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Previously Unpublished Interview with Michel Foucault. By Four LCR Activists, Contributors to the Cultural Column of the Daily News Journal *Rouge* (July 1977)

Michel Foucault

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A. Success and Failure of Psychoanalysis

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Rouge. — We decided to do a study of your work for the cultural column of Rouge *or, rather, for a sub-column that we put together. We discussed it amongst ourselves and not one of us would say that what Foucault is doing is anti-Marxist or that he is involved in a war machine against Marxism, etc. Otherwise, we wouldn't be here.*

Michel Foucault. — But I wouldn't mind if you said it to me.

Rouge. — Yes, of course, but you know, if that were the case, we would have been having a go at you before we'd even started. . . (Laughter) *I was talking about Rancière earlier. When he puts the spotlight on the popular revolt, working on 1848 and on the*

1. *Ligue communiste révolutionnaire*.

2. The full version of this previously unpublished interview is available online: *Question Marx*. <www.questionmarx.typepad.fr> and *Materiali foucaultiani*. <www.materialifoucaultiani.org/fr/materiali/materiali/60-intervista-ineditaa-michel-foucault/159-intervista-a-michel-foucault.html>

present, the people are the agent who re-appropriate this memory and do something with it. But who is the agent for you?

Michel Foucault. — What I'd like to try and really grasp is power. Not in the usual sense of the word, crystallized within institutions or apparatuses, but power as it is across a whole social setting, the whole class struggle, if you like. I would say, for me, what it comes down to is that power is class struggle, that is to say all the force relations which are inevitably unequal but also subject to change, that there can be within a social setting and which are the actualizations, the daily dramas of class struggle. What happens within a family, for example, the power relationships at play between parents and children, husband and wife, upward and downward, young and old, etc., these force relations, these power relationships are relationships between forces, which somehow—and that's what needs to be analyzed—are the class struggle. That's where the difficulty lies perhaps and that's what you wouldn't admit. I wouldn't say, the class struggle's like that, at a certain basic level, and everything else is only the effect, the consequence. I'd say that class struggle, in concrete terms, is what we live.

Rouge. — We'll agree on that. . .

M. Foucault. — So power is neither on one side nor the other. It's clearly in the confrontation with the instruments one side possesses, the weapons the other side has, the workforce on one side, the army on the other, the guns here. . . But, if we want to analyze all the power relations that there are within a social setting, to say that the bourgeoisie possesses the power because it is the bourgeoisie that actually owns the weapons, or that the bourgeoisie has seized power because they control the State apparatus does not seem to me to be expressing it precisely enough, accurately enough. The State apparatus—or the apparatuses of the State (the instruments and weapons that the bourgeoisie put into a class struggle)—is the way in which all the different aspects make up the power relations that are intrinsic in a social setting, which keep it under control. In other words, it is the idea that the social setting does not survive as a result of an agreement, nor of a consensus, but through something else, which is clearly war, fighting. . . the force relation.

Rouge. — But what you wouldn't agree with is the representation of a front, the representation of two positions in definitively opposed camps, a conflict of subjects, shall we say. . .

M. Foucault. — An analysis that would consist in saying that you have two categories of people within a social setting, those who have power and those who don't, those who belong to such and such a class and those who belong to another does not account for. . . That might hold for particular points in time where binary distribution is effectively taking place. It might also hold for a certain distance, or a certain angle, or in order to envisage, for example, certain economic power relationships, you'd be perfectly right to say that. . . . But if you reach a certain level typical of the exercise of power—medical power for example, power over bodies, power over sexuality etc.—it's clear that bringing binary opposition into play straight away by saying, children are like the proletarians, women, etc., will get you absolutely nowhere. You'll just end with historical aberrations. That's roughly what I mean.

Rouge. — When you say, in The Will to Knowledge*, that we have to stop analyzing power relationships in the negative, what does the word "negative" refer to if not to dialectics? Is it a Nietzschean critique of dialectics? Is it a Lyotard-style rejection of the negative?*

M. Foucault. — No, that's not what I meant. I believe we have two models for the analysis of society and the force relations within a society. The juridical model, which says that a society has been able to form whenever people have renounced part of their rights, part of their liberty, part of their violence, whenever they've transferred it to a sovereign. This sovereign has laid down a law and clearly censured everything that would be a renunciation or a breach of this renunciation. This is the traditional juridical theory of power. You'll find another analysis in the history books, which is what I shall call the invasion model. You have people who are basically happy. They don't belong to anyone, they are their own bosses. Invaders swoop down on them like animals of prey. They steal their land, seize their women, impose laws, subjugate, and then hunt down and punish any sign of rebellion. In both these

models, the juridical model of renunciation and the historical model of invasion—power in any case—there is prevention, prevention of someone doing something, either because it was renounced by agreement or because they didn't want to and someone had the force, the weapons to prevent them. These are the slaves, the serfs, the vanquished… Neither of these two images account for what really happens in the power relationships that run through a social setting and keep it under control. I would say, basically, we ask ourselves so often now, how is it that we love power? This question only makes sense if we assume that power is completely negative, that it is something that says no to you. How is it that we actually put up with someone saying no to us at that point? As soon as we realize that power is something that runs through us positively and actually makes us do something and rewards us, we no longer ask ourselves, how do we love power? It runs through us like a whole production machine where we are the agent, the beneficiary, to a certain extent anyway, etc. That's what I meant.

Rouge. — Do you call into question the fact that power only functions alongside repression?

M. Foucault. — Yes—that it functions only alongside repression, renunciation, prohibition. These two models of agreement and invasion have oddly been revived by psychoanalysts. It's basically the Freud-Reichian model. Power is the thing that says no, it is the superego, it is the prohibition. It is repression, the rule. It's in that respect that I criticize the negative.

Rouge. — Can we just come out with a question? It's deliberately stupid. The truncheon blows from the riot squad (CRS – Compagnies républicaines de sécurité)?

M. Foucault. — Well, yes, so. . . (*Laughter*). But you're quite right.

Rouge. — It was deliberately provocative. . .

M. Foucault. — Right, my problem is not at all with saying that repression doesn't exist. If you want, we can talk about

sexual deprivation in a minute. Repression exists, there is massive repression. But is it politically just or historically accurate to only ever understand power in this quasi caricatural repression sense? I would say that repression is the terminal form of power or, in other words, when it actually comes up against certain limits or it stumbles, or it can't go any further, or when the force relation reappears in all its naked brutality. At that point, it arms itself. But in actual fact, well before that, well before the lead up to this terminal stage, there has been a whole series of far more complex, more empowering mechanisms, which pass through us in a much more solid way. We know, anyway, that when a power uses the truncheon, it's because it's very weak, it's at the end of its tether. Literally, nothing left. It marks the end of the power. It's the extreme case. I'm not saying that repression only exists in extreme cases, but it seems that repressive moments in the exercise of power really have to be understood as moments within a complicated piece of machinery comprising many other parts. But if you single out the repressive moments, you have a caricature of power, which doesn't account for this phenomenon that we should all be conscious of. There hasn't been a revolution for such a long time—power is in control.

Rouge. — You've practically turned a well-known phrase on its head. You said, "the gun marks the end of power" as opposed to "power grows out of the barrel of a gun." (Laughter).

M. Foucault. — Exactly. I'm not saying that it *always* marks the end of power, but it is *rather* at the end of power. In any case, it is politically important to not just understand power as the "barrel of a gun;" that's only one aspect of it. Because you have all sorts of congruence between the juridical, historical, and psychoanalytical models to present power exactly as Goethe portrayed Mephistopheles, as the one who always says no.

Rouge. — That's what you were saying in Discipline and Punish*, that we shouldn't take power as oppositional. What is there left in your work, though, of the prohibition, "no," and state discourses?*

M. Foucault. — It's not necessary to identify the discourse that says "no" and state discourses. What's left? In *Discipline and Punish*, I'd started to think a bit about things like that, but it wasn't clear enough. I tried to show how the organization of the penal system and of criminality (which is the other side of it) was a way of saying no, at least up to a certain point if you like, but it was a way of wholly redistributing the functioning of illegalities. And you could say that was a phenomenon of redistribution, of repression, if you like, of forms of illegalities, but the whole disciplinary mechanism used to suppress a certain number of illegalities was not simply a negative procedure of prohibition. It was by focusing people, training their bodies, getting a whole series of economic as well as political results from and with them that these illegalities finally disappeared. There was a suppression, disappearance, obstruction side to it, but I don't believe it's necessary to isolate that as being the central essence of power.

In the case of sexuality, I've said all along, I don't want to show at all that sexuality is free. That's not what it's about. The relationships between power and the body, sex, and pleasure are not essentially, fundamentally, primarily negative. In any case, the effects of repression or of sexual deprivation—I prefer to use "sexual deprivation"—are inscribed in these even positive mechanisms. For example. There's no doubt that there was a real hyper-sexualization in the relationships between people in the bourgeois family—which was the model imposed on nineteenth-century society— particularly between parents and children. Children's sexuality has become the family problem—everyone's thought about it, everyone's dealt with it, it's a hyper-sexualization phenomenon. You can't just say that children's sexuality has been suppressed or that it's been hushed up. That's not true, it's a lot more complicated than that. We've built up a family that is full of incest, sexual gratification and pleasure, caresses, attentiveness, glances, and complicity. That hasn't been a liberation, but a sort of sexual deprivation, of children and adolescents and also, to a certain extent, families.

The problem is, therefore, to replace these effects of deprivation, to redefine them using the positive mechanisms that produced them. In a very pretentious fashion, I'll make the following comparison. Basically, when Marx started doing his analyses, he was surrounded by his thoughts: a socialist analysis, focused mainly on

poverty, which said, we are poor, how is it that we, who produce such wealth, are poor. In actual fact, his question had to do with theft: "How do our employers steal from us? How do the bourgeoisie steal from us?" This was a negative question, which the socialists at the time couldn't answer because they gave a negative response to this negative question: "You are poor because people steal from you." Marx turned the whole thing on its head, saying, OK, this poverty, this pauperization we are witnessing, what's it linked to? He revealed the formidable positive mechanisms that were behind it all, those of capitalism, of the accumulation of capital, all the positive economic mechanisms suited to the industrial society he could see all around him. That doesn't mean he necessarily denied the existence of pauperization. On the contrary, he reserved a very special place for that, but he made the move from a negative over to a positive analysis, which put the negative effects back in their place. Once again very pretentiously, I'd like to do something of the same. We should not be deceived by the totally negative phenomenon of this sexual deprivation. It exists, but it's not enough just to offer repression, somewhat tautologically, as an explanation: "if you're sexually deprived, it's because you're repressed." But behind this sexual deprivation, what is the huge positive mechanism of power that invests in the body and produces the effects?

Rouge. — So your work would involve ruling out issues but without wiping them out completely. You'd say these are not the only issues, that they are certainly not the fundamental ones. . .

M. Foucault. —. . .But especially as you wouldn't think you'd have to answer your own question when you've already given an isomorphic response. Everyone agrees with the "we are unhappy sexually" issue. But if we answer tautologically, saying, we are unhappy because we are sexually deprived, I don't believe we will come up with the right question or the solution.

Rouge. — If that's the case, on the other hand, there's the question of what that involves in putting this form of inspired power in its place, from the top to the bottom and, in particular, what it involves at the level of conflicts and resistance. How can the different struggles come together and become unified? And that

raises the further question of where Michel Foucault fits into these conflicts, and also the question of these and your own conflicts. How can Michel Foucault manage between these great citadels?

M. Foucault. —. . .He manages badly. . . (*Laughter*).

Rouge. — To return a minute to the question of history. With The Archaeology of Knowledge*, was there a clash between the question of historical truth and what was happening in the history of conflicts? It was also already an issue related to connecting conflicts with other forces. It's not only the way your work ties in with conflicts in the field of history, but also with psychoanalysis. That raises the question of how you conceive power and the rules you attribute to it. Perhaps it's not that simple. There are different areas in psychoanalysis and areas that put up resistance to this notion. Perhaps psychoanalysis exists no more than Marxism does. The fact that we are here shows, in any case, that the issue of Marxism is unresolved, that Marxism hasn't existed for a long time, that there's a lot of reactiveness. There's also another question that we could put to you on the possible effects of misunderstandings that may arise from your interventions, as is shown in the* Politique hebdo *headline: "A New Truth about Sex."*

M. Foucault. — (*Howls of laughter.*) Good grief! Now I know why they didn't send me the issue. . . . That generates a hell of a lot of questions. We could maybe talk about the actual conflicts. If we actually accept the juridical model of power, which we were talking about earlier, or the historical model of invasion, the problem then arises of how conflicts are possible, how resistance is possible. But if you accept that the power in a society is nothing other than all the force relations that exist, it is clear that you have as much resistance, if you like, as you do power. It means that you cannot in any way dissociate the analysis of power mechanisms from that of resistance. Resistance is the thing that makes such a form of power necessary; it confers any given form on the exercise of power at any given moment. In other words, power is always exerted on resistance and resistance always opposes a type of power. So the problem, I believe, has much more to do with the organization, tactical coordination, and strategic integration of these

points of resistance. Just as on the other side, for those who are dominant—meaning those for whom the force relation favors—the problem lies in integrating the advantages that they have in broad tactical elements and coherent strategies. . . . The State apparatuses are nothing more than the crystallization, of a certain number of force relations in the form of stable, institutional, legalized instruments. A revolution, revolutionary movements, revolutionary parties constitute the organization of these points of resistance. It is, therefore, completely normal that the strategic problem for a party is to respond to the strategic integration within a class-dominant state. So, people often say, and not just Jean-Marie Brohm, that, for them, the State doesn't exist. But it's nothing of the sort. You have to understand that the State. . . you can't understand a force relation as coming from the State, as if it's its primitive source. The State should be understood as the institutional crystallization of a multiplicity of force relations, which run through the economy, fundamentally, but also through a whole series of institutions, the family, sexual relationships, etc.

Rouge. — What you mean is, power starts at a grassroots level. . . .

M. Foucault. — If power is the class struggle, or the form that it takes, we have to replace the power within the class struggle. That's it. But I fear that, in many analyses, we often do the opposite and define the class struggle as the struggle for power. We would have to look at the works of Marx, but I don't think I'm being radically anti-Marxist in saying this.

Rouge. — We've never thought that, never thought that you were making a war machine against Marxism. . . .

M. Foucault. — I don't feel any obligation to be loyal. But when you look at the empirical analyses Marx carried out on 1848, Louis Napoleon, and *La Commune*, in his historical more than his theoretical texts, I believe he effectively puts his analyses of power back inside something that is fundamentally the class struggle, and that he doesn't make class struggle a competition for power. He analyzes the competition for power from within the different groups,

to be exact. None of the main Marxist commentators have assessed him at the level of his empirical analyses of the situation. There are a thousand reasons why they haven't done so, but it's mainly because Marx continually made false predictions, continually made mistakes, month after month. But he has nevertheless produced a political and historical analysis that can be considered true, a lot truer than any other at least. (*Laughter*).

Rouge. — But on the resulting political practices, your studies have influenced, or provided the material for, rebellions or, conversely, the rebellions have fed your studies. Whichever is the case, it's led to certain types of practices, which we rather hastily labeled "cultural liberalism," against the alleged necessity for a revolutionary party, for an organization directly attacking the state, trying to break it, etc. There have been various political groups focused on prisons in which your work could appear to have been a stakeholder, one has recognized shifts towards the new left in your work, and there have been unexpected interviews in the newspapers, like Actuel. *And then, on the subject of sexuality, you suddenly seem to take on cultural liberalism from a provocative stance and, say when faced with all your discourses on the theme, "let's liberate sex, the insane, the incarcerated, etc.," you say, in short, look out, it's not about knowing who has the power, man over woman, parents over children, it's about far more complex mechanisms. Isn't your work today a sort of safety catch for what's been called "cultural liberalism" in some way?*

M. Foucault. — It's a key issue. I'd say that I suppose, for you, the label, "cultural liberalism," is a little pejorative. . .

Rouge. — Not necessarily. . .

M. Foucault. — I won't challenge it. All the same, I will say that the political organizations, at least the majority of those that I've known, were based on the working model of the political party. It was the revolutionary party such as it was when it was set up at the end of the nineteenth century. It metamorphosed a number of times to resurface in the social democrats, in the different communist parties, in Trotskyist organizations too, and even in

anarchist organizations. . . The history of the parties and the party organizations has never been written, even though it's a political phenomenon of primary importance that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century. I think it should have been. In these political practices, such as they were defined by these organizations, a number of problems did not arise. They could not do so, initially, because they did not correspond to the immediate political objectives that these organizations were proposing nor did they play any part in the political subjects they were talking about. As soon as they started talking about the general strike at the end of the nineteenth century and again at the beginning of the twentieth, or the latest capitalist crises, or the constitution of monopolist state capitalism, there was no room for the problems of the insane, of psychiatric hospitals, of medicine, delinquents, and sexuality; they could not get a foothold. They weren't really able to raise these problems and they could only makes themselves heard if they raised them radically outside—I would go so far as to say against—these organizations. Not that it was about fighting against them with those instruments, but against them meaning in spite of their lines of discourse and the objectives they wanted to set. So, inevitably, small groups, which tried not to follow the model of the organizations—i.e. things that always had a particular objective, or a movement, or limited duration. . .—dissolved as soon as the objective was achieved and then there was an attempt to set up elsewhere, etc. So, all of that was inevitable. Will that do for the first part of the question?

Rouge. — Even so, that's what seems interesting to me about the history of liberalism in France, since '68. On the extreme left, I mean. I don't think that the women's movement or the political practices relating to asylums or the prisons—in fact, any of these types of micro-powers that, in general, the labor movement definitively underscored—were set up in opposition to the leftist organizations. In fact, they were set up at the margins of the leftist organizations, which subsequently continued this type of discourse. We see it in the Ligue communiste*, although it does cause some problems in the ranks. Don't you think this type of practice is also integral to a change in the discourse order? I remember a remark you made, I may be misquoting you: "Isn't the theory, after all, part of what we condemn? Isn't the theoretical*

discourse part of what we're fighting against?" It was during an interview with Actuel. *Do you think there is an interdependence between these more fragmented political practices compared with what had been defined as the sole stake of the struggle, the takeover of power, that is to say of the State, the apparatus of the State? Isn't it integral to a change in the discourse? I wouldn't like to try and say where Michel Foucault stands in relation to liberalism. . .*

M. Foucault. — Yes, I'll have to get to that, and to answer the other part of your question. Actually, on this point, I don't remember this comment now, but I can clearly see why I said it. I believe that it worked at the time. Actually, the theoretical discourse on politics, Marxism, the revolution, and society has been a way of denying access to a number of problems—considered hypo-theoretical and unworthy of appearing in theoretical discourse—for many years or, at least, for a certain period of time, most markedly between 1965 and 1970. So, I subscribe to the fact that we've had to fight against theoretical discourse, and I've done what I could to fight against it. Not just by criticizing it—I didn't want to show that so-and-so was wrong, I didn't give a damn and I was most probably right, it wasn't my problem. But, anyway, in the field we're in, a theoretical discourse falls silent through disuse; never as a result of contradictions being proven. By letting it fall into disuse by doing something else. That's it for that. Now, the second point that you mentioned: "You're in the process of countering the liberalism that you're linked to or you want to distance yourself from it." I don't agree with those words. It's not a counter position, it's not a step back. It would rather be an encouragement to quicken the pace. I would be ungracious to find repression, for example, the notion of repression, the theme of repression, dreadful and all bad, since it's a word that I've often used. I could say that was fueled by repression (*laughter*), on the idea of repression, in the *History of Insanity*. I was fueled by repression. But we only need to be able to consider three things now. The first is how easily this word has become widespread, in every environment, throughout the media, accepted by everyone. Giscard's going to give us a speech on repression soon and he's going to define advanced liberalism as an anti-repressive society, it's only a matter of weeks. . . (*Laughter*). That means the word

has lost its divisive properties, it's no longer marked. Second, in the discourse, let's say, still from the left, I believe that repression conveys some negative impressions, which are open to criticism, particularly this nostalgia, this naturalism that I was talking about earlier.

I wanted to give three reasons, but only two come to mind. They seem to me to be significant enough, these two reasons: the lack of progress in leftist thinking, and the use of those words and that concept by any school of thought. These two drawbacks illustrate well that, basically, the concept has had its usefulness, and that the tool is now worn out. What I'd like to do is just to say, right, well now we've had the use of it, we have to break it open, and then basically break down the analysis and ask ourselves, what was our aim with this word, "repression?" Well, look, we were aiming at a whole load of things, we have to see that very clearly now. We have to understand that the core of repression wasn't what we thought, but it was sufficient at that time to think that way; there weren't too many difficulties. It wasn't these mechanisms that were purely negative, frustrating, etc., it was something else, a lot more subtle. So, we need to get a more precise, more fine-grained analysis, we need to liquidate this concept, which is now worn out and, above all, has negative effects, and we need to begin an analysis of another sort, on another level, which will not have the effect of going backwards.

It's not a question of saying, sexuality hasn't been repressed and, on the contrary, all we have done is express it, extort from it so, gotten sick and tired of sexuality, let's return to a decent silence on the whole affair. No, that's not it at all. It's saying that we have to see that we have to move on from this sexuality, which we were right, for a certain period of time, to denounce as repressed. In fact, what's the purpose of the discourses on sexuality circulating at the moment? Their purpose is essentially to tell people, you know, everything you're seeking in the way of pleasure, all your desires, it's only really to be found in sexuality, let us do it, we, the sex specialists, we will tell you the truth about all that. This demand on sexuality, which had a fight factor for a while, now risks having the opposite effect: compressing and confining people within the sole problematic of sexuality. To say, actually, let's leave that behind and look more generally at issues related to the body, desire, relationships with others, modes of belonging, alliance, connection—the

diverse configurations that can exist between people—those are the issues that have to be raised. No more listening to the discourses of sexologists who, no matter what pleasure, no matter what body, no matter what alliance, configuration, no matter what relationship, say, sexuality is the only issue, let me tell you the truth. We have to go beyond sexuality and lay claim to the body, pleasure, alliances, connections, combinatorials, etc.; we have to move on. In other words, it's a process of acceleration that I'd like to see initiated in relation to the leftist repression theme and definitely not a stop mechanism that says, we've talked about it too much, let's go back to more sensible things. I don't know if it's very clear. . .

[. . .]

Rouge. — Is it more complicated for sexuality than for the insanity or prison issue? Because sexuality is a broad, culturally-divided phenomenon, which is not just the concern of sexologists and which is not confined to exploitation in the media. We've seen the emergence of movements like FHAR[3] *for homosexuality, like MLF*[4] *for women; movements which, it could be said, probably haven't reached their maximum effectiveness yet.*

M. Foucault. — Well, on that point, I'd like to be absolutely clear—and I wasn't clear in my book because I thought it would be inferable on its own, I want to be clear on that. What strikes me, and what I find interesting about these feminist and homosexual movements, is precisely the fact that they have used sexuality for the movements—female sexuality, a woman's right to have her own sexuality even outside that of men, and homosexuality—but to what purpose? To bring everything down to sexuality? Not at all! Because the feminist movements only laid claim to the specific nature of female sexuality in order to say women were much more than just their genitals. What's also interesting about the homosexual movements is that they've moved on from this claim that people had

3. Radical homosexual group, *le Front homosexuel d'action révolutionnaire*, founded in 1971, disappeared by 1973. (note from *Rouge*).

4. *Le Mouvement de libération des femmes* emerged, between 1967 and 1970, from several movements, from reformist to radical. A number of MLF activists took part in the founding of FHAR. (note from *Rouge*).

the right to have the sexuality they wanted, in one sense or another, but to say what? Well, to say that homosexual existence doesn't boil down in principle, either in its code or in its truthfulness, to such and such a form of sexual practices, but that they demand the possibility of interpersonal relationships, social relationships, forms of existence, life choices, etc., which go beyond sexuality. There's the dynamic in these feminist and homosexual movements, which builds, if you like, on a tactical foundation that the sexuality discourse provides or had provided. They've built on that as a tactical base to go further, to ask for a lot more, and to burst onto the scene at a much more universal level. This is very clear in the Californian homosexual circles that I knew, where homosexuality, in its sexual characterization, is the springboard for a whole form of social and cultural belonging, connections, affections, communal living, attachments, etc. And finally, they find pleasures, bodies, relationships that are physical and others that are platonic, metasexual, and parasexual. In other words, sexuality is a very clear centrifugal force in the movements. And what's interesting is just to see how, through false complicity, the sexologist tries to turn the feminist and homosexual movements to their advantage, saying: "Ah, but we completely agree with you. Of course you have the right to your sexuality, and you have such a right to it that you are only your sexuality. Come to us; come, women; come, homosexuals; come, perverts. Be free, but free on the condition that you come via us because you owe your freedom solely to the specific nature of your sexuality for which we hold the rules. So your freedom will be limited by our rules, the rules that we set." And that's how sexology works, by closing down the centrifugal movements through a centripetal or "sexipetal" drawdown, if I may say so (Laughter).

Rouge. — Since you're on the subject of feminist movements, we have received a text from a women who is part of the women's movement. She was bothered about a passage in your book where you say that the problem isn't knowing whether it's men or women who hold the power, because her problem and the women's movement's problem was, on the contrary, the type of power men could have over women and the way of fighting against this power.

M. Foucault. — When I said that, it was in a very precise sense. The negation is on the word "have." In other words, I don't believe the issue can be resolved by saying, the men have taken the power and the women do not have power, etc. Power isn't wealth. It's an economic metaphor that is omnipresent in these analyses. There would have to be a certain stock of power and then men would seize it all, leaving only trifling matters for the women and a few small crumbs for the children. That's not it. The problem is, how is power exercised within a family? It is quite obvious that the male "pole," the father "pole," the husband "pole" is the dominant pole, but it exerts its domination through a number of intermediaries, means, etc. And, in particular, the monopoly of power, the omnipotence that's been given to women over children during the first years of their lives is an indisputable fact, but it doesn't mean the women have any power, just that they exert all the power over the children within a constellation where the absolute dominant pole is the man. We have to achieve these relatively complex and fine-grained analyses, but if you use the possession metaphor when analyzing the exercise of power, you only have quantitative relations for your analysis—who has the most power, men or women?

Rouge. — Do you substitute "how" for "how many?"

M. Foucault. — Exactly. The problem is not about knowing whether man has power and woman does not. It's about actually knowing how the power current runs from the man to the woman, the woman to the children, what the differences in potential are that allow power to function.

Rouge. — But that would intersect a study of history that is broader than you see it. The works of Lévi-Strauss in the past showed how, across the system of relationships, power relations shifted within various configurations or social groups or, at least, that the figures able to take on these power relations shifted. . .

M. Foucault. — Yes, insofar as Lévi-Strauss's analysis was essentially relational, I can say that what I want to do as well, in respect of power, is a relational-type analysis, and not an analysis in terms of possession. That seems fairly obvious to me. That's

very difficult to analyze. I'm very aware that I've got nowhere near the tools needed to analyze relational stuff. But I'm aware that it is a relational thing, that there is power that isn't like a reserve to be passed out like you would a cake. It goes without saying if you think about it for a moment. That involves analyses that I'm not capable of doing. I hope someone coming after me will do them. . . (*Laughter*).

Rouge. — Is it analogical to the question we asked earlier on the sex-based movements? Is it the same phenomenon in psychoanalysis? Apparently, the sexual issue is central to it, but it goes beyond this level and it has a cultural dimension. . . .

M. Foucault. — Absolutely. I would say, basically, that Freud's genius lies not in finally having discovered that sexuality is the truth of the unconscious, quite the opposite. Starting out from a problematic of sexuality, which had already been reasonably well tackled during his era, he eventually went onto other things, because the unconscious is much more than sexuality, much more than sex. Well, it's obvious in Lacan, it's not about that anymore at all. I'm neither Lacanian nor anti-Lacanian, but this same overflow is found in psychoanalysis, and I am well aware that there is an unbearable kind of psychoanalysis where sexualization is omnipresent. And then there is the psychoanalysis that has broken through sexuality and which is seeking something else—I don't know what—but it cuts across sexuality and, leaving it in its wake, is moving things forward.