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*The Operating Instructions*  
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## Foucault in Late Antiquity: Technologies, Hermeneutics, Practices of the Self

In his first lecture of his final year at the Collège de France, Michel Foucault sweepingly declares: “Connecting together modes of veridiction, techniques of governmentality, and practices of the self is basically what I have always been trying to do.”<sup>i</sup> With this flourish in 1984, Foucault frames his long-standing and slowly-unfolding analyses of the relations between knowledge, power, and ethics.

It is well-known that Foucault becomes attentive to the technologies of the self as a central category of analysis, most notably in his 1982 lectures at the University of Vermont. What remains to be appreciated is how Foucault moves from technologies to hermeneutics to practices of the self in concert with his changing understandings of late ancient Christian practice. Foucault’s posthumously published draft of *History of Sexuality IV: Confessions of the Flesh* (2018; tr. 2021) now enables us to parse the technologies of the self from the hermeneutics of desire from the practices of the self in Foucault’s reading of early Christianity.

With these distinctions in place, Foucault spends his last years developing the ethical force of “a practice of freedom,” and through my archival research at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, I sketch Foucault’s work on the practices of the self in antiquity in the form of a volume ready to be edited yet left incomplete.<sup>ii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1983-1984*, ed. Frédéric Gros, trans. Graham Burchell (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 8.

<sup>ii</sup> Michel Foucault, “Ethics as the Care of the Self as the Practice of Freedom,” in *The Final Foucault*, ed. James Bernauer (MA: MIT Press, 1987), 1, 14; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Fonds Foucault, NAF 28730, Boîtes 72-74, with a note from Daniel Defert (Foucault’s partner) indicating that Foucault had considered this volume drafted and ready for editing.