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Michel Foucault: A Reading of his Legacy in Light of Critical Theory

by

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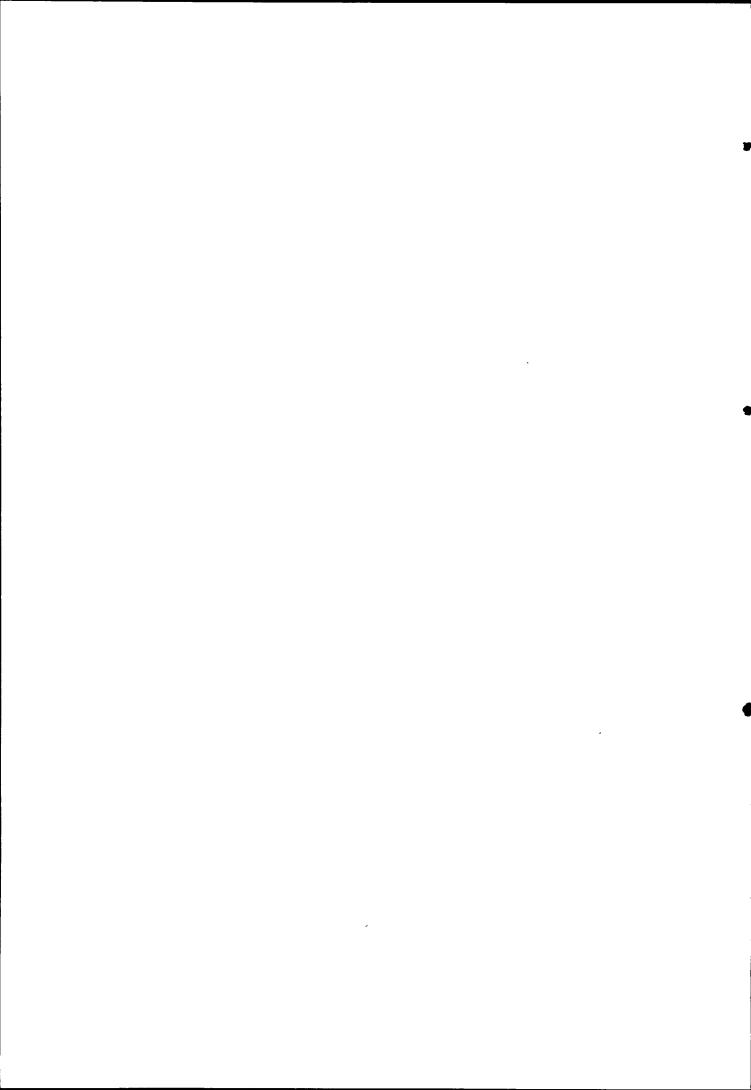


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Introduction

This introduction has three objectives. First, it will shed light on the life, education and philosophical project of Michel Foucault and situate him within the context of the philosophical trends of France at his time. Second, it will offer an explanation of why Foucault has been singled out for further research and exploration by stating the objective of the dissertation. Finally, it will give a brief outline of the divisions of the chapters and their main contents.

Foucault was born on 15th October 1926, in Poitiers, a provincial city three hundred kilometers to the southwest of Paris, to Paul Foucault and Anne Malapert. In 1930, he was enrolled in the elementary class at the Lycée Henri-IV. He spent two years in the elementary class, moving into the primary class of the Lycée in 1932 and remaining there until 1936. In 1940, he transferred to the Jesuit Collège Saint-Stanislaus and received his *baccalauréat* in 1943. After the War, Foucault gained entry to the École Normale Supérieure d'Ulm in Paris, which has such a high status that it is the conventional route to an academic career in France. For instance, Henri Bergson, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jacques Derrida, Georges

Dumézil, Georges Canguilhem and Jean Hypolite are all graduates of this institution. In addition to his degree in philosophy (1948), he also earned a degree in psychology in 1949. In 1951, he obtained an *agrégation* and in 1952 a diploma in psychopathology from the Institute of Psychology in Paris.

Due to the encouragement of his teacher Louis Althussuer, Foucault joined the French Communist Party from 1950 to 1953. However, he withdrew due to his disillusionment with the Soviet Union under the rule of Stalin.

After a brief career at the École Normale, he taught psychology to philosophy students at the University of Lille from 1953 to 1954. In 1954, he published his first book, Maladie Mentale et Personalité. In the same year, he left France for Sweden to hold the position of the cultural delegate of France to the University of Uppsala. He left Uppsala in 1958 and moved to Poland to become the head of the French Centre of the University in Warsaw. He then moved to Germany to be in charge of the French Cultural Institute in Hamburg.

After these diplomatic French cultural jobs around Europe, Foucault returned to France in 1960 to complete his doctorate and hold a post in philosophy at the University of Clermont-Ferrand. In 1961, he