all the problematic areas indicated by Foucault."

The sponsorship of the conference by the provincial administration seemed to confirm that the "Foucault effect" had in Italy extended well beyond the academic community. Faustino Boioli, the director of social and cultural services for the Province, noted in his introductory remarks that Foucault had stimulated his administration to "rethink," if not to restructure, two of its principal charges: the asylum and the prison.

Effetto Foucault: Convegno internazionale
REVIEWED BY DAVID HORN
31 May-1 June, 1985   Milan, Italy

Indeed, Foucault and his work had helped to shape, often indirectly, a number of political movements in Italy during the 1970s. He had, for example, been linked to the anti-psychiatry movement led by Franco Basaglia—participating, among other things, in a study of the psychiatric hospital sponsored by the Province of Trieste.[1] Foucault's work also enjoyed a certain popularity among members of the student left and the radical group Autonomia operaia: the publication in 1977 of *Microfisica del potere,* a selection of Foucault's political writings edited by Alessandro Fontana and Pasquale Pasquino, seemed to many to offer new hope that the locus of political struggle could be local and specific rather than global. Shortly thereafter, impatient students circulated unauthorized translations of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality.*

Yet the focus of the Milan conference was decidedly non-political. The two dozen papers ranged from methodological reflections—for example, a delightful essay by Arlette Farge on Foucault and his relation to the archive—to literary assessments—an analysis by Hayden White, the only American representative, of Foucault's discursive style—to "critiques"—including the troubling reading of Foucault's work as limited by his sexuality, proposed by Nadia Fusini. But the majority of the Italian papers dealt with philosophical aspects of Foucault's work, paying more attention to *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* than to his work on prisons, madness or government.

This particular emphasis was due in part to the scholars represented at the conference. For the most part, the Italian contributors came neither from the ranks of historians and social scientists, nor from the legal and medical professions—two groups among whom Foucault's work may have had more direct political effects. Instead, a majority of the speakers were academic philosophers. Secondly, the student and anti-psychiatric movements that sparked a particular kind of interest in Foucault's work have rapidly declined: de-institutionalization is acknowledged to have been only partially successful, and the 1980s have been marked by the rise of bourgeois parties like the Partito Radicale, and by a shift of political emphasis—for example, to ecological issues.

There were, however, some striking exceptions to the philosophical orientation, most delivered by the visiting French scholars, and by those Italians who had worked closely with Foucault. Michelle Perrot traced the history of the Groupe d'information sur les prisons, Pasquale Pasquino outlined Foucault's most recent lectures on war and truth-telling, Giovanna Procacci spoke on the government of the social (one of the few reports on work-in-progress), and Félix Guattari provided a dazzling discussion of power and desire.

By contrast, many of the other papers, while intelligent and stimulating, were rather safe and unproblematic, turned in on Foucault's texts rather than out toward new fields of research or political problems. Several attempted to sketch out a Foucaultian epistemology (Salvatore Natoli, Carlo Sini), while others meant to correct or complement Foucault's studies of the asylum and the prison by providing more detailed histories (Jean Pierre Gutton, Massimo Pavarini). Although one of the strengths of Foucault's work was to defamiliarize the familiar, to problematize the unproblematic, a number of these papers represented attempts to tame or normalize Foucault's thinking, to situate his studies in narrative histories and philosophical debates. They were in sharp contrast, for example, to the paper by Michel de Certeau, one of the few authors to embrace the strangeness of Foucault's thought.

> Although one of the strengths of Foucault's work was to defamiliarize the familiar, to problematize the unproblematic, a number of these papers represented attempts to tame or normalize Foucault's thinking, to situate his studies in narrative histories and philosophical debates.

No one can deny the need to understand better Foucault's texts, but we should also strive to connect these with the present, to use them to problematize both the present and the past. It is, therefore, unfortunate that political effects did not figure more prominently at the Milan conference—doubly unfortunate because Foucault's own political involvements are not widely known.

"Effetto Foucault" was an ambitious and largely successful undertaking, but it remains to be seen—not only in Italy, but throughout Europe and the United States—what will be the intellectual and political legacy of Foucault's work. Perhaps, as

Alessandro Fontana suggested, it is still too early to talk about the Foucault effect.

The papers, listed below, will be published by Feltrinelli.

1. The study led eventually to *Crimini di pace: ricerche sugli intellettuali e sui tecnici come addetti all'oppresione* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976), an investigation of intellectuals and institutional violence.

Foucault and the Prison

programs on the prison to include representatives of every group more or less connected to prisons: judges, lawyers, jail guards, social workers, philanthropists, everyone—but there were no prisoners, not even former prisoners. There was only the *coterie*. When there is a symposium on nursery schools there are all kinds of individuals but no children, even though they have something to say.

Well I have the feeling that in the case of the GIP this exclusion was becoming intolerable. Prisoners had had something to say for a long time, and what they had to say was exactly what Michel had foreseen and what the first questionnaires had revealed. In other words, "we are deprived of our freedom and that's fair, but to be deprived of freedom is one thing and what we have to endure is another thing. Consequently we have been had. Everybody is perfectly aware of this and yet everybody lets it happen."

HOP: *So one of the possible functions of the intellectual according to Foucault was to open a space where others could talk?*

Deleuze: Well, for France this was something totally new. This was the big difference between Foucault and Sartre, a conception of the political position of the intellectual that was not at all theoretical, but rather a way of life. Sartre, despite his strength and genius—and here I am not being in the least critical—shared the classical conception of the intellectual. That is, he intervened in the name of superior values: truth, justice, the good. I see a long line from Voltaire and Zola to Sartre.

Foucault had a wholly new conception. The intellectual was no longer the guarantor of certain values. His conception was, in a way, much more functional. Foucault was always a functionalist; he simply invented his own functionalism. He asked: what is there to see here? Not just see, but *really see*. And what is there to say? Or to think? What there was to see in the prison was something intolerable. But what was that intolerable something?

HOP: *Some would say that the prison is intolerable because it is unjust, but Foucault never said that.*

Deleuze: No, he never did. It was not a question of being unjust. Something was intolerable precisely because no one saw it, because it was imperceptible (even though everybody knew about it).

HOP: *It was not a secret.*

Deleuze: No, it was not a secret; it was something not seen. The seer is indeed someone who sees something not seen [laughs].

HOP: *Again quite Nietzschean.*

Deleuze: Quite. Everyone knew about the prison within the prison, but Foucault actually saw it.

All this did not prevent him from sometimes treating the intolerable with great humor; we laughed a lot. Because it was not a matter of feeling indignant, but of seeing something not visible, of thinking about something almost at the limit of thought. I know that later Foucault expressed himself in the name of truth, but that was his own conception of truth.

Again, "information" was not the right word, because the point was not to speak the truth about prison. The heart of the matter was to produce *énoncés* (statements)[1] about prisons, including *énoncés* produced by the prisoners themselves. I must add that neither prisoners nor people outside of prisons had been able to produce *énoncés*: they had made speeches about prisons but they did not produce *énoncés*.

HOP: *And énoncés had to be circulated.*

Deleuze: Yes, and they were then translated into more classical speeches. But the two activities were to see and to speak. To see meant to see something intolerable—which might be something well known—and to transform it into a vision. At the same time, it was necessary to produce *énoncés*.

HOP: *Did you find these two activities politically sufficient at the time?*

Deleuze: Were they sufficient? The two things were new so the question is not even relevant. Michel provided a new kind of political practice, consisting of two fundamental aspects. How could that not have been sufficient? Unless one could have added a third aspect, and Foucault would have been thrilled.

When you ask if these activities were sufficient, I know Michel would say they were not sufficient since in some respects the group failed; they were not sufficient to change the

status of prisons. Yet I would give the opposite response: they were doubly sufficient. They were sufficient, on the one hand, because they had a number of echoes. Needless to say, the principal echo was the movement in the prisons, and neither Daniel nor Michel inspired it. But the GIP gave it wide publicity. We wrote articles and spent our time hassling civil servants of the judicial system, of the Ministry of the Interior, and many more.

The activities were sufficient, on the other hand, because there is now a type of *énoncé* about prisons, which normally is produced by prisoners but sometimes by non-prisoners, and which would have been unthinkable before. In that sense, the GIP was successful.

HOP: *What does it mean to encourage the production of énoncés? Does it mean to let someone speak?*

Deleuze: Yes, but not only that. To let people speak used to be the most important thing. And we said that too, like everybody else. But Michel's originality did not lie there.

I'll take a political example to clarify this. If you think about Lenin as a political figure, what does Lenin mean? Well, I would say—and here I am speaking for myself, not for Michel—one of the fundamental things about Lenin is that he has produced new *énoncés*, before and after the Revolution: a new type of enunciation, a type of *énoncé* that bears his signature.

So if I were to go back to Michel's theory of *énoncés* I would ask: can we talk about a new type of *énoncé* arising in a particular space, and under particular circumstances, which is Leninist?

HOP: *And that changes the field of truth?*

Deleuze: Right. Therefore the point is not to seek truth in Sartre's fashion, but to produce new conditions.

HOP: *To change the stakes.*

Deleuze: Yes, if you like, to change the stakes. That is what producing new *énoncés* means. '68 produced new *énoncés*, meaning a type of *énoncé* that no one had uttered before. Of course, new *énoncés* can also be deplorable or even diabolical, and then people have to fight them. I would say that Hitler was a big producer of new *énoncés*.

HOP: *Then producing énoncés is very close to the other activity: seeing something.*

Deleuze: Certainly. In a way it is, roughly, *Les mots et les choses* (French title of *The Order of Things*). *Les mots*, the words, correspond to the production of *énoncés*. *Les choses*, the things, correspond to seeing. These are the visible formations, and the goal is to see the invisible within the visible.

HOP: *You yourself seem to have a much more fluid vision of the social world than Foucault. People have underlined his use of architectural metaphors, diametrically opposed to your "fluidity."*

Deleuze: I agree totally with you. I remember we talked about this when Foucault published the first volume of *History of Sexuality*. I realized then that we did not share the same view of society. For me a society is something that never stops slipping away. So when you say I am more "fluid," you are totally right: there's no better word. Society is something that leaks, financially, ideologically—there are points of leakage everywhere. Indeed, the problem for society is how to stop itself from leaking. Michel was amazed by the fact, that despite all the powers, their underhandedness and their hypocrisy, we can still manage to resist. On the contrary, I am amazed by the fact that everything is leaking and the government manages to plug the

leaks. In a sense, Michel and I addressed the same problem from opposite ends.

You are perfectly right to say that for me society is a fluid. It is truly a fluid—or even worse, a gas. For Michel it was an architecture.

1. Although often translated as statement, *énoncé* is used by Foucault to identify a particular kind of verbal production, a wording of a problem that, to follow Deleuze, is to speaking as a vision is to seeing. For a more detailed discussion see Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

Of Interest to Our Readers

Foucault: Une histoire de la vérité, Paris: SYROS, 1985. An extraordinary album published in connection with the CFDT conference of the same name in October 1985. The book contains a brief but comprehensive introductory essay by François Ewald, Michelle Perrot and Arlette Farge, "Une pratique de la vérité," which discusses Foucault's research and methodology, his political practice and ethical concerns, and his conception of the role of the specific intellectual. This is complemented by provocative memoires written by Robert Badinter, Pierre Bourdieu, Jean Daniel, Bernard Kouchner, Edmond Maire and Claude Mauriac, a biographical chronology assembled by Daniel Defert, and a number of previously unpublished photographs and documents.

Copies of the album can be ordered by sending a money order for $23 to SYROS, 6 rue Montmartre, 75001 Paris.

Nikolas Rose, *The Psychological Complex: Social Regulation and the Psychology of the Individual,* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985

G. Burchelle, Colin Gordon & Peter Miller, eds., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmental Rationality,* London: Harvester Press, 1986. A collection of previously published articles from the journal *I&C,* and new material on insurance and risk by François Ewald and Daniel Defert.

Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose, eds., *The Power of Psychiatry,* Cambridge: Polity Press/Basil Blackwell, 1986.

Gesa Dane, et al., eds., *Anschlüsse: Versuche nach Michel Foucault* (Connections: Attempts following Michel Foucault), Tübingen: Edition Diskord, 1985. A collection of 21 essays by European scholars from a number of disciplines, many of which were presented at the University of Goettingen on 16 July 1984, in commemoration of Foucault's death.

Walter Seitter, *Menschenfassungen. Studien zur Erkenntnispolitikwissenschaft.* Munich, 1985. A study of the rupture between the Renaissance and the Classical Age, and of the shift from heraldry to statistics.

Hans-Jürgen Lusebrink, *Kriminalität und Literatur im Frankreich des 18.Jahrhunderts,* Munich: Oldenbourg, 1983.

Kristin Bumiller, *Anti-Discrimination Law and the Enslavement of the Victim: The Denial of Self-Respect by Victims Without a Cause,* Madison: University of Wisconsin Disputes Processing Research Program, 1984.

Thesis Eleven, 10/11 (1984-1985). Special double issue on the intellectual and politics.

Work in Progress

La vie privée
An interview with Michelle Perrot
CONDUCTED BY KEITH GANDAL
AND PAUL SIMMONS
17 June 1985

Michelle Perrot teaches history at the Université de Paris VII (Jussieu). She is the author of two books on strikes in France, Les ouvriers en grève, France 1871-1890 *(Mouton, 1974) and* Jeunesse de la grève *(L'univers historique, 1984), and articles on industrial discipline, prisons, delinquency and women. She is also the editor of* L'impossible prison: Recherches sur le système pénitentiaire au XIXe siècle *(Seuil, 1980).*

Perrot: I am working on a history of private life in France in the nineteenth century. This is part of a project organized by Philippe Ariès, Paul Veyne and Georges Duby for Éditions de Seuil.[1] Seuil has already produced comprehensive and very successful histories of rural life and urban life, and when Ariès and Veyne suggested they do a history of private life, they asked me to take care of the nineteenth century. I accepted about five years ago. This is a difficult project, because there are very few detailed works on the subject. Indeed, it is somewhat paradoxical to produce a synthesis for the general public in a field where we really should be doing detailed research.

HOP: *What other authors will contribute to this history of private life?*
Perrot: Paul Veyne has already written the part on private life in antiquity. It, too, is a collective book, but I think Veyne did most of the work. Georges Duby, along with some collaborators, is responsible for the middle ages. Philippe Ariès was going to take care of the modern era, but he died and was replaced by Roger Chartier, from the École des Hautes Études. And I am responsible for the nineteenth century. In this volume my collaborators are Alain Corbin, Roger Guerrand, Anne Martin Fugier, Lynn Hunt, who writes on private life during the French Revolution, and an Englishwoman named Catherine Hall. I am responsible for the sections concerning the family—both the interpersonal relationships within the family, and the position of the family in society. In addition, I will contribute the general introduction and conclusion, and will try to establish links among all the parts, in order to give the book some kind of continuity.

HOP: *Could you elaborate on the particular themes of your volume?*
Perrot: First of all, the political significance of the constitution of a private sphere in the nineteenth century. Not that this is a new phenomenon—there has always been private life. But it is important to see how things take shape and reveal themselves at a particular point in time. Consider, for example, the way in which Foucault approaches sexuality. There has always been a sexuality, of course, but its particular definition and scope change all the time.

The political aspect is very important. "The private" is, after all, a frontier; you cannot really conceive of the private unless you conceive of the public. And in the nineteenth century, after the French Revolution, there is a will to rebuild society and to render its spheres autonomous. The realm of politics becomes well defined, marked by the rise of the professional politician. On the other hand, there is civil society and "the private," which is entrusted to the family. It is therefore important first to see the political position of the problem, then to study concrete phenomena such as the family.

As a historian, I focus on the relations between men and women, such as conjugal relations, and between parents and children. I also examine the ways in which the family is invested with certain controls and missions by the state, and the ways it constitutes its own sphere of private pleasures. Finally, I explore the creation of a kind of tension within the family, and among the individuals that compose it, such that the family is at the same time a cozy nest and a pit of vipers, a zone of conflict. To the extent that individuals think of themselves as independent beings with their own projects and desires, they somehow break the framework of the family. The whole history of private life in the nineteenth century can be read around this theme.

The book also addresses the history of the space of private life, and here, too, the thought of Foucault is relevant. Indeed, as you know, many historians accused him of thinking too much in terms of space, rather than time. But in the domain of private life, spatialization is very important. In the nineteenth century, for example, people said that private life had to be walled in. The house or apartment was therefore a closed space, with its own arrangement of objects, its public spaces and private recesses, for the life of the couple and the individual, its spaces for writing, etc. All these relationships, and the subtle strategies within such a closed space are very important. But we must also examine private uses of public space, the ways in which individuals and groups use public space for private ends. On this point, there are important differences between the bourgeoisie and the dominated classes; the bourgeoisie always tries to imitate the model of the house—for example, in the theater, the loge is a private space in the public space. There are many other examples, but you can perhaps see the spirit in which I approach this question of private life and private space.

Then, of course, there is the question of the individual. In the nineteenth century, the individual is not the dominant value, and Foucault points this out in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*. He argues that, in the nineteenth century, it is really the family that is important, and I find this to be true in the history of private life. The value of the individual is proclaimed theoretically by the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme*—which is considered the charter of the individual—but a lot of time passes before he becomes really a concrete person. On this point, the ideas of the anthropologist Louis Dumont are very important. So in this part of the book, which is written by Alain Corbin, we see how the individual is trying to establish a personal space of existence, at once in agreement with the family, and in conflict with the family.

HOP: *Can this project be described as a genealogy of the opposition public/private?*

Perrot: Yes, a genealogy of the frontier between the public and the private. I think this is a fundamental hypothesis: there cannot be anything private without a notion of the public—it's all thought together. Indeed, this was the original idea for the

volumes. But ours is an ambitious undertaking, and in many ways an enterprise of philosophical reflection. So it may risk being somewhat disparate. The history of private life is a magnificent but difficult subject.

HOP: *Do you have any other projects in mind?*

Perrot: Yes. In fact, I have three main fields of research. The first is work: the milieu of working people, strikes and so forth. I intend in the future to come back to the history of work and to write a book on the ideas and practices of work in the nineteenth century. I think this is a very important and tempting subject.

My second field is delinquency and penitentiary systems. I now participate in two discussion and research groups on this topic, but for the time being I am not writing about it. Nevertheless, I would like someday to write on the criminal woman. There is a whole very interesting discourse on the subject, at the level of ideas, and there are concrete dossiers.

Finally, the third field is the whole domain of the history of women and private life. I am helping to write a collective article on the culture and power of women, coordinated by Arlette Farge, for the *Annales.*

I also have an idea for a book I would like to call "The Rebellious Adolescent in the Nineteenth Century." I am very much interested in the history of adolescence. Adolescence is not a new notion, but it is redefined in the nineteenth century, in relation both to discipline and sexuality. What interests me is the gaze that the nineteenth century—the family, the state, the school—brings to bear on the adolescent. It's a very concerned gaze, because adolescence is considered a very dangerous age: it's considered the age of sexuality identity, and of course it's considered a period of upheaval. There is, therefore, a particular surveillance of the adolescent. But the adolescent does not always accept the surveillance, and this refusal explains, for example, the very important revolts in the *lycée* in the nineteenth century. Moreover, the adolescent has a thousand ways to escape the look and the discipline imposed upon him or her: writing, keeping diaries, composing poetry—one writes a lot during adolescence—as well as friendship and love.

I find this topic all the more interesting because today in France there is a psychoanalytic school or movement, asking why Freud did not attach much importance to adolescence in his work. For Freud there is only infancy, and people are really beginning to wonder why he was silent on the subject of adolescence.

1. The title of the series is *Histoire de la vie privée.* The first three volumes have already been published; the fourth, edited by Perrot, is scheduled for publication in 1987.

La vie fragile
An interview with Arlette Farge
CONDUCTED BY KEITH GANDAL
AND PAUL SIMMONS
17 June 1985

Arlette Farge is associated with the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS) and the École des Hautes Études, where she directs the center of historical research. She is the author of Le vol d'aliments *(Plon, 1974),* Vivre dans la rue à Paris au XVIIIe siècle *(Gallimard, 1979), and collaborated with Michel Foucault on* Le désordre des familles: Lettres de cachet des Archives de la Bastille *(Gallimard, 1982). The research she describes below has just been published as* La vie fragile: violence, pouvoir et solidarité à Paris au XVIIIe siècle *(Hachette, 1986).*

Farge: I have been working on a book on popular behavior in Paris in the eighteenth century, a book based on judicial archives. What interests me are precisely those sources that are not discourses but rather morsels of life, fragments of reality. Because I do not believe that history is a narrative, with evolutions. I believe in fragments, instants. In effect, I work on things that are absolutely minuscule, tiny incidents.

I have written around two main themes: the theme of alliance and the theme of rupture. What it is that makes people come together, on the basis of encounters in private life—for example, when a man and a woman meet—in working life and in collective life? I examine all kinds of alliances and ruptures.

HOP: *All of this on the basis of judicial records?*

Farge: Yes. But it's not the judicial reality that interests me; it's not crime. It's the sources themselves, the interrogations and the testimony that describe the tiny events of the past: the dogbite in the street, the boy who jumps the gate at Luxembourg garden, the man who arrives too late at the cabaret. When one went to the police station, there was a verbal proceeding and there were witnesses who recounted events. What interests me are those bits and pieces of life, rather than the delinquent act itself. Or rather, the delinquent act allows me to see fragments of reality.

When I was working with Michel Foucault on *Le désordre des familles,* he wrote that what he liked about the life-fragments in the archives was that they were "plays in the dramaturgy of the real." They are indeed like scenarios, and I try to work on them in a detailed way.

Again, it's the source that's important. The common people did not write in the eighteenth century; I can only find them in the places were they left a trace—mainly, in the police records. I cannot find their words anywhere else. And it is this aspect that interested Foucault in the *lettres de cachet:* people would report to the king, "my wife beats me" or "my son comes back too late at night"—tiny things, of no consequence. So I try to work that way, starting from the raw archives.

HOP: *What do you construct with these?*

Farge: Well, that's the problem for me. Among the historians, I am rather marginal. My work creates problems for historians because it's not something linear. It's not a question of a narrative. I have been influenced by the philosopher Jacques Rancière, who wrote *Le philosophe et ses pauvres* and edits *Les révoltes logiques.* His work tries to show that we have a completely false vision of popular life and how the common people think, especially how they think about themselves. He actually acknowledges that the people think, while the historian generally represents the people as exotic or animal-like, driven by instinct. Most of the works that have been written on crowds and riots, for example, are rather stereotyped: the common people change their minds all the time, or as Michelet said, the people are "female." So I try to show that the behavior of people has a logic, a rationality, and a utopia, which has its own rules and order. I think that behavior is thought, by which I do not mean to exclude the

irrational. But there is an order; there are rules; it is not chaos or anarchy; it certainly is not of an animal nature.

HOP: *Is it your goal to specify this rationality?*
Farge: Well, I'm an explorer, not a theoretician.

HOP: *But you want to talk about these minuscule things in a new way.*
Farge: I want to talk about them because I live them in the present. I find that in the unfolding of everyday life, every instant is important. In a way, I don't really care what was happening in the eighteenth century. But in relationship to the present, it's very important. For example, in my book there is a lot about male-female relations, because I am interested in the encounters between men and women today. And the theme of male-female relations has not been dealt with very much in the past; it has been broached only in the last few years.

HOP: *Is it fair to say your work is like that of the novelist?*
Farge: Well, I do write in a similar way, but I hope no one says my book is a novel, because I would like it to remain based on archives.

Like Foucault, I think that history is a fragment. I have never thought that there was one truth of history, an objectivity. I think rather that there are problematizations.

Fascism and Reproduction
NANCY TRIOLO
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

In my dissertation, a study of the fascist regime's effort to modernize maternal and child health care in western Sicily, I have focussed on the regime's search for political legitimacy through the deployment of welfare and medical services. Specifically concerned with the changing nature of government involvement in private life, I have studied the impact of medical modernization practices on the everyday lives of women. Two crucial policies of that era—1) ONMI, the Organization for the Protection of Mothers and Infants, and 2) the professionalization of midwives—form the basis of my analysis.

Prior to the fascist period, liberal politics had treated the domestic sphere as a realm outside political argument and action. Women, regarded as inferior and naturally subject to a husband's authority, were relegated to this sphere, denied the vote and effectively excluded from political life. These medical modernization practices, however, signified an attempt to intrude upon and politicize the domestic sphere by defining women as political subjects.

For instance, practices such as ONMI represented a frightening synthesis of nationalist and racist ideologies and medical scientism. Such policies, geared toward increasing the size and quality of the Italian race, focused on women, their bodies and procreative abilities. In general, women were exhorted to produce more children, breastfeed, and not abort; the extensive network of 10,000 ONMI clinics were designed to make sure women capitulated. Furthermore, arguments to keep women out of the work force appeared in political pamphlets as well as medical journals, claiming that biological dangers to motherhood (and the motherland) were inherent in work outside the home. In fact, an amazing synchrony of voices prevailed in this period as the Church, State, and

medical profession reminded women that their god-given, biologically appropriate duty as citizens was to produce children.

As a set of mediating institutions and practices, these medical modernization policies (which were continued by the post-fascist government) attempted to orchestrate women's entrance into civil society. By enforcing an extremely limited public role for women—as patriotic mother and self-sacrificing producer of citizens—such practices tried to replicate, in public life, what had been viewed as her role in private life.

My dissertation, designed to assess the impact of these practices on traditional women's roles, is based on eighteen months of participant-observation fieldwork in Sicily, archival and ethno-historical work, extensive interviewing, and cohort analysis. My study reveals that these efforts to institutionalize a very restricted public role for women have had wide-ranging and sometimes unintended consequences regarding both modes of resistance to fascism and recent changes in the nature of family life in Sicily.

Recent Research and Work in Progress

Deirdre Boden (University of California, Santa Barbara) is working on a study of everyday power in an organizational setting, the Silicon Valley, using ethnographic and conversational analysis methods. **Peter Fitzpatrick** (University of Kent at Canterbury) works in three related areas: the emergence of modern law as a unitary state-centered form, the reconstitution of custom and related "popular" elements as legal knowledge/power in the third world, and the history of forms of labor and law in Papua New Guinea. **Thomas R. Flynn** (Emory) is at work on a book-length comparison of Sartre and Foucault on the notion of reason in history. **Anthony G. Hopwood** (London Business School) is engaged in research on the social functioning of accounting systems and the rise of practices of economic calculation. **Peter Miller** (Sheffield University) is writing on accounting and planning in France, and on the construction of the governable person. **Ann Oberhauser** (Clark University) works on the state and industrial decentralization in the French automobile industry. **Julia Trilling** (M.I.T.) is working on a political and social study of the changing planning discourses and cityscape of Paris after the Second World War.