Chapter Six

Archaeology: the Method

A Study of Foucault's Archaeology of Knowledge
I. Introduction: History, Structure and the Discontinuist Method

a. A Book as an Appendix to Earlier Works

Foucault wrote his fifth book-length work, *L'Archeologie du savoir*, in 1969, that is after the May 1968 Paris uprisings, but instead of belonging to the group of works that I have clubbed together as belonging to the later Foucault, and discussed in the next section of the thesis, this book, translated in English in 1972 as *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, belongs very much to the tradition of his earlier works. This is so because this book is hardly an independent work in itself, it being more of an appendix to Foucault's earlier works, especially *The Order of Things*. His earlier works had raised two important problems. First, though it was clear from the 'histories' Foucault was writing that he was bringing into operation a special method, and though he often off-handedly referred to the same as 'archaeology', he never really took the pains to elucidate what this method consisted of. Secondly, Foucault was, much to his dismay as has been noted earlier, often labelled a 'structuralist' primarily because of three reasons: his continuous debunking of the subject, which enjoyed such a privileged position in Western thought from Descartes to Sartre, made him easily identifiable with the 'objectivist' structuralists; his repeated reference to concepts like language and discourse made him appear at one with the structuralist enterprise; and finally his oft-used label—'structural'—to describe his own work made admirers and critics alike take him as a structuralist. It is easy to observe, however, how much removed the Foucauldian method is from structuralism, with him not relying on the permanence of frozen structures but rather questioning them from the perspective of decentred historical change.

Both the problems thus point towards one thing, that Foucault elucidate his 'discontinuist' method and answer the two queries simultaneously, and this is precisely what he does in the current book under discussion. One should not, however, take this notion of 'discontinuity' as its subject, but rather see how the book reveals, as Foucault says in an interview given in 1977, the 'politics' of governance that makes continuities appear in discourses:

> This business about discontinuity has always rather bewildered me. In the new edition of the Petit Larousse it says: 'Foucault: a philosopher who founds his theory of history on discontinuity'. That leaves me flabbergasted... My problem was not at all to say, 'Voilà, long live discontinuity, we are in the discontinuous and a good thing too', but to pose the question, 'How is it that at certain moments and in certain orders of knowledge, there are these sudden take-offs, these hastenings of evolution, these transformations which fail to correspond to the calm, continuist image that is normally accredited?'... It is a question of what governs statements, and the way in which they govern each other so as to constitute a set of propositions which are scientifically acceptable, and hence capable of being verified or falsified by scientific procedures. In short, there is a problem of the régime, the politics of the scientific statement.1

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b. Discontinuity and The History of Thought

Turning to this question of discontinuities vis-à-vis history, Foucault notices first the problem that periodization presents to any attempt at historical analysis. He shows how, while history can definitely be perceived as a series of discontinuities, in recent historiography, the attempt has always been to identify long periods. For him, it is the history of thought—scientific, philosophical, and literary—which on the other hand has, of late, talked about ruptures and discontinuities. Foucault says,

For many years now historians have preferred to turn their attention to long periods, as if, beneath the shifts and changes of political events, they were trying to reveal the stable, almost indestructible system of checks and balances, the irreversible processes... At about the same time, in the disciplines that we call the history of ideas, the history of science, the history of philosophy, the history of thought, and the history of literature...in those disciplines which, despite their names, evade very largely the work and methods of the historian, attention has been turned, on the contrary, away from vast unities like 'periods' or 'centuries' to the phenomena of rupture, of discontinuity.²

This surely indicates that Foucault, would rely heavily on histories of science, philosophy, and literature to formulate his own archaeological method, and the first thing that Foucault does in this book is to give credit to sundry theoreticians of the three fields for inspiring him with key ideas in his method.

First, Foucault goes on to show the contribution of historians of science to his type of thought. Foucault’s method being one where there is a suspension of any progressivist schema of teleology in history, it is easy for Foucault to show how this is based on some key concepts of historians of science like Bachelard, Canguilhem and others. In an interview given in 1975, admitting his borrowings, Foucault says,

This is something I owe to the historians of science. I adopt the methodical precaution and the radical but unaggressive scepticism which makes it a principle not to regard the point in time where we are now standing as an outcome of a teleological progression which it would be one's business to reconstruct historically: that scepticism regarding ourselves and what we are, our here and now, which prevents one from assuming that what we have is better than—or more than—in the past.³

The first concept that Foucault mentions is Bachelard’s notion of ‘epistemological acts and thresholds’, or that knowledge is accumulated in a non-developmental way, cut it off from its empirical origin, when the mode of thought in an age crosses a certain threshold to usher in a new episteme. Foucault mentions next two sets of notions of his doctoral supervisor, Canguilhem, and shows how these also influenced his archaeological method. The first is that

of 'displacements and transformations', or that concepts undergo change according to the nature of their successive rules of use and their theoretical contexts, and these may not always be of steady progressive refinement. The second idea that he takes from Canguilhem is the distinction between the 'microscopic and macroscopic scales' of history, on each of the two levels of which a different history may be written, with 'minor' capillary events not always obeying the conditions of the 'grand' spirit of the age. Foucault borrows from Serres, a noted historian of mathematics, the notion of 'recurrent redistributions' or that one and the same science might reveal several pasts, several forms of connection, and several hierarchies of importance in its history. The fifth concept that Foucault takes from the history of sciences is that of architectonic unities of systems as analysed by Guérourt, whereby any system of thought tries to base itself on internal coherences, axioms, deductive connections, and compatibilities rather than a description of cultural influences and traditions that it relies on.

After listing the different influences from the domain of the natural sciences that go on to frame his method, Foucault proceeds next to show how certain notions in the history of philosophical and literary thought also contribute to the same. First, he mentions certain histories of philosophical thought where an emphasis on ideology sees discontinuities as the driving force behind classification of discourses. In this context, he mentions Althusser, credits him with this type of thought, and quotes him to show how for him the most radical discontinuities are breaks effected by a work of theoretical transformation 'which establishes a science by detaching it from the ideology of its past and by revealing this past as ideological'4. Lastly, he talks of certain types of literary analysis, which focus on the particular structure of a given text rather than focussing on transcendental unitary constructs like the spirit or sensibility of a period; 'groups', 'schools', 'generations', or 'movements'; and the personality and life of the author. What all these seven concepts, five taken from the pure sciences and two from social sciences and humanities, and to which Foucault credits the roots of his method, points towards is a debunking of unities, continuities, and tradition, and an establishment in their place of a method based on transformations. As Foucault says,

And the great problem presented by such historical analyses is not how continuities are established, how a single pattern is formed and preserved, how for so many different, successive minds there is a single horizon...the problem is no longer one of tradition, of tracing a line, but one of division, of limits; it is no longer one of lasting foundations, but one of transformations that serve as new foundations, the rebuilding of foundations.5

Therefore, he explains next the basic tenets of this historiography of limits and divisions.

c. **Documents and Monuments: Total and General History**

For Foucault, the main problem of contemporary historiography lies in its revised stance to the relationship between what he calls documents and monuments. Historiography has always dealt with monuments, or landmarks of history, and documents, or records thereof; but while traditional historiography attempted to documentarize monuments and render them to discourse, modernist historiography rests itself upon not the interpretation of a document to find the truth about a monument, but a development of the document itself into a monument, by discovering its unities and defining its relations. Foucault says,

To be brief, then let us say that history, in its traditional form, undertook to 'memorize' the monuments of the past, transform them into documents, and lend speech to those traces which, in themselves, are often not verbal, or which say in silence something other than what they actually say; in our time, history is that which transforms documents into monuments. In that area where, in the past, history deciphered the traces left by men, it now deploys a mass of elements that have to be grouped, made relevant, placed in relation to one another to form totalities. There was a time when archaeology, as a discipline devoted to silent monuments, inert traces, objects without context, and things left by the past, aspired to the condition of history, and attained meaning only through the restitution of a historical discourse; it might be said, to play on words a little, that in our time history aspires to the condition of archaeology, to the intrinsic description of the monument. 6

The reversal in modernist historiography in the mutual status of documents and monuments leads, therefore, to a reversal in the methodological status of archaeology. While this entails a redefinition of archaeology, and this is precisely what Foucault does in this book, he first moves on to outlining four consequences of this document-monument reversal.

The first consequence is that instead of the reliance of traditional historiography on a continuous chronology of reason trying incessantly to reach an inaccessible origin, modern historiography stresses on series or periodization. The second consequence is that the notion of discontinuity starts assuming a major role in contemporary historical disciplines as opposed to classical history, where discontinuity was a stigma to be removed by the historian from history. The third consequence, and this is probably the most important of the four, is the disappearance in current times of the possibility of what Foucault calls a total history and the emergence of what he calls a general history. Qualifying the two different types of history, Foucault says that while the task of total history was to talk about the fundamental principle or the essence of a period, thereby trying to determine the unitary spirit of an age, general history treats historical events as separate series and tries to find the hierarchic relations of correlations and shifts between them. Thus, while total history tries to establish a totalizing series of a grand narrative of history, general history tries to outline different possible series of such series. Highlighting the difference between the two, Foucault says,

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The project of a total history is one that seeks to reconstitute the overall form of a civilization, the principle—material or spiritual—of a society, the significance common to all the phenomena of a period, the law that accounts for their cohesion—what is called metaphorically the ‘face’ of a period... The problem that now presents itself—and which defines the task of a general history—is to determine what form of relation may be legitimately described between these different series; what vertical system they are capable of forming; what interplay of correlation and dominance exists between them; what may be the effects of shifts, different temporalities, and various rehandlings; in what distinct totalities certain elements may figure simultaneously; in short, not only what series, but also what ‘series of series’—or, in other words, what tables it is possible to draw up.\(^7\)

The fourth consequence is that this new history is confronted by many methodological problems, which include the formation of coherent and homogeneous bodies of documents, the exercise of choice as to what to study, specification of the method of analysis, etc. The four consequences taken together imply that there is a new type of historiography emerging, which may be called general history, which believes in discrete discontinuous periods as opposed to a grand unity, and of which the method has still to be concretely outlined. This is precisely what constitutes the first problem that I had earlier talked about and what is one of the reasons behind this book, but before Foucault elaborates upon this any further: he turn to the second problem of him being labelled a structuralist.

d. \textit{Structuralism, Discontinuities, Totalization}

Turning to the second problem that he wishes to address in this book, Foucault states how his enterprise cannot be called ‘structuralist’ because the structural implications of his method comprise only one characteristic of his enterprise, and cannot be thought to cover the whole of it. Foucault says that his method can be called structuralist only conditionally:

These problems may, if one so wishes, be labelled structuralism. But only under certain conditions: they do not, of themselves, cover the entire methodological field of history, they occupy only one part of that field... The structure/development opposition is relevant neither to the definition of the historical field, nor, in all probability, to the definition of a structural method.\(^8\)

Foucault also shows how the discontinuist anti-subjectivist positions of his method are not all that novel, with Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud having talked in similar lines in the nineteenth century itself. He adds that the attempt on the part of critics to club him together with the totalist structuralists is also not novel, because the three thinkers mentioned above faced the same indignity in being clubbed within anthropology and humanism. He shows how while Marx fundamentally talked about decentring, by bringing into focus the historical analysis of relations of production and class struggle, he was soon appropriated into the search for a total history, in which all differences of a society might be reduced to a single form. Similarly, the decentring operated by the Nietzschean genealogy, was soon interpreted as the search for an

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\(^7\)\textit{Ibid.}, 9-10.

\(^8\)\textit{Ibid.}, 11.
original foundation with rationality the _telos_ of mankind, thereby creating a total history, where all thought must return to its foundation in search for its teleology of rationality. Finally, when, after Freud, the counter-sciences of psychoanalysis, linguistics, and ethnology have decentred the human subject, the theme of continuity in history has been reactivated to replace the discontinuist general history with one that is developmental, unitary, and total. Summing up the three movements, and how in the case of all three totalizing tendencies have tried to misappropriate them into their own folds, Foucault says,

Foucault, therefore, has sufficient reason to believe that attempts to brand him as a structuralist, who believes in the supremacy of a totalizing underlying structure, is part of this conspiracy of denying the discontinuous and the decentring its due place in the history of thought. Foucault states categorically that his aim is not to transfer a structuralist method to the field of history of knowledge, not to use any structural category of cultural totalities, but on the contrary to question the same. Foucault makes it very clear that his method is one that does not only eschew subjectivism, but also all forms of transcendentalism, humanism, and anthropologism. Finally, he can sum up the basic purpose of this book, a purpose that sums up both the two reasons that I have been discussing so far, a purpose that tries to "order" the methodological disorder and doubts that his earlier works raised. Foucault says,

At this point there merges an enterprise of which my earlier books _Histoire de la folie_ (Madness and Civilization), _Naissance de la clinique_, and _Les mots et les choses_ (The Order of Things) were a very imperfect sketch. An enterprise by which one tries to measure the mutations that operate in general in the field of history... These tasks were outlined in a rather disorderly way, and their general articulation was never clearly defined. It was time that they were given greater coherence—or, at least, that an attempt was made to do so. This book is the result. 

Having clarified what his basic methodological presuppositions are, what the genealogy of these presuppositions comprises, and how his method is not what might be commonsensically called 'structuralist', and also having laid down the purpose of writing this book, Foucault proceeds finally to a detailed discussion of the essential categories of his method. The sections of the book that I would take up now for discussion mainly involve a typology of categories of functions that go into discursive formations. The huge inventory of terms that Foucault provides in this book contribute together to an understanding of his 'archaeological' method, and the constitution of the appendix to his previous works that this book is.

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9 _Ibid._, 13.
II. The Discursive Regularities: Unities vs. Formations

a. Discursive Unities: Tradition, Book, Œuvre, and Origin

Before he begins to discuss how his method works at and questions the foundationist bases of discourse, Foucault talks about certain discursive regularities first. For him, there are two categories of elements in discourse: there are certain discursive unities that tend to bind a discourse to unitary formations, and cover up its dissipated character; there are also discursive formations, whereby objects and concepts get enunciated through certain modalities following certain strategies to give rise to discourse. While the second group of regularities leads to the very formation and circulation of discourse, the first group forms more of an impediment to archaeological analysis, and Foucault chooses to discuss this first to show straightaway the inefficacy of the agencies of unity in discourse.

The first unity that Foucault points to is that of tradition, and the corollaries it entails. While the notion of tradition tries to bracket all singularities and disparities within the totalizing logic of the dominant, the allied notion of influence credits the origin of all new formations to the old unity. Similarly, notions of development and evolution connect dispersed events to one and the same organizing principle, just as the notion of spirit credits all formations in an age to a single explanatory principle of unity. The traditional typology of discursive formations into disciplines and genres as rigid and yet as amorphous as science, literature, philosophy, religion, history, fiction, etc., are also to be questioned because they create certain great historical insulated individualities.

The second unity that Foucault talks about comprises the twin notions of the book and the Œuvre, which, despite their essentially unitary appearance, are basically problematic constructs. Talking about these two discursive unities, Foucault says,

But the unities that must be suspended above all are those that emerge in the most immediate way: those of the book and the Œuvre. At first sight, it would seem that one could not abandon these unities without extreme artificiality. Are they not given in the most definite way? There is the material individualization of the book, which occupies a determined space, which has an economic value, and which itself indicates, by a number of signs, the limits of its beginning ad its end; and there is the establishment of an Œuvre, which we recognize and delimit by attributing a certain number of texts to an author.  

However, Foucault states that the book is not at all an autonomous form, but merely a node within a network of systems of reference to other books, other discourses, and other statements. Similarly, though œuvre seems a fairly united collection of texts ascribable to a single author, this designation is not a homogeneous function because the name of the author functions differently for texts published under his or her real name, texts published under a

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II Ibid., 23.
pseudonym, texts discovered posthumously, and incomplete drafts, letters, notebook entries, transcriptions of interviews, etc. Thus the *œuvre* is just a problematic construct and cannot be regarded as a homogeneous unity.

The third type of *discursive unity* that one should be wary of consists of two linked, but opposite themes: the first involves an attempt on the part of analysis to connect a discursive formation to a secret origin beyond its observable empirical beginnings; the second theme connects all manifest discourse to what is an ‘already-said’. This third unity thus brings in the notion of the *a priori* in discourse analysis, with the first theme eluding all historical determination in its search for the *a priorized* origin, and the second interpreting all discourse as a repetition of *a priorized* conditions of production.

It is easy to appreciate that only when one gets rid of the primacy accorded to these discursive unities, that one can proceed to a Foucauldian analysis of discursive formations. Foucault mentions this and states how when one is free of these unitary presuppositions, one can embark, like him, on the enterprise he terms a *pure description of discursive events*:

> Once these immediate forms of continuity are suspended, an entire field is set free. A vast field, but one that can be defined nonetheless: this field is made up of the totality of all effective statements (whether spoken or written), in their dispersion as events and in the occurrence that is proper to them... One is led therefore to the project of a *pure description of discursive events* as the horizon for the search for the unities that form within it.¹²

Having delineated the pitfalls one should avoid, and also having given a title to his type of analysis of discourse, Foucault proceeds to distinguish his yet quite sketchily laid out method from traditional, and deceptively similar looking, positivities, like the analysis of language or history of thought. He says that while a linguistic system entails a finite body of rules that authorizes an infinite number of performances, a field of discursive events, as he understands it, is a grouping that is always finite and limited; and while language analysis poses the question as to what rules could lead to similar statements, description of discursive events analyses how a particular statement appeared rather than another. Similarly, for Foucault, the history of thought tries to discover, beyond statements, either the conscious intention of the speaking subject, or the unconscious activity that took place at the time of enunciation, thereby falling back on a secondary discourse. The analysis of the discursive field, however, grasps a statement in the exact specificity of its occurrence, and connects it to two other discourses only to examine its correlations, limits, and conditions of exclusion. Having named his enterprise, showing what it must avoid, and also defending its exclusivity against other enterprises, Foucault describes next the very regularities that form discursive events.

Discursive Formations: Four Hypotheses and Dispersion

Coming to the second discursive regularity, Foucault says that this function of discursive formation concerns the relations between different statements that can be grouped together in a discourse, and he proposes four hypotheses for this. The first hypothesis is that statements, different in form and dispersed in time, form a discursive group if they refer to the same object. However, what makes this facile hypothesis fraught with problems is the fact that to define such individual objects of discourse, one has to talk about the dispersion of the objects and the laws of their division. The second hypothesis concerns the forms and types of connection between statements to be related in a discursive formation. But, here also one must characterize, in the coexistence of dispersed and heterogeneous statements, the system that governs their division, and the degree to which they depend upon and also exclude one another, while undergoing transformations themselves. The third hypothesis probes if it is possible to establish groups of statements by determining the system of permanent and coherent concepts involved. It can be noted, however, that discursive unity is rooted less in the coherence of concepts, and more in the distance that separates them. The fourth hypothesis concerns the grouping of statements under unitary forms on the basis of identity of themes. But, one may argue that the identification of an apparently same thematic being articulated on two different sets of concepts, can only be strategic and never a real similarity. Thus, all the four hypotheses that Foucault initially presents, to understand the concept of discursive formations, lead to contrary hypotheses. As opposed to the coherence of a well-defined field of objects, what appear are gaps and differences; in the place of a definite, normative type of connecting statement, appear heterogeneous enunciative modalities; instead of a homogeneous field of underlying concepts, there appear concepts that differ in structure and in the rules governing their use; and, contrary to the permanence of a thematic, one finds various strategic possibilities that permit the activation of incompatible themes, or the establishment of the same theme in different groups of statements.

What this revised version of the four hypotheses points towards is the key idea of dispersion. It is dispersion that, therefore, characterizes discursive formations, and to understand discursive regularity, one has to study the dispersions themselves. Explaining how this characterizes his type of analysis, Foucault says,

Hence the idea of describing these dispersions themselves; of discovering whether, between these elements, which are certainly not organized as a progressively deductive structure, nor as an enormous book that is being gradually and continuously written, nor as the œuvre of a collective subject, one cannot discern a regularity: an order in their successive appearance, correlations in their simultaneity, assignable positions in a common space, a reciprocal functioning, linked and hierarchized transformations.\(^{13}\)

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 37.
Qualifying his enterprise and method further, Foucault says how instead of reconstituting *chains of inference* as is done in the history of the sciences of philosophy, and instead of drawing up *tables of differences* as linguists do, his analysis of discourse would simply describe *systems of dispersion*. In a position now to define what a *discursive formation* is and what constitutes the *rules of formation* for a discourse, Foucault says,

> Whenever one can describe, between a number of statements, such a system of dispersion, whenever, between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations), we will say, for the sake of convenience, that we are dealing with a *discursive formation*. The conditions to which the elements of this division (objects, mode of statement, concepts, thematic choices) are subjected we shall call the *rules of formation*.

One can understand how discursive formations as well as the rules of formation revolve around the dispersion of four key notions—objects of discourse, modes of statement, concepts involved in the discourse, and thematic strategies—and Foucault describes next the formation of these four categories, one by one.

c. *The Formation of Objects*

To examine how the notion of *rules of formation* works, Foucault takes up first the case of formation of objects, and to simplify his analysis, he takes the example of the discourse of psychopathology from the nineteenth century onwards, to have a delimited and easily identifiable discursive formation, to explain the same.

Foucault shows how the formation of objects for a discourse can be studied under three heads. The first is that of *surfaces of emergence* of discursive objects, which for nineteenth-century psychopathology were visibly constituted by the family, the immediate social group, the work situation and the religious community. Beyond these obvious ‘surfaces’, there were also new ones like art with its own normativity and notions of creative deviation; sexuality with its deviations becoming an object of observation, description, and analysis for psychiatric discourse; and penalty, for which ‘homicidal monomanias’ became a form of deviance related to madness. All these surfaces, along with the thresholds and discontinuities they entail, make the emergence of the objects of the nineteenth-century psychopathological discourse possible. The second factor is that of the *authorities of delimitation*, which concerns, in the nineteenth century, the status of medicine, as an authority recognized by public opinion, the law and government, to delimit and designate madness as an object. But, just as with the surfaces of emergence, here also one finds new authorities emerging: the penal law with its notions of the *crime passionel*, and the role of heredity in crime and madness: the religious authority in its division of the mystical from the

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pathological, and the supernatural from the abnormal; and literary and art criticism in its recognition and delimitation of the idiosyncrasies of authors and artists. The third ground of examination is that of grids of specification according to which different kinds of madness are grouped and classified as separate objects of psychiatric discourse.

This classification is however, as Foucault says, inadequate because it overlooks the mutual relations between the different planes of emergence, different authorities of delimitation, and different grids of specification themselves. For him, criminal behaviour could give rise to a whole series of objects of knowledge in the nineteenth century because a group of particular relations was adopted in psychiatric discourse. Similarly, the relations between different planes of specification, and those between the authorities of medical and judicial decision led to new objects for the psychopathological discursive formation. In addition to these, the relations between the family, sexual norms, and religion, and the relations between therapeutic confinement in a hospital and penal confinement in a prison also led to the formation of a whole group of objects for the psychiatric discourse. Thus, it is not a set of privileged objects that characterizes a discourse, but rather the dispersions of its members and their mutual relations. Foucault says,

Let us generalize: in the nineteenth century, the psychiatric discourse is characterized not by privileged objects, but by the way in which it forms objects that are in fact highly dispersed. This formation is made possible by a group of relations established between authorities of emergence, delimitation, and specification. One might say, then, that a discursive formation is defined (as far as its objects are concerned, at least) if one can establish such a group; if one can show how any particular object of discourse finds in it its place and law of emergence; if one can show that it may give birth simultaneously or successively to mutually exclusive objects, without having to modify itself.¹⁵

This turns the focus in understanding the objects of discourse to a dispersed relational space, and Foucault observes that the conditions necessary for the appearance of an object of discourse, and those necessary for this object to exist in relation to other objects are varied. These relations are not present in the object itself, but are established between different institutions, social, economic and political processes, systems of norms, behavioural patterns, etc. The relations, therefore, do not define the internal constitution of an object, but what places it in a field of exteriority, in a heterogeneous, distinctive, comparative relation with other objects. Foucault proceeds next to distinguish between two types of relations in society: first, there are the ‘primary’ relations between institutions and social forms, which are independent of discourse and are not necessarily expressed in the formation of relations that makes discursive objects possible; on the other hand, there are ‘secondary’ relations that are formulated within discourse itself. For Foucault, there exist not only these two—a system of

¹⁵Ibid., 44.
real or primary relations and a system of reflexive or secondary relations—but also a system of discursive relations, which are neither internal to the discourse, in the sense of connecting concepts within it to one another, nor exterior to it, in the sense of imposing certain forms upon it. Discursive relations exist at the limit of discourse offering it objects it can speak about, and thus the whole of the discursive formation is rooted in this relational space of object formation. Noting how, therefore, the formation of objects is rooted in dispersion, and their rules of formation are based on dispersed relational practice, Foucault says,

We sought the unity of discourse in the objects themselves, in their distribution, in the interplay of their differences, in their proximity or distance—in short, in what is given to the speaking subject; and, in the end, we are sent back to a setting-up of relations that characterizes discursive practice itself; and what we discover is neither a configuration, nor a form, but a group of rules that are immanent in a practice, and define it in its specificity...it is not the objects that remain constant, nor the domain that they form; it is not even their point of emergence or their mode of characterization; but the relation between the surfaces on which they appear, on which they can be delimited, on which they can be analysed and specified.\footnote{Ibid., 46-47.}

Thus, as far as a study of the formation of objects of discourse is concerned, it is clear that one has to do away with the foundational totality of things, and as Foucault says, one has to 'depresentify' them, or to substitute the \textit{a priorization} of 'things' anterior to discourse with the regular formation of objects that emerge only in discourse. The definition of these objects has to be, in itself, without reference to the foundational \textit{ground} of things, but only in relation to the body of rules that enable them to form as objects of a discourse, and only in relation to the dispersed relational space that defines this functional regularity. For Foucault, therefore, discourse in not just an intricate web woven between words and things, but one that can only be understood in relation to the rules of discursive practice. He says,

I would like to show that ‘discourses’, in the form in which they can be heard or read, are not, as one might expect, a mere intersection of things and words: an obscure web of things, and a manifest, visible, coloured chain of words; I would like to show that discourse is not a slender surface of contact, or confrontation, between a reality and a language (\textit{langue}), the intrication of a lexicon and an experience; I would like to show with precise examples that in analysing discourses themselves, one sees the loosening of the embrace, apparently so tight, of words and things, and the emergence of a group of rules proper to discursive practice... Of course, discourses are composed of signs; but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is this \textit{more} that renders them irreducible to the language (\textit{langue}) and to speech. It is this ‘more’ that we must reveal and describe.\footnote{Ibid., 48-49.}

It is a quest for this \textit{more} that characterizes Foucault’s archaeological method, which looks for the relation between the reality of things and the linguisticity of words in the discursivity of the statement or the \textit{énoncé}, and he takes this up soon in his book. But before that, he goes on to describe, in an equally dispersive light, the other three categories of discursive formation, beginning with that of \textit{enunciative modalities}. 

\footnote{Ibid., 46-47.} \footnote{Ibid., 48-49.}
d. *The Formation of Enunciative Modalities*

Talking about the formation of modalities of enunciation of a discourse, Foucault points to three possible sites. The first question is about who becomes the speaking subject in a discursive formation, and who is considered qualified to use the particular type of language the discourse warrants. Giving the example of another of his pet topics—clinical discourse, Foucault shows how it is the doctor who can alone, in collusion with other structures like the judiciary and religious bodies, talk about illnesses and cures. The second concerns the institutional sites from which the doctor can make his or her discourse, and from which this discourse derives its legitimacy, which, for Foucault, are the laboratory and the ‘library’, or the entire documentary field, which the discourse occupies. The third modality is about the positions of the subject in relation to various other domains or groups of objects, which include not only perceptual situations, where the doctor can become either the questioning subject or the listening subject, but also positions that the subject can occupy in information networks comprising theoretical teaching and hospital training.

It is to be noted that enunciative modalities gain an amount of positivity only because a group of relations, like, as Foucault shows in the case of the clinical discourse, that between the hospital and the perceptual codes of the human body, and that between the doctor’s therapeutic role, his or her pedagogic role, and his or her role as a responsible representative of public health in the social space, is involved. Thus, if there is a unity in the modalities of enunciation of a discourse, it is because it makes constant use of this group of relations, and instead of referring to the unifying function of a subject, the various enunciative modalities manifest a dispersion of the same. The unity that can be presented between the different enunciative modalities is thus not an *a priori*, something anterior to discourse, but one defined by the specificity of a discursive practice within a relational space. Therefore, as with the formation of objects of discourse, the formation of modalities also shows itself to be rooted not in transcendental subjectivity, but in its dispersion, and Foucault says,

> I showed earlier that it was neither by ‘words’ nor by ‘things’ that the regulation of the objects proper to a discursive formation should be defined; similarly, it must now be recognized that it is neither by recourse to a transcendental subject nor by recourse to a psychological subjectivity that the regulation of its enunciations should be defined.\(^{18}\)

On the contrary, it is the field of dispersions that has to be credited, as in the case of discursive objects, with the emergence of enunciative modalities. It is with this understanding the role of dispersion and the practical role of relations in the formation of discursive regularities, that Foucault moves on to the two remaining formations, that of concepts underlying discourse, and that of strategies adopted to make a discourse emerge and subsist.

\(^{18}\)Ibid., 55.
e. The Formation of Concepts

Very much in what I have called a 'dispersive' mood, Foucault attempts next to find a regularity in the field of disparate concepts that underlie discursive formations. He asks,

Could a law not be found that would account for the successive or simultaneous emergence of disparate concepts? Could a system of occurrence not be found between them that was not a logical systematicity? Rather than wishing to replace concepts in a virtual deductive edifice, one would have to describe the organization of the field of statements where they appeared and circulated.\(^{19}\)

Thus, if one wishes to have a system of discursive regularity between concepts, without taking recourse to a deductive logical systematicity, where all disparities are wished away in an overwhelming unity, one has to describe the organization of discursive units in the act of formation and circulation. For Foucault, this 'organization' happens in three ways.

The first type of this organization involves forms of succession, which in turn involves the ordering of two distinct but successive steps. First comes the various orderings of enunciative series, or how—either through inferences, implications, and reasonings; or through descriptions and generalizations—events of a time are distributed in the linear succession of discursive statements. The next form involves the various types of dependence of the statements, or the various rhetorical schemata, according to which groups of statements may be combined into concepts. Foucault gives the example of natural history in the Classical period to explain how this happens. The second step in the configuration of the enunciative field involves forms of coexistence, which operates on three related fields. The first is a field of presence, which incorporates all statements formulated elsewhere but taken up in a particular discourse. The second field is the field of concomitance, which includes statements that belong to other types of discourse, but are active in the current discourse, either through analogy, or being models that can be transferred to other formations, or because they function as a higher discursive authority. The last field is the field of memory, which consists of statements that are no longer in circulation, but in relation to which historical discontinuity can be established. The third organizational form comprises the procedures of intervention, which appear either through more tangible discursive techniques like rewriting, transcription, and translation, or through the more complex means of expanding or delimiting the range of a statement, transferring statements from one field of application to another, and systematizing propositions and redistributing statements in a new discursive arrangement.

These schemata make it possible to describe concepts not in terms of laws of their internal construction, or their progressive and individual psychological genesis, but in terms of their dispersion. This dispersion defines not only forms of deduction, derivation, and

\(^{19}\) Ibid., 56.
coherence, but also of incompatibility, substitution, exclusion, and displacement between concepts. This type of analysis concerns, what Foucault calls, a *preconceptual* level, just as the four categories of the Classical quadrilateral were not really in use in the age, but can be decoded as the basis of all the age’s concepts. It should, however, be noted that the ‘preconceptual’ level is neither a horizon of ideality, a foundational *a priori* beyond chronology, nor an empirical genesis of abstractions about the series of operations that make it possible to constitute concepts. The preconceptual formation is always restricted to particular discursive fields, without indefinite possibilities of extension to all fields of an *episteme*. Thus, just as one should avoid certain pitfalls while analysing the formation of objects or enunciative modalities, one should steer clear of locating the formation of concepts in either of the two extremes of an ideality or the empirical progress of ideas. For Foucault,

In order to analyse the rules for the formation of objects, one must neither, as we have seen, embody them in things, nor relate them to the domain of words; in order to analyse the formation of enunciative types, one must relate them neither to the knowing subject, nor to a psychological individuality. Similarly, to analyse the formation of concepts, one must relate them neither to the horizon of ideality, nor to the empirical progress of ideas.20

f. The Formation of Strategies

Finally, Foucault comes to the fourth category of discursive formation, that of thematic strategies. Earlier, he had shown how, as opposed to a permanence of themes, one needs to talk about strategies concerning the same, but he had not defined ‘strategies’ in an unambiguous way. So, before going on to the rules of formation of strategies, Foucault chooses to define strategies as the set of thematic coherences that group objects, concepts, and types of enunciation in a certain discursive formation. He says,

Such discourses as economics, medicine, grammar, the science of living beings give rise to certain organization of concepts, certain groupings of objects, certain types of enunciation, which form, according to their degree of coherence, rigour, and stability, themes or theories... Whatever their formal level may be, I shall call these themes and theories ‘strategies’. The problem is to discover how they are distributed in history.21

The object in studying the rules of formation for these strategies thus lies in a study of their distribution, and this can be done, as Foucault shows, in three forms.

The first step lies in a determination of what Foucault calls the possible *points of diffraction* of discourse. These points are themselves characterized in three steps: first, as *points of incompatibility*, where two objects, two types of enunciation, or two concepts appear in the same discursive formation, but do not lead to the same series of statements; next as *points of equivalence*, where these two incompatible elements are formed in the same way and

on the basis of the same rules; and finally as link points of systematization, where, on the basis of each of these equivalent and yet incompatible elements, a coherent series of objects, forms of enunciation, and concepts can be derived. This form, however, does not take care of the emergence of all the partial groups and regional compatibilities, and so, one must study the second form of economy of the discursive constellation, or how a particular discourse interacts with other discourses, either as a model for application to them, or in terms of analogy and complementarity, or opposition and mutual delimitation between them. Thirdly, The determination of the theoretical choices also depends upon the concept of authority, which itself can have three characteristics. The authority can be characterized by the function of the discourse in a field of non-discursive practices, by the rules and processes of appropriation of the discourse, and finally, by the possible positions of desire in relation to the discourse, or the fact that discourse may be the place for a representation of fantasy and an instrument of deriving forbidden satisfaction.

It should be noted that none of these strategies are rooted, anterior to discourse, in a fundamental and original thematic choice, but are exercised in delimiting, separating, and regrouping objects of discourse; in choosing, constituting series, and composing into great rhetorical unities forms of enunciation; and in providing concepts with rules, regional coherences, and conceptual architectures. The strategic options are thus neither part of a fundamental anterior project, nor a simple play of theoretical alternatives and opinions, but regulated ways of practising the possibilities of discourse. Connecting this discursive regularity, in its dispersion, to the earlier three, Foucault ends his discussion on the four categories in discursive formation by saying,

But these strategies must not be analysed either as secondary elements that are superposed on a discursive rationality that is, of right, independent of them... And just as one must not relate the formation of objects either to words or to things, nor that of statements either to the pure form of knowledge or to the psychological subject, nor that of concepts either to the structure of ideality or to the succession of ideas, one must not relate the formation of theoretical choices either to a fundamental project or to the secondary play of opinions.22

**g. Systems of Formation and their Dependences**

Having described all the four levels of discursive formation, Foucault finally notes how these four levels, which together comprise the systems of formation, are not independent of one another, but fold upon each other in a circular way to create a system of mutual dependences. The four levels are thus related in a vertical dependence of hierarchic relations, and to explain this mutual relation, Foucault says,

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22 Ibid., 70.
In fact, the different levels thus defined are not independent of one another. I have shown that the strategic choices do not emerge directly from a world-view or a predominance of interests peculiar to this or that speaking subject; but that their very possibility is determined by points of divergence in the group of concepts; I have also shown that concepts were not formed directly against the approximative, confused, and living background of ideas, but on the basis of forms of coexistence between statements; and, as we have seen, the modalities of enunciation were described on the basis of the position occupied by the subject in relation to the domain of objects of which he is speaking. In this way, there exists a vertical system of dependences: not all the positions of the subject, all the types of coexistence between statements, all the discursive strategies, are equally possible, but only those authorized by anterior levels... The levels are not free from one another therefore, and are not deployed according to an unlimited autonomy: between the primary differentiation of objects and the formation of discursive strategies there exists a whole hierarchy of relations.  

It is clear, therefore, that the system of formation is not something frozen in time, and its mobility appears, as Foucault shows, in two ways. On the one hand, the elements that are being related to one another in discourse may undergo a number of intrinsic mutations without the general form of their discursive regularity being altered. On the other hand, the discursive practices may modify the domains that the systems of formation relate to one another. Foucault also points out to the fact that the systems of formation do not constitute the terminal stage of discourse, and their analysis never forebodes a completed construction. They constitute rather, what he calls, preterminal regularities and the analysis of the dependence between elements of the system as well as that between discourse and the system is always rooted in dispersion and discursive practice. Foucault says,

Discourse and system produce each other—and conjointly—only at the crest of this immense reserve. What are being analysed here are certainly not the terminal states of discourse; they are the preterminal regularities in relation to which the ultimate state, far from constituting the birth-place of a system, is defined by its variants... One is not seeking, therefore, to pass from the text to thought, from talk to silence, from the exterior to the interior, from spatial dispersion to the pure recollection of the moment, from superficial multiplicity to profound unity. One remains within the dimension of discourse.  

Having laid out thus the nature of discursive formation in terms of the unities one has to avoid, the regularities one has to seek, the rules of formation that one has to understand in terms of dispersion and discursive practice, and the preterminal systems of formation that one has to analyse, Foucault proceeds next to the unit of discursive formations—the énoncé.

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23 Ibid., 72-73.
24 Ibid., 76.
III. Enoncé, Positivity, Archive: the Range of a Discursive Formation

a. Enoncé as the Functional Unit of Discourse

After laying down the scope and objective of his method, Foucault defines next what his method seeks as the basic functional unit of its object of research. He establishes this functional unit as the *enoncé*, translated by Sheridan as 'statement'. Earlier whenever I have mentioned the word 'statement', it has always been in the sense of 'enoncé', but from now on I would generally refer to the category by its French name itself (except in the quotes, where Sheridan's translation has to be retained), because now, me having presented the Foucauldian description of the same, there would be no ambiguity about its nature, and I can retain the more technical French term rather than the loaded common English word. Anyway, right at the onset of his definition of the *enoncé*, Foucault notes that whatever he had been doing so far in the book, including his description of the four sets of rules of discursive formation, entailed a description of this concept. He says,

> But what, in fact, have I been speaking about so far? What has been the object of my inquiry? And what did I intend to describe? 'Statements'—both in that discontinuity that frees them from all the forms in which one was so ready to allow them to be caught, and in the general, unlimited, apparently formless fields of discourse...the four groups of rules by which I characterized a discursive formation really did define groups of statements... This, then, is the task that confronts me: to take up the definition of statement at its very root.

Accordingly, he proceeds to define this category of *enoncé* in all its possibilities.

Foucault notices that from the description of the *enoncé* that he has given so far, one might assume it to be something like the 'seed' of discourse or the atom of discourse. But this assumption of the *enoncé* as the elementary unit of discourse poses, for Foucault, problems regarding what it consists of, what its distinctive features are, and what its discursive are. In short, it becomes imperative to define the *enoncé* in terms of its similarity with what logicians term 'proposition', grammarians call a 'sentence', and pragmatists or 'analysts' identify with the 'speech act'. Foucault observes, however, that in all three cases, the conditions are too numerous and too rigid, and though the *enoncé* sometimes does take on these forms, one can always find *enoncés* that lack in a legitimate propositional structure, that do not have a regular syntax, and that cannot be isolated as speech acts. Thus, the *enoncé* is something less deterministic, less strongly structured, but more omnipresent than any of these three readily available units of logical, linguistic, or pragmatic analysis. What Foucault concludes as an intermediate step towards understanding the category is the possibility of the *enoncé* possessing no isolable character of its own at all, it being the extrinsic material on the basis of which discourses determine their own objects.

Soon, Foucault refutes this definitional possibility of the énoncé too. He shows, how for the earlier provisional definition, an énoncé appears whenever a number of signs are juxtaposed, the threshold of the énoncé becoming that of the threshold of the existence of signs. And here, a term like ‘the existence of signs’ becomes problematic, because the existence of an énoncé is not of the same order as that of language, the latter existing not only as a system for constructing possible instances of the former, but also as one obtained from it. Foucault gives the example of keyboards of a typewriter, where a series of letters printed on the keys, each a sign in itself, does not make an énoncé, but the same series of letters listed in a typewriting manual, becomes the énoncé of the alphabetical order adopted by typewriters. Thus, the énoncé can only be defined by a number of negative consequences: that a regular linguistic construction is not required to form it; and that an énoncé does not play the role of an external agency influencing linguistic constructions.

The énoncé exists therefore neither as language though it is also made up of signs, nor as objects presented to perception though it also has a materiality with spatio-temporal coordinates. This category can thus be defined only as a function that gives a discursive formation its concrete form in time and space. Foucault says,

One should not be surprised, then, if one has failed to find structural criteria of unity for the statement; this is because it is not in itself a unit, but a function that cuts across a domain of structures and possible unities, and which reveals them, with concrete contents, in time and space.26

The énoncé thus becomes the functional unit of a discourse and Foucault describes next this role that it plays in the form of the enunciative function in discourse.

b. The Enunciative Function and Repeatable Materiality

In his attempt to find out the characteristics of the énoncé, Foucault lays down four of its absolutely definitive characteristics that comprise the enunciative function. The first concerns the notion of the correlate, or what is it that an énoncé has as its correlate. Foucault points out that an énoncé has as its correlate neither an individual or a particular object that is designated by a word in a sentence, nor a state of things or a relation capable of verifying the proposition. What it has as its correlate is a group of domains in which such objects may appear and to which such relations may be assigned, the énoncé being linked to a ‘referential’ that is made up not of ‘things’ or ‘beings’, but of laws of possibility and rules of existence for its relations. This group characterizes the enunciative level of a discursive formulation, and it is through a relation with these domains of possibility that the énoncé makes a syntagma, or a series of symbols distinct from grammatical and logical levels.

26 Ibid., 87.
The second characteristic, which also distinguishes an énoncé from any series of linguistic elements, concerns its relation with the subject. While, for a series of signs to exist, there has to be an 'author' or a transmitting authority, this 'author' is not the subject of an énoncé, either in substance, or in function. There is no individual person or agency that can be credited as the cause, origin, or starting-point of the énoncé, its subject being a vacant place that may be filled by different individuals. For Foucault, it is this non-subjective trait that characterizes the enunciative function.

The third characteristic of the enunciative function is that the énoncé cannot operate without the existence of an associated domain, so that it is always something other and something more than a mere collection of signs that a sentence or a proposition is. An énoncé is always surrounded by other énoncés, but these latter do not really form, as Foucault points out, what is conventionally called the 'context', because it is the énoncé that makes this associated domain possible, rather than it being framed by this domain. This associated field is made up of the series of formulations within which the énoncé appears, all the formulations which it refers to, the formulations whose subsequent possibility is determined by the énoncé and which may follow it as a consequence, and the formulations whose epistemic status the énoncé in question shares.

The fourth condition for the enunciative function is that the énoncé must have a material existence, in the sense that it is always given through some material medium, even if that medium is concealed. This notion of materiality gives rise to a most important characteristic of the énoncé, namely repeatable materiality, or that the énoncé is always subject to possibilities of re-inscription and transcription, and that it is constituted in relation to the two functions of a field of stabilization and a field of use. Talking about this fourth and most important feature of the énoncé, Foucault says,

This repeatable materiality that characterizes the enunciative function reveals the statement as a specific and paradoxical object, but also as one of those objects that men produce, manipulate, use, transform, exchange, combine, decompose and recompose, and possibly destroy. Instead of being something said once and for all—and lost in the past like the result of a battle, a geological catastrophe, or the death of a king—the statement, as it emerges in its materiality, appears with a status, enters various networks and various fields of use, is subjected to transfers or modifications, is integrated into operations and strategies in which its identity is maintained or effaced. Thus the statement circulates, is used, disappears, allows or prevents the realization of a desire, serves or resists various interests, participates in challenge and struggle, and becomes a theme of appropriation or rivalry.

Thus, it is this repeatable materiality that gives the énoncé its power of sustenance and circulation through society, and Foucault proceeds to a description of this inexorable énoncé.
Having identified the énoncé as the basis of discursive formation, and also having shown how this is a functional category distinct from the proposition, the sentence, or the speech-act, Foucault finally defines it by summing up his previous observations thus:

I now realize that I could not define a statement as a unit of a linguistic type (superior to the phenomenon of the word, inferior to the text); but that I was dealing with an enunciative function that involved various units (these may sometimes be sentences, sometimes propositions; but they are sometimes made up of fragments of sentences, series or tables of signs, a set of propositions or equivalent formulations); and, instead of giving a 'meaning' to these units, this function relates them to a field of objects; instead of providing them with a subject, it opens up for them a number of possible subjective positions; instead of fixing their limits, it places them in a domain of coordination and coexistence; instead of determining their identity, it places them in a space in which they are used and repeated. In short, what has been discovered is not the atomic statement—with its apparent meaning, its origin, its limits, and its individuality—but the operational field of the enunciative function and the conditions according to which it reveals various units (which may be, but need not be, of a grammatical or logical order).

This being merely a repetition of the findings already made, Foucault proceeds next to define the énoncé in a more systematic way.

The first task that he sets for himself is to fix the vocabulary, or define the different concepts that appear in the definition of énoncé. Foucault terms as verbal or linguistic performance the production of any group of signs based on a natural or artificial language, and formulation, the individual or collective act that reveals a linguistic performance. He defines énoncé as the modality of existence for a formulation that allows it to be something more than a mere object made by a human being, something in relation with a domain of objects, and endowed with a repeatable materiality. Having done this, Foucault observes how the énoncé is not, thus, an elementary, isolable, horizontal unity that can be added to the unities of grammar or logic, but one concerning functional conditions that produce a vertical series of signs. This verticality makes the analysis of énoncés a historical analysis, which, however, avoids interpretation of hidden meanings, and questions only their mode of existence. The énoncé thus stands within the enunciative field as the constitutive category of the unsaid and the lack in discourse, which form its correlates. The next characteristic of the énoncé that Foucault observes is that it is neither hidden nor visible, and requires a certain change of viewpoint to be recognized. The reason for this is that unlike linguistic constructions, énoncés refer to their own formation rather than perceptible objects. Thus neutralized, the enunciative level resides at the limit of language and defines its periphery rather than its internal organization, and its surface of regularity rather than its content.

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28 Ibid., 106.
Foucault turns next to another group of questions concerning how such a description of \( \text{\textit{\text{\textit{enonce}}}} \) can be adjusted to the analysis of discursive formations, and vice-versa. Explaining how an analysis of the \( \text{\textit{\text{\textit{enonce}}}} \) and that of the discursive formation are established correlative, he says that the mapping of discursive formations independent of principles of unification reveals the specific level of the \( \text{\textit{\text{\textit{enonce}}}} \), just as the description of the organization of the enunciative level leads to the individualization of discursive formations. Thus finally, Foucault is in a position to define discourse in its entirety, and he says,

So we can now give a full meaning to the definition of ‘discourse’ that we suggested above. We shall call discourse a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation; it does not form a rhetorical or formal unity, endlessly repeatable, whose appearance or use-in history might be indicated (and, if necessary, explained); it is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined. Discourse in this sense is not an ideal, timeless form that also possesses a history... It is, from beginning to end, historical—a fragment of history, a unity and discontinuity in history itself, posing the problem of its own limits, its divisions, its transformations, the specific modes of its temporality rather than its sudden irruption in the midst of the complications of time.\(^29\)

This 'historical', anti-unitary, anti-subjectivist definition of the discourse makes it possible the notion of discursive practice. It is not the subjective competence, rational activity, or expressive operation of an individual leading to the formulation of an idea, but the operation of the enunciative function—a body of anonymous historical rules, determined by the given social, economic, geographical, and linguistic constraints of a time and space, the conditions.

These convincing definitions of the category of \( \text{\textit{\text{\textit{enonce}}} \) the idea of discourse and its formation, and the operation of discursive practice, should not make one assume that Foucault is providing here an alternate theory, a radically departed method. Foucault says that instead of providing an explanatory theory, which is itself foundationalist, and thus much the antithesis of the import of his work, what he discusses here are only possibilities. He ends his definition session on this very cautious note, saying,

But one can also see that I am not developing here a theory, in the strict sense of the term: the deduction, on the basis of a number of axioms, of an abstract model applicable to an infinite number of empirical descriptions... I am not inferring the analysis of discursive formations from a definition of statements that would serve as a basis; nor am I inferring the nature of statements from what discursive formations are...but I am trying to show how a domain can be organized, without flaw, without contradiction, without internal arbitrariness, in which statements, their principle of grouping, the great historical unities that they may form, and the methods that make it possible to describe them are all brought into question... And I will consider, not that I have constructed a rigorous theoretical model, but I have freed a coherent domain of description, that I have, if not established the model, at least opened up and established the possibility of one... Rather than founding a theory—and perhaps before being able to do so (I do not deny that I regret not yet having succeeded in doing so)—my present concern is to establish a possibility.\(^30\)

\(^29\) Ibid., 117.
\(^30\) Ibid., 114-15.
d. Rarity, Exteriority, Accumulation; and the Positivity

Convinced that his analysis is not one leading to a fossilized theory, Foucault mentions next three very important dispersive features of such an enunciative analysis. The first is an element of rarity, or that while traditional discourse analysis shows how different texts refer to one another and organize themselves into a unity with institutions and practices, the analysis of énoncés and discursive formations tries to determine the principle by which only a few ‘significant’ groups of enunciation could appear. According to this law of rarity, everything is never said and énoncés are always in deficit, and the task of enunciative analysis is to look for this principle of rarefaction, not in terms of treating ‘exclusions’ as ‘repression’, but in terms of limited presences. This principle also explains the fact that since only a few things can be said, there is always a tendency for these rare énoncés to get collected in unifying totalities, and their meanings multiplied. This principle of rarity also poses, as Foucault shows for the first time in this book, the question of power and struggle, as to what will get enounced and what appropriated within this limited scope of discursive presence.

The second characteristic feature that Foucault mentions is of exteriority, or that while traditional historical analysis roots itself in a movement from the exterior towards a nucleus of interiority, his type of analysis deals with énoncés in terms of an exteriority. Thus, for Foucault, énoncés are not a mere ‘translation’ of operations that take place in transcendentally subjective consciousness and unconscious thought, but are located in particular events, regularities, relationships, and transformations. Consequently, according to this principle of exteriority, the enunciative field does not obey the temporality of consciousness and thought, but that of its own dispersive regularity.

The third feature of enunciative analysis is that it is addressed to specific forms of accumulation, or that while traditional analyses treat already existing discourses in terms of an essential inertia, and uses four terms—reading, trace, decipherment, and memory—to rid them of it, the Foucauldian type of analysis studies the inertia itself, and looks into what an énoncé accumulates in time. This sort of analysis rests itself on three terms: that of remanence, or that a discourse should be studied in terms of what remains in it, rather than a constant reference back to the past original event of its formulation; that of additivity, or a study of the specific things that get added to it in the course of time; and that of recurrence, or that every énoncé involves a field of antecedent elements in relation to which it is situated, and which it is able to re-organize and redefine according to emerging new relations. These three features of enunciative analysis, thus, make it possible to study discursive formations and énoncés without any reference to the subject, the origin, or hidden meaning, in relation to historically regulating systems of power.
Summing up the consequences of a method that has such three features, Foucault shows how this type of analysis has as its object what he calls a *positivity*, a discursive formation that does not succumb to the temptations of rationality or teleology. Defining the category of *positivity* in relation to these features of his method, he says,

To describe a group of statements not as the closed, plethoric totality of a meaning, but as an incomplete, fragmented figure; to describe a group of statements not with reference to the interiority of an intention, a thought, or a subject, but in accordance with the dispersion of an exteriority; to describe a group of statements, in order to rediscover not the moment or the trace of their origin, but the specific forms of an accumulation, is certainly not to uncover an interpretation, to discover a foundation, or to free constituent acts; nor is it to decide on a rationality, or to embrace a teleology. It is to establish what I am quite willing to call a *positivity*. To analyse a discursive formation therefore is to deal with a group of verbal performances at the level of the statements and of the form of positivity that characterizes them; or, more briefly, it is to define the type of positivity of a discourse.

Having done with the different definitional categories of his scope, objective and method, Foucault, however, turns back for a while to talk about the role of this new-found category of positivity in history before giving his method the historically cogent name of archaeology.

### e. *Positivity as a Historical a priori, and the Archive*

It may be noted that dispersed texts and diverse authors belonging to a single discursive formation are in a continuous interaction with each other because of the form of positivity of their discourse. The form of positivity, thus, defines a field in which formal identities, thematic continuities, translations of concepts, and polemical interchanges are deployed, and it plays the role of a *historical a priori* in discourse formation. For Foucault, this *a priori*, however, does not avoid historicity, because it is characterized by the group of rules that form a discursive practice and are transformed with the along with the discourse.

This role of positivity gives a new dimension to Foucault’s description of discursive formation, and he identifies a new term, that of the *archive*, emerging from this. He says,

The domain of statements thus articulated in accordance with historical *a prioris*, thus characterized by different types of positivity, and divided up by distinct discursive formations, no longer has that appearance of a monotonous, endless plain that I attributed to it at the outset when I spoke of ‘the surface of discourse’; it also ceases to appear as the inert, smooth, neutral element in which there arise, each according to its own movement, or driven by some obscure dynamic, themes, ideas, concepts, knowledge. We are now dealing with a complex volume, in which heterogeneous regions are differentiated or deployed, in accordance with specific rules and practices that cannot be superposed. Instead of seeing, on the great mythical book of history, lines of words that translate into visible characters thoughts that were formed in some other time and place, we have in the density of discursive practices, systems that establish statements as events (with their own condition and domain of appearance) and things (with their own possibility and field of use). They are all these systems of statements (whether events or things) that I propose to call *archive*.

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31 Ibid., 125.
32 Ibid., 128.
The archive is thus the composite complex volume of all the énoncés that take part in discursive practice and get established as either an event or a thing. After having identified this category, Foucault proceeds next to describe its features. The first feature he mentions is that the archive is the system that governs the appearance of énoncés as unique events in discursive practice, and decides on what is to be said in a discursive formation. The second feature is that the archive, instead of allowing the things said to accumulate—either in an amorphous mass, or in an unbroken linearity—or disappear, groups them together in distinct figures based on multiple relations and following specific regularities. The third and final feature of the archive is that it is at the very root of the énoncé-event couplet, and defines, what Foucault calls, the system of its enunciability, while it is also the basis of the énoncé-thing duo, and defines the system of its functioning.

Therefore, the archive defines a particular level between language, which is the system of constructing possible sentences, and the corpus that collects all constructions thus made, and causes a multiplicity of statements emerge as regular events and things to be dealt with in discourse. It is thus, as Foucault terms it, the general system of the formation and transformation of énoncés, and an analysis of the archive becomes the most crucial task for anyone interested in analysing discursive formations. This is especially so because the archive has its threshold of existence in the discontinuity that separates the analyser from what he or she can no longer say, it falling outside one’s discursive practice in the gap between different modes of discursive practice. This is why the earlier tasks that Foucault set himself, like the analysis of positivities or énoncés, have their overall limits in a never-completed analysis of the archive, and it is this search that Foucault finally terms as archaeology. He says,

The never completed, never wholly achieved uncovering of the archive forms the general horizon to which the description of discursive formations, the analysis of positivities, the mapping of the enunciative field belong. The right of words—which is not that of the philologists—authorizes, therefore, the use of the term archaeology to describe all these searches. This term does not imply the search for a beginning... It designates the general theme of a description that questions the already-said at the level of its existence: of the enunciative function that operates within it, of the discursive formation, and the general archive system to which it belongs. Archaeology describes discourses as practices specified in the element of the archive.33

Thus, Foucault eventually gives his method a name, or, more accurately, defines for the first time the method he has already claimed to use in his earlier works. Archaeology is thus an analysis of the archive; an archive itself comprising a particular set of énoncés determined by the a priorized demands of positivities in a regularized discursive practice as leading to certain relations of discursive formations. Having defined all these crucial terms in great detail, Foucault moves on to a direct exposition of this archaeological method.

33 Ibid., 131.
IV. Archaeology and Knowledge: Features and Limits of a Method

a. *Archaeology and the History of Ideas*

Foucault notices that a discipline like the history of ideas, which has uncertain objects, badly defined limits, and no rigour and stability in method, basically performs two roles. On the one hand, it deals with events that occur at the margins of history, thus concerning itself with not the history of the sciences, but that of amorphous thought which arises in the interstices of great discursive monuments. On the other hand, history of ideas crosses the boundaries of existing disciplines, and reinterprets them, as if from the outside. Summing up the consequences of both these roles of this discipline, Foucault observes how, therefore, it becomes a discipline of *interferences*, continuously relating in a linear historical chain unrelated domains of thought. He says,

The history of ideas, then, is the discipline of beginnings and ends, the description of obscure continuities and returns, the reconstitution of developments in the linear form of history. But it can also, by that very fact, describe, from one domain to another, the whole interplay of exchanges and intermediaries... It becomes therefore the discipline of interferences, the description of the concentric circles that surround works, underline them, relate them to one another, and insert them into whatever they are not.\(^{34}\)

It is easy to notice how history of ideas is rooted in a search for origins and continuity, much like traditional historiography, and far removed from the archaeological method. Foucault states how his method is quite the opposite of history of ideas:

Genesis, continuity, totalization: these are the great themes of the history of ideas, and that by which it is attached to a certain, now traditional, forms of historical analysis. In these conditions, it is normal that anyone who still practises history...cannot conceive that a discipline like the history of ideas should be abandoned... But archaeological description is precisely such an abandonment of the history of ideas, a systematic rejection of its postulates and procedures, an attempt to practise a quite different history of what men have said.\(^{35}\)

Accordingly, as opposed to the nearest traditional equivalent of the history of ideas, Foucault lays down the four basic characteristics of this archaeology. The first feature is that archaeology does not analyse the 'hidden' meanings or thoughts that discourses possess, but those discourses themselves, as practices obeying certain rules. It, thus, does not treat discourse as *document*, and a sign of something else, but in its own positivity, as a *monument*, thereby refusing to be 'allegorical'. The second feature of this method is that archaeology does not seek continuities between discourses separated in time, but define discourses in their specificity, in terms of their exclusive and irreducible set of rules of formation. Archaeology is not, therefore, a ‘doxology’, but a differential analysis of the modalities of discourse. The third feature of archaeology is that it does not focus on ‘original’ transcendental unities, like the authority of the creative subject or the unity of an *œuvre*, to understand discursive

\(^{34}\) *Ibid.*, 137.

formations. It takes, quite to the contrary, an anti-subjective, anti-unitary perspective to it. The
fourth and the last feature that Foucault mentions is that archaeology does not try to restore to
the discourse its origin. It is just a rewriting, a systematic description of a discourse-object,
rather than a return to the secretive origin. These four features—that archaeology does not
seek hidden meanings, historical continuities, subjective creators, or the ever-elusive origin—
mark the broad differences between this method and traditional history of ideas, and having
tabulated them, Foucault moves on to subtler methodological differences between the two.

Foucault notes that the history of ideas always classifies a field of discourses in terms
of two values: any discursive element is characterized either as old or as new, either as
‘traditional’ or as ‘original’, and the discipline employs different modes of analysis for the
two. In describing the first group of ‘traditional’ énoncés, it analyses discursive history as
inertia and a slow accumulation of the past. For the second group of ‘original’ discourse-
objects, it tries to contain the discontinuous, ruptured history of inventions and
transformations within a continuous ‘historical’ line of evolution. Foucault also notes that the
history of ideas continuously determines relations between these two authorities, showing the
integration of the new in the already structured field of concepts, through conflicts between
the two. Thus, in both its forms, history of ideas always refers to unities and the origin.

This description of originalities poses, for Foucault, two different methodological
problems: that of precession and that of resemblance. Precession, or what precedes a
particular discursive formation, cannot be taken, as Foucault argues, as an irreducible and
primary donnée (given), as the ultimate hallmark of all discourse. Similarly, resemblance
between successive formulations does not mean that they are absolutely identical, but just that
their analogy is an effect of the discursive field to which they belong. As opposed to such a
problematic method, therefore, archaeological description is concerned with, not the
originality/banality opposition, but an establishment of regularity of énoncés, the regularity of
a traditional discourse being no less spectacular for it than that of an original one.

This distinction from the history of ideas leads archaeology to two different directions
of research. The first direction is to distinguish between linguistic analogy (or translatability)
and logical identity (or equivalence) on the one hand, and enunciative homogeneity on the
other, the first two being methods adopted by history of ideas, and the third by archaeology.
The task of this method is to see first, how, in spite of proceeding at different paces,
enunciative homogeneities and heterogeneities intersect with linguistic continuities and
changes, and logical identities and differences, setting up a complex relational set of
interdependences, and then, to describe the same. The second direction of research is to study
interior hierarchies within enunciative regularities, or how certain groups of énoncés put rules of formation into operation in a most general form, while certain others put into operation the regularity already formed by the first type of énoncés. Foucault shows, how archaeology arrives at, therefore, a tree of enunciative derivation, with the more generalizing énoncés at its base, and after a number of branchings, the more derivative type at its summit. Summing up finally, Foucault reiterates that archaeology, as a method, steers clear of totalizing tendencies:

Nothing would be more false than to see in the analysis of discursive formations an attempt at totalitarian periodization... On the contrary, archaeology describes an enunciative homogeneity that has its own temporal articulations... and at this level, it establishes an order, hierarchies, a whole burgeoning that excludes a massive, amorphous synchrony, given totally once and for all. In those confused unities that we call 'periods'. It reveals, with all their specificity, 'enunciative periods' that are articulated, but without being confused with them, upon the time of concepts, on theoretical phases, on stages of formalization and of linguistic development. 36

One can expect, therefore, this method to be characterized by a premium put on contradictions, comparisons, and transformations as its tools, and Foucault describes, one after the other the role of these three categories in archaeology.

b. Archaeology and Contradictions

Foucault observes that the history of ideas always tries to find, as a heuristic rule and a procedural obligation, a principle of coherence, even if the discourse it analyses shows only irregularity. For Foucault, the history of ideas presupposes this coherence, and locates this unity in discourse in three ways. The first is the coherence of systematicity, where an analysis of the truth of propositions and the relations that unite them leads to a field of logical non-contradiction. The second is a more imaginary thematic coherence, which is arrived at by following the uniting thread of analogies and symbols in the discourse. The third type of coherences are established at the level of the individual, in terms of the author's biography, or his or her peculiar discursive circumstances. All these forms of coherence serve to wish away any visible contradiction in an overwhelming logic of unity, so that, finally, one has in discourse only residual contradictions like accidents, defects, and mistakes, or fundamental contradictions like economic and political conflicts that can be shown to function as the very origin of discourse. Foucault shows how, thus, history of ideas does away with the idea of contradictions, even when it unmistakably appears, in the idea of an original coherence:

The history of ideas recognizes, therefore, two levels of contradiction: that of appearances, which is dissolved in the profound unity of discourse, and that of foundations which gives rise to discourse itself. In relation to the first level of contradiction, discourse is the ideal figure that must be separated from their accidental presence, from their too visible body: in relation to the second, discourse is the empirical figure that contradictions may take up and whose apparent cohesion must be destroyed, in order to rediscover them at last in their irruption and violence. 37

36 Ibid., 148.
37 Ibid., 151.
For archaeological analysis, on the other hand, contradictions are neither appearances to be overcome, nor secret principles to be uncovered, but objects to be described for themselves. Thus, as opposed to the attempt in history of ideas to dissolve contradictions into a coherent uniform principle of interpretation, archaeology describes the different spaces of dissension. Foucault classifies these contradictions into three types. The first is what he calls archaeologically derived contradictions, which are localized only at the level of propositions and do not affect the enunciative rules, like the eighteenth-century contradiction between the animal character of fossils and the more traditional thesis of their mineral nature. The second type comprises extrinsic contradictions, which reflect the opposition between distinct discursive formations, like that between Linnaeus’s fixism and Darwin’s evolutionism. The third category is of intrinsic contradictions, which are deployed in the discursive formation itself, like the contradiction between ‘methodical’ analyses and ‘systematic’ analyses in eighteenth-century Natural History. Foucault notes that these intrinsic oppositions are the ones that are especially relevant to archaeological analysis.

After this typology, Foucault attempts another classification of contradictions, this time in terms of their function at the four different levels of discursive formation. At the level of objects, contradictions cause an inadequation, or the making scarce of discursive objects; at the level of enunciative modalities, they cause a divergence, or the appearance of varied codes of enunciation; at the level of concepts, an incompatibility in terms of the different notions involved; and at the level of theoretical options and strategies, an exclusion of certain theoretical modes. Functionally speaking, Foucault shows how these contradictions play three specific roles: some of them cause an additional development of the enunciative field by opening up new arguments and inferences without modifying the system of positivity of the discourse; some bring in a reorganization of the discursive field by posing the question of translatability of one group of énoncés into another; and some other oppositions play a critical role in terms of accepting a particular discursive practice. For Foucault, one of the primary tasks of archaeology is to take up these contradictions in their functional roles, and he sums about the role of contradictions in archaeological analysis saying,

A discursive formation is not, therefore, an ideal, continuous, smooth text that runs beneath the multiplicity of contradictions, and resolves them in the calm unity of coherent thought; nor is it the surface in which, in a thousand different aspects, a contradiction is reflected that is always in retreat, but everywhere dominant. It is rather a space of multiple dissensions; a set of different oppositions whose levels and roles must be described. Archaeological analysis, then, erects the primacy of a contradiction that has its model in the simultaneous affirmation and negation of a single proposition... In short, its purpose is to maintain discourse in all its many irregularities, and consequently to suppress the theme of a contradiction uniformly lost and rediscovered, resolved and forever rising again, in the undifferentiated element of the Logos. 38

38 ibid., 155-56.
c. *Archaeology and Comparisons*

After discussing the role of contradictions in archaeology, Foucault describes how his method uses comparison. Foucault shows how the archaeological method is all about comparisons, not only between different discursive formations, but also between them and non-discursive practices, and adds that even here, archaeology looks for pluralities rather than comparative uniting facts. He says,

Archaeological analysis individualizes and describes discursive formations. That is, it must compare them, oppose them to one another in the simultaneity in which they are presented, distinguish them from those that do not belong to the same time-scale, relate them on the basis of their specificity, to the non-discursive practices that surround them and serve as a general element for them. In this, too, they are very different epistemological or 'architectonic' descriptions, which analyse the internal structure of a theory; archaeological study is always in the plural; it operates in a great number of registers; it crosses interstices and gaps; it has its domain where unities are juxtaposed, separated, fix their crests, confront one another, and accentuate the white spaces between one another. 

Having established the importance and the character of comparison in archaeology, Foucault mentions three major functional features of this methodological tool in his method.

The first feature is that, in archaeological analysis comparison is always limited and regional, so that archaeology tries to analyse only particular discursive forms in an *interdiscursive configuration* and not any general form of all discourse. The use of comparison in archaeology is, thus, not aimed at bringing to light the spirit of a period, the face of a culture in its totality, or the *Weltanschauung* of an entire people, but describing what is a *region of interpositivity*. Archaeology is, therefore, not a universal method covering the global domain of all knowledge, but one aimed at particular positivities. In an interview given in 1976, on being asked why he has not written an archaeology of geography, Foucault gives a similar answer to show how his method is not a global attempt but one aimed at particulars:

Finding a place for geography would imply that the archaeology of knowledge embraces a project of global, exhaustive coverage of all domains of knowledge. This is not at all what I had in mind. Archaeology of knowledge only ever means a certain mode of approach... Properly speaking there is no 'place' in archaeology for geography, but it should be possible to conduct an archaeology of geographical knowledge.

Archaeology is, thus, a comparative analysis that does not reduce the diversity of discourses in a holistic schema of omniscience, but to divide it into different individual figures. As a first feature, comparison lends to archaeology not a unifying but a diversifying effect.

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The second feature is that archaeology involves comparison to uncover the play of analogies and differences as they appear at the level of rules of formation. Foucault shows how this particular function implies discovering five distinct notions: that of the *archaeological isomorphisms*, or to show how different discursive elements may be formed on the basis of similar rules; that of the *archaeological model* of each formation, or to show to what extent these rules are arranged in accordance with a similar model in different types of discourse; that of *archaeological isotopia*, or to show how concepts absolutely different in terms of their domains of application, degrees of formalization, and historical genesis, occupy a similar position in their systems of positivity; that of the *archaeological shifts*, or to show, as the obverse of the earlier task, how a single notion may cover archaeologically distinct elements; and that of the *archaeological correlations*, or to show how relations of subordination or complementarity may be established between positivities.

The third feature is that archaeology reveals relations between discursive formations and non-discursive domains like social institutions, political events, and economic practices. These relations, which Foucault terms *rapprochements*, are, however, not aimed at discovering great cultural continuities or mechanisms of causality. Archaeology does not seek contexts of formulation, that is how a non-discursive event motivates an enunciative fact; neither does it, like hermeneutics, attempt to interpret a discursive formation in terms of its context. It simply tries to determine specific forms of articulation, or how the rules of formation of a discourse are linked to non-discursive systems. While a causal contextual analysis examines how social, political, and economic changes determine ways of thought, archaeology studies the dialectics between the two without the notion of a hierarchic causal determinism having any role to play.

d. *Archaeology and Transformations*

At the beginning of his discussion of the archaeological description of changes and transformations, Foucault pre-empts a possible criticism of his method, and states how people might point out that while traditional history of ideas takes temporal succession and sequence as its essential theme thus describing the historical deployment of discourses, archaeology freezes history by describing discursive formations in terms of their regular general rules. Archaeology can thus be accused of imposing the figure of synchrony on what is evolutionary and developmental, and even when it has recourse to chronology, it is only to fix the temporal limits of the positivities. Foucault refutes this charge of ahistoricity and atemporality on two grounds. First, he shows how archaeology aiming to define the rules of formation of a group of *enoncés*, it is always about how a succession of events may become an object of discourse. Thus, quite contrary to the charge that it overlooks temporal successions, archaeology rests
itself on the chain of successive events, and sees how they co-ordinate with the rules of discursive formation. Archaeology, thus, does not avoid that mobility of discourses, but studies the level at which they are set in motion in tandem with the events, the level which Foucault calls that of *evential engagement*. Secondly, as Foucault observes, archaeology does not accord the same uniform generality to all the rules of formation, but assign their subordination in a hierarchical form that involves a *temporal vector*. Archaeology, therefore, takes as its model neither a purely synchronic schema of simultaneities, nor a merely diachronic linear succession of events, but studies the intersection between different types of successive events, thereby mapping, what Foucault calls the *temporal vectors of derivation*.

This is how Foucault proves that archaeology too is sensitive to the nuances of history, and the only difference that lies between it and the history of ideas, in terms of historicity, is that the former does not avoid historical transformations, but bases itself on them, the primary task of archaeology thereby becoming one of *differentiation*. Foucault says,

"Archaeology is much more willing than the history of ideas to speak of discontinuities, ruptures, gaps, entirely new forms of positivity, an of sudden redistributions... if there is a paradox in archaeology, it is not that it increases differences, but that it refuses to reduce them—thus inverting the usual values. For the history of ideas, the appearance of difference indicates an error, or a trap... Archaeology, on the other hand, takes as the object of its description what is usually regarded as an obstacle: its aim is not to overcome differences, but to analyse them, to say what exactly they consist of, to differentiate them."  

He mentions next four processes of differentiation, or the study of transformations, that the archaeological method undertakes. The first is that instead of considering discourse as made up of a series of homogeneous events, archaeology distinguishes different levels of events—that of *énoncés* themselves, and those of the appearance of objects, types of enunciation, concepts, and strategic choices, and studies the transformations within them. The second process is not to study changes by simply relating them to the theological or aesthetic model of creation, or the psychological model of the act of consciousness, or the biological model of evolution, but to analyse the transformations themselves. Thirdly, when archaeology studies how one discursive formation is changed and substituted for another, it does not say that absolutely new objects, enunciations, concepts, and theoretical choices emerge, but that a general transformation of relations has occurred, and *énoncés* are henceforth governed by new rules of formation. The fourth and last process of differentiation is that the discontinuity thus arrived at, showing the appearance and disappearance of positivities and a play of substitutions, does not constitute a homogeneous process in itself, so that rupture itself is not an undifferentiated interval that separates two heterogeneous periods, but a discontinuity.

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specified by a number of distinct transformations. The analysis of ruptures, or what are called epistemic cuts or archaeological breaks, is, therefore, a description of the dispersion of the discontinuities themselves, involving different transformations, analogies and differences, hierarchies, complementarities, and shifts.

Thus, Foucault ends a description of his archaeological method, and shows it to be rooted in the regularity of discontinuities to such an extent that even its theoretical mainstays, like the notions of the episteme (i.e. period) and rupture (i.e. epistemic cut), are not stable theoretical postulates for it, but constructs subject to transformations. He says,

Archaeology disarticulates the synchrony of breaks, just as it destroyed the abstract unity of change and event. The period is neither its basic unity, nor its horizon, nor its object: if it speaks of these things it is always in terms of particular discursive practices, and as a result of its analyses... Similarly, rupture is not for archaeology the prop of its analyses, the limit that it indicates from afar, without being able to determine it or to give it specificity; rupture is the name given to transformations that bear on the general rules of one or several discursive formations. 42

After establishing this fundamental characteristic of archaeology—that it is rooted in an ever-dispersed chain of the discontinuous, Foucault proceeds next to the other term in the title to the book—‘knowledge’—and discusses very briefly the definition that this category takes within the schema of archaeological analysis.

e. Savoir, Connaissance, Science: Knowledge in Archaeology

For Foucault, positivities characterize neither forms of knowledge, nor the state of knowledge at a given moment in time, and the archaeological analysis of positivities, in terms of their rules of formation of groups of objects, enunciations, concepts, and theoretical choices, does not constitute a science, or a body of knowledge with a defined structure of ideality. The elements uncovered by the archaeological method constitute, for Foucault, an alternate knowledge—savoir as opposed to connaissance—a body of knowledge that presents itself to the discontinuous rules of discursive formation. Foucault says,

This group of elements, formed in a regular manner by a discursive practice, and which are indispensable to the constitution of a science, although they are not necessarily destined to give rise to one, can be called knowledge (savoir). Knowledge is that of which one can speak in a discursive practice, and which is specified by that fact: the domain constituted by the different objects with which he deals in his discourse...knowledge is also the field of coordination and subordination of statements in which concepts appear, and are defined, applied and transformed...lastly, knowledge is defined by the possibilities of use and appropriation offered by discourse... 43

To understand the archaeological notion of knowledge, one is thus led to the distinction between savoir and connaissance, and their relation vis-à-vis science.

42 Ibid., 176-77.
43 Ibid. 182-83.
To understand the difference between these two terms, both of whose English equivalent would be 'knowledge', I turn to the translator of the book, Alan Sheridan, who defines 'connaissance' as a particular body of knowledge and 'savoir' as the knowledge in general that underlies several connaissances. In a footnote to his translation, Sheridan says,

Connaissance refers here to a particular corpus of knowledge, a particular discipline—biology or economics, for example. Savoir, which is usually defined as knowledge in general, the totality of connaissances, is used by Foucault in an underlying, rather than an overall way. He has himself offered the following comment on his usage of these terms: 'By connaissance I mean the relation of the subject to the object and the formal rules that govern it. Savoir refers to the conditions that are necessary in a particular period for this or that object to be given to connaissance and for this or that enunciation to be formulated.'

Thus, connaissance is much more subjective, being rooted in an individual discipline, while savoir makes this subjectivity dependent on general conditions of existence. Therefore, archaeology use savoir as its pivot, as opposed to the history of ideas, which uses connaissance to grant knowledge a transcendental subjective status. Foucault says,

Instead of exploring the consciousness/knowledge/connaissance/science axis (which cannot escape subjectivity), archaeology explores the discursive practice/knowledge/savoir/science axis. And whereas the history of ideas finds the point of balance of its analysis in the element of connaissance (and is thus forced, against its will, to encounter the transcendental interrogation), archaeology finds the point of balance of its analysis in savoir—that is, in a domain in which the subject is necessarily situated and dependent, and can never figure as titular (either as a transcendental activity, or as empirical consciousness).

Knowledge, as understood by archaeology is, thus, not an epistemological site that is superseded by science, but one in whose field, science is localized as a functional category. This status makes science, always considered so pure and neutral in traditional historiography, an ideologically framed object in archaeology. Showing how ideological questions can be asked of science, at the level of its discursive practice, Foucault says,

If the question of ideology may be asked of science, it is in so far as science, without being identified with knowledge, but without either effacing or excluding it, is localized in it, structures certain of its objects, systematizes certain of its enunciations, formalizes certain of its concepts and strategies... In short, the question of ideology that is asked of science is not the question of situations or practices that it reflects more or less consciously; nor is it the question of the possible use or misuse to which it could be put; it is the question of its existence as a discursive practice and of its functioning among other practices.

This leads Foucault to the conclusion that ideology is not exclusive of scientificity, that one can locate the ideological functioning of a science in theoretical contradictions and defects in a scientific thought, and that a scientific discourse cannot undo its relations with ideology by simply rectifying its errors: science continues to bear ideological underpinnings.

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44 A. M. Sheridan Smith, note 2, in Ibid., 15.
46 Ibid., 185.
Foucault observes next how a certain discursive formation comes to attain scientific status by crossing four thresholds. First comes the *threshold of positivity*, which is crossed the moment a discursive practice gains individuality and autonomy. Next is the *threshold of epistemologization*, which is crossed when a group of enoncès is articulated in a discursive formation. The third is the *threshold of scientificity*, on crossing which the epistemological figure of the enoncé frames certain laws for propositional constructions from within itself. Finally comes the *threshold of formalization*, crossing which a scientific discourse can define all the axioms, elements, and propositions that it uses. This is how science, that hallmark of knowledge, is formed through distinct levels of discontinuities, ruptures, and shifts.

Foucault shows how there are different types of analysis for these four different thresholds. At the threshold of formalization, one has a *recurrential analysis*, comprising analyses of the recurrently same form within a specifically constituted science. At the threshold of scientificity, one has an *epistemological history* of the sciences that questions how various scientific concepts emerge from within imaginary contents. At the threshold of epistemologization, there is the *archaeological history*, where how discursive give rise to a corpus of knowledge is studied. Finally, at the threshold of positivities, occurs the *analysis of the episteme*, and Foucault proceeds to define what an *episteme* is by saying,

By *episteme*, we mean, in fact, the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized systems... The episteme is not a form of knowledge (*connaissance*) or type of rationality which, crossing the boundaries of the most varied sciences, manifests the sovereign unity of a subject, a spirit, or a period; it is the totality of relations that can be discovered, for a given period, between the sciences when one analyses them at the level of discursive regularities.\(^47\)

Finally, having established his method in relation to knowledge, Foucault proposes to see whether archaeology can be used to analyse apparently non-scientific domains like sexuality, representational art, and political practice, thereby bringing one to the threshold of the three bodies of his later work, foreboding what I have called ‘tri-hierarchization’. He says,

One question remains in suspense: could one conceive of an archaeological analysis that would reveal the regularity of a body of knowledge, but which will not set out to analyse it in terms of epistemological figures and sciences?... Must archaeology be—exclusively—a certain way of questioning the history of the sciences? In other words, by confirming itself up to now to the region of scientific discourses, has archaeology been governed by some insuperable necessity—or has it provided an outline, on the basis of a particular example, of forms of analysis that may have a much wider application?... There is, for example, the archaeological description of ‘sexuality’... But here is an example of another possible orientation. In analysing a painting, one can reconstitute the latent discourse of a painter... it seems that one might also carry out an analysis of the same type on political knowledge.\(^48\)

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V. Conclusion: Towards a Political Analysis of Discursive Formations

In the last sub-section of the chapter, I showed how Foucault brings in this apparently very formalistic work, the questions of ideology and future directions of research, which cannot ignore the politics of discursivization. However, to the average critic of Foucault, this work is not at all politically sensitive, but one interested in dealing with a purely theoretically oriented exposition of method. Foucault himself admits, through the words of an imaginary critic, that this book is nothing but ‘a whole panoply of terms’⁴⁹, implying that, at best, this book is a treatise in structuralizing or scientificizing the task of discourse analysis. Thus, to give any credence to his already earned reputation as a political thinker, and any basis to my attempt at finding in his works a thorough working out of the principle of tri-hierarchization, Foucault must first refute these two charges. This is precisely what he does in the ‘Conclusion’ to his book, and proving his endeavour to be aimed at neither according a structuralist nor a scientific status to his method, he shows how it is politics that, even if impalpably, underlies the archaeological enterprise.

Reacting to the first allegation first, Foucault reiterates the non-structuralist quality of his work that he explained in the ‘Introduction’. For him, the purpose of the book is not at all to structuralize the formation of knowledge, but to free, on the one hand, the history of thought from the overwhelming role of transcendence, and to analyse, on the other, this history in a system of discontinuities without any a priorized teleology. Foucault’s aim here is, thus, to clear from discourse what he calls ‘transcendental narcissism’, and the everlasting and never requited circular search for its lost origin. Foucault makes it very clear that his attempt is not aimed at bringing back to discourse the structured transcendental moment that invaded the works of some of his predecessors like Kant in the domain of rational mechanics, Husserl in the domain of mathematical idealities, and Merleau-Ponty in the domain of meanings of the perceived world. Archaeology is, as Foucault establishes, a most anti-structuralist way of talking about dispersions and discontinuities in discourse.

Countering the second allegation, Foucault repeats what he said while discussing the role of comparisons in archaeology, showing how he never makes in this book any attempt to establish archaeology as a science or the beginnings of a future science, because this method is restricted only to certain concrete domains and not to the universality of discourse that any scientific pretension would have claimed to cover. The current book is thus, an attempt to schematize Foucault’s earlier works in certain domains and not one to found the global science of discourse analysis. Though, the archaeological method maintains, doubtlessly, a

⁴⁹ Ibid., 199.
close relation with science at every level, the objects of its analysis being, more often than not, *science-objects*, there is a huge difference in their approaches to the same, because while science talks of *competence*, or its prioritized right to speak about the objects, archaeology tries to realize the *performance*, or how the objects are formed into discourses. Being so distinct at the functional level, Foucault shows how while science always deals with particulars, archaeology talks about interdiscursive *correlative spaces*, and tries to constitute, as a general theory of productions, what he calls an *enveloping theory* of different discursive practices.

Having refuted in no uncertain terms the allegations against him, Foucault comes to the conclusion that such attempts at appropriating him within the dominant method of the unitary stem from a system of power in Western thought that always tries to contain disparities within the totalizing schema of the Logos. Turning on to his imaginary critic, Foucault asks how he or she could foreground in such a blatant way the supremacy of the transcendental Logos, and overlook its political implications, when centuries of revolutionary thought have repeatedly debunked the solidity of this constructed unity. He says,

> And now I should like to ask you a question: how do you see change, or, let us say, revolution, at least in the scientific order and in the field of discourses, if you link it with the themes of meaning, project, origin and return, constituent subject, in short for the entire thematic that ensures for history the universal presence of the Logos? What possibility do you accord it if you analyse it in accordance with dynamic, biological, evolutionist metaphors in which the difficult, specific problem of mutation is usually dissolved? More precisely still: what political status can you give to discourse if you see in it merely a thin transparency that shines for an instant at the limit of things and thoughts? Has not the practice of revolutionary discourse and scientific discourse in Europe over the past two hundred years freed you from this idea that words are wind, an external whisper, a beating of wings that one has difficulty in hearing in the serious matter of history?

Having brought in the notion of the political and the tendentious in discursive formations and their analysis, Foucault finally sums up his central, even if not explicit, thesis in this book. He concludes that it is only politics that makes historiography repeatedly turn to transcendental unities, and he promises at the end of the book to take up, in future, this politics, and analyse the dialectics of formations in terms of this principle of hierarchization. He says,

> What is that fear which makes you reply in terms of consciousness when someone talks to you about a practice, its conditions, its rules, and its historical transformations? What is that fear which makes you seek, beyond all boundaries, ruptures, shifts, and divisions, the great historico-transcendental destiny of the Occident?

> It seems to me that the only reply to this question is a political one. But let us leave that to one side for today. Perhaps we will take it up again soon in another way.

This is precisely what he does in his bodies of work to come, which I discuss in the next section of the dissertation, where he shows how power pervades formations in the domains of mentality, materiality, and physicality, to constitute what I have termed *tri-hierarchization*.

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50 Ibid., 209.
51 Ibid., 209-10.