

Lectures on the Will to Know

Graham Burchell; Arnold I. Davidson; Michel Foucault

ISBN: 9781137044860

DOI: 10.1057/9781137044860

Palgrave Macmillan

Please respect intellectual property rights

This material is copyright and its use is restricted by our standard site license terms and conditions (see http://www.palgraveconnect.com/pc/connect/info/terms_conditions.html). If you plan to copy, distribute or share in any format including, for the avoidance of doubt, posting on websites, you need the express prior permission of Palgrave Macmillan. To request permission please contact rights@palgrave.com.



17 MARCH 1971

Crime, purity, truth: a new problematic. ∪ The tragedy of Oedipus. Emergence of visual testimony. ∪ Nomos and purity. Purity, knowledge, power. ∪ Sophocles' Oedipus versus Freud's Oedipus. ∪ What hides the place of the sage. ∪ What is a discursive event? ∪ Usefulness of Nietzsche.

I—THE JURIDICAL-RELIGIOUS SUPERIMPOSITION of crime and purity entails a new relationship to the truth. In fact:

- α—impurity is now a quality of the individual constituted by the crime;
- β—this impurity is the source of dangerous contacts which spread throughout the space of the city;
- γ—it is therefore important know if the crime has been committed and by whom.

Demonstration of the truth becomes a political task. Impurity and its effects bring with them the need to investigate what happened.

CREON—The King Apollo expressly orders us to free this country from a defilement which it has nourished in its womb, to not let it grow and become incurable.

OEDIPUS—By what *purification**? What misfortune is involved?

* Underlined by M.F.

CREON—By exiling a guilty man or by expiating a murder by a murder, for this blood causes the misfortunes of Thebes.¹

...

The god today clearly orders punishment of the murderers whoever they may be.²

OEDIPUS—Where are they? Where will we discover this difficult trail of an old crime?

CREON—In this land. He has said so. What we seek, we find; what we neglect, escapes us.³

In the archaic epoch, the investigation of what happened was not the primary and determining element of the procedure. For two reasons:

1. The most important thing was the correct sequence of challenges and restitutions. The scene of the shield—not: has there been a crime? But: has there been restitution? The judgment is not brought to bear on the fact, but on the procedure.

The decisive oath does not serve to reveal the truth, but to expose the one who swears the oath to a double risk. If he committed the crime and swears that he has not, then he will be punished for this double offence. But the demonstration of what happened is left to the gods, whose vengeance will make it known.

In the Menelaos–Antilochos dispute there is no appeal to the *histōr*.⁴ But what care is taken in *Oedipus* to find the witness.

2. This is because when crime produces defilement, this defilement affects the city,⁵ and exclusion is required, it now becomes necessary to know:

—if

—by whom

—how.

α—Draco's laws provided for establishing the fact of the crime and, if it was an involuntary crime, for there to be an inquiry. Of course, it is not yet the city that takes responsibility for the demonstration. Testimonies are provided by the parties and witnesses jointly swear an oath.

Truth is still caught up in the form of the struggle. But judgment, deciding on the victory of one of the two parties, bears on what happened, no longer solely on the fulfillment of a procedure, but on the reality of a fact.

β—For a long time signs of purity are still typically found among proofs of the fact. In the pleas [of the] classic [epoch], the accused often say: I am not guilty,

- since I have not been banned from entering the *agora*,⁶
- since I have not been ruined,
- since I have not suffered any misfortune.

This signifies rather that the test is still present, but as sign of truth. Since the effects of impurity and the reality of the fact are linked to each other, the reality of the fact must be established for one to escape the effects of the impurity.

Conversely, the effects of impurity (or their absence) confirm or infirm the reality of the fact.

γ—The whole of the Oedipus tragedy is permeated by the effort of the whole city to transform the enigmatic dispersion of human events (murders, plagues) and divine threats into [certified] facts.

When the *miasma*⁷ reigns in the city, it is because there is something to be known. It is because there is an enigma to be resolved. And the Priest says this to Oedipus: he is turned to because he was able to answer the cruel singer.⁸

The effects of impurity immediately set the snares of knowledge. But this is not the knowledge of the rules to be applied; it is not the knowledge that answers the question: what must be done? It is the knowledge that answers the question: who?

To start with, the Priest and Oedipus still spoke in terms of “what must be done,” although the answer to the Sphinx indicates clearly that Oedipus is the man who answers the question: *who*? Apollo’s oracle corrects the question; or rather, to the question: what must be done? he replies: what must be done is to look for *who*. And not in order to start a complex rite of purification. But certainly in order to exclude: exile or death.

Now Teiresias will not say who this “*who*” is.⁹ He knows, of course, and in a sense tells. But he does not name him and he has not seen him. His sentence is missing the name, as sight is missing from his face.

The question “*who?*” is not answered by the seer, but by the person who saw. Or rather, by those who saw:

- the servant who saw the birth of Oedipus and who is precisely the only witness to survive the murder of Laius;
- the Messenger who saw the child Oedipus and who is precisely the one who comes to announce the death of Polybus.

No wisdom is required to answer the question: *who?* Two frightened servants suffice to answer the question put by Apollo. Among all these blind persons, they saw. And the truth that the priests and kings did not know, that the gods and seers partially concealed, was possessed by a slave in a hut who had been witness, *histōr*.

CONCLUSION

1. As we see: defilement is linked to the truth. The juridical and social practice in which defilement is an element involves *establishing a fact* as an essential component: it is necessary to know if a crime has been committed and by whom.¹⁰ In the archaic period,¹¹ responsibility for eventually avenging a crime, should one have been committed, was handed over to the gods, and it was the event of this vengeance that both made the crime blatantly clear and compensated for it beyond any human retribution. There were two events, one of which retrospectively lit up the other, and the moment of its erasure: between the two was a pure waiting—indecision, indefinite imminence.

Now the rite of purification requires the truth of the fact to be set out. The passage from the crime to its punishment takes place through the intermediary of a proven reality and a duly certified fact. Truth, instead of residing in the flash produced between two events, the second of which indicates and destroys the first, constitutes the only legitimate passage from the defilement to what has to remove it.

The *event* is transformed into *fact*.

2. And truth thus becomes the primary or in any case primordial condition of purification. In the archaic system, the thunderbolt of divine vengeance brought, in an instant, the flash of the truth; the truth sparkled only in the event. (The rite did not concern the truth, but the transfer from men to the gods.)

Now truth is required by the *rite* and forms part of the rite. Impurity will become pure again, or rather impurity will be separated from purity only through the intermediary of the established truth. Truth finds its place in the rite. The rite makes room for the truth. And truth does indeed have a lustral function. Truth separates. Lustral function of the truth.

The truth is what makes it possible to exclude; to separate what is dangerously mixed; to distribute the inside and outside properly; to trace the boundaries between what is pure and what is impure.

Truth henceforth forms part of the great juridical, religious, and moral rituals required by the city. A city without truth is a threatened city. Threatened by mixtures, impurities, unfulfilled exclusions. The city needs the truth as a principle of division. It needs discourses of truth as it needs those who maintain the divisions.

II—But the juridical-religious structure of purity envelops another type of relation to the truth. We could indicate this in this way:

α—One who is impure threatens all those around him with his impurity. He is a danger for the family, for the city, and for its wealth. Where he is, “the city is drowned by a swell of blood, it perishes in its deep seeds, it perishes in its herds; it perishes in women’s abortions” (*Oedipus the King*, 24-27).¹² Wherever *nomos* reigns, that is to say, throughout the space that constitutes the city, the criminal is dangerous. His pollution compromises the order of things and of men.

β—That is why he must be excluded from this *nomos*, from the “social space” that defines the city.

“No one must receive him, or speak to him, or make him take part in prayers and sacrifice to the gods; no one must share with him the lustral water; all must drive him from their homes” (*Oedipus the King*, 236-241).¹³

The impure is coextensive with the *nomos* in its effects, and the region from which it is excluded must also be coextensive with the *nomos*.

γ—But in what is it impure? Of what does this impurity consist? What gesture, then, qualifies it as impure? It is that of having voluntarily or involuntarily ignored the *nomos*.

For the Homeric hero, punishment took place either because he had forgotten the rule (in a moment of blindness), or because he had provoked the gods' jealousy.

Under the reign of *nomos*, the offence consists in ignoring a law that is there, visible to, and known by everyone, made public in the city and decipherable in the order of nature. The impure is someone who has had his eyes closed to the *nomos*. He is impure because he is *anomos*.

δ—But if one is impure for having been blind to the *nomos*, when one is impure, when one is a source of disorder for the *nomos*, one can no longer see it. One becomes blind to its lawfulness.

Nomos as principle of distribution, as principle of the just dividing up, is inevitably inaccessible to the impure. Disclosure of the order of things, which enables the *nomos* to be stated and provides its justification, will remain impossible for someone who is impure. Conversely, purity is the condition for access to the law: for seeing the order of things and for being able to utter the *nomos*. This median place, which as we have seen is the fictitious site where the lawgiver like Solon places himself, can only be occupied by someone who is pure.

Purity is the condition required to tell of and see the *nomos* as manifestation of order. The purity/impurity separation is thus connected to the *nomos* in four ways:

- impurity produces its effects in the space of the *nomos* (which is why exile is purification in itself) (division, separation, non-mixture);
- impurity must be excluded from the *nomos* and according to the *nomos* itself. It is the law that says it is necessary to exclude;
- but impurity occurred only because one was already excluded from the *nomos* due to ignorance or blindness. And if one is blind to the *nomos*, it is because one is impure.
- The relations between impurity and the law are finally sealed through the intermediary of knowledge. To be able to state the law, one must not be impure. But to be pure one must know the law.

A whole ethics of truth, from which we have not yet escaped, is in the process of being brought together, even though we now receive only muffled echoes from this formidable event.

* * *

A number of important figures in Greek thought revolve around this purity-disclosure of order relation.

1. THE FIGURE OF THE SAGE

This figure is located at the origin of the distribution of political power. Not where political power is exercised violently and by constraint, but where its law is formulated. The sage's place is in the middle. Sometimes, like Solon, he does not exercise power and merely expresses the law. And if some tyrants are ranked [at this] level, it is to the (mythical) extent to which they let [the law] be brought to bear by itself, have no need of guards, and the *nomos* passes through them without violence.

But at the same time the sage is someone who knows the order of things. He is acquainted with the world because he has travelled, because he has gathered lessons from afar, and because he has observed the heavens and eclipses.

Finally, the sage is someone who is not stained by any crime.

A certain place is defined which is that of the founder (rather than possessor) of political power, of the expert of the order of the world (rather than the keeper of traditional rules), of the man with pure hands (rather than the one who is forever taking up the challenge of vengeance). But we need to recognize that this is a fictitious figure behind whose mask economic and political processes continue to operate.*

* The partial oral transcript is even more explicit:

"Thus a certain place is defined which is at the same time that of the founder of political power rather than of its possessor, that of the expert of the order of the world rather than that of the keeper of traditional rules, and that of the man with pure hands rather than that of the hero who is forever taking up the challenge of vengeance. It is this that defines the bond on the basis of which the whole of knowledge as practiced by the Greeks will be deployed: juridical knowledge of the law, philosophical knowledge of the world, moral knowledge of virtue...and the figure of the sage is the mask behind which economic processes are preserved, maintained, and transformed into political institutions."

2. ANOTHER FIGURE, THAT OF POPULAR POWER

This power, the negative figure of which appears in Plato, Aristotle, less [in] Aristophanes than in Thucydides, is a power which does not respect the *nomos* but changes it through discourse, discussion, the vote, and a changeable will. Popular power does not know the *nomos*. It is excluded from knowledge (from political knowledge and the knowledge of things).

Although the procedures are now no longer exclusively in the hands of the important families, knowledge of the law, of *nomos*, of the good order of the city, is confined to that fictitious site that only sages can occupy.

But popular power is not merely ignorant. It is inevitably impure since it is *anomos*. Popular power harkens only to its interests and desires. It is violent: it imposes its will on everyone. It is murderous. And in a privileged fashion, it kills the sage, as the one who occupies the place where the laws speak.

Popular power is criminal in essence—criminal in relation to what, since it expresses the will of all? It is criminal in relation to *nomos*, to the law as foundation of the city's existence. Popular power is crime against the very nature of the city.*

The sage as pure keeper of knowledge and *nomos* therefore has to protect the city against itself and prohibit it from governing itself.¹⁴

Wisdom: fictitious site which functions as real prohibition.

3. BETWEEN THE TWO, THE TYRANT

Figure of the effective holder of power:

- an absolutely negative figure when he comes close to popular power and embodies it;
- a figure who becomes positive insofar as he lets himself be persuaded by the sage.

* The lecture adds:

“In fourth century aristocratic thought, the murder of Socrates is this exclusion of the sage by popular power.”

We can see that this interdependence of knowledge and power, and this connection of *nomos* to truth through the intermediary of purity, are very different from what we were saying with regard to purity and the event.

We have seen that impurity put to knowledge the question of fact, more precisely it put the question: who did it? And we saw that it was fundamentally important to purity that the crime be established. (Truth of the fact, which allows exclusion of the impurity, and purity, which allows access to knowledge of the order.)

But we see that it is not in order to know the facts that purity is essential, but in order to know the very order of the world; whoever is impure cannot know the order of things.

Now in this second type of relation (in which it is no longer a question of fact, but of order; in which it is no longer a question of impurity which demands knowledge, but of impurity which prevents knowledge), we find Oedipus again. Oedipus (this is said several times at the start of the text) is the one who put the city right, who set it straight again (*orthos*);¹⁵ these are the terms traditionally employed to designate the work of the lawgiver. Now he did this by solving an enigma: so by his thought, his knowledge, etcetera. But he became impure by being blind to the most fundamental *nomos*—father and mother.¹⁶ And now he no longer knows what to do, for although he does not yet know this, his impurity has put him outside the *nomos*. He no longer knows the order of things and the human order.

The person whose thought kept the city straight no longer knows.

Hence the appeal to all those who may know: from the god to the shepherd. He places himself at a remove from the sources of knowledge. He is no longer in the middle of the city. And every time a piece of news arrives, a fragment of knowledge, he recognizes (and is not mistaken) that a part of his power is being taken from him.

The dispute with Creon is at the center of the tragedy. Purity links knowledge and power. Impurity covers up knowledge and drives out from power.

And finally, Oedipus, joining together these two forms of relation between *purity* and *truth*, is the one who still does not know the truth of the fact at the point when everyone is already capable of knowing it; and he does not know it because he is impure and, being impure, he does not know the order of things and of men. (He suspects a plot, a threat,

he wants to kill, to exile Creon, he is *unjust* as he himself will recognize when the truth will have forced his access...

* * *

Maybe the story of Oedipus points to a certain form that Greece gave to truth and its relations with power and impurity.* Maybe Oedipus does not recount the destiny of our instincts or of our desire. But maybe it indicates a certain system of constraint with which the discourse of truth in Western societies has complied since Greece.

The political, juridical, and religious requirement to transform the recurrences, temporal flashes, and disequilibria of the event into established and definitively preserved facts in the *observation* of witnesses; the political, juridical, and religious requirement to found the principle of the distribution of power on the knowledge of an order of things to which wisdom alone gives access (and so the requirement that the *nomos* be founded on a knowledge-virtue which is quite simply respect for the *nomos*)—these are the historical constraints imposed on true discourse, the historical functions confided to true discourse which Oedipus recounts.

Freud, advancing in the direction of the relations between desire and truth, thought that Oedipus was speaking to him about the universal forms of desire;¹⁷ whereas it was telling him about the historical constraints of our system of truth (of the system that Freud was coming up against). (The culturalists' mistake concerning Freud's mistake.)¹⁸

If we are subject to an Oedipal determination, it is not at the level of our desire, but at the level of our true discourse. It is this determination that subjects the thunderbolt of the event to the yoke of the observed fact; and which subjects the requirement of the distribution [of power] to purified knowledge—purifier of the law.

The system of the signifier as what marks the event in order to insert it into the law of a distribution is indeed an important element of this Oedipal constraint, it is this that has to be overturned.

But maybe this Oedipal determination is not the most fundamental thing to be found in the determination of true discourse as it functions

* From here, ms page 18, corrections and rewritings seem to indicate that it is no longer a matter of one and the same lecture, but of different presentations. (See Appendix below, p. 195 et seq.)

in Western societies. Maybe the most important thing would be this: in the great political reorganization and redistribution in the seventh and sixth centuries, a fictitious place was fixed where power is founded on a truth which is only accessible on guarantee of purity.

This *fictitious place* was marked out by projection from a class struggle, a shift of power, an interplay of alliance and transaction which halted the great popular demand for a full and egalitarian distribution of the land. This fictitious place excludes recognition of the both political and factual character of the processes that enabled it to be defined.

This place can only fail to understand its having been produced historically. A discourse will be delivered from this place which will claim to be:

- as regards its content, what it talks about: a discourse revealing the order of the world and things down to the singularity of the fact;
- as regards its function, its role: a just discourse governing, or serving as the model for political relations between men, and allowing the exclusion of all that is anomic;
- as regards the subject who delivers it: a discourse to which one can have access only at the price of innocence and virtue, that is to say, outside the field of power and desire.

Fiction: that is to say *invented* site which will hold a discourse of truth (which will gradually be specified in philosophical, scientific, and political discourse)—*

* * *

* After this dash, the rest of the page is crossed out. We have thought it illuminating to restore it as a note:

“And it is this fictitious place that, in turn or simultaneously, will qualify the following as able to deliver this discourse:

- the sage (as lawgiver, as teller of the Law, revealer and founder of order),
- the theologian (as the interpreter of God’s word, as the revealer of God’s thought, will, and being),
- the scientist (as discoverer of the world’s truth, one who states things themselves or their relations),
- the philosopher (as one who states the form and foundation of all possible truth).

Now, we can see, if this fictitious place qualifies them for telling the truth, this is subject to a double condition of:

- on the one hand, remaining set back in relation to the exercise of power. They can found it, they can say what the good distribution of power is, but on condition of not taking part in it and of remaining outside the actual exercise of a power;
- and, on the other, the imposition of the restrictive conditions of purity, innocence, and non-criminality.”

*1. What is involved is the analysis of what could be called discursive events:¹⁹ namely, events concerning the mode of appropriation of (political-judicial) discourse, its functioning, and the forms and contents of knowledge to which it accords the role that it plays in social struggles.

Two comments:

By *event* I do not mean an indivisible unity that could be situated univocally on temporal and spatial coordinates. An event²⁰ is always a dispersion; a multiplicity. It is what takes place here and there; it is polycephalous.

By discursive event I do not understand an event that occurs in a discourse, in a text. But it is an event which is dispersed between institutions, laws, political victories and defeats, demands, behaviors, revolts, reactions. Multiplicity that we can recognize and describe as discursive event insofar as its effect is to define:

- the place and role of a type of discourse,
- the quality of the person who must deliver it,
- the domain of objects to which it is addressed,
- the type of statements to which it gives rise.

In sum, the discursive event is never textual. We do not find it in a text.

2. To try to see whether the emergence of truth as we find it in Plato or Aristotle could be treated as a discursive event.

- that is to say, outside of any search for the origin: outside of any search that would like [to find], beyond history, the foundation of the possibility of history itself;
- that is to say, on the basis of a series of humble and external processes: peasant debt, subterfuge in the establishment of money, displacement of the rites of purification, small humble origins;

* Here begin three unnumbered sheets with a slightly different handwriting. Are they part of the same lecture, replacing the page crossed out, or part of a summary in other circumstances? It is difficult to decide.

—that is to say again, on the basis of a history [other] than that of [the] struggle conducted around political power by opposed social classes.

All in all, to try to show truth as an effect of this struggle at the level of discursive practices.

To find again that something altogether different Nietzsche spoke about.

3. Not to look for a link of expression and/or reflection between these struggles and their effect in discourse. Rather, it is a matter of showing:

—how, at a given moment, the class struggle may call upon certain types of discourse (Eastern knowledge); or

—how the class struggle defines the fictitious place of discourse and the (real or ideal) quality of the person who can and must take it up; or

—how a certain type of object can become an object of discourse serving as an instrument in this struggle; or

—how this discourse exercises a function of occultation in relation to the struggle that made it possible.

It is this set of relations that is to be analyzed in terms of conditions of possibility, function, appropriation, and encoding. And not [in terms] of a reflection.*

* * *

APPENDIX PRESERVED FRAGMENT OF THE TRANSCRIPTION OF THE LECTURE GIVEN

The Oedipus story points to a certain form that Greece gave to the truth and the relations that truth maintains with power, on the one hand,

* This abrupt ending may indicate that some sheets are missing. A preserved fragment of the oral transcription corresponds faithfully to the synthetic notes of the auditor, Hélène Politis. They are given here as an appendix.

and with purity, on the other. Maybe we should say that the Oedipus fable does not recount the destiny of our desire and our institutions; it could well be that the Oedipus fable speaks rather of a certain system of constraints to which, since Greece, the discourse of truth in Western societies conforms. And this system of constraints shown by the Oedipus fable could be characterized very schematically in the following way:

On the one hand, the political, juridical, and religious requirement to transform the event, its recurrences and figurations over time, into established and definitively preserved facts in the *observation* of witnesses. Subjecting the event to the form of the observed fact is the first aspect of Oedipal truth.

On the other hand, the requirement—also political, juridical, and religious—of founding the principle of the distribution of power on the knowledge of an order of things to which only wisdom and purity give access. In other words, the other aspect of this Oedipal system of truth will be to found the *nomos* on a knowledge-virtue which is quite simply in itself respect for the *nomos*. Truth will be given only to someone who respects the *nomos* and he will arrive at the truth of the *nomos* only on condition of being pure.

The transformation of the lightning flash of the event into observed fact, and access to truth given only to someone who respects the *nomos*, are the two great historical constraints that, since Greece, have been imposed on the true discourse of Western societies, and it is the birth, the formation of these historical constraints that *Oedipus* recounts.

So that Freud, in advancing in the direction of the relation between desire and truth, was mistaken; he thought that Oedipus was speaking to him about the universal forms of desire, whereas, in lowered voice, the Oedipus fable was recounting to him the historical constraint weighing on our system of truth, on that system to which Freud himself belonged. When culturalists reproach the Freudian analysis of Oedipus with the fact that Freud gave it infinitely too much universality, when they say that Oedipus is only valid for certain European societies, they are no doubt mistaken, but they only make a mistake about Freud's own mistake.

Freud thought that Oedipus spoke to him about desire, whereas Oedipus, himself, was talking about the truth. It is quite possible that Oedipus may not define the very structure of desire, but what Oedipus

recounts is simply the history of our truth and not the destiny of our instincts. We are subject to an Oedipal determination, not at the level of our desire, but at the level of our true discourse. In hearing the true discourse of desire, Freud thought that he was hearing desire speaking, whereas it was the echo of his own true discourse, whereas it was the form to which his true discourse was subject.

Thus we see taking shape the system of constraints and that determination that subjects the thunderbolt of the event to the yoke of the observed fact; this is what subjects the requirement of universal distribution, regularly repeated, to the purified and purifying knowledge of the unchanging law. If we add to this that the system of the signifier is undoubtedly a system which allows the event to be marked so as to insert it into the law of distribution, we can see how the signifier is what enables the lightning flash of the event to be subjected to the yoke of the observed fact, and what also allows reduction of the requirement of distribution to the purified knowledge of the law. The system of the signifier is the major instrumental element in this Oedipal constraint; which is why the order of the signifier has to be overturned.

Thus, I have tried to analyze the relation between truth and the system of purification in historical terms, but the project of analyzing the "Will to know" has not been carried out.

The hypothesis of this analysis was that the Aristotelian model appeared to characterize classical philosophy. This model entails that the Will to know (*savoir*) is nothing other than curiosity, that knowledge (*connaissance*) is always already marked in the form of sensation, and finally that there was an inherent relation between knowledge and life.

The Nietzschean model, on the other hand, claims that the Will to know (*savoir*) refers not to knowledge (*connaissance*) but to something altogether different, that behind the Will to know there is not a sort of preexisting knowledge that is something like sensation, but instinct, struggle, the Will to power. The Nietzschean model, moreover, claims that the Will to know is not originally linked to the Truth: it claims that the Will to know composes illusions, fabricates lies, accumulates errors, and is deployed in a space of fiction where the truth itself is only an effect. It claims, furthermore, that the Will to know is not given in

the form of subjectivity and that the subject is only a kind of product of the Will to know, in the double game of the Will to power and to truth. Finally, for Nietzsche, the Will to know does not assume the preexistence of a knowledge already there; truth is not given in advance; it is produced as an event.

The task proposed was to test the utilizability of the Nietzschean model and to put to work the four principles found in Nietzschean analysis:

- 1—The principle of exteriority: that behind knowledge (*savoir*) there is something altogether different from knowledge;
- 2—The principle of fiction: truth is only an effect of fiction and error;
- 3—The principle of dispersion: a subject is not the bearer of truth, but truth itself passes through a multiplicity of events that constitute it;
- 4—The principle of the event.

I have begun to tackle the analysis on the basis of these principles.

With regard to the principle of exteriority, I have never tried to analyze the text on the basis of the text itself.

As far as possible I have tried to get rid of the principle of exegesis, of commentary; I have never tried to know the non-said which was present or absent in the texture of the text itself.

I have tried to get rid of textuality by situating myself in the dimension of history, that is to say locating discursive events that take place, not within the text or several texts, but through the fact of the function or role given to different discourses within a society.

Going outside the text so as to find the function of discourse within a society is what I call the principle of exteriority. As for the principle of fiction, I have tried to show how the effect of truth could arise from something that not only had nothing to do with the truth, but that, from the point of view of the truth constituted in this way, we can only recognize as untrue, illusory, or fictitious.

I have tried in this way to show how measurement arose from a currency; how this knowledge of the order of things and the order of men, which was the guarantee of the unity of things with men, arose only as a pretext from an economic and political caesura.

The *symbolon*

divination	(1) <i>Apollo</i> It is necessary to punish Lack: the person one must punish	<i>Teiresias</i> It is Oedipus
hearing memory	(2) <i>Jocasta</i> It is not you (a) It was a robber at the crossroads (b) And in any case he had to be killed by his son, who was got rid of	<i>Oedipus</i> It is me I killed him at the crossroads After having fled my parents
testimony	(3) <i>Corinthian</i> I got him from the person with whom he had been left	<i>Servant</i> I got him from his parents Laius and Jocasta

The *symbolon* was Oedipus himself. Given by somebody, received by another. To half of the story held by the servants corresponds the other half held by the masters. Only the gods know everything. King Oedipus was caught between the gods who knew everything and the servants who had seen everything. He knew nothing.

This visual testimony was necessary for the prophecy to be effectuated, realized.

But as a result, he loses power. He really was the tyrant extending his power over *gnōmē*, *technē*. He is the ignorant king. So delivered up to the wheel of Fortune.

Not having really put the city right, he can no longer rule it. See Creon's last question: Do you still want to command?*

* This passage is returned to in "La vérité et les formes juridiques" (1974), lecture in Rio de Janeiro in 1973, in *Dits et Écrits, II*, pp. 538-646; "Quarto" ed., vol. I, pp. 1406-1490; English translation by Robert Hurley, "Truth and Juridical Forms" in *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, Vol. Three. Power*, pp. 1-89.

1. Sophocle, *Œdipe roi*, 96-101, ed. and trans. P. Masqueray (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1922) p. 144; English translation by David Grene, Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* in *Sophocles I. Three Tragedies* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991) pp. 14-15:

Creon ...

King Phoebus in plain words commanded us
to drive out a pollution from our land,
pollution grown ingrained within the land;
drive it out, said the God, not cherish it,
till it's past cure.

Oedipus

What is the rite
of purification? How shall it be done?

Creon

By banishing a man, or expiation
of blood by blood, since it is murder guilt
which holds our city in this destroying storm.

2. The option of exile or death is normal in Attica. On the other hand, the penalty for parricide is invariably death. If Apollo had announced that the guilty man had to be killed, it would have been understood that he is a member of the family of Laius.

3. Sophocle, *Œdipe roi*, 106-111, p. 145; *Oedipus the King*, p. 15:

Creon

The God commanded clearly: let some one
punish with force this dead man's murderers.

Oedipus

Where are they in the world? Where would a trace
of this old crime be found? It would be hard
to guess where.

Creon

The clue is in this land:
that which is sought is found;
the unheeded thing escapes;
so said the God.

4. *Histôr*: arbiter, one who knows. See above, p. 82 note 12.
5. L. Moulinier, "Le Pur et l'Impur," p. 85: "to punish is to purify the entire city of the pollution."
6. Antiphon, "Hérode" §10; Antiphon, "On the Murder of Herodes" §10.
7. E. Will distinguishes *miasma*, a notion of prehistoric origin (but absent in Homer, according to Moulinier), concrete defilement—literally: dirt to which defilement is limited in Homer and Hesiod—from the *agos* (Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, 1426), defilement and curse at the same time. The murderer is *miaros*, that is to say marked with an invisible stain which establishes a break between the man and what is *hieros*, sacred, what falls within a transcendent order. To approach the sacred one must make oneself *katharos*, pure. See E. Will, *Le Monde grec et l'Orient*, vol. I, pp. 522-525.
8. Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, 41-43, p. 12:
"Priest... we all entreat you,
find us some strength for rescue.
Perhaps you'll hear a wise word from some God,
perhaps you will learn something from a man."
See 41-45.

9. *Ibid.*, 333, p. 24: "I will tell you nothing."

10. It seems that at the time of this lecture Foucault did not know of the book by B. Knox, *Oedipus at Thebes* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press and Oxford University Press, 1957), which deals with Sophocles' tragedy on the basis of the judicial procedure of investigation as instituted in fifth century Athens, and with reference to the imperialist policy of Athens.

11. Moulinier, in "Le Pur et l'Impur," pp. 60-61, writes: "It is the drama that teaches us that Orestes and Oedipus are polluted...Pollutions enter the written legends after Homer and Hesiod. Previously we were not told that they were."
12. Sophocle, *Edipe roi*, p. 142: Thebes is "drowned in a bloody surf: it perishes in the fruitful seeds of the earth, it perishes in the cattle in the fields, in the sterile abortions of women"; Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, pp. 11-12: Thebes

"...can scarcely lift its brow
out of the depths, out of the bloody surf.
A blight is on the fruitful plants of the earth,
A blight is on the cattle in the fields,
a blight is on our women that no children
are born to them."
13. *Ibid.*, p. 149; *ibid.*, p. 20:

"...I forbid any to welcome him
or cry him greeting or make him a sharer
in sacrifice or offering to the Gods,
or give him water for his hands to wash.
I command all to drive him from their homes."
14. See V. Ehrenberg, *Sophocles and Pericles* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1954).
15. *Oedipus the King*, 39, *orthosai*, 46, *anorthoson*, 50, *orthon*, 51, *anorthoson*.
16. L. Moulinier, "Le Pur et l'Impur" p. 199: "There are two causes of the impurity of Oedipus, the murder and the incest, but sexual purity is not a Greek notion."
17. S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1958) vol. IV.
18. Probably an allusion to Bronislaw Malinowski, *Sex and Repression in Savage Society* (London: Routledge, 2002 [1927]): "By implicitly accepting that the Oedipus complex exists in all forms of society, psychoanalysts have seriously vitiated their anthropological work." [I have not been able to trace this quotation in the original English edition of the work. The editor's note cites the French translation, by S. Jankélévitch, *La Sexualité et sa répression dans les sociétés primitives* (Paris: Payot, 1932), p. 189; G.B.]
19. Discursive events: this notion, introduced into Foucauldian analysis fairly recently, appeared in "Sur l'archéologie des sciences. Réponse au Cercle d'épistémologie" (1968), *Dits et Écrits*, I, pp. 696-731; "Quarto" ed., vol. I, pp. 724-759; English translation as "On the Archeology of the Sciences: Response to the Epistemological Circle" in Michel Foucault, *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984. Volume Two: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley and others (New York and London: The New Press/Penguin Books, 1998). Previously Foucault spoke of "discourse as event."
20. The description of the event: "a set of singularities, of singular points characterizing a mathematical curve, a physical state of affairs, a psychological and moral person," is fundamental for Deleuze. See Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale (London: Athlone Press, 1990) p. 52.