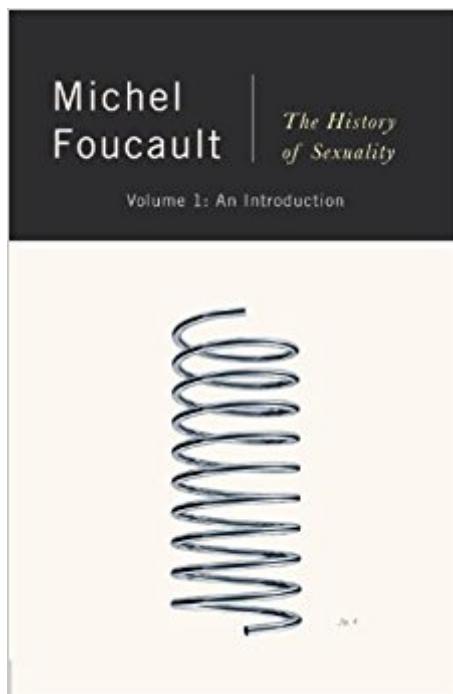


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The History Of Sexuality: An Introduction: 1



Synopsis

The author turns his attention to sex and the reasons why we are driven constantly to analyze and discuss it. An iconoclastic explanation of modern sexual history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This text is perhaps Foucault's most well-known, although it might not be his best. It is an important work, so if you are at all interested in sex as an abstract and organizing principle, this is a must-read. (Note: it is not a history in the proper sense of the term). While not a terribly confusing book, it is WIDELY misunderstood, including by many of the reviewers. First off, do not make the mistake of reading the first section as Foucault's thesis (it may seem that way)--he is presenting the common approach to the issue, one that he will eventually CHALLENGE. "Sex" was never repressed--on the contrary, there has been an explosion of discourses, a productive manifestation of power. Foucault admits that this was partially organized through technologies of confession, normalization, etc.-BUT THAT IS NOT THE MAIN THRUST. The main idea of the text is that there is no commanding, Platonic principle "sex" that we must uncover or saturate ourselves with, and hence, while prudery seems suspect, liberation through "sex" or "sex-desire" is entirely nonsensical, since sex is subordinate to sexuality and not vice-versa. Foucault, with much uncertainty, thereby

envisions a different economy of bodies and pleasures, more like the *ars erotica*, that focuses on the local and individual, with all their multiple possibilities for deeper value and communication. Hence, despite what people make of Foucault's life, this book is more "conservative" than one would imagine... It is ideal for anyone who wants to free themselves from either a deep-rooted fear of sex or the incessant demands sex makes from on high (from the media, etc.) To Foucault, the idea that sex is seen as a requirement for one's deepest sense of being is absurd (and almost comical).

More like a 3.5 if that was an option. Part of me hates rating this book so low, but I really have to. Here's why. I love and hate Foucault more than just about any other philosopher. He is probably the pre-eminent French philosopher of his generation. The problem is that he is probably also the worst French historian of all time. Foucault certainly has his moments and he's consistently entertaining (he's a very good writer and judging from his lectures, a great lecturer), but underneath it all, he's fundamentally lazy - he never does research studies or clinical work, he never looks outside France, he uses translations and secondary sources when he should be using original texts, he cites literature as if it is representative of the masses in the society in which it was written. Yet his writing is so confident, and his ideas so interesting and self-assured people believe him without checking his sources or his historical assertions. He reminds me of the student I always have in my class who comes up with the best ideas but is unwilling to follow them through. The B student that should be an A+ student. He doesn't do homework, he doesn't show his work. I have to give them split grades. I'd give Foucault a split grade if I could - Ideas 5/5. Reasoning and Research 2/5. In Foucault's case, he didn't do research outside France, he didn't reference or respond to contemporary History of Ideas works on Sexuality (e.g. Otto Kiefer's Sexuality in Rome and Greece, Van Gulick's Sexuality in Ancient China), he failed to develop a basic understanding of medicine, he cherrypicked texts that suited his arguments and failed to consider opposing arguments, and his Greek and Latin leave something to be desired.

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