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Putting Foucault to Work: Analytic and Concept in Foucaultian Inquiry

Colin Koopman and Tomas Matza

1. A Plurality of Foucaultian Inquiries

Is there a single area of intellectual inquiry in the humanities and social sciences where the work of Michel Foucault is not taken seriously? Discipline, biopolitics, governmentality, power/knowledge, subjectivation, genealogy, archaeology, problematization—these are just a few of the many Foucaultisms that have been adopted in fields such as philosophy, sociology, cultural anthropology, political science, history, literary studies, area studies, and much else besides. Just a short list of the forms of Foucault's influence would necessarily include certain of his philosophical commitments, methodological strategies, discursive resources, and materials for reflection.

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We regard Foucault's influence as productive; many explicit and implicit features of his work have been put to use in researches that range well beyond his own thinking. Yet in pushing beyond Foucault with Foucault, we expose ourselves to dangers as well as opportunities. If not sufficiently self-reflective, our uses of Foucault may run counter to his own work or, more problematically, counter to our own intentions and efforts as these motivate our inquiries.

In this essay, we reflect on some of the ways Foucault's work has prompted new forms of inquiry in researches that had previously assumed universalist, structuralist, or otherwise ahistorical forms. Our aim is to offer a vocabulary for making sense of these various uses of Foucault and, in so doing, focus more clearly on particular senses in which inquiry can make productive use of Foucault. To clarify the stakes and outcomes of this endeavor, we draw on two uses of Foucault from our independent research projects: one, an ethnographic study of new knowledge practices surrounding the human subject in post-Communist Russia; the other, a genealogical inquiry into the emergence of liberalism in America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

We cite here, as a preparatory example of this operation, Stuart Hall's explication of Antonio Gramsci. Noting that Gramsci was not a "'general theorist'" but rather "a political intellectual and socialist activist on the Italian political scene," Hall cautions against "mistak[ing] the level of application at which Gramsci's concepts operate." Gramsci's concepts "were quite explicitly designed to operate at the lower levels of historical concreteness." Thus, "to make more general use of them, they have to be delicately dis-interred from their concrete and specific historical embeddedness and transplanted to new soil with

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considerable care and patience."[1] Although for different reasons, it is important for critical social science and critical philosophy to avoid a straightforward application of Foucault. Such application can have a double-negative effect—on the one hand, warping empirical materials by subjecting them to a framework whose contours were developed elsewhere and, on the other hand, warping concepts by affixing them to new contexts where they do not easily apply, such that we force ourselves to strip empiricities of their historicities.

Such methodological warping occurs when forms of inquiry are not clear about which elements or aspects of a body of work they deploy. In the fields of political anthropology and political philosophy, for example, Foucault's important intervention in discussions of state power and the productivity of discourse has enabled a turn away from top-down theorizations of the state and toward new empirical and theoretical approaches to government and subject-formation. Yet many projects have, we suggest, taken Foucault's historically derived (and therefore highly context specific) concepts as universal categories. It is important for inquiry conducted in a Foucaultian spirit to clarify the different senses in which such work might be Foucaultian. Thus we will be able to appropriate from Foucault what we need while leaving aside what we do not.

To facilitate projects of discriminating separable aspects of Foucault's work, we explicate a taxonomical distinction that we have found helpful in our own work. A distinction between *concepts* and *analytics* allows us to clearly distinguish those aspects of Foucault's work that are important to our respective projects, those that are not, and those that may prove useful but only if transformed. Through the prism of our respective projects, we also illuminate from different angles the relationships among these various elements. These distinctions have been particularly important in our own research for resisting the temptation to turn Foucault's work into a global theory of power, or of modes of subjectivation, or of anything else. Foucault offers empirically specific inquiries whose analytical methods are useful for contemporary critical inquiry.

The taxonomy outlined below is of course only one possible way to carve up the armature furnished in Foucault's work. That said, given the general lack of critical attention amongst Foucaultian inquirers to these

1. Stuart Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10 (June 1986): 5, 7, 6–7.

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sorts of methodological questions, we expect that our proposed taxonomy might be useful for others, even if only provisionally. In this spirit, we offer to those who draw from Foucault—whether under the banner of a Foucaultian or genealogical or poststructuralist flag or something else altogether—tools for distinguishing those elements in Foucault's thought that their own inquiries do and do not require. The lessons herein, we believe, are generalizable to the uses of the work of other prominent thinkers—though we shall not discuss that in what follows.

Why are these tools useful? Consider the case of governmentality studies. Anthropologists (and others) have deployed Foucault's concept of governmentality in geographic locales that have very different historical relations to the genealogy of liberalism that was Foucault's own implicit context of inquiry. There are potentially grave risks here; inasmuch as the genealogy of liberalism is fundamental to governmentality as Foucault conceptualized it, much work is requisite to disinter the concept from its original sites.[2] However, we suggest that this also poses numerous opportunities: examining the formation of political rationalities in places characterized by different assemblages of sovereignty-discipline-government; using comparison to illuminate previously hidden aspects of liberal governmentality; and more effectively tracking advanced liberal rationalities as they continue their spread, sometimes perniciously and sometimes melioratively but never innocently, around the globe.[3] Or consider studies of biopolitics, where there are similar risks and opportunities.[4] Deploying biopower as a

2. For a critique of applications of neoliberal governmentality to research in China, see Andrew B. Kipnis, "Audit Cultures: Neoliberal Governmentality, Socialist Legacy, or Technologies of Governing?" *American Ethnologist* 35 (June 2008): 275–89. For examples of ethnographies that seek to more carefully explore governmentality in other locales, see Tania Murray Li, *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics* (Durham, N.C., 2007), and Donald S. Moore, *Suffering for Territory: Race, Place, and Power in Zimbabwe* (Durham, N.C., 2005).

3. See, for example, Matza, "Moscow's Echo: Technologies of the Self, Publics, and Politics on the Russian Talk Show," *Cultural Anthropology* 24 (Aug. 2009): 489–522; Stephen J. Collier, *Post-Soviet Social: Neoliberalism, Social Modernity, Biopolitics* (Princeton, N.J., 2011); James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development," Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Minneapolis, 1994); James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta, "Spatializing States: Toward an Ethnography of Neoliberal Governmentality," *American Ethnologist* 29 (Nov. 2002): 981–1002; Matza, "'Good Individualism'? Psychology, Ethics, and Neoliberalism in Postsocialist Russia," *American Ethnologist* 39 (Nov 2012): 804–18; Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham, N.C., 2006); Julia Paley, *Marketing Democracy: Power and Social Movements in Post-Dictatorship Chile* (Berkeley, 2001); and Lisa Rofel, *Desiring China: Experiments in Neoliberalism, Sexuality, and Public Culture* (Durham, N.C., 2007).

4. A helpful summary of the relevant literature is offered in Thomas Lemke, *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction*, trans. Eric Frederick Trump (New York, 2011). Lemke's summary is more or less comprehensive in its coverage of the post-Foucaultian literature, with the

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totalizing or global theory of power is here a risk. However, a careful interrogation of the specificities of biopolitical assemblages, under the guidance of genealogical or archeological analytics, offers an important way of gaining conceptual grip on contemporary developments such as personalized genetics, the pharmaceutical management of mental health, and the emergence of bioprosthetics and biomachines.

Such lines of inquiry based on Foucault's work are fruitful as long as inquirers attend carefully to questions of emergence, particularity, and historicity. So we argue below, proceeding as follows. We first develop a distinction between analytics and concepts that is central to our taxonomical interpretation of Foucault (an interpretation that, to repeat, expressly aims to put Foucault to use). Next, we offer some textual evidence that motivates our distinction as properly Foucault*ian* by drawing on some of Foucault's own methodological self-interpretations from his course lectures at the Collège de France. Our appeal to Foucault is not an attempt to channel the voice of the master but rather to bring into better focus the great gains of a particular style and spirit of thought that one cannot help but hear in Foucault's own methodological self-reflection. To better specify this style and spirit, we conclude with the following provocation: Foucault is a critical empiricist insofar as his best legacy involves the patient use of empirical analytics as a check against the speculative use of abstract conceptualization.[5]

2. A Taxonomy for Foucaultian Inquiries

A. Elements

We distinguish two different elements in Foucault's work that might be put to use to take contemporary inquiries beyond Foucault's precedents. *Analytics* are the broadly methodological constraints that Foucault brought to bear upon his inquiries; the two analytics most

important exception of its neglect of Ian Hacking's work. See especially Ian Hacking, "Biopower and the Avalanche of Numbers," *Humanities in Society* 5, no. 3–4 (1982): 279–95 and *The Taming of Chance* (Cambridge, 1990).

5. Our intervention is thus offered not only as a counterweight to speculative appropriations of Foucault's conceptual apparatus (featured in Giorgio Agamben's work, briefly discussed in the final section) but also as an alternative to contemporary trends toward the revival of a purely speculative mode of philosophy (featured in recent work by Quentin Meillassoux, which we do not here discuss).

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obviously featured in his work are archaeology and genealogy. *Concepts* specify the formulations through which Foucault made sense of the objects of his inquiry. Prominent examples from his early work include *déraison* and *mathesis*; prominent examples from his later work include discipline, biopower, security, neoliberalism, and all the microtechniques and miniprocedures analyzed under the broader headings of these technologies.

Although our focus here will be almost entirely on *analytics* (or *methods*)[6] and *concepts*, there are other elements in Foucault's work that vary independently of analytics and concepts. A fuller taxonomy would take all of these into account; we shall here only outline them. If *concepts* are emergent in Foucault's research, then *topics* refer to his elective subject matter—for instance, punishment, sexuality, labor, life, and language. These topics help characterize *sites*, *fields,* or *objects* of inquiry, such as the historical archive or an ethnographic locale. We can also distinguish the *conclusions* that result from Foucault's inquiries—for example, the conclusion that heteronormativity emerged on the basis of a broader biopolitical problematization over the course of the nineteenth century. Other elements, call them *doctrines*, refer to the philosophical results of Foucault's inquiries as these have implications for central philosophical debates into which Foucault is often drafted (structure versus agency, nominalism versus universalism). Though formally similar, it is best to regard *conclusions* as conclusions of inquiry and *doctrines* as doctrines of philosophy, so as

6. We here use the term *analytic* to characterize genealogy, archaeology, and other modes of conducting (by constraining and facilitating) inquiry. This term is chosen in preference to various alternatives largely because it resonates most widely across the disciplines. That said, we also find reasons to prefer at times various alternative terms. In related recent work, one of us adopts the terminology of *method* (see Colin Koopman, "Two Uses of Michel Foucault in Political Theory: Concepts and Methods in Giorgio Agamben and Ian Hacking," forthcoming in *Constellations*), largely because *method* better captures, especially given its etymology, the full range of ways in which inquiry can travel after and pursue its objects, such that an analytic is just one form that method can take. James D. Faubion, *An Anthropology of Ethics* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 44, finds *analytic* too deductive in orientation, preferring *diagnostic* instead. Arnold Davidson makes use of the term *technique* with the implicit suggestion that archaeology and genealogy are best seen as tools crafted for inquiry; see Arnold I. Davidson, "Foucault and the Analysis of Concepts," *The Emergence of Sexuality: Historical Epistemology and the Formation of Concepts* (Cambridge. Mass., 2004), p. 178. One useful feature of all four terms *(analytic, method, diagnostic,* and *technique)* is that they foreground the sense in which archaeology and genealogy are facilities for inquiry that do work. In this, they all contrast effectively to theories. An analytic, method, diagnostic, or technique that is not put to use is as good as worthless. A theory, by contrast, needs *do* no work in order to *be* true. Analytics gain any *being* they have only by *doing*.

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not to mistake what is formally similar for what is substantively different. Another element concerns Foucault's *styles of writing*—narrative mode, architectonics, figurative language, metaphor—and the ways they lend yet another valuable dimension to his work.

A final element we distinguish are *categories*. These refer to the constructions or schemata through which analytics operate in order to do their work. For instance, genealogy is an analytic, but the inquirer must employ analytical categories—such as power/knowledge, or discourse, or practice—in order to develop concepts adequate to the material in question. *Categories* and *concepts*, though seemingly similar, are quite different insofar as concepts emerge out of the work of inquiry whereas categories function like lenses through which inquiry takes place. Categories help bring a field of inquiry into view whereas concepts help make sense of (for example, explain, narrate) the objects populating that field.[7] Thus Foucault writes of knowledge and power: "It is also important at every stage in the analysis, to be able to give knowledge and power a precise and determined content. . . . No one should ever think that there exists *one* knowledge or *one* power. . . . Knowledge and power are only an analytical grid."[8] Foucault here dispels a common misunderstanding of his work. He is not offering a theory of power, a theory of knowledge, and a theory of their relation.[9] In actuality, Foucault deploys *pouvoir* and *savoir* as analytical categories that enable him to conceptualize determinate formations of power and knowledge. This operation, in turn, produces empirically grounded concepts like discipline and biopower.

The following table presents a quick visual summary of the elements we have distinguished. This summary makes visible the multiplicity of combinations facilitated by self-reflectively distinguishing different elements of inquiry.

7. Both concepts and categories are, as it were, composed of contentful conceptual material (which is to say that both are conceptual in a standard and nontechnical sense of that term). This raises interesting questions (beyond our scope here) concerning the empirical status of categories in inquiry, the theoretical status of concepts in inquiry, and the relation between the two in instances where stable concepts become categories (for example, where the concept of discipline is reified into a categorical lens) or where categories themselves are submitted to conceptual interrogation (for example, where categories of power and knowledge are submitted to theoretical inquiry).

8. Michel Foucault "What Is Critique?" interview by Henri Gouhier et al., trans. Lysa Hochroth, *The Politics of Truth,* trans. Hochroth and Catherine Porter, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (New York, 2007), p. 60.

9. Foucault was clear on this: "I in no way construct a theory of power" (Foucault, "Structuralism and Post-structuralism," trans. Jeremy Harding, *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, trans. Robert Hurley et al., ed. James D. Faubion, vol. 2 of *Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984,* ed. Paul Rabinow [New York, 1998], p. 451; hereafter abbreviated "SPS").

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Taxa	Description	Exemplars
Analytics (or Methods)	Higher-order methodological constraints, limits, and heuristics that facilitate inquiry	Archaeology, Genealogy, Problematization (?), Ethics (?)
Concepts	Formulations emerging out of or produced by inquiry	Discipline, Biopower, Governmentality, Pastoral Power
Categories	Conceptual lenses functioning as analytical grids of intelligibility	Self/Power/Knowledge, Discourse, Practice
Topics	Elective subject matter	Psychiatry, Medicine, Punishment, Sexuality
Sites, Fields, and Objects	Foci of inquiry, or what inquiry is trained on	Archive, Fieldsite
Conclusions	Argument drawing together a constellation of concepts	Heteronormativity emerged as a basis for biopolitics in the 19th c.
Doctrines	Philosophical results	Nominalism (v. Universalism), Historicism (v. Structuralism and Phenomenology)
Styles of Writing	Language, narrative, and metaphor shaping how inquiry is communicated	Contrasting images of a torture spectacle and a prison timetable

Having distinguished these elements in preliminary fashion, we turn now to a fuller explanation of Foucault's *concepts* and *analytics*.

Concepts form a major aspect of Foucault's historical-philosophical work and they lend much of his work its vividness. Among the most exemplary of his concepts are discipline, biopower, security, and care of the self. Yet none of his most important concepts is simple. These concepts might be better described as conceptual networks or conceptual assemblages insofar as they invoke a complex plurality of notions. This is important to remember when one imports them from Foucault's writings into one's own inquiries that may concern contexts in which these concepts did not originally develop. Talking about biopower in late Victorian England is one thing, but talking about biopower in the early twenty-first century (where genetic technologies, biological weapons, dense global communication assemblages, and other factors condition the objects of analysis) is another. Similarly, a discussion of neoliberal governmentality in Western

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Europe in the mid-twentieth century is one thing, but talking about neoliberal governmentality in Russia in the post-Soviet period is another. Each requires careful "disinterring and transplantation," to return to Hall's phrasing above. This point underscores an inherent danger in applications of Foucault's conceptualizations to fields where his thought did not range: his concepts were often tailored for the fields into which he was inquiring, and so it may well obscure more than it reveals to inject these concepts in unrevised fashion into wholly different fields.

With respect to concepts, it may also be helpful to distinguish various types of concepts with which Foucault operated. Much of his work is characterized by what might be called *operational concepts*, that is, concepts that make sense of how something operated in a given field—for example, how power operated at the site of the emergence of the prison (disciplinarily); how power operated at the site of the entrenchment of heteronormative sexuality (biopolitically); how power operated through the increasing technicization of rule (governmentality). There are, however, other kinds of concepts in Foucault, including importantly *conceptual figures*. These refer to the kinds of persons or figures produced through and (re)productive of certain practices: the delinquent, the masturbator, the hysteric, the monster, the abnormal, the self-entrepreneur. Seemingly obvious in their conceptual structure, Foucault's work suggests that such figures were constructed in a manner that was anything but straightforward.

Analytics refer to the methodological constraints, limits, and assumptions by which inquiry can be conducted in coherent fashion. While concepts require a high degree of careful disinterring in order to be redeployed, analytics are much more portable in their original form. Foucault's work gains much of its rigor and mobility on the basis of analytics, whereas concepts are what lend his work its vividness and force. These two together form the fantastic combination, highly readable and yet profoundly technical, that are Foucault's books. We conceive of Foucault's analytics as broadly referring to the research strategies and tactics that Foucault employed to guide (that is, to modalize) his own inquiries. As one of several modes of inquiry, his analytics can be contrasted with other modes, such as structural analysis, hermeneutic interpretation, and systematic philosophy. The most familiar examples of analytics in Foucault's works are archaeology and genealogy.

In further specifying the kinds of analytics that give Foucault's thought its unique motion we follow Paul Rabinow and Hubert Dreyfus in their still-invaluable early book on Foucaultian method. They describe Foucault's detranscendentalized analytics as involving "a mode of analysis of those cultural practices in our culture which have been instrumental in

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forming the modern individual as both object and subject."[10] Foucault's analytics are quite protean and diverse, but we agree with Rabinow and Dreyfus that one thread that runs through all of them is that they constitute "an interpretive analytic of our current situation."[11] In a very general sense, we understand this orientation as a historicized form of Kantian inquiry into the conditions of possibility that enframe subjects capable of acting and objects capable of being acted upon. This is also how Ian Hacking describes Foucault: "Where Kant had found the conditions of possible experience in the structure of the human mind, Foucault does it with historical, and hence transient, conditions for possible discourse."[12] The idea is that a Foucaultian analytic seeks to conceptualize the conditioning limits that simultaneously enable and constrain the practices under investigation. If for Kant these conditioning limits had been transcendental, for Foucault the empirical is conditioned by the empirical—that which is hidden (the conditioner) is but more of the same (the conditioned), albeit deeper and heavier. Archaeology and genealogy thus function to critically excavate historical conditions of possibility that reveal the objects of our historical present as contingent (rather than necessary), complex (rather than simple), and composed (rather than merely given).

In our view, archaeology and genealogy mark two different, but entirely compatible, approaches that Foucault employed for examining the conditioning limits that make us who and what we are.[13] The description of these two as analytics immediately raises a broader question concerning other elements in Foucault's work (especially from his late writings) that might qualify as candidates for analytics or methods: ethics and problematization.

As for *ethics,* we here leave open the question of whether or not Foucault's late investigations constitute another analytics. But the question itself is certainly worth raising given that Foucault's late ethical investiga-

10. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago, 1982), p. 120.

11. Ibid., p. 124.

12. Hacking, "The Archaeology of Foucault," *Historical Ontology* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002), p. 79. See also Amy Allen, *The Politics of Our Selves: Power, Antonomy, and Gender in Contemporary Critical Theory* (New York, 2008), chap. 2.

13. With respect to the compatibility of these two analytics, our view is that genealogy does not refuse or abandon archaeology so much as it expands it; if archaeology analytically specifies conditions of possibility in terms of depth knowledge then genealogy analytically specifies them in terms of depth power/knowledge relations. The shift is not away from knowledge and into power but rather from knowledge-only to knowledge-and-power. On archaeology, see Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York, 1972). On genealogy, see Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," trans. Donald Brouchard and Sherry Simon, *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, pp. 369–91. The compatibility of archaeology and genealogy is further discussed in Davidson, "On Epistemology and Archeology: From Canguilhem to Foucault," *The Emergence of Sexuality,* pp. 192–206.

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tions have long been a source of perplexity. We suggest that our taxonomy offers some useful tools for reframing these long-standing interpretive difficulties. For example, is Foucault's ethical fourfold of substance, mode of subjection, form of work, and aim better understood as a category or an analytic (or an object)? On the one hand, ethics is a lens for a preconceived field of genealogical inquiry, much like power or knowledge. On the other hand, if Foucault's work is read as a series of successive inquiries into compounding forms of knowledge, relations of force, and relations of the self, then we might construe his ethics as part of a sequence of analytical devices. We leave this important question of the status of Foucaultian ethics unanswered. We raise it only to show how our taxonomy refocuses some of the most perplexing provocations issued by Foucault's late work.[14]

As for *problematization,* in his final years Foucault asserted that this term offers the best general account of his analyses of historical conditions of possibility.[15] Foucault was careful to insist that a history of problematizations informs both archaeological and genealogical analysis.[16] Problematization focuses inquiry on the problematic conditions of possibility that both motivate and constrain the elaboration of responsive practices. For a history of problematizations, the primary objects of inquiry are assemblages of problems and practices. The idea is that problems at the depths induce practices and that, in turn, surface practices reciprocally entrench their own depth conditions. For example, glossing *Discipline and Punish*, the problematization of discipline established a deep set of motivating constraints that facilitated the emergence of new practices of punishment in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These concrete new practices then reinforced the more diffuse disciplinary problematic. It is crucial to note here that, for Foucault, a problematization is both an object of inquiry (that is, an underlying depth problem that inquiry illuminates) and an act of inquiry (that is, that which renders the seemingly natural more problematic). In this sense, problematization can function as both an object (in its nominal sense) and an analytic (in its verbal sense as an act) according to our taxonomy. Parsing these different functions helps us better under-

14. For a convincing perspective on ethics as an analytic, see Davidson, "Archaeology, Genealogy, Ethics," in *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Couzens Hoy (Oxford, 1991), pp. 221–33.

15. See Foucault, "The Concern for Truth," interview with François Ewald, trans. Alan Sheridan, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977–1984*, trans. Sheridan et al., ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman (New York, 1986), pp. 255–68.

16. See Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?" trans. Porter, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, trans. Hurley et al., ed. Rabinow, vol. 1 of *Essential Works of Michel Foucault,* pp. 304–19.

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stand how we might, after Foucault, but also beyond Foucault, problematize what is problematic in today's present.[17]

B. Relations among Elements

Having detailed two elements—concepts and analytics—at the core of Foucault's work, we now consider some of the types of relations these elements may exhibit. We assert that conceptual and analytical elements are logically related to one another in at least four ways: as *exclusive*, as *reciprocal*, as *nonexhaustive*, and as *noncodeterminative*.

Specifying the relations as *exclusive* suggests, provisionally, that any analytic will by definition not be a concept. Genealogy is not a concept; biopower is not an analytic. This is merely stipulative, but it is important insofar as it enables us to clearly specify what sorts of things count as analytics, as concepts, and also as conclusions, theses, topics, and so on. (As discussed above, a strict adoption of this stipulation raises questions about the status of ethics and problematization.) One reason to make the distinction between concept and analytic is to distinguish what animates an inquiry from what results from that animation. In short, it is not possible to start from nowhere; critical inquiry always begins with some analytic apparatus. By distinguishing analytic from concept, we aim to make room for new concepts that neither the analytic itself nor the object(s) of analysis can offer.

Specifying the relations as *reciprocal* means that analytical equipment and conceptual material should be mutually informed in a given inquiry. For example, genealogy cannot be employed successfully to develop an analysis of invariant versions of concepts such as truth. A historical analytic must be set to work with and through concepts that are themselves treated as historical. Foucault, in describing his historical analytics, rigorously insisted that we should "suppose that universals do not exist."[18] Similarly, an ahistorical set of analytic procedures cannot productively elaborate historically specific concepts. Thus Foucault, to make sense of specific historical episodes, rigorously employed analytical procedures that facilitated attention to historical detail. Examples from our own work can help with this point. In the case of a genealogical treatment of Amer-

17. For an interpretation of problematization as the central analytical element in the full range of Foucault's writings that can be textually located across his work from 1961 to 1984, see Koopman, *Genealogy as Critique: Foucault and the Problems of Modernity* (Bloomington, Ind., 2013), chaps. 3–4. A number of other methodological issues that arise in the next section are also developed in greater detail in these two chapters, which comprise an effort to illuminate the singularity of Foucault's methodology.

18. Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1978–1979* (New York, 2008), p. 3; hereafter abbreviated *BB*.

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ican liberalism, it would be potentially misleading to take up historical processes of industrialization, electrification, informationalization, statification, and corporatization as instantiating an underlying logic of either pure economism or pure culturalism. In the case of emergent forms of self-care in post-Soviet states, it would be misleading to read such forms as instantiating an invariant neoliberal subject insofar as a genealogy of subject-formation ought, by relations of reciprocity, also take up a genealogy of the elements of subjectivity as they have been historically constituted. In both cases, historicity of analytic procedure and historicity of conceptual material demand one another.

Third, the point that analytical and conceptual elements *are nonexhaustive* simply serves as a reminder that a research project might employ other elements that do not neatly fit these categories or any of the others we have outlined. Our taxonomy is, we hope, extensible—both to aspects of Foucault's work we have not considered and to aspects of other inquiries.

A fourth and more complex type of relation suggests that concepts and analytics are *noncodeterminative*. This point seems obvious, but in the literature making use of Foucault it is neglected with surprising frequency and to bad result. Our point here is that one can use a given analytical procedure (for example, Foucault's genealogy) without having to confine oneself to a given set of concepts (for example, discipline) and without reaching Foucault's conclusions (for example, those of his more famous claims concerning modern punitive practice). One could also reach Foucault's conclusions without employing either Foucault's analytics or concepts. Relatedly, to employ a given set of concepts (for example, discipline or biopower) is not by itself determinative of any given analytic (for example, genealogy). To say a few things about discipline and offer a few words about the importance of history is not yet to do genealogical inquiry even if it may be a step in that direction. It is helpful, indeed even necessary, to distinguish the ways in which various inquiries can make use of Foucaultian elements. Our inquiries can achieve historical, contextual, and nonreductive approaches that admit of historical, ethnographic, and social scientific complexity, and they can do so along a multiplicity of fronts.

The idea that the elements we have identified are noncodeterminative is meant to emphasize that one can legitimately pick up Foucault's analytics or his concepts and put them to work in ways that Foucault never could have anticipated. For instance, one might find Foucault's analytics and concepts sorely lacking but find his conclusions intriguing and so attempt to ground them through a different procedure. Yet, a crucial point about this lack of codetermination is that it does not imply a lack of reciprocity. If one puts Foucault's analytics to work, then one's concepts and conclu-

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sions ought to exhibit reciprocity with these analytics. In the final analysis, then, we hope that our distinctions prove useful in facilitating reflection on how different inquiries can make use of tools forged in other conditions. Ultimately, the distinction between analytic and concept thus serves as a reminder that empirical specificity ought to remain a crucial ingredient in any use of Foucault.

C. Summary

To summarize, our distinctions facilitate forms of inquiry that deploy one of the elements we have described without deploying others. For example, the distinctions yielded by our taxonomy enable us to deploy Foucaultian analytics along with a handful of Foucaultian concepts in some new domain of inquiry without feeling anxiety over whether or not our inquiry might result in conclusions that are explicitly Foucaultian (and perhaps even antithetical to Foucault's own conclusions). To illustrate, two examples drawn from our own (ongoing) research will help.

Consider first research on the relationship between restructured psychological services and the governance of population in Russia.[19] Here, again, Foucault's analytics have been useful in illuminating both the changing techniques of rule and also the subject as a target of rule. That is to say that an interest in genealogy has facilitated both a nominalist approach to the self in Russia (relevant terms include *samost'* and *lichnost'*), while at the same time it has provided a space for considering late- and post-Soviet developments in the psychological sciences. Ethnographic research, however, has also suggested that Russia has not simply mirrored the rise of a psychologized neoliberal subject, as has been described in Europe and America by some of Foucault's followers. Instead, both rationalities and technical forms of a neoliberal political rationality have been alloyed with statist forms of post-Soviet governance to produce something novel. To put this in the terms of our taxonomy, a Foucaultian analytic (genealogy) merged with ethnographic inquiry has highlighted the fact that Foucault's concepts (in this case neoliberal governmentality) cannot simply be "applied" without significant amendment. This is an operation that we view as immensely productive, not only for Foucaultian inquiry, but also for the study of globally circulating political rationalities.

As a second example, consider the project of a genealogy of American liberalism. Foucaultian analytics can help develop an understanding of the distinctive contours of American liberalism as it inflected the British liberal tradition with American conditions of particular urgency: a distinctive

19. See Matza, "Moscow's Echo" and "'Good Individualism'?"

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religious pluralism, a fraught and fragile federalism, the rise of a massive bureaucratic machinery in the midst of Civil War governmentality, the stabilization of scientific uses of probability, the later emergence of empirical rigor in the social sciences, the distinctively American development of concepts of race and the oppressive racialized practices they were (mostly) designed to serve, initial expansion westward and then beyond into imperialism, and much more besides. Foucault's archaeological and genealogical analytics are of value in grasping the distinctive complexity of the conditions within which American liberalism emerged. It is not always clear, however, that Foucault's concepts of discipline and biopower should be applied to the American scene in exactly the same way that they were used in Foucault's own Francocentric research. At the very least, there are different chronologies that would act as pivots for the emergence of new complexes of practices that Foucaultian analytics could help to conceptualize in their specificity.

The larger point of our taxonomic approach beyond the work of our two examples is twofold. First, it highlights how diverse and flexible Foucault's thought is; it can be used in ways that need not be squared with every last aspect of Foucault's own work. Inquirers can and should take what they need from Foucault while leaving the rest to the side. Second, the taxonomy shows that we can do this with a good conscience, but only to the extent that we are self-reflective in doing so. Lacking this self-reflection, we run across problematic tendencies, such as the conceptual hypostatization that occurs when theorists deploy Foucaultian concepts as if they were universally applicable in just the way that Foucaultian analytics serve to caution against. A critical self-reflective deployment of Foucaultian work examines the conditions under which inquiry[20] makes use of concepts, analytics, theses, and other elements drawn from Foucault and others.

20. We have employed the notion of inquiry fairly liberally throughout our discussion thus far but without specifying it. This notion has many senses. In what sense were Foucault's works inquiries? In what sense can our work now be Foucaultian inquiries? Here we take our bearings from recent work by Rabinow, who discerns important resonances between the form of inquiry present in Foucault's work and John Dewey's work on the form of inquiry. See Rabinow, *Anthropos Today: Reflections on Modern Equipment* (Princeton, N.J., 2003) and "Dewey and Foucault: What's the Problem?" *Foucault Studies*, no. 11 (Feb. 2011): 11–19. Extending Rabinow, we hold that inquiry as purposive critique can take at least two forms. Inquiry can be the purposive attempt to render unstable or indeterminate situations into those that are more stable and determinate (for example, Deweyan reconstruction); inquiry can also take shape as the purposive attempt to render apparently stable situations vague and susceptible to criticism (for example, Foucaultian problematization). On these two complementary aspects of the work of critical inquiry, see further Koopman, "Genealogical Pragmatism: How History Matters to Foucault and Dewey," *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 5, no. 3 (2011): 533–61.

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3. Concept and Analytic in Foucault's Methodological Self-Reflections

The foregoing methodological reconstruction can be given more gravity by way of an examination of Foucault's own methodological self-reflections. In this section, we use a selection of these self-reflections to exhibit the importance of maintaining an explicit distinction between analytics and concepts. Our point, to be clear, is not that our distinction has gravity because it reproduces explicit claims by Foucault. Rather, it elucidates the gravity of Foucault's work toward both a critical refusal of who we have become and an experimental remaking of our selves. In this spirit, we here consider a brief metareflective note offered by Foucault at the outset of one of his Collège de France course lectures. The course lectures on the whole are particularly useful for our purposes because many of Foucault's lecture series begin with enticing metareflections on methodological procedure. While perhaps not always the most precise guide to the subtle intricacies of Foucault's central concepts, they do nevertheless showcase those intricacies in the context of their analytical refinement. They enable us to see his thought in motion.

Particularly pertinent for our analysis is Foucault's 1979 lecture series, titled *The Birth of Biopolitics*. In the lecture of 7 March 1979, Foucault begins by cautioning against a kind of conceptual generalization he seeks to avoid in his own work. Foucault suggests, as we read him in the terms we outlined above, that his project is a generalization of analytic without a corollary generalization of concept. He suggests that what he is doing in his lectures of that year is trying to introduce variability at the level of concepts (biopolitics, neoliberalism, discipline, power) so as to test out a more general methodology for the analysis of relations of power. Here is how Foucault describes his intent: "I wanted to see what concrete content could be given to the analysis of relations of power." Foucault cautions that power is neither a theoretical "principle in itself" nor a concept with "explanatory value." Rather, he continues, power designates "a domain of relations which are entirely still to be analyzed" (*BB,* p. 186). In our terms, Foucault's commitment is not to a single concept of power but rather to an analytic that deploys power as a category so as to reveal multiple concepts of power at work in different contexts. He continues: "What I wanted to do . . . was to see the extent to which we could accept that the analysis of micro-powers, or of procedures of governmentality, is not confined by definition to a precise domain determined by a sector of the scale, but should be considered simply as a point of view, a method of decipherment which may be valid for the whole scale, whatever its size" (*BB,* p. 186; see *BB,* pp. 317–18 and "SPS," pp. 451–52).

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As we interpret this self-interpretation, Foucault aims to generalize his methodological project as a point of view that can be usefully applied in a variety of domains. This expansion of methodology does not imply the project of generalizing concepts, and indeed Foucault guards against precisely this in cautioning against deploying power as a principle or an explanatory constant. In fact, he explicitly contrasts his own approach to those who would generalize their concepts in such a way as to lend the work of analysis to "inflationary" tendencies (*BB,* p. 187). Foucault must be thinking here of those political theorists who inflate the concept of the state, that "cold monster,"[21] to a level an "interchangeability of analyses" renders which kind of state we are talking about immaterial (*BB,* p. 187).[22] This, unfortunately, is exactly what some so-called Foucaultian branches of contemporary political theory risk.

Why guard against the theoretical inflation of concepts? Foucault's answers to this question suggest a kind of empiricism informing his thought. In his lectures he describes four problems with forms of analysis that universalize and generalize: (1) they lead to a loss of specificity; (2) they facilitate a generalized and nonspecific form of polemical denunciation; (3) they evince a lack of grip on reality and actuality; and (4) they too often fail to develop critical reflexivity (see *BB,* pp. 187–88). Each of these concerns is rooted in a critical empiricism informing Foucault's thought, but for our purposes the first is the most telling.

The point of Foucault's first critique of theoretical inflation is that the universalization and generalization it involves leads to vacuous explanations and empty principles. If we take such an approach, he cautions, "it then becomes possible not only to use different analyses to support each other, but also to refer them back to each other and so deprive them of their specificity" (*BB,* p. 187). This loss of empirical grip on our historical present effectively acts as a block on being able to understand, work on, and transform our present in the face of contemporary problems.

An imperative to transformation always animated Foucault's analytics, so much so that we might speak of a kind of militancy in his thought. But this imperative is too often mischaracterized by Foucault's critics and de-

21. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978,* trans. Graham Burchell, ed. Michel Senellart (New York, 2007), p. 109.

22. Foucault's insights here have also had a significant effect in anthropologies of state. See, for instance, Ferguson and Gupta, "Spatializing States," and Gupta, *Red Tape: Bureaucracy, Structural Violence, and Poverty in India* (Durham, N.C., 2012). See also Timothy Mitchell, "The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Causes," *American Political Science Review* 85 (Mar. 1991): 77–96 and *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley, 2002).

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fenders.[23] It is a familiar refrain that the point of a genealogy or an archaeology is to denaturalize some practice that has all the trappings of inevitability. Thus, we are told, the point of the project announced in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* is to render contingent the conception of sexuality that for so long had been taken as necessary and even natural. This familiar wisdom is true so far as it goes. Foucault himself emphasized this point: "history serves to show how that which is has not always been; that is, the things which seem most evident to us are always formed in the confluence of encounters and chances, during the course of a precarious and fragile history" ("SPS," p. 450). While the denaturalization of the seemingly natural is indeed one important implication of Foucault's work, it is neither the only implication nor even the most important. To suggest that it is amounts to transcendentalizing Foucaultian method, as if the point of critique could only be to demonstrate some more general condition that holds for all historical constructs.

The central motif of Foucault's critical empiricism is not so much the simple *fact* of contingency as it is an inquiry into *processes* of contingent composition. Through what combinations of practices, subjectivities, relations of force, and rationalities has a particular practice been contingently assembled? If the traditional view is that genealogies and archaeologies help us recognize *that* our conceptual assemblages are contingent, then our view is that, as analytics, these can help our inquiries uncover *how* different conceptual assemblages were contingently composed. We suggest that our taxonomy offers more than a methodological guideline; it also facilitates the kinds of critical, ethicopolitical experimentation that characterizes Foucault's work.[24] Thus, continuing the passage quoted in the previous paragraph, Foucault says, "since these things have been made, they can be unmade, as long as we know how it was that they were made" ("SPS," p. 450). The problematizations within which we make ourselves were themselves made. To this banal constructivist observation Foucault contributes a methodological apparatus that would help us understand *how* our problematizations and hence also our selves were made. Here is the political and ethical edge of the empirical in Foucault's work. The resistance to and

23. For further development of the distinction drawn in this paragraph and the next, see Koopman, "Foucault across the Disciplines: Introductory Notes on Contingency in Critical Inquiry," *History of the Human Sciences* 24 (Oct. 2011): 1–12, and the chapters cited above in note 19.

24. Michael Hardt has recently described this project as "militant research" in his "The Militancy of Theory," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 110 (Winter 2011): 33; see also Elizabeth Povinelli, "The Will to Be Otherwise: The Effort of Endurance," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 111 (Summer 2012): 453–75.

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remaking of the tight grip of power and knowledge and modes of subjectivation always have a site and a specificity.

4. Foucault, Empiricist

Foucault's most fecund offerings, on our reading, are thus to be found in his empirical analytics for critical inquiry. What we are calling Foucault's empiricism should not be mistaken for a classical empiricism emphasizing the passive observation of pure facts in search of incontestable truth. Nor is it akin to recent positivist and verificationist variants that remain equally married to passivity and purity. Rather, Foucault's empiricism is an innovation on a long tradition of looking, observing, inquiring, and experimenting. Characterizing Foucault as an empiricist is a way of understanding the humility of his work, while respecting his innovations on empiricism is a way of understanding the force of his thought. Foucault's empiricism is both a critical empiricism and an agitating empiricism; it might even be a "kinky empiricism."[25]

Beyond Foucault's own brilliant uses of his empirical analytics, a number of prominent critical social scientists and philosophers continue to make productive use of these analytical devices for the purposes of explicating historical and contemporary formations of knowledge, power, and subjectivity. The work of Hacking, Rabinow, Nikolas Rose, and Arnold Davidson is exemplary of a growing literature from a diversity of disciplines that instructively pushes Foucault beyond Foucault.[26] Hacking's

25. We borrow the term "kinky empiricism" from a recent essay by Danilyn Rutherford in which she calls for anthropology to "reclaim [and rethink] the empirical." She writes, "Kinky empiricism is always slightly off kilter, always aware of the slipperiness of its grounds and of the difficulty of adequately responding to the ethical demands spawned by its methods. Being off-kilter is a strength, not a weakness" (Danilyn Rutherford, "Kinky Empiricism," *Cultural Anthropology* 27, no. 3 [2012]: 466).

26. See, for example, Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular* (Stanford, Calif., 2003); Collier, *Post-Soviet Social;* Davidson, *The Emergence of Sexuality;* Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton, N.J., 1994); Faubion, *An Anthropology of Ethics*; Ferguson, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (Durham, N.C., 2006); Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory* (Princeton, N.J., 1995); Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, N.J., 2005); Ladelle McWhorter, *Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America: A Genealogy* (Bloomington, Ind., 2009); Povinelli, *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Later Liberalism* (Durham, N.C., 2011); Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Chicago, 1995); Jenny Reardon, *Race to the Finish: Identity and Governance in an Age of Genomics* (Princeton, N.J., 2005); Nikolas Rose, *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton, N.J., 2007); Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, N.C., 1995); and Mariana Valverde, *Diseases of the Will: Alcohol and the Dilemmas of Freedom* (Cambridge, 1998). See also the citations in notes 2–4 above.

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studies of the emergence of sciences of probability and statistics, for example, illustrate how we can retrain Foucaultian analytical strategies on targets that are not themselves featured in any rigorous way in Foucault's work.[27] Rabinow's inquiries into contemporary biosciences, such as the now-emerging field of synthetic biology, also show how a Foucaultian analytical perspective can inform our work in making sense of practices that appeared after Foucault died.[28] What this and other work shows is that Foucault can be used to illuminate that which he himself did not illuminate, as long as we are careful in taking from his works their methods for illumination rather more than their illuminating concepts.

By contrast, we are cautious about, even at times dismayed by, the work of those who would draft Foucault's concepts into transcendental, not empirical, projects. This appropriation too often takes the form of work (in anthropology, sociology, history, philosophy, literature, and more) that sets out to study a particular cultural formation, social movement, or discursive structure and ends up arriving at conclusions or concepts that simply, and all-too-often simplistically, reproduce Foucault's findings from quite different sites of inquiry.

Consider an example that today creates sparks across the disciplines. We find it unfortunate that Giorgio Agamben is widely taken by so many to be an exemplary neo-Foucaultian. Agamben's work forwards a usage of Foucault that draws almost exclusively on conceptual material in a way that not only fails to make productive use of but also cuts against the grain of Foucault's analytical gains.[29] As we have discussed, for Foucault concepts are results of the careful deployment of analytical strategies, which is to say that concepts are the products of rigorous processes of inquiry. For Agamben, by contrast, concepts seem to function in that more explanatory and principled capacity that Foucault himself cautioned against in his 1979 course lectures.

Agamben makes use of Foucault's concept of biopower to develop his own conceptual repertoire involving modern sovereignty, the state of ex-

27. See, for example, Hacking, *The Emergence of Probability: A Philosophical Study of Early Ideas about Probability, Induction, and Statistical Inference* (Cambridge, 2006), "Biopower and the Avalanche of Numbers," and *The Taming of Chance*.

28. See, for example, Rabinow and Gaymon Bennett, *Designing Human Practices: An Experiment with Synthetic Biology* (Chicago, 2012).

29. See especially Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life,* trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, Calif., 1998) and *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago, 2005); and in a more methodological vein, see Agamben, "What Is an Apparatus?" *"What Is an Apparatus?" and Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford, Calif., 2009) and *The Signature of All Things: On Method*, trans. Luca D'Isanto and Kevin Attell (New York, 2009).

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ception, and bare life, but he does so in a fashion that deprives this repertoire of its potential specificity. And whereas Foucault's analytics led him to cautious analyses of particular problematizations, Agamben is looking for "the keys to the historico-political destiny of the West."[30] Agamben thus quickly loses conceptual specificity in spreading the concept of biopower over all of modernity as a kind of thin film accounting for "the biopolitics of both modern totalitarianism and the society of mass hedonism and consumerism."[31] There is much that is wrong with hedonism and consumerism, but one cannot simply conflate them with totalitarianism. Consumerist hedonism and modern totalitarianism are in fact quite different in crucial respects that nobody who lives midst the latter would ever dream of denying. Foucault argued against *precisely* this kind of strategy in his 1979 lectures where he issued a caution against the "interchangeability of analyses" that involves a bundling together of radically heterogeneous problematizations. Foucault there offers an example that *directly* counters Agamben's subsequent conflation: "the welfare state has neither the same form, of course, nor, it seems to me, the same root or origin as the totalitarian state, as the Nazi, fascist, or Stalinist state" (*BB*, pp. 190). In ascending to the transcendental and departing from the empirical, Agamben's work runs the risk of losing sight of the heterogeneity, complexity, and contingency that conditions any and every historical specificity. This very risk is present in studies of governmentality or biopower as they function in contexts beyond Europe; perhaps because of a stubborn disciplinary division of labor, these studies sometimes shy away from examining what differences alternate political histories might make for the analysis.[32]

What Paul Patton calls "Foucault's relentlessly empirical approach"[33] is best discerned in the mobilization of Foucaultian analytics for the purposes of inquiry into emergent phenomena in the present rather than in a

30. Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 182.

31. Ibid., p. 11.

32. We have focused on Agamben's conceptual colonialism in contrast to Foucault's conceptual specificity. This contrast can of course also be mapped to differences at the level of analytic. Agamben's analytic is transcendental and ontological and so retains an element of the universal. Foucault's analytic is empirical in orientation and thus refuses to truck in universals. Yet Agamben insists that Foucault's analytic category of *dispositif* (apparatus) acts as a kind of substitute term for universals: "Apparatuses are, in point of fact, what takes the place of the universals in the Foucauldian strategy" (Agamben, "What Is an Apparatus?" p. 7). Contrast Gilles Deleuze, who construes Foucault's *dispositif* as entailing an outright "repudiation of universals": "Each apparatus is therefore a multiplicity where certain processes in becoming are operative and are distinct from those operating in another apparatus. This is how Foucault's philosophy is a pragmatism, a functionalism, a positivism, a pluralism" (Gilles Deleuze, "What Is a Dispositif?" *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews, 1975–1995*, trans. Ames Hodges and Mike Taormina, ed. David Lapoujade [New York, 2007], p. 347).

33. Paul Patton, "Life, Legitimation, and Government," *Constellations* 18 (Mar. 2011): 41.

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generalization of Foucaultian concepts that forces them to colonize domains that demand different conceptualizations. This raises the question of just how mobile we can take an analytic to be. Would a genealogy or an archaeology be a valuable analytic for any context of (historical) inquiry? Perhaps, but probably not. That Foucault productively employed these analytics in the two quite different contexts of recent European history and ancient Greco-Roman history does suggest, however, a mobility of analytic outranging that of his concepts. Indeed, one point that Foucault's work clearly makes is that analytics can illuminate the historical specificity of the concepts they help produce. Analytics, which range across contexts, are light, whereas concepts, which are always tied to their sites, are heavy. Thus, the mobility of an analytic does not always imply the mobility of the concepts produced by that analytic. An analytic that is empirical (contextual, situated, located) will produce concepts always tied to specificities. Analytics are mobilizable and flexible in a way and to a degree that concepts, with all their inertia, are not. This is by no means an indication that one should prefer analytics to concepts. For what would that even mean? Rather, ours is a claim about the distinctive methodological stakes of each. Analytics free thought to range across contexts while concepts facilitate the work of thought in grasping a context in its specificity. Concepts can also enable meaningful cross-context comparison, but only as long as they are deployed with the kind of attentiveness that an empirically oriented analytic affords.

Some will balk at all this talk of empiricism, perhaps because empiricism is assumed to be passé. But we invoke empiricism without implicating it in foundationalism, representationalism, subjectivism, or any other hallmark of classical empiricist epistemology. Empiricism can be a stance for inquiry without being an epistemological enterprise.[34] Empiricism can be construed as the empiricism of inquiry.[35] The empiricism of inquiry is all about specificity and situation. This is the empiricism of looking, observing, perceiving, receiving, and above all experimenting. Such acts are never infallible and are never guarantors of infallible truth. Yet when done right they are mobile in a way that more rationalistic and reductive modes are not.

Foucault practiced a humble empiricism that was also, to be sure, a critical empiricism. Where others are content to universalize their concepts, Foucault was eager to immerse himself in facts so as to better see the sites that make facts the specific "little facts" that they are. Paul Veyne, in

34. See Bas C. van Fraassen, *The Empirical Stance* (New Haven, Conn., 2002).

35. See note 20 above on our usage of the term *inquiry*.

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his recent book on Foucault, writes of "the gap that separates general and trans-historical ideas, which are always false, from little facts, the truth of which can be verified." Veyne reads Foucault, and so do we, as "an empiricist and a philosopher of understanding, not of any presumptuous Reason." At the outset of his book, Veyne declares of Foucault: "He was something that, in this day and age, is rare, a *sceptic* thinker who believed only in the truth of facts, the countless historical facts that fill the pages of his books, never in the truth of ideas."[36]

Foucault's empiricism gives his work its traction in our present projects of experimentally remaking ourselves. And his empiricism helps us test the limits of contemporary regimes of power and knowledge. Foucault was never content with the idea of a purely theoretical critique, which is but reason's presumption. For Foucault, critique—that is, the work of thought—was always oriented around what he called the "*limit-attitude.*"[37] To remake ourselves and the conditions of what forms of life are possible, we need to gain a sense of the limiting conditions by which our present has been made in the first place. Recomposition requires fluency with composition. Acts of critically testing our own limits requires empirically coming to terms with those limits as they have been composed in all their specificity, factuality, and reality. Thus Foucault wrote in "What Is Enlightenment?": "This historico-critical attitude must also be an experimental one. I mean that this work done at the limits of ourselves must, on the one hand, open up a realm of historical inquiry and, on the other, put itself to the test of reality, of contemporary reality, both to grasp the points where change is possible and desirable, and to determine the precise form this change should take."[38] This is a description of a critical empiricism.

We conclude by conjuring an image of our philosopher, intent and curious, hunched over a book, somewhere in a far corner of a sprawling archive, chasing the elusive trail of a fact. This same chase assumes a diversity of forms: the anthropologist immersed in the field in search of sensation, structures, and subjects, forms of domination hidden and visible; or the observer in the lab meeting who is also simultaneously a participant in putting together strange facts midst microscopes and micropolitics. These chases are not for pure facts that will demonstrate some grand salvific idea. They are chases for a better understanding of some humble aspect of our present that, however, may turn out to be more grand, because more gripping, than we had imagined. This image is a useful counterweight to cur-

36. Paul Veyne, *Foucault: His Thought, His Character,* trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 12, 2, 1.

37. Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?" p. 315.

38. Ibid., p. 316.

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rent tendencies to see in Foucault, and some of the philosophical tendencies for which he is too often made to stand, a bloated epochal critique of our age that cannot possibly be submitted to experimentation.

Foucault wrote the history of the present. The point of doing so was to facilitate change in that present. One facilitates change by fashioning concepts that are adequate to that which one would transform. One fashions transformative concepts through inquiry guided by analytic constraint. It is the patient labor of inquiry that gives both form and freedom to the work of severe thought.

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