The Constitution of the Normal: Monsters and Masturbation at the Collège de France

Stuart Elden

“No posthumous publications.” In the letter written a year before his death, which has been legally interpreted as his will, Michel Foucault made his views on this subject clear. As a result, the fourth volume of the History of Sexuality series, Les Aveux de la chair [The confession of the flesh], which Foucault was working on at the time of his death, remains unpublished.1 And yet texts under the name of Michel Foucault continue to appear: the collected shorter works in Dits et écrits [Sayings and writings] in 1994; «Il faut défendre la société» [“Society must be defended”] in 1997; and Les Anormaux [The abnormals] in 1999.2 The last two are courses from the


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Collège de France—from the years 1975–76 and 1974–75 respectively. In order to circumvent the legal restrictions, Foucault's executors have used not the still extant lecture notes but rather the audio recordings made at the time, which for some years have been accessible at both the Collège and the Centre Michel Foucault in Paris. Other than allowing these books' very existence, the advantage of such an approach is that the texts we have are those Foucault actually delivered, along with extemporizations, developments, and elucidations. This fidelity to the spoken word is, however, also the greatest problem. Most of the notes are those of the editors, as is the punctuation and the division into paragraphs, and because the oral form can read rather awkwardly at times, the editors have exercised some discretion in sentence formulation. More seriously, some passages substitute ellipses for inaudible delivery. But despite these problems, we now have the courses in a much more accessible form than the Paris tapes.

The Collège de France is a peculiar institution, and these are peculiar lecture courses. Rather than have students, professors there are said to have listeners; and rather than teach, they are expected to present their ongoing research. One would assume, therefore, that these lecture courses would provide a valuable insight into the development of Foucault's research project from 1971 until his death, in much the same way that Heidegger's lecture courses in his Gesamtausgabe have done. However, Pierre Nora reports a conversation in which Foucault himself was rather disparaging about the material in his lectures: "There is a lot of throwaway material, but also plenty of work and ways to take it that might be useful to the kids."3 Reading Les Anormaux shows why both these views are correct, as the course both opens up a number of interesting areas but is itself ultimately part of a discarded project.

Delivered between January and March 1975, Les Anormaux is clearly a course from a crucially important time in Foucault's career. Surveiller et punir [Discipline and Punish], the culmination of several years' courses at the Collège, appeared about half way through this set of lectures, and the first volume of the History of Sexuality series was clearly well under way. This volume, La Volonté de savoir [The will to knowledge], translated as

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3. Pierre Nora, interview, L'Evénement de jeudi, 18 September 1986, quoted in Eribon, Michel Foucault, 324.
An *Introduction*, appeared toward the end of 1976. As is well known, between then and the publication of *L’Usage de plaisirs* [*The Use of Pleasures*] and *Le Souci de soi* [*The Care of the Self*] in 1984, Foucault changed his project radically. Realizing that some of the first volume’s claims were misleading, he moved to a far more historical study, tracing the subject backward, through early Christianity initially and then back to antiquity. Originally, though, Foucault had intended a more thematic approach, and the initial plan—found on the back cover of the first volume—was for the following titles:

1. *La Volonté de savoir* [*The will to knowledge*]
2. *La Chair et le corps* [*The flesh and the body*]
3. *La Croisade des enfants* [*The children’s crusade*]
4. *La Femme, la mère et l’hystérique* [*The woman, the mother, and the hysteric*]
5. *Les Pervers* [*The perverse*]
6. *Populations et races* [*Populations and races*]

Such a program receives its rationale from the analysis in the first volume. Foucault saw Christian practices of confession as central to understanding the birth of psychoanalysis and the discourse of sexuality, and he planned to analyze confession’s understanding of the flesh as distinct from the body. Similarly, sexuality’s four constituent subjects were the hysterical woman, the masturbating child, the Malthusian couple, and the perverse adult. These were to be the principal foci of the remaining volumes. There are various reports that Foucault’s original plan was to publish the six volumes of the series at the rate of one a year.4 Given that *La Volonté de savoir* was intended to serve only as an introduction, and that the other volumes never actually appeared, the most profitable way to read *Les Anormaux* is, it seems to me, as the most thorough treatment we are likely to get from what would have been in the originally planned set of volumes.

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Only two of the above themes receive anything like systematic treatment in the course—the notion of the perverse and the crusade against childhood masturbation. To illuminate the latter, Foucault spends a great deal of time on the notion of the body and confession. Although the control

of populations is a running theme throughout *Les Anormaux*, this topic receives much more detailed treatment in the following year’s course «Il faut défendre la société.» Discussion of the question of women is almost entirely absent. Foucault begins the course by discussing the role of psychiatric expertise in criminal matters (A, 3–11), a theme he had concentrated on in the previous lecture course, *Le Pouvoir psychiatrique* [Psychiatric power].\(^5\) Although Foucault initially cites contemporary events (one from 1955 and one from 1974), he quickly moves to an examination of the history that informs them. In this sense, then, this course is, like *Surveiller et punir*, a history of the present.

The preliminary discussion is centered around the role of such psychiatric expertise in the relation of “the grotesque” to the psychologico-ethical (or psychologico-moral) doublet of “offense” (délit). By “grotesque” Foucault does not mean “simply a category of insults . . . nor an insulting epithet . . . but a precise category of historical-political analysis” (A, 12). This notion of the grotesque is linked to what Foucault called the “ubuesque,” a category deriving from Alfred Jarry’s book *Ubu roi*. Ubuesque seems to designate someone who, by their grotesque, absurd, or cruel character, resembles the character of this book. Foucault mobilizes the notion of the grotesque to look at sovereignty, drawing from examples in the history of the Roman Empire, such as Nero. He also briefly touches on the links between the grotesque and administrative or bureaucratic power, not simply that found in the works of Honoré de Balzac, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Georges Courteline, or Franz Kafka, but also modern bureaucratic grotesques in Nazism and fascism. At this point, Foucault breaks off and says that he has neither the force, the courage, nor the time to give his course over to these topics (A, 14). At times he will return to these themes, particularly in his analysis of Marie-Antoinette and Louis XVI (A, 87–93). But more generally, the notion of the grotesque will serve as a guide to the texts that are read in the course (A, 14).

Foucault turns in detail to the relationship between madness and crime, in relation to Article 64 of the 1810 Penal Code, which declared that there was no crime or offense if the accused had been in a state of dementia at the time of the action or under a force they could not resist. Once again, psychiatric and medical expertise became central to the administration of the law. Psychiatric expertise served a double function—to link offense and

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criminality, on the one hand, and to link the author of the offense to the personage of the delinquent, on the other. Psychiatry also created the role of the doctor-judge, given the legal powers psychiatrists and doctors came to possess. Similarly, judges became doctors of sorts, since the judgment was not simply over the legal subject of an offense defined as such by the law but over the individual with the character traits so defined. The judge was able to prescribe a series of measures of reform and rehabilitation for the individual. The nasty job of punishing thus became the good job of curing (A, 22).

This creation of the personage of the delinquent leads Foucault to examine the concept of the “dangerous individual,” another subject on which he had intended to write a book. Just as in *Surveiller et punir* and the Rio lectures on medicine, he then compares the treatment of lepers and plague victims in order to illuminate how strategies of exclusion became those of discipline. The replacement of the exclusion of the lepers with the inclusion, the observation, the formation of a knowledge in the case of the plague is a shift from a negative reaction to a positive reaction. It is, for Foucault, the invention of the positive technologies of power; it is the birth of administrative and political strategies. He briefly discusses here how these strategies might be thought of as an art of governing. By “government” Foucault wants three things to be understood: a juridico-political theory of power; the state apparatus and its subsidiary elements in diverse institutions; and disciplinary organizations. While it is clear that all three are important, it is the last of these that Foucault concentrates on, what he calls the frame or apparatus (*dispositif*) of “normalization,” which he outlines in terms taken from Georges Canguilhem’s *The Normal and the Pathological* (A, 29–48). This slow formation of a knowledge and power of normalization is a crucial part of the way in which society is defended, which links this period of Foucault’s work with his earlier and later research. In one of the few editors’ notes that refers to the manuscript, they remark that Foucault closes the first lecture with the suggestion that he would like to undertake the archaeology of the emergence of the power of normalization. The text delivered simply says he would like to study it (A, 24).

The realm on which the *dispositif* of “normalization” is brought to


7. In the summary he wrote some months later, Foucault linked this course to those that preceded it and that of the following year in precisely this way. See *Résumé des cours*, 80–81; A, 311.
bear is that of anomaly or abnormality \((\text{anomalie})\). Some of the early discussion clearly relates to the analysis of \textit{Surveiller et punir}, with the comparison of the scaffold and the prison, and the brief discussion of the \textit{lettres de cachet} (letters bearing the King’s seal that allowed imprisonment) recalls the book \textit{Le Désordre des familles} [The disorder of families], but here the notion of anomaly has three elements: the “human monster,” the “incorrigible” or the “individual to correct,” and the masturbating child. The category of “human monster” is formed in relation to the law—“monster” is a juridical notion—but by its very existence it is a violation of the laws of nature as well as those of society. It appears in the domain Foucault calls the “juridico-biological.” The monster is both an extreme phenomenon and an extremely rare one; it is the limit case, the exception which is found only in extreme cases. For Foucault, the monster combines the impossible and the forbidden \((A, 51)\). It is essentially thought of as a mixture. Foucault suggests that each age had its form of “privileged monster,” a particular type that was emphasized. For the Middle Ages, it was the bestial man, a mélange of two species—a man with the head of a cow or the feet of a bird. These monsters transgress the table of classifications, they distort the laws of nature, they exceed the bounds of the possible \((A, 58–61)\). For the Renaissance, the privileged monster was Siamese twins—one which is two, two which are one \((A, 61)\). But in the Classical age, a third type of monster was emphasized: hermaphrodites \((A, 62)\).

Foucault’s treatment of the issue of hermaphrodites is particularly detailed and interesting. In \textit{La Volonté de savoir}, he had claimed that for a long time hermaphrodites were treated as criminals because their anatomical disposition, indeed their very being, was in conflict with the law that distinguished between the sexes and prescribed their conjunction. In this course, the treatment is naturally more nuanced. Foucault notes that hermaphrodites were “considered as monsters and executed, burnt and their ashes thrown to the wind” \((A, 62)\). But the citation of the case of Antide Collas from 1599 is interesting, because Foucault claims Collas was one of the last cases of being burned alive simply for \textit{being} a hermaphrodite. As in the introduction to the \textit{Herculine Barbin} memoir, Foucault suggests that there was a period when hermaphrodites were allowed to choose their sex,

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9. For a more detailed treatment of this part of the course, and the issues that arise from it, see Stuart Elden and Sharon Cowan, “Words, Ideas, and Desires: Freud, Foucault, and the Hermaphroditic Roots of Bisexuality,” forthcoming.
“to conduct themselves in the manner of the sex that had been so determined, and to take in particular its clothes.” Foucault then recites the limitation of the acts allowed—to make use of the secondary sex would lead to their being condemned for sodomy. There were a number of such cases (A, 62–63). He moves on to describe two later case studies in some detail: the affair of Marie/Marin Lemarcis (the “hermaphrodite of Rouen”) from the early seventeenth century and that of Anne Grandjean from 1765.

Foucault uses the two cases to suggest that during this time there was a fundamental shift in the treatment of hermaphrodites. Lemarcis was instructed to dress as a woman and not live with anyone—of either sex—on pain of death (A, 63). Grandjean, however, was instructed to take the clothes of a woman and avoid both the woman “she” had married and other women. Foucault thinks it is important that Grandjean was allowed a sexuality and a sexual relationship that was forbidden to Lemarcis (A, 66). For Grandjean, then, it was not that she was a hermaphrodite, but a woman “with perverse tastes, she loved women, and it was that monstrosity, not of nature but of behavior, which provoked the condemnation” (A, 67). This history shows the disassociation of the juridico-natural complex of the monstrosity hermaphrodite, because the somatic anomaly is only an imperfection, and the monstrosity is no longer juridico-natural but juridico-moral: It is a monstrosity of behavior and not a monstrosity of nature (A, 68). The question of sexuality becomes central: “Homosexuality appeared as one of the figures of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodisism of the soul. The sodomite had been a throwback [un relaps]; the homosexual was now a species.”

As Foucault notes, this new emergence of a species is based on behavior and not nature (A, 69).

The individual in need of correction is similarly a species that arises in the Classical age, the period between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. While the monster is, by definition, the exception, the individual to correct is an everyday or common phenomenon. It is through such commonplaces that it is a paradox—it is regular in its irregularity. The material here is rather sketchy, but we would expect that many of the techniques used to correct such individuals would bear comparison with those outlined in Surveiller et punir—the idea of dressage for one. The incorrigible is, like the monster, one of the ancestors of the nineteenth-century notion of

the “abnormal” (A, 53–54). The link with the published book is most evident in these particular lectures: “The question of the illegal and the question of the abnormal, or that of the criminal or the pathological, are now linked—and not by a new ideology or state apparatus, but as a function of a technology characterizing the new rules of the economy of the power to punish” (A, 85).

Like the correctable incorrigible, the childhood masturbator, a figure that appeared at the end of the eighteenth century, is looked at as a very frequent occurrence, almost a universal individual. Masturbation is the secret universal, the secret divided and yet shared across the world, as no one speaks to anyone else about it. In his archaeology and genealogy of anomaly, Foucault suggests that the abnormal of the nineteenth century is the descendant of the three individuals he has discussed: the monster, the incorrigible, and the masturbator. He then explains how these three types relate to the notion of sexual deviancy. Monstrosity and sexuality are closely linked, similarly, masturbation and the notion of the incorrigible. But Foucault claims, and he stresses this is a crucial point, that the three types are kept quite separate in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is only in the nineteenth century, with the emergence of the technology of abnormal individuals, that a broad field of knowledge and power can unite them (A, 54–56). Just as the hermaphrodite comes to be seen as a monstrosity of behavior rather than of nature, no longer juridico-natural, but juridico-moral, so too does the notion of the monster become a moral monster (A, 75). The point of the preceding analyses is to trace the history of this moral monster, or at least the conditions of its possibility (A, 85).

Foucault dates the birth of this modern monster to the years 1792–93, with the trial of Louis XVI. Indeed, he claims that the king is the first juridical monster of the modern kind and suggests that “all human monsters are the descendants of Louis XVI” (A, 87). There follows a discussion of the way the Jacobins, and particularly Louis de Saint-Just, constituted Louis XVI not as someone who had broken the laws from the inside, and that therefore could have the laws applied to him, but as an absolute enemy of the entire social body. He therefore had to be destroyed, as one would destroy an enemy or a monster. The action of the social body was at the same time the action of each individual, and therefore it did not matter who actually killed the king. As Saint-Just said, “The right of men against tyranny is a personal right.” Marie-Antoinette and Louis XVI were seen as the monstrous couple. They were represented as blood thirsty, as jackal and hyena. Many pamphlets at the time mobilized the notions of cannibal-
ism, debauchery, homosexuality, and incest—particularly the latter—to describe her. It was, suggests Foucault, with Marie-Antoinette that the theme of the human monster became crystallized. But at the same time, in the anti-Jacobin literature, the idea of the monster was used in a different way, to characterize not the abuse of power but the monster who broke the social contract by revolt. The blood being spilled was crucial again, with the revolution of the people, their regicide, being tied to cannibalism. Cannibalism and incest—an alimentary prohibition and a sexual one—were the central themes of the monster, shown in literary form in the Marquis de Sade’s work, above all in _Juliette_ (A, 88–93).

Elsewhere in the course are descriptions of torture to rival that of Damien (A, 78); discussion of cannibalism in relation to the soldier Bertrand, the vampire of Düsseldorf, and Jack the Ripper (A, 94–95); and a passing reference to King Kong (A, 101). Foucault further examines detailed case studies, notably that of Henriette Cornier, who cut up her neighbor’s daughter and became an application of Article 64. This case, which was also treated in Foucault’s 1975 seminar, is important in understanding the relation of the criminal to psychiatry, particularly in the notion of “instinct” (A, 102–24, 128–40), and leads into a discussion of how psychiatric models came to be applied to political regimes (A, 140–45). Clearly from the material here, _Les Pervers_ would have been a great book. There is some fascinating documentary material, and had Foucault continued to work in this area, he no doubt would have presented it in a more stylized manner and uncovered further stories.

I noted above that Foucault discusses how the three types of abnormality are related to the notion of sexual deviancy, most clearly demonstrated by the case of the masturbating child. In this regard, Foucault takes a long detour through Christian procedures of confession and penitence,

11. Much later in the course, Foucault returns to this case and apologizes both for getting the date wrong and for making a historical or epistemological error. Aside from grave robbing, desecration of corpses, and possible cannibalism, the authorities were alerted by the much larger number of female than male corpses involved. The corpses were especially those of young girls. Signs of sexual attention were found, even among those corpses that were in an advanced state of decomposition. Foucault then turns to a discussion of different types of monomania—destructive and sexual—and of the difference between vampirism and Bertrand, whom he calls an inverse vampire, for Bertrand, unlike vampires, was alive, preyed on dead bodies, and—to an extent—sucked their blood (A, 267–71).
and the separation of the notions of the body and the flesh, in order to trace how these procedures have informed psychiatry (A, 158–80). His digression touches on themes that he would have treated in the projected second and third volumes. The appearance of the sexual body of the child in the eighteenth century has a prehistory that dates back to the Council of Trent, the interpretation of the Sixth Commandment, Augustine's Confessions, and various other places and times. Masturbation emerges as a sin in relation to fornication, adultery, debauchery, rape, molestation, sodomy, incest, and bestiality (A, 172). Foucault sums up the development as a political anatomy of the body, a moral physiology of the flesh (A, 180), and traces how this leads to a pedagogical medicine of masturbation and the linking of the notion of desire with that of instinct. Together, problems of sexuality are linked to the field of abnormality.

Before he heads for such matters, Foucault discusses the relation of the body to concupiscence, the problem of the charnel, witch hunts, possession, and the Inquisition (A, 187–212). The theme of sexuality is continued throughout. The nature of the pact with the devil is discussed in terms of a transgressive sexual act—"It is the visit to the incubus, kissing the goat's arse on the Sabbath"; the idea of possession, on the other hand, is described as an invasion, a penetration of the body (A, 193). The possession at Loudun serves as Foucault's principal example here—the point is to highlight the differences in the conception of the body. The inner struggle made visible by convulsion is that between medicine and Catholicism, at the level of the individual body (A, 198). Bringing in the theme of the hysteric briefly, Foucault notes the correspondence between Loudun, Lourdes, and Salpêtrière. This triangle is one in which possession, cure, hysteria, and faith relate in various ways. All of these themes, demonstrating the battle between ecclesiastical and medical power, help to understand the emergence of sexuality within the field of medicine (A, 210).

Indeed, Foucault suggests that the discourse concerning masturbation emerges at precisely this point—between Christian discourse on the flesh and sexual psychopathology (A, 219). This led to careful control of the space of schools and the home, ensuring visibility and control (A, 218, 231); manuals on how to prevent masturbation, detailing the disastrous physical

12. Foucault clearly has in mind the commandment concerning adultery, which is the sixth for the Catholic and Lutheran churches, but the seventh for most Protestant faiths and for the Hebrew tradition. The other possible reason Foucault refers to it as the sixth is that the early Nash manuscript of the Bible reverses the prohibitions against killing and adultery. See Joseph Lewis, The Ten Commandments (New York: Freethought Press, 1946).
consequences; brochures on medicines, apparatuses, and bandages for its prevention (A, 220–21); suggested preventive techniques, such as tying children’s hands to themselves, to an adult sleeping nearby, or to warning bells; and detailed information on how to spot the signs, traces, and odors of arousal or ejaculation, the key times to check, and so on. He notes the use of chemical solutions and permanent catheters, and procedures such as cauterization of the urethra, clitoridectomies, and castrations (A, 237–38). At one point, Foucault apologizes to his audience for having to cite all these details—especially given that he is lecturing beneath a portrait of Henri Bergson, who had previously taught at the Collège—but he thinks them important (A, 231–32). But as well as controlling the bodies of children, this new discourse places the fundamental blame on the parents and puts the onus on them to prevent such behavior. Part of the emphasis is against the seduction of children by adults—particularly those in close contact with the children, such as domestics, governesses, private tutors, uncles, aunts, cousins, and the like (A, 229). This emphasis leads to what we might call the nuclear family, as opposed to the larger “household” of the past; new types of familial obligations; and new health principles regulated by external medical knowledge (A, 232–39). Foucault suggests that what he calls this “epistemophilic” incest of contact, observation, and surveillance is part of the foundation of the modern family (A, 234). The crusade against masturbation—a new children’s crusade—constitutes a new apparatus or dispositif of knowledge-power: It is linked to state strategies concerning education and population control (A, 239–43).

Such strategies of population control are common themes in the final two lectures, which discuss the normalization of the urban proletariat, the optimal division of the working-class family, the prohibitions on incest, and the link between instinct and sexuality in the context of the epistemologico-political task of psychiatry. Foucault recognizes that the prohibition on masturbation was aimed at the bourgeois family; the restrictions on proletariat families, rather, were against the danger of incest, to try to secure the institution of marriage, and to prevent cohabitation. Whereas the antimasturbation crusade encouraged parents to keep their bodies close to those of their children, here the aim was the separation of bodies, into spaces for parents and spaces for each sex of child (A, 254–56). There follows a long discussion of Heinrich Kaan’s Psychopathia sexualis, published in 1844, from which Foucault dates the emergence of sexuality and sexual aberrations in the field of psychiatry (A, 262–67). Concluding, he discusses how the three types of abnormality can be seen to come together in the case
of Charles Jouy (A, 275–89),

13 whom he had mentioned in La Volonté de savoir; raises some points about psychiatry and heredity (A, 289–99); and then links these discourses to the modern notion of racism. Modern racism, returning the course to themes seemingly abandoned earlier, is an internal defense of society against the abnormals and is born out of psychiatry (A, 299–301).

These themes link clearly, as I have already suggested, to those of the following year’s course, which relates to the final chapter of La Volonté de savoir, in its discussion of race, the state, and the right of death and the power over life. These themes are some of the most interesting in the book, but they are relatively neglected in the secondary literature. Foucault’s research for Populations et races and La Croisade des enfants would therefore appear to have been well under way at this time. His discussion of confession itself is less convincing, and it seems that the analysis of this material for La Chair et le corps led Foucault to abandon the original plan and work more historically than thematically. His discussions cover a vast range of material over several centuries, and some of the more sweeping claims may not have been sustainable on more detailed examination. Equally, much of this seems to trade on a small range of secondary source material. Daniel Defert, the inheritor of Foucault’s estate and his papers, told the editors of Les Anormaux that Foucault had destroyed the manuscript for the original second volume, which the editors suggest served as the basis for the discussions in this course. The working through of the themes of confession seems to have tied up Foucault for many years, and therefore the unpublished Les Aveux de la chair, even though it treats a different historical period than does La Chair et le corps, may well be the key to the whole Sexuality series.

It is well known that Foucault’s work has affinities with that of Canguilhem. Although Canguilhem was the supervisor of Foucault’s doctoral work, his influence was largely due to a common interest in Nietzsche.

13. Foucault seems to find this name amusing: the surname sounds like the word come.
sche.\textsuperscript{17} In the book Foucault cites here, for which he wrote an introduction to the English translation, Canguilhem argues that “the abnormal, whilst logically second, is existentially first.”\textsuperscript{18} Like the argument made in \textit{Histoire de la folie}, where the notion of madness is able to constitute what we think of as reason—strikingly shown in Descartes’s \textit{Meditations}—we know that the “normal” is often defined by what it is not. This understanding is clearly indebted to the examination Nietzsche made of slave morality in \textit{On the Genealogy of Morality}. Foucault’s lecture course could therefore easily have been called \textit{The Constitution of the Normal}. \textit{Constitution}—legal, political, medical, and biological—is a useful word for understanding Foucault’s intent.\textsuperscript{19} A great deal of the material here is clearly connected not just to the \textit{Sexuality} series that Foucault was working on at the time but also to the research of which \textit{Surveiller et punir} was but one part and to his work of the late seventies on governmentality. \textit{Les Anormaux} is therefore the concourse of a number of problematics that coincide in the body of the abnormal.

What Foucault calls the \textit{dispositif} of “normalization” is an example of his understanding of power/knowledge. The negative formulation of the “normal” through the knowledge of what it is not—rather than what it is—is paralleled by the power exercised in order to protect that normalcy.\textsuperscript{20} This is how society is defended: both an exclusion established through knowledge and an inclusion policed through power. The mechanisms of policing and governmentality illustrated by the plague town are imposed over the selected individual, of whom the leper is but the striking historical example. The notion of a norm is not a natural law but is defined by the role it plays in the domains to which it is applied. The norm is not simply a principle of intelligibility, one that allows us to compare and contrast, but is an element in the exercise of power. It is a polemical concept for Canguilhem, a political one for Foucault. And most importantly for Foucault, it is at the same time a principle of qualification and a principle of correction. Rather than function-

\textsuperscript{17} See Michel Foucault, “Structuralisme et poststructuralisme,” in \textit{Dits et écrits}, 4:436.
\textsuperscript{19} The use of the word \textit{constitution} in this plural sense plays an important role in Foucault’s own work, particularly in “Il faut défendre la société,” 171–74, where he discusses the \textit{constitution} of the state. For a related use, see Mark Neocleous, \textit{Administering Civil Society: Towards a Theory of State Power} (London: Macmillan, 1996) and \textit{The Fabrication of Social Order: A Critical Theory of Police Power} (London: Pluto, 2000).
\textsuperscript{20} A similar argument regarding race is made in “Il faut défendre la société,” 53, 231–32.
ing to exclude or reject, the norm is always linked to a positive technology of intervention and transformation: a normative project (A, 46). 21

However, the exclusion of the other, or the abnormal, in order to constitute the same, or the normal, is not without risk. As the illustrations of the nature of political leadership, bureaucracy, and administrative power show, the mechanisms utilized to police normalcy are often tainted by grotesque or abnormal elements. The original preface to *Histoire de la folie* made a very similar point, quoting Pascal's aphorism that "men are so necessarily mad that it would be another form of madness to not be mad" and Dostoevsky's admonition that "it is not by imprisoning our neighbor that we become convinced of our own sanity." 22 Foucault's investigation is therefore of what he calls "the other form of madness." These lectures show elements of the other form of abnormality—the categorization, delimitation, and treatment of, and cruelty toward, the "abnormals."

Reading *Les Anormaux* as a study of the constitution of the normal would show that Foucault is not concerned with the details of these case studies merely for their own sake but in order to illuminate a deeper historical problematic. Through his appropriation by diverse academic disciplines, Foucault's work is often read in ways that miss the much larger questions with which he was concerned. For example, *Surveiller et punir* should be read only as a study of the birth of the prison in the light of the comment that the "soul is the prison of the body" and should therefore be seen as "a genealogy of the modern 'soul.'" 23 Equally, the *Sexuality* series should be read not simply as an examination of sexuality and subjectivity but as a genealogy of the subject precisely in order to circumvent this notion. Similarly, this course should be read as a genealogy of normality. Genealogy is a historicization of the Kantian problematic. It is a historical investigation of conditions of possibility: genealogy as historical ontology. This would be opposed to the historical sociology or ontic history to which Foucault is often reduced. All of these works of genealogy can be read as historical ontology rather than as historical sociology. 24

22. Foucault, *Folie et déraison*, i.
24. This argument is made in greater detail in Stuart Elden, "Reading Genealogy as His-
As can be surmised from the preceding discussion, the subject matter of the course is almost entirely gruesome. The category of the grotesque with which Foucault introduces the course does indeed serve as a guide throughout. As he notes, the themes he discusses bear relation to the Gothic novel and to de Sade (A, 69). Disease, death, and torture shadow most lectures; cannibalism, incest, monsters, and masturbation haunt its pages. Fascinating though its themes are, it often reads as the accumulation of material, stories, and documents that Foucault is unable to fully come to grips with. His own definition of the lectures at the Collège de France therefore seems pretty apt. There is a lot of material here that he threw away, but equally plenty of work and ways to take it that might be useful. And not just—given the subject matter, perhaps not at all—for the kids.