



# RETHINKING BIOS AND POLITICS AFTER FOUCAULT



AARHUS UNIVERSITET

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# RETHINKING BIOS AND POLITICS AFTER FOUCAULT

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Moesgaard Museum  
Moesgaard Allé 15, 8270 Højbjerg  
8-10 October 2016

A decade ago, the ubiquity of Foucault's terms in anthropological conferences, books, and journal articles prompted some to credit him with providing the discipline's lingua franca. More recently, ontologically oriented investigations seem to have captured much of the attention of cultural anthropologists and Foucault's theoretical insights appear to be less influential in anthropological circles. An exception to this state of affairs may be found in continuing interest in questions regarding life and the political effects of what sense humans make of it. Foucault's notion of "biopolitics" continues to inspire anthropologists working on a wide range of contemporary problems, from anti-refugee policies in Europe to global health, genetics, and climate politics. As some within anthropology speak of "turning" on an ontological axis that is not usually associated with Foucault's oeuvre, we find it timely to revisit Foucault's investigations into bios and politics within the context of his broader philosophical contributions. Furthermore, the recent publication in English of the last of his unpublished lectures in the Collège de France offers an opportunity to assess the relationship between Foucault's unfinished intellectual project and contemporary anthropological research on power, ontological problems, and the interweaving of humans and nonhuman lives.

Organized around four panels that build on some of Foucault's most influential ideas, we engage with Foucault's work from a wide range of perspectives, from recent contributions made by Italian philosophers to the ongoing work of anthropologists working in the United States. The event does not celebrate Foucault's work as a finalized achievement and instead seeks to contribute critically to nourish novel anthropological commitments.

## Panel 1

### A Maddening View Through the Apparatus

In *History of Madness* (1961), Foucault attempts to let "madness speak for itself" in order to bring into focus the historical contingency of that which the Other of reason outlines. But in writing a history of madness, he focuses instead upon the apparatuses, the mechanisms through which we come to recognize madness as madness.

This panel takes up this tension between the "machine" – the techniques and mechanisms that illuminate the world in ways that make us see in specific ways – and its constitutive blind spot, the spot from which light emanates but is itself in the dark. What is the potential of seeing ourselves as subjects born in and out of such historically informed machines? How can we address alterity through the apparatus of our knowledge while letting "it" speak for itself? And what promise does seeing anthropology as another apparatus hold for the future of the discipline?

## Panel 2

### Apparatuses of Global Health

Concerns over global threats to "human security," ranging from infectious diseases to climate change and political instability, often lead to proposals to advance globally orchestrated interventions in the name of health as a universal human right. Such framings of health as an object of universal concern contribute to the ongoing emergence of new "apparatuses" wherein technologies, spaces, and knowledge practices combine to situate the lives of individuals and populations within linguistic and material infrastructures (cf. Redfield 2012). While some of these apparatuses target non-human entities that may affect human health such as insects carrying pathogens, others focus on vulnerable peoples such as refugees fleeing the destruction wrought by clashing geopolitical projects. Apparatuses of global health often operate on the basis of an implicit distinction between *bios* ("politically



qualified life”) and *zoē* (“unqualified life”). Although this distinction allows humanitarian actors to side-step political considerations when helping vulnerable populations, it may also be at play in efforts whereby bodies, populations, and ecological relations are rendered apolitical and framed as objects of intervention, abandonment, and even destruction.

This panel explores new potentials for life-affirming biopolitics that may arise within apparatuses of global health. Building on contemporary anthropological debates over infrastructure, we ask what new subjects emerge within the materiality of global health efforts and which human–nonhuman relations flourish among them. For example, do apparatuses that reach out to individuals regardless of national citizenship (cf. Lakoff 2010) reveal the making of a new cosmopolitanism based on the framing of life as a universal? How can Foucault’s notion of apparatuses help us unpack ongoing shifts in the global politics of health?

### **Panel 3** **Other-Than-Human Living**

In the years following Foucault’s untimely death, human-driven environmental disruptions have intensified, ecological concerns have become a fixture in global political conversations, and scientists have begun arguing that our lives currently unfold in the Anthropocene (a novel geological era shaped by the irreversible impacts that human actions have on the earth’s dynamics). In response to these issues, anthropologists are increasingly interested in exploring the ecological outcomes of human–nonhuman relations in investigations that are thematically related to—albeit rarely carried out in dialogue with—Foucault’s research on the idea of “man-as-species.” Furthermore, multispecies ethnographers have advanced Foucault’s insights by focusing on the creative actions of other-than-human life forms in disjointed landscapes shaped by imperial relations and the infrastructures on which they rely.

This panel revisits Foucault’s engagement with other-than-human entities engaging with recent anthropological investigations of the creation, destruction, and re-composition of the worlds that humans and nonhumans inhabit.

### **Panel 4** **Epistemology, Ontology, and Ethnographic Critiques**

Since the 1980s, anthropologists associated with the “linguistic turn” in the social sciences and the humanities have drawn inspiration from Foucault’s work on power and knowledge and advanced ethnographic experiments that question totalizing styles of knowledge. Over the past decade anthropologists who are seen to be advancing an “ontological turn” have proposed novel ethnographic experiments that are often seen as incompatible with those of a previous generation. In contrast to former anthropological critiques that were concerned with novel ways of knowing and writing (problems often associated with the field of “epistemology”) “ontologically inclined” anthropologists focus their research on emerging ways of being and becoming.

Nevertheless, while distinguishing epistemological from ontological approaches has often proved analytically useful, this panel draws on Foucault’s work to ethnographically explore potential points of connection that could link these distinct critical perspectives. From his work on knowledge that transforms bodies and populations to his research on ethical practices through which persons refashion themselves, Foucault’s oeuvre offers fertile ground on which to reassess ethnographic methods used to explore relations between *words* and *things*. Short of constructing a synthesis that integrates ontological and epistemological perspectives, on this panel we seek to explore novel grounds for ethnographic projects that may continue to cultivate, and experiment with our knowledge of, shifting worlds and ideas.

Free and open to all.

### **Contact Information**

Daena Funahashi (funahashi@cas.au.dk), conference co-organizer.

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## PROGRAMME

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### SATURDAY 8 OCT.

Moesgaard Museum Auditorium

Arrival and registration

**14:00-14:10** | Welcome by Organizers

**14:10-15:15** | Timothy Campbell | **Opening Keynote** | *The Generous Form of Life: Caring for the Self in a Neoliberal Milieu*

**15:15** | Drinks / reception (Room 201)

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### SUNDAY 9 OCT.

#### Panel 1. A Maddening View Through The Apparatus

Moesgaard Museum, **Room 301**

**9:00-9:15** | Brief panel introduction

**9:15-9:35** | Bohuslav Kuřik | *Words and Stones: An Architecture of the Amoebic Critique*

**9:35-9:55** | Daena Funahashi | *Persistent Shadows of the Apparatus*

**10:00-10:20** | Andrew Willford | *Maddness in India*

**10:20-10:35** | Coffee Break

**10:35-11:15** | **Panel Keynote** | James Siegel | *The Success and Failure of the Gift*

**11:00-11:20** | Panel Discussion

**11:30-1:00** | Lunch

### Panel 2. Apparatuses of Global Health

Moesgaard Museum, **Room 301**

**1:30-1:50** | Saiba Varma | *The Encounter*

**1:50-2:10** | Jens Seeberg | *The Global Tuberculosis Dispositif as Humanitarian Action*

**2:30-2:50** | Alexander Horstman | *Christian Aspirations and Pastoral Power among Vulnerable People in Eastern Myanmar: The Free Burma Rangers*

**3:10-3:30** | Coffee Break

**3:30-3:50** | **Panel Keynote** | Peter Redfield | *Aftermaths: Equipment for Living in a Broken World*

**3:50-4:10** | Panel Discussion

**7:00** | Conference Dinner | Restaurant Møf | Vesterport 10, 8000 Aarhus

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### MONDAY 10 OCT.

#### Panel 3. Other-Than-Human Living

Moesgaard Museum, **Room 301**

**9:00-9:15** | Brief panel introduction

**9:15-9:35** | Kirk Fiereck | *Our Retroviral Unconscious: Genetic Différance, or the Biopolitics of "Junk" DNA*

**9:35-9:55** | Andrew Johnson | *Biopower and the Bodiless: Divinities, State Anxiety, and Control in Thailand*

**10:00-10:20** | Heather Swanson & Knut Nustad | *Trout Biopolitics: Living in the Ruins of Colonial Fish Introductions*

**10:20-10:35** | Coffee Break

**10:35-10:55** | **Panel Keynote** | Nils Bubandt | *Animate Bio-Politics: Corals by Way of Example*

**11:00-11:30** | Panel Discussion

**11:30-1:00** | Lunch

## Panel 4. Epistemology, Ontology, and Ethnographic Critiques

Moesgaard Museum, Room 301

**1:30-1:50** | David Rojas | *Dissolving Humans, Savage Ontologies, and Fish Breeding in Amazonia*

**1:50-2:10** | Will Rollason | *Security on the Streets, Security in the Belly: Reiteration and the Critical Ontology of Post-Genocide Politics in Rwanda*

**2:30-2:50** | Hoon Song | *Caught by Power: A Symptomatic Reading of Foucault Through Favret-Saada*

**3:10-3:30** | Coffee break

**3:30-3:50** | **Panel Keynote** | Rosalind Morris | *Resisting Simulation: Foucault, Anthropology and the Problem of Truth*

**3:50-4:10** | Panel discussion

nie Klein and D.W. Winnicott, as generosity and forms of holding. Tracing a line among touching, grasping, and holding, I sketch an ontology of grips on which the moments of Foucault's notion of care of the self can be plotted.

In the second half of my talk, I explore the relation between the generosity and an emancipatory politics of the gesture. Forms of holding and forms of letting go offer an impolitical response to a politics that increasingly depends today upon holding onto something, some idea, some identity. Pushing the focus away from the content of me and mine toward the mode by which we hold our ideas, our selves, and our language, I emphasize the gestures of holding and letting go that can emerge in a larger instance of play. What is needed is recognizing how profoundly Foucault's care of the self hinges upon a notion of self that requires and even demands forms of holding as possession. In the revealing of the generous form of life, a holding becomes possible that is less grip, less a tightening around what is mine and more around what is common to all.

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## ABSTRACTS

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Timothy Campbell, Cornell University

*The Generous Form of Life: Caring for the Self in a Neoliberal Milieu* | **Opening Keynote**

My paper takes its cue from the notion of care of the self that Michel Foucault elaborated across his last lectures at the Collège de France and attempts to translate the term into a lexicon of holding and grasping. The reasons for doing so are two. First, Foucault is widely seen as being indifferent to when not implicitly in support of a neoliberal agenda, a reading based chiefly on his 1979 lectures *The Birth of Biopolitics*. Largely agreeing with these critics, I introduce a different terministic screen for care of the self, which I refer to, borrowing a language from both Mela-

## Panel 1. A Maddening View Through the Apparatus

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Bohuslav Kuřík, Charles University, Prague

*Words and Stones: An Architecture of the Amoebic Critique*

During my militant ethnographic research with radical left youth from contemporary Germany, I have discovered that the post-autonomous youngsters acquire an amoebic art of living with appropriate self. The amoebic self moves forward by changing political shapes. Each shape is connected with appropriate techniques of resistance. The amoebic self redistributes oneself on several axis of political versatility which circumscribe the spanning of an action radius of protest. The crucial axis which I scrutinize in my paper is the one of communicating their critique.

The architecture of the amoebic argument of anti-capitalist critique as well as for radical change is circumscribed by two poles. From one side it is shaped as verbalized arguments in university debates, public talks, written documents, media interviews and composed mostly of words. From other side it is shaped as arguments constituted largely beyond the discourse with stones, color bombs etc. in riots and direct actions. The amoebic versatility on the argumentation axis implies reassembling and redistributing different human/non-human, discursive/material as well as whole/part relations while making arguments in post-autonomous times. Furthermore, it acquires different capacities to act, aesthetics of self, forms of distributed agency as well as techniques and skills of resistance. It is the task of my paper to discuss ethnographic details of this architecture of the amoebic critique bridging Foucault's notion of technologies of self, modes of subjectivation and arts of living with theories of distributed and assemblatic self.

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Daena Funahashi, Aarhus University

*Persistent Shadows of the Apparatus*

In his Dartmouth lectures, Foucault identifies the self as a political problem. Via genealogically tracing the understanding of the self through history, Foucault promotes a positive hermeneutics through which the self is to reconstitute itself in the face of limits set by the technologies that condition the possibilities for self-knowledge. While there is no liberation of the self in the absolute sense for Foucault, he argues nonetheless that this moment of disavowal of the self against "itself" opens the space necessary "to think differently", and for the practice of freedom. Rehabilitation programs for occupational burnout in Finland, where I did my fieldwork, operated based on this premise of liberatory self-hermeneutics, where clients were encouraged to name the forces that animated their actions so as to escape their clutches. Finnish experts saw occupational burnout as the disorder of those maladapted to new workplace imperatives, and tasked clients under their care with the work of identifying why

they worked to the point of pathogenic fatigue. Here, I question what politics such a hermeneutics of self promises, and whether, inasmuch as the capacity "to think differently" emerges for Foucault through self-reflection, such a dialectics of meaning in itself might paradoxically constitute the very form of "burning-out" expressed by these clients. I argue that there are unintended consequences of bringing to light the self as a product of history, and that naming what moves us to do what we do is not only productive of new subject positions that can counter what was, but can unhinge the idea of ipseity itself.

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Andrew Willford, Cornell University

*Maddness in India*

India faces significant social problems productive of psychosocial stress. These, in turn, are increasingly understood and supplemented by narrowly technical diagnoses and treatments, following a global trend. In this sense, whether something is a delusion or a hallucination is not a mere academic question, but one that pits the reductive neuropsychological against the psychosocial and psychodynamic models of self and mind. In this sense, we see Kraepelin's ghost within the contemporary Indian medical context.

This paper, based on over 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork in India, argues that Foucault's understanding of "madness" as the demarcation made by power is oddly aligned with Freud against neuropsychiatric reductionism. But as India largely lacks, and never developed a robust, psychodynamic paradigm within psychiatry, the "pastoral" care for the self that Foucault traces in European thought from the middle ages to modern psychiatry, inclusive of psychoanalysis, finds its parallel in India outside of biomedicine, within demonologies and traditional medicine. In this parallel, the disengagement with the social provenance or etiologies of symptoms through a lexicon of diagnostics and their routinized application and archivization obscures and effaces the violence of the social. Finally, it is argued that at this historical moment, the political and economic demand for a singular identity (e.g.,



ethnic, religious, linguistic, occupational), and the concomitant serialization of identities, produces a subject incapable of nuance and flexibility, hastening a host of possessive symptoms that overtake India's modern subjects, both in urban and rural populations, fueling the sense of a crises in search of a technological and pharmaceutical solution to a psychopathological diagnosis. Here, I argue, we must escape Foucault's reason against reason and turn to the Derridean pharmakon for analytic inspiration. This, in turn, exposes us to the ghost of Freud against both Foucault and Kraepelin.

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James Siegel, Cornell University

Panel Keynote | *The Success and Failure of the Gift*

A jihad was waged at the end of the 19th century and the early 20th lasted decades against colonial invaders. After the defeat of the Acehnese sultan and then of the subsequent leaders of this war, the jihad continued without organization and without leadership. Many jihadists carried a fetish as they attacked and killed colonialists. The paper does not describe the war itself, but instead concentrates on the role of the fetish in continuing it after Aceh was defeated and colonial authority established.

## Panel 2. Apparatuses of Global Health

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Saiba Varma, UC San Diego

*The Encounter*

In his lectures on psychiatric power delivered in 1973-1974, Michel Foucault distinguished two forms of power: sovereign power and disciplinary power. Embodied in the figure of the mad king George III, Foucault argues that from the 17th century on, sovereign power, "concentrate[d] pow-

er in a visible and named individual" waned, as disciplinary power—exemplified by biomedicine, psychiatry, and other disciplines—gained in prominence. Building on Foucault, Achille Mbembe and other social scientists argue that what makes colonial occupations so totalizing is that they combine disciplinary, biopolitical and necropolitical power in order to target entire populations, leading to "absolute domination over the inhabitants of the occupied territory" (Mbembe 2003: 29). But how these forms of power articulate, and whether they are in fact so seamless, requires ethnographic elaboration.

This paper ethnographically examines one articulation of disciplinary and sovereign power through the 'encounter.' In addition to its popular usage as a term meaning contact between a self and other, in Kashmir and elsewhere in South Asia, 'encounter' is also a shorthand for an encounter killing—a likely fake and staged armed confrontation in which individuals are killed by law enforcement and passed off as criminals or terrorists. The systemic and widespread practice of encounters in postcolonial India is an example of sovereign, and more specifically, necropolitical power. And in occupied Kashmir, as in Mbembe's paradigmatic case of Palestine, sovereign power is braided with disciplinary power, such as biomedicine and psychiatry, in far-reaching ways. While disciplinary and sovereign power shape each other, these forms of power are, of course, also radically different: one aims to end or destroy life; the other seeks to extend and protect it.

At the same time, rather than take disciplinary or sovereign power as stable, this paper foregrounds the encompassing category of 'encounter' itself, which I define as an unexpected relation through which a self and other is constituted and/or fixed (in the sense of emplacing and/or helping). I ask: how does the category of 'encounter' help us rethink the modalities of disciplinary and sovereign power and their relation to each other? How does a focus on the encounter illuminate gaps or ruptures in necropolitical and disciplinary power? Finally, anthropological uses of Foucault's work often enact a hierarchy between theory and ethnography, in which ethnography provides case studies for the operation of biopolitics, disciplinary power, or necropolitics. By contrast, this paper asks readers to reckon with the linguistic slippage and doubleness of the encounter as

Kashmiris live and experience the intertwined nature of disciplinary and necropolitical power; to borrow the words of Gayatri Spivak, “We must not just learn from below, but we need to learn to learn from below” (1993: 177).

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Jens Seeberg, Aarhus University

*The Global Tuberculosis Dispositif as Humanitarian Action*

Foucault, in his writings on *Raison d'État*, uses the concept of *dispositif* to point to the deployment of a permanent military apparatus, comprising of 1) the professionalisation of soldiers, 2) a permanent armed structure, 3) a backup infrastructure and 4) a specific type of tactical knowledge. While Foucault is discussing the development of national security politics in Europe, such an apparatus resembles the development, in the 1990s, of the global tuberculosis (TB) strategy known as DOTS sufficiently to serve as a model for the analysis of this highly complex and administratively demanding public health apparatus, as well as its transformations in light of the rise of a new epidemic of drug resistant TB. While this global health *dispositif* has been backed by substantial state and inter-state power, it has had increased access to life-saving treatment for the world's poor as its stated objective. In his work on humanitarian reason, Fassin has described such language of humanitarianism, and the practice of what he calls humanitarian government, as constituted on a paradox between a relation of domination and a relation of assistance. This paper explores the work of the World Health Organization in the global health field of tuberculosis, with a special focus on implementation of WHO's TB strategies in India. The paper argues that, in this case, this relation between domination and assistance is articulated through a balancing of messages of alarm and hope: Alarm that the situation is getting out of control, and hope that WHO is able to point to the solution that enables us, the global community (a handy construct) to re-establish control. The paper also points to the relative powerlessness of this *dispositif* in the face of unregulated market forces structuring the dominant commercial healthcare sector in India, that effectively undermines TB control and

propels the epidemic transition from a drug-sensitive to a drug-resistant epidemic. Recently, this has given rise to a ‘paradigm shift’ in the global anti-TB strategy, changing from a paternalistic compliance-centered approach informing the DOTS strategy and the ‘STOP TB’ strategy to a ‘rights-based’ approach at the centre of the ‘End TB’ strategy that was launched in 2014. The paper discussed this policy shift as a utopian vision in the face of a dystopic epidemic.

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Alexander Horstman, Tallinn University

*Christian Aspirations and Pastoral Power among Vulnerable People in Eastern Myanmar: The Free Burma Rangers*

Missionary humanitarian agency is being engaged with the downtrodden of society in all crisis-ridden, post-traumatic and devastated societies. Operating on local, transnational and global scales, through training, tireless efforts, unique support networks and advocacy work, evangelical churches are able to validate the marginalized and vulnerable and attract them to their projects. Taking the Korean, Naga and Karen (Kayin) Christianities and their Asian and international church networks into focus, our research team makes a collaborative effort to explore the micro-sociological spaces of power where missionization and humanitarian assistance meet and overlap and together impact on the political subjectivities of marginalized people and societies. The project breaks new ground in the research of religion and power by a fresh focus on the growth of local Christianity in Asian societies and its articulation with structures of capitalism and governance (Cao 2011, Comaroff 2010).

Of particular interest will be missionary investments into migrant society, providing relief and development projects, in spaces of orphanages, “bamboo” migrant boarding schools, social work, community counseling, teaching, bible studies and pastoring. In the center of interest are the dialectics of humanitarian care, persuasion and power and the question of the power relationships, dialogue and inter-action between churches, missionaries and vulnerable population that become the target of humanitarian assistance. The Foucauldian term *governmentality* captures



this broad concept of governance, which includes institutions and ideology (mentalities) captures this totality of public and private spaces, organizations and livelihoods. Using Foucault's notion of governmentality, controlled (totalizing) spaces and disciplinary, biopolitical agencies that center on the mind, the project advances neo-institutional theories to argue that missionary actors establish their own discursive, organizational and legal network in which they establish their own law. Global evangelical humanitarian actors are hence regarded as social transnational movements and governmental actors that use the void of nonstate spaces to carve niches for their transcendental humanitarian projects, model communities and utopias.

Our perspective taken is affinitive to Foucault's classic identification of disciplinary power. Foucault was developing the concept of pastoral power in relation to Christian forms of governance and ideology. In Foucault's genealogy of the modern arts of government, "pastoral power" figures as the religious roots of modern state power, which is re-inscribed in the institutions and discourses of the modern state. Unlike sovereignty, pastoral power is unconcerned with space. It is linked with the pastor's spiritual power and his role is to constantly sustain, improve and guide the lives of everyone. He exercises this power upon his followers like a shepherd upon his flock. Through his caring efforts and sacrifice, the pastor generates a sense of debt and loyalty in the follower, thus achieving both subjection and "subjectification".

Foucault introduced the concept of bio-power as a technology to accumulate knowledge of the population and to produce healthy bodies. We find Foucault's concept highly insightful in describing the forms of power of governance and discipline in relation to certain ideologies of care, salvation and moralities (as in Dean 1999). While we believe that missionization is not only a project of religious renewal, but also and centrally, a political project, we do not reduce missionization to brainwashing. Like Foucault, we emphasize the positive, productive element of power. Christianity certainly can and does have liberating effects and together with material help lead to empowerment and hope.

Peter Redfield, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

#### Panel Keynote | *Aftermaths: Equipment for Living in a Broken World*

In this paper I will consider two forms of aftermath: the afterlives of theories and the aftereffects of modernist infrastructure and expertise. As such I am less interested in Foucault's formulation of biopower proper than in the larger field of norms, dreams and expectations now woven between life and politics. Foucault's account famously focused on the emergence of the modern European state. Contemporary experience, however, includes concerns about life and health that exceed this political form, involving international agencies, nongovernmental organizations and private corporations. Such actors play a central role in the proliferation of projects associated with global health, identifying and responding to a wide array of actual and potential problems. Diffuse claims about human rights and humanitarian values permeate international affairs and corporate initiatives. The globalization of health research has shifted emphasis from national populations to those suffering from specific conditions, even as crisis moments reveal the enduring appeal of security discourse. They also inspire ingenious, minimal designs for objects like modest shelters, water filters or low-cost incubators, devices that offer little prospect of systemic response but suggest an alternative scale of vision. Drawing inspiration from Steven Jackson's call for "broken world thinking" in technology studies, my goal is to recognize the productive centrality of breakdown and repair, along with an ethics of care. Rather than assuming a unified or seamless apparatus for either health or security, we might then explore a more fragmented, heterogeneous world of dispersed threats and small fixes, moving across imaginative and material registers.

Kirk Fiereck, University of Pennsylvania

Our Retroviral Unconscious: Genetic *Différance*, or the Biopolitics of “Junk” DNA

The discovery of ancient retroviruses in contemporary human genomes raises critical questions as to the ontological limits of life and non-life. This aporia of human and non-human being is significant in light of social science and humanistic inquiry on the Anthropocene and ethnographic approaches to inter-species hybridity. Our self-definition as human lies in our DNA, the material that, until now, has signified life itself. As it turns out, human “junk” DNA is now thought to be made up of retroviral DNA. Thus, a prototypical form of non-life is discovered at the very core of our vital being as living humans. Perhaps we have always already been other-than-human. Scientists working on retroviral DNA in humans speculate that these non-human DNA fragments may regularly impact our health in unknown ways both negative and positive. For example, some experts think that retroviral DNA may be a significant source of the therapeutic potentialities of embryonic stem cells. All this points to a critical re-ordering of sociocultural paradigms rooted in Foucauldian biopolitics. This paper will explore the implications of these cultural transformations within the biosciences for thinking beyond the limits of Foucault’s notion of biopolitics from the perspective of human-retroviral DNA. Until very recently this genetic material was regarded as “junk,” or a type of genetic unconscious. Only through the deferral of meaning accorded to such “junk” do scientists come to know its value. These recent developments in genetics indicate that Derrida’s meditations on autoimmunity, hospitality and an inter-species cosmopolitanism might offer fruitful ways to understand the emergent biopolitics of human-viral non-/life.

Andrew Johnson, Princeton University

*Biopower and the Bodiless: Divinities, State Anxiety, and Control in Thailand*

In *History of Sexuality*, Volume 1, Michel Foucault shows how the identification, categorization, inducement of public concern over and subsequent desire to control the sexual activity of individuals and the “species body” in turn led to the development of new ways of seeing the population: in other words, biopower. But biopower here is rooted in a particular place and time – indeed, as Foucault notes, it is the product of “we other Victorians”. What about other times and places, and other forms of power stemming from other desires to categorize and fix in place?

Here, I look at the issue of uncanny presences [phi] and invisible lords [chao] – what might in other context be called “spirits,” “ghosts,” or “gods” in Thailand. Official attempts to delegitimize some form of mediumship coexist with the promotion and maintenance of other kinds of divinities, kings (see Jackson 2010, Morris 2000, Klima 2006, White 2005), and the power of particular Buddhist monks. Here, state and para-state powers intervene in order to separate real spirits from fake, legitimate gods from charlatans. This perspective is important now, as the country prepares for the death of the divine king and succession of another whose claim to divine power [barami] is less certain. It is a moment where the ruling junta offers to expel rival politicians not only by carceral threats, but also via magical exorcism. Here, I turn towards this new attention towards exerting power over not only the bodies of citizens, but also those residents of Thailand that lack bodies. I ask: what new possibilities arise when we go beyond the bio (and towards the theo) in biopower?

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Heather Swanson, Aarhus University  
Knut Nustad, University of Oslo

*Trout Biopolitics: Living in the ruins of colonial fish introductions*

Rainbow trout and brown trout are what one might call “creatures of empire” (Anderson 2006).

While the former originated in the U.S. West and the latter in northern Europe, these species are now found on every continent except Antarctica. European colonists introduced these favored sport fish wherever they went, making new trout populations in places as diverse as New Zealand, Peru, Kenya, and Kashmir. We follow these trout to consider the biopolitics of colonial landscape-making projects that used plant and animal introductions in attempts to create Europeanized ecologies in the provinces. For European men, a nearby stream full of trout, where one could fly-fish, was an essential part of the domestic assemblage that allowed them to craft boundaries of race, class, and gender.

Classic Foucauldian approaches clearly help us to analyze how trout have important in the making of human subjectivities, but humans are not the only subjects who are remade in these processes. Bringing together biopolitics, more-than-human anthropology, and fisheries science, we explore how nonhumans both transform and are transformed by colonial landscape-making. Once released into new waters, trout take on new feeding behaviors, reproductive practices, and relations with other species. Sometimes, they establish new regimes of power in the rivers they come to inhabit, driving other aquatic species to extinction. How, we ask, might we better attend to the politics of such relations among the *bios* within scholarship on biopolitics? What might we gain from shifting the central object of biopolitics from the *species body* to the *landscape*?

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Nils Bubandt, Aarhus University

*Animate Bio-Politics: Corals by Way of Example*

Based on recent fieldwork in a coral reef archipelago in the Papuan province of Indonesia, this paper takes up two fascinating, but also obstructed, paths in Foucault's work on bio-politics in order to animate bio-politics, as it were: to open bio-politics to up to the complex more-than-humans worlds of spirits, algae, zoo-plankton, ancestors, and the multitude of other forms of life that tend to be excluded from most uses of the category of "the non-human". Firstly, there

is Foucault's brilliant deconstruction of the Enlightenment category of "Man" and his historical emphasis on the rise of bio-politics as a form of governance of "man-as-species", a form of political analysis that nevertheless remained strangely reluctant to "pursue power's effects beyond the production of human social and/or species life and into the zoopolitics of animal capital" (Shukin 2009:11), let alone into other forms of life: coral, bacterial, fungal. I use "coral governance" to refer to the relationship between coral life, conservation, and the politics of environmental change in Indonesia in an attempt to open this first, obstructed path. Secondly, there is Foucault's much criticized interest in the Iranian revolution as a site of emergence for a new form of "political spirituality", a kind of folding of politics, subject, and spirit that had otherwise become impossible in secular politics (and obscured from political analysis). In the coral reef communities of eastern Indonesia where I work, there has been a sustained but often subterranean millenarian tradition waiting for the return of a mythical ancestor and the Second Coming since the 1930s, a tradition that was activated with the arrival of the first Western scuba-tourists to the area in the late 1990s and which continues to this day. The paper asks whether "political spirituality" might allow us to include ancestors, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit into bio-politics as well.

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**Panel 4. Epistemology, Ontology, and Ethnographic Critiques**

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David Rojas, Bucknell University

*Dissolving Humans, Savage Ontologies and Fish Breeding in Amazonia*

In *The Order of Discourse* Michel Foucault famously argued that "one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea" and suggested that anthropology would be involved in this erasure. Ethnology, he claimed, "dissolves man" by examining its



limits. In this paper, I address Foucault's wager in an ethnographic study of human-nonhuman relations at an artisanal fish farm in Amazonia. Working within human-fish entanglements, I ask what it means to ethnographically examine human limits in the afterlife of human erasure and dissolution.

I worked as an apprentice for a fish breeder in Amazonia who described his efforts as a world-changing endeavor that required a particular kind of self-erasure on the part of humans. At the farm, we were expected to set our preferences aside and "breed" ourselves as animals capable of sensing and responding promptly to the needs of fish. Such self-fashioning seems to have enabled the fish-farmer to navigate a form of human dissolution as our actions entered—and disrupted—ecological webs. We bred new hybrid fish species and sold them to farmers who were cutting down forests—and by doing so were causing ecological disruptions that were negatively affecting our breeding operations. Fish-breeding knowledge, I argue, was a practical skill honed in self-fashioning engagements advanced in fluid worlds that were colored with the traces of disruptive human actions. To know was to create ever-changing ecologies that remained mysterious and resembled what Foucault called "savage ontology" wherein animality is "the carrier of life and death, the continuous devouring of life by itself."

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Will Rollason, Brunel University

*Security on the Streets, Security in the Belly: Reiteration and the Critical Ontology of Post-Genocide Politics in Rwanda*

In his 1978 essay 'What is Enlightenment', Foucault identifies his project as a historical and critical ontology that would show how states of being are constituted historically in unstable processes that Butler (1997) identifies as reiteration, processes that allow for the transformation of what things and people are.

In this paper, I apply Foucault's insights to concepts of security, umutekano, in post-genocide Rwanda. Security is clearly a state of being, not

merely a representation. However, security is reiterated with contradictory effects. Hailed by the current government as a key aspect of its legitimacy, security entails not being subject to genocidal violence, 'security on the streets'. Yet for my informants, motorcycle taxi drivers in Kigali, security is the state of not being hungry, 'security in the belly'; often, being secure is not to have the policed security of the state. As such, security is destabilised by its various reiterations, resulting in an ambiguity which provides the ontological motor for much Rwandan politics.

This case points towards fruitful new directions in the anthropology of ontologies. I offer three theses: first, a move towards a critical, historical approach to ontology could remedy the evident historical and political shortcomings of 'the ontological turn'; second, attention to ontological instability ought to focus our minds on the human subject as the prior condition of historical flux; third, a critical ontology open to transformation would allow a rapprochement between those areas of the discipline focused on radical alterity and those attending to the cosmopolitan possibilities of anthropology.

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Hoon Song, University of Minnesota

*Caught by Power: A Symptomatic Reading of Foucault Through Favret-Saada*

"Being caught" is the only way to approach the phenomenon of witchcraft, Jeanne Favret-Saada wrote. What does the "catching" here is the very "force" behind bewitching and dewitching alike. May we bring Favret-Saada's "methodology" to bear on the question of what Foucault calls "power"? This paper asks so lest we should assign ourselves a ready immunity to the powers we study. Favret-Saada would diagnose such self-immunization as owing to our precipitous "naming" of the power/force we study. Self-immunization's opposite, to "be caught," is to be within the affective force-field of the "believer's" words yet-to-name the source of that force in a person, the witch. It is neither to empathize with those words nor to explain the "life" of the believer in context. It is rather about becoming suspended by the Other's

words-in-life, and bear witness to the moment when the words find their referent – the act of singularly “naming the witch,” amidst otherwise overdetermined fields of relationality. Foucault’s “power” entertains neither such a suspension nor such an act. Instead, it is something which became “palpable” –according to “Society Must be Defended” – only with the collapse of modernity’s most passionate would-be “namers” of the witch: fascism and communism. “Power” is that which sustained a certain historico-political continuity despite those regimes of epistemic discontinuity. Hence, Foucault allows the “same” analytic to capture that “continuity”; which can speak of state managerial rationalities along with tactics of struggle against the same, knowledge with life, and words with things. And “discourse” is that “same” vocabulary, which knows neither suspended referent nor the act of naming. If some accuses Foucault for “nominalism,” it is because of his analytics’ ability to name all but the very act of naming – the irreducible polemicity of politics.

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(in the case of clinical medicine) and learning to judge (in the case of those who govern) when there is no means to differentiate between simulation and truth. We may trace the development of Foucault’s concern with simulation and dissimulation in relation to the shifting objects of his investigations, and from an archaeology of institutional forms and knowledges to a genealogy of *epimeleia heautou*. But we can and should also ask ourselves how the question of simulation and dissimulation relates to other experiences of self-care and political form, and to the very possibility of the political. To undertake such an interrogation, I consider the experiences and discourses of contemporary migrants in Southern Africa, considering how it is that they inhabit and negotiate what they know to be dissimulations (the promise of wealth, for example, or of state functionality) even as they submit to the effects of simulation (the murderousness of witchcraft, and of the idea of the state itself).

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Rosalind Morris, Columbia University

Panel Keynote | *Resisting Simulation: Foucault, Anthropology and the Problem of Truth*

In his late seminars, Michel Foucault famously elaborated the concept of *epimeleia heautou* or ‘care of the self’ in contrast to *gnōthi seauton* (‘know thyself’), which has traditionally been imagined as the task of philosophy. In these seminars, and in a shifting vocabulary, Foucault describes the development and practices of a technique that could secure those who govern against the dissimulations of those who advise them and assist them in judgment. Conceived with reference to, and from within the historical framework of emerging imperial states, the ‘care of the self’ became, in some senses, a practice of immunizing oneself against flattery, and as such demands a rethinking of the problematic of recognition. But Foucault’s thought on the problem of (dis)simulation had its roots in the phenomenon of hysteria and the medical forms of ‘veridiction’ that it enabled in the formation of clinical medicine. In both hysteria and flattery, the problem is not merely of knowing the truth, but of producing knowledge