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**Nietzsche's Genealogical Method:  
Presentation and Application**

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## Introduction

Nietzsche is not considered to be a methodologist. (1) To talk about his method almost seems a contradiction in terms. In our days, when his popularity is again at its height, there is a lot of talk about his style, among other things, but no discussion of his "method". (2) And yet, one of the most influential thinkers of our age, Michel Foucault has read and used Nietzsche just in this way, as an inventor of a new method: genealogy. (3)

There is another thinker, widely credited to be an important methodologist in the social sciences, whose links to Nietzsche have just recently received increased attention: Max Weber. While for decades, Nietzsche's name did not even appear in the subject indexes of monographs on Weber, recently he has been acknowledged as a major source. (4) We may take this idea a step further by stating that this influence was most significant at the level of method; that Weber read Nietzsche in the same way as more than half a century later, and independently of him, did Foucault. There are strong indications that in his last years, Foucault realised that in Weber, he had predecessor in using Nietzsche. (5)

Due to the huge resonance of Foucault's work, the term "genealogy" gained recently currency in certain types of analyses. Yet, there is a considerable confusion in its exact meaning. This is in no small way due to the manner in which Foucault used this term, especially in his writings of the 1970's. This was the period where Foucault's name became known all over the world, when he wrote those two books that are still most associated with his name, especially but not exclusively in the broad field of the social and political sciences. (6) Yet, as a careful analysis could show in detail, this was the period when, due to a number of reasons, his work was the most confused and questionable. (7). Unfortunately, by taking at face value some of his own claims, Foucault's least Nietzschean period was declared to be the most Nietzschean one, and the method of genealogy was restricted to this type of work.



This may explain the fact that in spite of the wide reference to Foucault's work, the links to Nietzsche were not much studied in detail. Most of those who used Foucault were situated in the left of the political spectrum where Nietzsche was not much referred to before, (8) and possibly assumed that whatever was of value in Nietzsche to their purposes, Foucault exhausted in his work of the 1970's. Therefore, it would be a meaningless exercise in exegesis to go back to the original texts. Symptomatically, in their standard work on Foucault, Dreyfus and Rabinow simply declined any interest in entering the labyrinth of Nietzsche scholarship. (9) Even in the few works that tried to go back to Nietzsche, methodological interest was minimal. (10)

The aim of this paper is to tackle questions about the genealogical method explicitly, to sort out some of the confusion still surrounding this concept. It argues that, quite faithfully to the spirit of the method, this can only be done if careful attention is paid to its own conditions of emergence. Now, it seems that Nietzsche has never used the term "genealogy" until the moment that it appeared in the title of one of his books. (11)

The *Genealogy of Morals* represents the culmination of Nietzsche's work, in a number of different senses. First, it is generally acknowledged as his *chef d'oeuvre*, the most coherent exposition of his key ideas. Second, it is not just more systematic than his other books, written in the form of aphorisms, but presents a new method: genealogy. Finally, it is a culmination of the previous work also in the sense of cumulativeness. It builds upon and therefore assumes knowledge of all his previous works. Nietzsche spells this out explicitly, claiming that it may not be possible to understand this book without an acquaintance with the previous ones. (12)

There is nothing new or controversial in these three points. They are in line with most of the acknowledged wisdom of Nietzsche scholarship. (13) But this paper will not present another summary or commentary. It has a specific aim. It wants to show that the *Genealogy* should be read after the late Prefaces



Nietzsche wrote in 1886-87 for the second editions of some of his earlier books, and that such a reading is crucial for the understanding of both the book, and of the genealogical method. (14)

Such a reading can be justified by simple chronological grounds. The writing and publication of the *Genealogy* directly followed upon that of the Prefaces. (15) As Nietzsche has always painstakingly worked on his previous ideas, the exact chronological order of his thinking is of much importance. Different commentators did in fact lay an emphasis on the exact dating of his different notes, so it is quite surprising that not much attempt was made so far in reading the Prefaces together. (16) There may be two reasons for this omission that together form a tight web. First, in standard editions of Nietzsche these Prefaces are not bound together. Even in the Colli-Montinari edition, they found their natural place together with the books to which they written. But this would not have been sufficient without a second reason, which was a lack of interest in them. So long as such post-fact accounts were considered merely as ad hoc justifications by the author of his former work, they did not evoke much attention.

However, this paper will present a different perspective on the writing of late Prefaces. It will argue that the *Genealogy* is the corollary of the writing of these Prefaces. In one language, one can say that these two sets of works are interdependent, assume the knowledge of each other. Using a slightly different language one can state that the exercise Nietzsche did on his former works when writing the Prefaces, this work on the self by the self, had a significant substantive and methodological effect: this effect was the writing of the *Genealogy of Morals*, and the discovery of the genealogical method.

Such an analysis may also bring us closer to solving some of the riddles of Nietzsche's work. Let's mention only one of them: the peculiar title. First, the book is supposedly about morals. This, in itself, is a quite huge topic for a small volume. And yet, morality is only one of the areas covered, besides religion, science, law, and

the question of values in general. Apart from the definition of the topic, the manner of analysis is also elusive. The book is not a treatment in moral philosophy, but neither is its criticism. It is a "genealogical" analysis, as the other key word of the title indicates. But this presents immediate problems on its own. The term "genealogy" has a very specific meaning, the reconstruction and analysis of family lineage. It smells obsolescence and irrelevance, a kind of analysis that seems to be the least suitable for the study of modern society. Its application to morals, moreover, seems to be a contradiction in term. In fact, one could say that morality can even be defined as the break with a type of customary order that is located in family lineage. (17) Finally, the title begins with the term "on", suggesting incompleteness, even accidentality; the casualness of the approach that is reinforced by the closing part of section eight of the *Preface*, (18) but that is belied by the tight structure and the strong methodological orientation of the whole book.

The previous paragraph immediately calls for clarification and specification. There are two problems about such a claim of "solving the riddles". First, it looks preposterous. After all, there are libraries of scholarly works on Nietzsche, many of them excellent, and all of them trying to come to terms with his enigma. (19) Any new interpretation should first review the previous ones, analyse them in detail, and only after this work can one come forward with a new one, claiming it to be different. This book does not even try to summarise the previous literature. But, then, it does not propose a new interpretation either. It claims to rely upon a "higher authority" than even the best of the commentators: the writer himself.

Under normal circumstances, such an approach would represent a lack of scholarship, a neglect of the basic principles of a critical attitude towards one's material. But Nietzsche (just as Weber or Foucault) are not exactly ordinary thinkers. The claim is not that they have a quasi-metaphysical standing above others, in the sense of the "great classics" whose every word requires reverence and not critical evaluation. But they are exceptional in the sense



that their reflections on the former works are not justifications of content, but attempts to spell out the problem their work was trying to approach; a problem that was not clear even to them when they were actually writing. (20) It is in this special sense only that relying upon the "authority of the author" does not represent a short-circuiting, a lapse of critical standards, but the use of a special kind of extra information that should not be neglected when one is trying to make sense and use of their works.

This leads us to a second remark about riddles. "Solving riddles" is meant here in a very specific sense. The aim is not to untie knots that thinkers fabricated in their spare time. Their solution is relevant only to the extent that Nietzsche, Weber, and Foucault started and went ahead on research paths that have contemporary relevance; that can still be continued. All the riddles this book tries to solve are related to the possibilities of taking up and in a certain way continuing their work.

Finally, third, the presentation and solution of such riddles is related to the kind of audience this paper is targeting. It is not the small circle of Nietzsche, Weber, and Foucault scholars, and is definitely not the wider circle of interpreters and commentators on Nietzsche, Foucault, post-modernity, post-Marxism, feminism, and similar fashionable themes. Perhaps hopelessly, the paper aims a public that is wider than the first and different from the second; an audience of serious researchers in any field of the social and political sciences who are engaged in concrete, personal research projects, and who do want to gain in this way some understanding of the world in which they live. In my view, this is an audience that would profit most from a proper reading of Nietzsche, Weber, and Foucault; but they are exactly the ones who are most deterred by the style and personality of many commentators - and in a certain way, especially what concerns Nietzsche and Foucault, by the writers themselves.

A clear dividing line must be drawn here between the proper ideas of a thinker, and the way he enveloped his ideas, due to



expectations on the part of the audience, even if such a separation cannot be made clearly, especially due to the fact that publication exerts an effect on its own; an effect that is central to our concerns. Now, the actual audience of Nietzsche and Weber, and even of Foucault, was something very different from their possible serious contemporary audience. They had to establish their difference, to mark their work in a context and against adversaries that have long since disappeared, and false friends that they brought upon themselves. Many of the tricks they used to differentiate their work, in order to avoid misunderstanding, today only serves to hinder understanding, by enclosing them into small circles of the devoted. This paper tries to show that it is possible to use their own writings to bring them out of this enclave; that a joint re-reading of Nietzsche, Weber, and Foucault can prove that they are not just boring classics of sociology or extravagant, thought-inspiring, but unreliable master-thinkers, but initiators of extremely rigorous, demanding, and interesting research projects with much contemporary relevance in many parts of the world.

However, before going into a concrete analysis, let's return and review in some detail the question of the "problem of the problematics". What sense does it make that the problem underlying the work of a given thinker can be a problem on its own? Under what conditions can such a phenomenon emerge? What is the specificity of a work in which the underlying problem can be unknown for a long time? Or, in this concrete case, what were the assumptions on which Nietzsche's work on his previous work, his writing of the Prefaces was based? What made such an undertaking at once possible and in a certain way necessary?

Three such conditions can be specified. The first point is obvious: at the start, Nietzsche was not able to define exactly the problem that motivated his research. Second, in spite of this, he had a determination to go ahead with his work, with an almost fanatical obstinacy, even if not only the end was distant, but the very starting point unclear. He was not just contemplating and meditating, but doing actual research. Finally, the whole work was



coloured and even shaped by a certain feeling of uneasiness. Nietzsche was not simply unclear about the exact intellectual problem he was pursuing with such a vigour, but this problem was not external to him, was not just a peculiar riddle, but it had a fundamental relation to the world in which he was living; even with his own being.

These three points are in fact inseparable. Each of them alone is nothing but an idiosyncratic peculiarity or the indication of a failure. Taken together, they shape a tightly defined, rigorous and extremely burdensome undertaking. It was the feeling of uneasiness that gave the problem he was pursuing. But these were the peculiar characteristics of this feeling, its pervasive strength and unclear focus that started him to work, and with such a vehemence, yet made it so difficult for him to be more exact and precise. These were the three elements that constituted the peculiar configuration of obstinacy and hesitation, of strict determination and uncertainty about the end, of sensing a problem but being unable to define it clearly, that set out Nietzsche on his intellectual enterprise, but also made it necessary that after a time, he had to reflect on the status of his work, and to specify its focus and stakes in this manner. This was what made at once possible and necessary the writing of the "posthumous Prefaces". This is the configuration that projects forward the circular character of the whole undertaking, and the enormous difficulties, first of all the recurrent problems of method, that it necessarily encounters.

Finally, a few words about the particular, seemingly accidental conditions, the "effective causes" of their writing. Nietzsche was always disturbed by the lack of response his works received, and ended up blaming for this the publisher. Thus, in 1885, when he finally succeeded in getting free from the former obligations, he decided to re-publish the earlier works. When working on the new editions, he tried at the same time to make them more accessible to others, and to clarify for himself the problems he had about his own works. The actual Prefaces written reflect this dual concern; their strength lie here.

A full treatment of Nietzsche's case would require an analysis of the previous Prefaces, followed by a study of the preface to the *Genealogy*, and finally of the book itself. This goes beyond the limits of this paper. A genealogical analysis would focus on the conditions of emergence (the posthumous Prefaces), and the effect (the book). However, our intention here is not to do a genealogy of genealogy, rather to give a short exposition of the genealogical method. This will be done by an extended reading of the Preface to the *Genealogy*. This *Preface* stands in the same relationship to the late Prefaces as the Prefaces to the whole previous work: they represent not simply a reflection, but a work. The *Preface* is the conclusion of the work done on the previous work.

Sections two, three, and four of the *Preface* tell the short, summary story of Nietzsche's intellectual trajectory, especially the formulations of his problem, while sections five, six, and seven, subsequently, describe in a nutshell the method developed to answer them: genealogy. All this is preceded by an introductory and followed by a closing section. But the presentation of the gradual search for the specification of the problem and the description of the method are related. Already in the first account of his 'life story', introducing the central concerns of genealogy, he gives a first formulation that will be elaborated in detail in the later sections, and in the book.

### Section One

The first sentences of the *Preface* can only be made sense of on the basis of the former Prefaces. This is the first sentence of the first new book published by Nietzsche after writing them. According to the standard view, a review of one's former works and a writing of new prefaces to them is an exercise in self-understanding. The output is a better knowledge of one's own work and self. Here, the first two sentences question this hidden assumption. The first states the opposite: far from obtaining full knowledge, Nietzsche still remained unknown to himself. The



second goes even further, specifying that self-understanding was not even the aim of the undertaking.

And yet, in these and the next two sentences, he does give a certain kind of self-definition, a specification of identity. In the same first two sentences, he is talking in first person plural and not singular, as a "man of knowledge" [*Erkennenden*]. (21) At first, it only underlines the paradox of the statement, as exactly "men of knowledge" (meaning philosophers, or spiritually minded people in general) are supposed to possess some kind of self-knowledge. This is the point that will be elaborated in the next two sentences. In the third, Nietzsche uses a quote from the Bible to underline his strong commitment to the search of knowledge that even defines the most personal part of his being; (22) while in the fourth, he specifies this activity, this special kind of search for the knowledge, again in quotation marks, as "bringing something home". These two sentences form a circle, providing, along the lines suggested by the use of the first person plural in the opening sentences, a non-essential self-definition of Nietzsche: he is someone whose being, whose heart is identical, is at one with the search for knowledge, who lives for knowledge; but also one for whom the act of knowing, of gathering knowledge, is deeply personal; where a piece of knowledge is valued only to the extent that it is personal, belonging to "home".

So, in the first four sentences, we first have a statement of the impossibility of self-knowledge, and therefore of a positive definition of one's own identity; and a circumstantial, circular definition of identity, in so far as this identity is established with a general category: "men of knowledge". While the first two sentences are about the impossibility and the second two about the circular definition, the first part of the very first sentence nevertheless contains a reference to both aspects. These four sentences construct a set of interrelated paradoxes about the need and the impossibility of self-knowledge, the identity and difference between self and knowledge. But Nietzsche does not stop at playing with words, has no interest in questions for their own sake. (23) It is this dilemma whose solution will be at the

heart of the undertaking of the *Preface* and of the whole *Genealogy*, and even of Nietzsche's work in general.

The remaining discussion of the section continues this play with identity and difference. Nietzsche is still only sketching the problem - section one is about the problem, and not the solution. If the first four sentences located Nietzsche's very being at the level of knowledge, in the sense of the search for knowledge, the remaining part clarifies the necessity of the distance with respect to this identity, spelling out the reasons why a "man of knowledge" does not and even should not know himself; that it is not self-knowledge that gives coherence to such a being.

It is the problematics of the link between knowledge and being that, in different forms, is at the centre of this section, and of the whole work. At each and every point, Nietzsche is connecting knowledge to being, to invest it with reality; and yet, in the very same act, he is signalling the existence of a fundamental distance. In the remaining parts of the section, this distance is established in time. The kind of knowledge he is after is oriented not towards the present, but always to the past. Nietzsche comes out of the dangerous possibility of the short-circuiting of knowledge and being at the level of the investigator by establishing a distance between the "object" of knowledge (one's past experiences), and what is the replacement of the "subject" of knowledge in the present (the search for knowledge, or the "will" of knowledge). These two elements, the target and the "moving force" of knowledge are still linked to the same person, belong to his being; but the gap that exists between them prevents complete identification and the subsequent short-circuiting, maintains the tension, the distance necessary for work.

On the basis of the previous Prefaces that tried to define, finally, his problem, Nietzsche discusses here some general questions that in a way envelop the whole issue of the basic problem lying at the heart of the specification of a research project: the question of knowledge, and the search for knowledge itself. The point is, in one way, about the old and familiar dilemma of the link between



the "object" and the "subject" of knowledge, the objectivity of knowledge, or the conditions of possibility of objective knowledge. And yet, it is also something completely different. It is certainly not a critique of these traditional perspectives, as the whole question is not even raised in such terms; and it is not a sceptical position, questioning the possibility or necessity of knowledge. Who is speaking here is not someone outside knowledge, criticising it from an external or hostile position. Quite the contrary: it is someone who is an extreme (one could easily say: pathological, mad) follower of the most traditional concern for knowledge, in whom the search of knowledge became the aim of his life; his being itself. It is from this perspective that questions are raised about the connections between being and knowledge, about the best way one should proceed in his search for knowledge, in his research, by one who is not just gathering knowledge as a pastime or a profession, but for whom this is a fundamental, deep passion.

Perhaps we can go even a step forward. What Nietzsche is accomplishing here is a redefinition of the links between knowledge and passion, knowledge and personality. For centuries and even millennia, passion and knowledge, personal concerns and objective facts were opposite poles, as far as possible from each other. Passions were considered blind, irrational, foolish. The only way for the acquisition of real knowledge lay through restraint, ascesis, the elimination of passions. In the same way, private interest or personal involvement were claimed to be a *priori* negations of the possibility of an objective, detached perspective considered to be necessary in the search for knowledge, the establishment of true facts. This was derived from the judicial origins of the scientific method, the privileged position of the mediator, the impartial observer and judge.

These are points that would be foolish to criticise. But Nietzsche, heralding or acknowledging our modernity, takes a further step. He is not just making a point about the diabolical trap that the restraint of passions has become a passion itself, leading to the "disciplinary society" of the "last men"; not even that having been



separated from its original, judicial aim, the search for knowledge now became separate from the utilitarian considerations that helped to establish the independence of scientific investigations, outside judicial or religious concerns: but that this search has become a passion; that through centuries of shaping and moulding, a type of personality was formed in whom objectivity, the search for knowledge and systematicity became a passion on its own; in whose case a detachment, a reduction of the passions, an enforcement of objectivity would only represent a hindrance, as all that is necessary for a proper scholarly undertaking has already been interiorised by him. We can say by an analogy that to restrain their passion for knowledge and to enforce the rigid norms of strict "objectivity" in this case would be similar to enforcing simplistic moral rules for individuals who have a strong conscience; or to make adults read today the kind of textbooks for eating habits analysed by Elias that were used by adults in the 16-17th centuries. The fundamental originality of Nietzsche at this point can only be compared to revolutionary implications of the Cartesian moment. Just as Descartes swept away the old, scholastic exercises, considered necessary for someone to become a subject of knowledge, but rendered useless by the spread of education at an earlier age and mass scale, Nietzsche calls for the elimination of the requirement of objectivity for those subjects of knowledge who are so steeped in ascesis that can open up even their passions and subjectivity for their work. The fact that Nietzsche eventually failed does not question the possible general validity of the point.

This point can be taken further, by establishing a direct link between this passion for knowledge and the Protestant ethic. The search for knowledge, defined as a passionate and deeply personal interest is not just an idle and idiosyncratic concern, a hobby. It has all the characteristics of a calling, a *beruf*. One can even say, elaborating on Weber, that in the contemporary world, science remains the almost only place today where profession can still remain a vocation. We know now better than ever that all attempts to resurrect an "entrepreneurial spirit" are doomed to fail in a market-oriented civilisation, where the anticipated desires of the consumer represent the subjective antipode of the



mechanistic characteristics of actual work. But "science" still remains at once the last refuge of the "society of the orders", where personal relations still play an overwhelming role, and where an ethical conduct of life is still tolerated; where one can pursue his/her own concerns, passions, and interests, and there is a possibility for establishing an identity between one's own being, one's everyday life and work. In the Middle Ages, the difference between the agile, agonistic, self-confident warrior class and the remote, withdrawn group of monks and clerics couldn't have been greater. But could it be that the inheritors of the warriors of the Middle Ages are not just the "captains of industry", but also the "man of knowledge" of today?

Nietzsche's point does not even stop here. If it is the case that modernity can be defined as the search for knowledge becoming a deep and passionate concern, it should pose anew a number of crucial questions of method, about the link between knowledge and reality, or rather being. If knowledge, so far only considered as a superimposition on reality, becomes a reality in itself, how does this change the links between knowledge and being? What is to be changed at the level of method, what can be gained if this passion, being so personal, utilises fully the being of the observer as an object that is also a subject? If this were the case, however, will it not result in some kind of short-circuiting between the "object" and "subject" of knowledge, the two being collapsed into the same person? Or what are the different levels that these processes can located inside this "being" who is a "man of knowledge"? And, finally, is there not a danger in this whole undertaking, the unchaining of a spirit even stronger than the "capitalist spirit", capable of an extremely profound transformation of being, of everything outside knowledge?

## Section Two

Such are the questions that loom large around this short introductory section of the *Preface*. In the following sections, Nietzsche will review them one by one. The second and third

sections will take up directly the two questions that are perhaps the most important out of the series of dilemmas led bare in the first. They will continue to avoid the short-circuiting by bringing in a historical perspective, and introduce a fundamental conceptual distinction.

The dilemma is the following. If a work is closely connected to the being of the investigator, if this is an undertaking that relies upon and mobilises his whole being, then a way should be found to establish a distance with respect to oneself. One solution is to take the object of analysis in one's past, and never reflect on one's own present. This is the way the second section proceeds, now giving a positive interpretation of the accomplishments of the previous Prefaces. If the first section was about the impossibility of self-knowledge, the second gives the positive results of those "attempts at self-criticism". This section discusses the way the ideas contained in this book got their first formulation in his earlier works, with special reference to *Human, All-Too-Human*. Nietzsche realised the extent to which he was still thinking along the lines laid down there, how much they contained the first versions of this book. But he also found out something more. He was able to recognise, in a special sense, the fundamental coherence of his whole work. This was given not by the unity of a topic, a discipline, a concern, or even an explicit problem, as it was their lack that gave the starting point of the whole undertaking of self-reflection. But, he claims, all his work was motivated by the same fundamental will of knowledge.

### Section Three

In the third section Nietzsche is continuing to retrace his itinerary. The direction and aim are still the same. On the one hand, he is going back in time. Section One was about the recent Prefaces, Section Two about the former books, while Section Three goes back to his first childhood piece. On the other, the central concern is still the link between his being and knowledge, or the search for knowledge. All this, one could say, is well in line with traditional



genealogy and similar kind of historical predilections and imperatives: always go back in time, in order to discover the primordial form or the basic source, the founding act or the original institution or contract. (24)

Such a retrocession in time, a return to childhood and the first literary products, together with such an obstinate concern of trying to locate knowledge, the subject of knowledge back in being seems to confirm the worst expectations for a casual reader of the *Genealogy*. It reflects the obsolete title, smells of searches for origin, even if clearly with an affiliation with its modern, Freudian bent about childhood as the source of such original experiences. And yet, the very first sentences of the first paragraph already precluded such a reading. At every point where traditional genealogists and modern psychoanalysts are happy to grasp upon a fundamental identity, Nietzsche is always pointing out a distance, a gap, a displacement. It is not different in this case as well. At the very moment when introducing childhood, he marks a difference. He is not going back to the original formulation of the problem, rather to a first sketch that even causes him uneasiness today; that he is "loath to admit". The rediscovery of the origin does not lead to a happy experience of identity and harmony, only returns to the central driving force of the Prefaces: distance and uneasiness.

The uneasiness referred to here by Nietzsche comes from his contemporary being. It is from this point that we get the perspective for the retracing of his intellectual path accomplished in this section. This reconstruction, instead of telling the great story of his being or becoming, or of critically unveiling and questioning the deepest sources of his previous life and work, in fact, turns inside out the major elements of traditional genealogy: the genesis of being and the recovery of the point of origin. At the origin, we do not find the first, even if rudimentary - or perhaps the "true", the "pure", but forgotten - formulation of his real problem. But neither is this first effort completely irrelevant, a joke with respect to which one can establish the correctness and truth of a present definition. The past is not used to authenticate

the present, either positively, through continuity, or negatively, through denial. The link between the first sketch and the final version is not established through a clear affiliation, a fundamental identity of content, neither through complete negation or an unbroken linear development, but by a series of displacements. It was through such efforts, such transformations, that out of a simple (though even at that time very peculiar) curiosity, Nietzsche developed his fundamental will of knowledge; and that, following patient, long schooling and work, he arrived at his own question mark, his problem.

This question is in a peculiar relation with the original one: it is at once contained in it, and is orthogonal or "critical" to it. There is a clear-cut distance between the two: the latter questions exactly what the first formulation took for granted. Yet, in a fundamental way, the second remains part of the first, reiterates it in a new form, instead of setting up an opposition or an antithesis. This section contains the first demonstration, a working illustration of a crucial aspect of Nietzsche's method, at once the consequence and reason of circularity. The later formulations not simply contained a better, more precise, more advanced definition of the same problem, but the original formulation turned out to be a part (but only part!) of the problem he was trying to analyse and diagnostise. The first formulation was, and even had to be, provided by the same morality of truthfulness he ended up trying to partially diagnostise.

In the reconstructive analysis of his own itinerary, Nietzsche was always careful of not committing anachronisms, of not projecting back his contemporary state of mind into the period he was writing about. (25) But at this point, it helps our analysis if we state the well-defined Nietzschean concepts sections two and three were about, respectively: the *will to knowledge*, (26) and the *will to truth*. (27)

At the start, in his childhood, Nietzsche's concern with origins was motivated by the *will to truth*: to get to the bottom, to find the real and only truth. This question was not different from the



attitude diagnostised so well by Marc Bloch. At this stage, there are only two characteristics that distinguish Nietzsche from any other searcher of "the" truth. The first is his unusual determination and persistence in this pursuit. If anything, he was more and not less "ill" with the *will to truth* than most scholars. But he also lets us know that even in the first answer, there was something that went beyond the usual formulations; that the way Nietzsche pursued the traditional question of the origin of evil had a power to take it beyond the limits given by convention, therefore a transgressive potential. The second indicates a glimpse of his originality, helping him in the whole long road, even if still only in a restricted, negative sense: he had a sense of knowing where not to search.

Therefore, it is within the general horizon of the *will to truth* that his problem was first formulated and his *will to knowledge* shaped, until he was able to establish his own ground and could stand up alone, wedging a gap between the two. But there is a fundamental point here: the central concern of the genealogical approach is that one is never leaving one's background horizon completely. This is what marks the specificity of Nietzsche's approach, what defines the major difference between dialectics and genealogy.

It is at this point that we are getting close to perhaps the most fundamental aspects of Nietzsche's whole method, attitude, or approach, that is even connected to his problem, the problem of the value of the evaluations of existence. One way to re-formulate this question would be to pose it as the problem of criticism, or the critical attitude. This question is undoubtedly at the heart of Nietzsche's problem. But the question is not simply "what is criticism?". It is restricted in two dimensions. Firstly, the kind of criticism Nietzsche is concerned with is not related to statements, but to reality, to being. (28) Nietzsche's points are only about being and reality, or about the points of contact between statements and reality, and not about the internal logical consistency of statements. But, secondly, only a very specific kind of "reality" or "being" is of interest to Nietzsche: one's own

everyday world, the actual life, the practices and beliefs one took for granted, and eventually arrived at questioning. One can say that Nietzsche is only concerned with criticisms that are voiced by someone who was part of the reality it criticises, and never ceases to stay part. This can be seen as a matter of choice. But it is also a matter of principle for him. One has no right, in the sense of intellectual conscience, to pass judgement on a reality or a being with respect to which one is only in an external position. (29)

The previous paragraph only defined in negative terms, by a series of differentiation, the space of the problem. Now, we have to give the exact, specific, limited sense in which Nietzsche's attitude and method to criticism is given. Let us again start with the established methods. How is one supposed to criticise something like the *will to truth*? What are the established, available procedures? First, one could reject it altogether, to denounce and unmask it as nothing else but the vehicle of a manipulative force, a state, a class, or a religion; or as a negative, destructive force on its own. In this way, criticism means a complete turnover, a going from the inside to the outside, into full opposition and exteriority. This is the procedure of Hegelian dialectics, or the spirit of negation, the idea being that by announcing the denial of one's former self, one can establish an immediate turnover, and become the very opposite of what one formerly believed in. If there is a continuity between the two positions, it is only given negatively, by the fact of denial. Strictly speaking, this logic assumes that every single belief, attitude and value formerly held has turned to its opposite, allowance being perhaps made to the exception of natural or universal values. It is assumed that the new self is influenced by the old one only by trying to be the exact opposite, but there is no positive, concrete connections or continuities of the two beings. This allows for the possibility of synthesis.

There is an alternative possibility, still rooted in Hegelian dialectics, the idea of "immanent criticism". In this case, one remains inside, and proclaims himself to be the true carrier of the truth. One is criticising something in the name of the very same



thing. It charges concrete beings or reality in the sense of not living up to the promise or the principle. As an example, one could evoke the old discourse about the "immanent critique" of existing socialism; but the same can be told about Milton Friedman's critique of the market economy influenced by Keynes and the "neo-classical synthesis". (30) While the previous exemplified a complete denial and break, this is proposing a return to the true but forgotten origins, or original principles.

Nietzsche's approach is different from both. For him, a return to the origin is just a myth, based on the misunderstanding of the actual origins. It should be evaluated as all errors, on the basis of their usefulness: whether they help to solve contemporary problems and conflicts, or only to sweep them under the carpet, and give pretence to an escape from reality. A return to clear principles, on the other hand, could be a useful way to reflect upon what is going on, and make suggestions. But the assumption that a perfect ideal can be realised at the level of being does not make sense. Finally, a complete denial simply cannot happen. This is based on a misunderstanding of reality with its manifold layers, of which only the value of some can be changed at the same time, but not all. (31) This misunderstanding opens up a host of problems: mistaken representation of oneself, the denial of connections to the past at the level of one's own being, the need to posit a completely different ideal, and not the last the need to present "the" alternative, coming out as if from the head of Zeus. However, as long as one is "criticising" something of which one remains a part, one is not subject to the blackmail of giving an total alternative. This would not even be possible, as such a "critical" undertaking starts with a distance, a gap, and uneasiness, and not the proposal of a new solution. But if one is claiming a complete break with the past and the present, with "the" system and everything it contains, then, in order to avoid the charge of nihilism, one will always have to present a new and total order of things. However, this alternative will always be an abstraction, a day-dreaming, far from daily reality, unable to take roots; therefore, will be a *par excellence* manifestation of a hostility to life. (32)

The previous discussion was still only related to the horizon, the background, the taken for granted. It emphasised the fact that all elements cannot be changed at the same time. But Nietzsche's point goes further. In his version, the investigation will not simply remain to a certain extent part of the world it tries to investigate "critically", but the problem which motivates the search, therefore the investigation itself is also drawn in its substance from the same horizon. It is not just in a negative way, as part of the unconscious, taken-for-granted assumptions that the reality to be criticised is present in the study, but positively, at the level of motivations or moving forces. Thus, in a way, Nietzsche is not only using dialectics, but also immanent criticism, in both cases turning the approaches against themselves. Instead of a negation, a complete break, we have a series of displacements; and instead of immanent criticism, the restoration of an ideal, the point is that criticism is necessarily "immanent" in a certain way, but this is part of the problem, and not the solution. It means that the investigation, at least for a long time, remains necessarily and fundamentally flawed, as it must be motivated by the same considerations that it wants to question.

But for Nietzsche, it does not represent a reason for despair. It does not mean that all "critical" undertakings are necessarily and always trapped in the very beliefs they want to question, and in the pettiness of the everyday world they want to distance themselves from. One is trapped only if one is not realising the dangers, the fact that it is impossible to "get outside", especially not immediately; and that radicalism is only a "mask" of a conservative will, a will to leave everything unchanged except what is the easiest to replace: explicit convictions and ideologies. If one is realising the stakes of Nietzsche's genealogy, if one accepts, beyond the stakes involved in separating from what was taken for granted previously, the additional painfulness of realising that it is not easy to find a new answer, and even more painfully, that the very investigation one is undertaking will have to be "doomed" for a long time, as one's questions will also be taken for a considerable length of time out of the same



"background horizon" whose elements (but only elements) one ended up questioning, then at the end, one may get the benefit of posing the real questions, and eventually, even getting significant answers.

So far, we discussed Nietzsche's approach to "criticism", his overturning of a paradigm dominated before, and for a long time even after, Nietzsche by Hegel. (33) To this approach, Nietzsche gave the surprising name "genealogy". Let's now review the reasons for this choice.

Genealogy, in the traditional sense, is about being and identity, the specification and localisation of one's identity in his being - in his descent, family lineage, and traditions in general. As we have seen, the first section of the Preface overturned this interpretation, by offering a reading that located Nietzsche's undertaking not in an identity, but in a distance within his own being. (34) In the second part of Section Three the other major aspect of genealogy, the search for origins is turned inside out.

Here Nietzsche is not so much changing the values previously assigned, as shifting the focus, the importance, in an analogous manner. A search for or an affirmation of origins centres around the very "object" of which one tries to establish its emergence, and in this way define the identity. The question is to specify the origins of an institution, a discourse, or the family credentials of a prince. Any historical reference to the conditions of emergence are accidental, only serves as a background against which the saga can unfold; can be used to illustrate the uniqueness of the deed, the distinctive marks of a character, or the novelty of a form. But for Nietzsche, the opposite is the case. His version of genealogy focuses exactly on these conditions. The realisation that the real question of "origins" is about the conditions in which an institution, a character, or an evaluation is established gave Nietzsche finally the formulation of the question with which he could start his work.

In this section, then, Nietzsche gives the first glimpse into the genealogical method. But only a first glimpse, a formulation that is still crude. The same points that are made here will return in later sections. In order to indicate the rudimentary character of the work at that stage, and also to maintain chronological faithfulness, the term "genealogy" is not mentioned in this section.

This is again not an idiosyncratic peculiarity, an extreme concern with historicity and exact chronological order, but belongs to the heart of Nietzsche's method and work. The personal itinerary used here does not reproduce faithfully the way he gained his problem and his method, but it is a method that can only work and be used in such a fashion. Nietzschean genealogy is not a research tool that is freely available for anyone in order to use it for whatever reasons, but can only be bought, in the manner of a truly Faustian contract, at the price of one's life: one has to struggle his own way through with himself or herself to find the problem, and to realise at the level of one's existence the necessary displacements. Genealogy cannot be practised with relaxation and anaesthetic methods. Therefore, the method can only be introduced in the manner of the reconstruction of an intellectual trajectory.

This leads us to the last reason why Nietzsche may have chosen this term as the catch-word of his method, a reason that fits well into his whole approach and work. When explaining the choice of the name "Zarathustra" for the prophet of "beyond good and evil", Nietzsche argued that as he was the first prophet of good and evil, he should be the one who is "over" with it before anyone else. Applying the same argument to genealogy, one can say that as genealogy is the first and the most traditional method of the search for origins, of traditional history, the method that overturns all historicism in the name of a new "historical sense" should be called "genealogy". This is a word that is shocking, thus immediately establishes a distance - either by deterring or drawing attention.



#### Section Four

Up till now, the sole reference point of the *Preface* was Nietzsche himself, his own intellectual trajectory - even if this was given not in the form of an identity, but in a series of displacements. With section four, we break out of this circle, toward the publication of the results. In this way this section continues the previous lines and introduces a new one. First, we have seen that in the middle of Section Three, the temporal retrocession stopped at the childhood formulation, and after that Nietzsche started to tell the actual, even if reconstructed, story of his intellectual path. But second, publication introduces a gap between the ideas themselves, and their eventual published version. Publication does not happen only once the problem has been found and solved, but documents itself the path made. The first publication only came when he felt reasonably secure about the project, when it started to live its own life, when it had his own path and field, when there was no risk of being overtaken by established, existing forms; but when it was still not completely certain of itself. It was necessary to wait and delay publication for a long time; but then, it was also necessary to publish the half-digested results. (35) As we know from the experience of the Prefaces, it was only through the former publications that the necessary *a posteriori* reflections became possible. It is these publications, these temporary accomplishments that documented the path, and in this way allowed him to step back from the work itself, and to redefine and reshape the focus.

In fact, there are two levels in which writing and publication becomes necessary, according to Nietzsche, for the subsequent development of one's own ideas. First, one should just put things down. It is by writing them out that one gets rid of the ideas, overcomes them, and makes thinking possible again. It should be no surprise by now that writing for Nietzsche, instead of establishing identity, marks a difference. (36) Second, it also makes possible the eventual, later reflection. Even if it seems that the whole exercise of writing of the posthumous Prefaces came by accident, as he only wanted to republish his earlier books, there



are indications that he was aware earlier of the possibility of such an exercise. (37)

One could argue that there is nothing specific in Nietzsche's ideas about the return to one's former thoughts. The view that there is an "interdependence" between thinking and publication, that one should continue with a new topic after a book was written, but time and again return to his former books are well-known techniques. But both some of the elements used by Nietzsche, and the whole configuration are highly specific and original. First, the target is not to establish the identity of the author, perhaps in the sense of a continuous development, but continuous displacements and eventual returns through the trajectory. Second, the main question is finding the problem. The usual advice about returning to the former books is a return to forgotten principles, ideas, solutions. No one has suggested before a search for the "problem" these works were based upon. Finally, there is not just an "interdependence" or a "dialectical relationship" between the internal path of thinking and the publication of the stages of thought here, but something much more specific. Publication produces effects, and of two kinds: first, outside the level of consciousness, it helps one to think beyond what he had thought before; and second, at the level of consciousness and reflection, it allows one not only to step outside his own work, and go forward, but even to reflect upon it, and thus multiply the powers, specify the focus, define ever more precisely the problem, and in this way increase distance not simply with respect to the former thoughts, but also to one's whole taken-for-granted horizon. It is this that enables one to distinguish, slowly and carefully, between one's own project and its external conditioning factors; in the case of Nietzsche, between his *will to knowledge* and the *will to truth*.

But Section Four is not only about publication, but also about a stimulus to publication. This is the section where Nietzsche is trying to construct his tradition. Even if the term was not used by Rée, he names him a "genealogist", though he was called a moral philosopher; this is, by the way, the first time Nietzsche ever uses this term. Such a concern with tradition again no doubt would



seem to many, and in general quite rightly, as a meaningless exercise. Why should one need the authority of predecessors to establish his right to speak? However, in this case, there are a few reasons to make an exception. First, any type of knowledge fits into some kind of discursive tradition: a scientific discipline, a separate sphere of life, or philosophy. Nietzsche's work does not easily belong to either of these categories, therefore he needs to locate somewhere his own discourse outside himself. Second, this is all the more important as his work is a kind of research. It is not simply a Cartesian reflection on the critical powers of reason, an analysis of texts and forms of reasoning, but an empirical investigation. Therefore, it needs specific methods and a body of literature on which it can rely upon. (38) Third and finally, the kind of tradition Nietzsche is presenting here is quite peculiar, almost a caricature of the usual references to one's roots or foundations. It is a constructed tradition, by an appropriating interpretation, and not the search for an existing discourse. It is also not done not in a positive, but in a negative way. Rée does not provide the answers or the methods Nietzsche will take up - in fact, Nietzsche tells us that he said "no" to his every single hypothesis -, but only in the sense of the problems, the sensitivity. The work of Rée was nothing more to Nietzsche, according to this account, than a catalyst. It helped him to collect and formulate his own ideas. Therefore, in the remaining part of the section, Nietzsche goes through his own works, and gives a detailed overview of the way he formulated his ideas there, indicating the distance both from the first and the present formulations.

### Section Five

The previous two sections reviewed in a nutshell Nietzsche's intellectual trajectory, from the very start to the first formulations of some of the major ideas of the present book. Section Three presented the intellectual path from an internal perspective, while Section Four introduced the external perspectives of tradition and publication. Consequently, Section Four was distant and cool. In



line with the tradition in which he placed himself, he was satisfied with giving his purpose as the replacement of a less probable hypothesis with the more probable one. Here, in Section Five, he steps further. Connecting the previous two sections, he states that his aim was even there much more than "hypothesis-mongering", and gives finally the major target of this book, tackling directly the problem found by the Prefaces: the link between science and morality, especially the value of morality, with respect to the question of the evaluation of existence. It is at this point that he refers to his master Schopenhauer, and the eventual need to separate from him. In this way the other, more personal, internal component of his tradition is also given. But here, something is clearly starting to go wrong.

In this extremely delicate, specific, circular way, going round and round around himself - which, however, is unavoidable, is one is pursuing the topic honestly -, Nietzsche finally arrived at the present moment. He should now define his method and the specific approach and purpose of the book. But, in fact, at this very moment, and not only in this *Preface*, he is doing something more. He is jumping a step. So far, he was documenting the way he was able to distance himself from and analyse a certain part of the morality he was part of. But now, instead of continuing a careful and partial analysis, he jumps directly to the assessment of the value of morality as a whole, to a diagnosis. With it, a new play with distance is set upon. He is positing himself outside all morality and all existing values, to a unique position, from which he can judge and evaluate morality, and even give and create other values. In this way, the whole carefully built-up balance is destroyed. The complete distance with respect to morality and the actual world as its supposed end-product leads to a loss of distance with respect to oneself. In spite of all efforts to the contrary, something has become short-circuited. Right at the top of his work, at the moment of the highest achievements, the road is paved toward his madness.

In fact, this jump will be a characteristic of the whole *Genealogy*. After all the major points, the most crucial insights and elements



of analysis, Nietzsche spoils the effect by immediately forgetting about himself, by running ahead in time and out of style, in order to diagnose "the" present, and to give prophetic allusions to his role, task, and destiny. (39)

But let's go back to the text, and try to make sense of Nietzsche's diagnosis at this point: nihilism as the will to negate, to turn against life.

We have seen that Nietzsche's whole project was based upon a careful play with a series of distances. There is a necessary distance between thought and reality, as knowledge and truth are always connected to reality in a certain way, but could never be identical with it, always remaining external. Then, there is a distance between his own work and the tradition to which he belongs to, referring to both his intellectual forerunners, and morality in general. Finally, Nietzsche claims the impossibility to pin down any identity, and yet asserts some kind of fundamental importance of identity and unbrokenness in existence. His diagnosis concerning the "hostility to life" is related to his assessment of the way in which modern (Western, Christian) morality and science has, in a fundamental way, misunderstood this game of distance and identity, and the "revaluation of all values" is about how this is to be corrected. The analysis given in the next paragraphs will try to transform Nietzsche's diagnosis into a language that would make more sense to "Cartesian ears", (40) and to demonstrate the extent to which Nietzsche became entrapped in the same attitude he wanted to diagnose.

The first point concerns a major transformation Nietzsche was trying to accomplish. The operation is well known, but the exact implications have not been considered so far carefully enough. It is a commonplace that Nietzsche was criticising morality, and was trying to replace it with "life" or "existence", as the major reference point. This implies, however, an attempt to switch his own horizon in its entirety, the operation that the genealogical method claimed to be a contradiction in terms. This would also run the risk of a metaphysical philosophy of life, a romantic turn

to unbroken unity, errors Nietzsche tried to avoid explicitly. But there is a way out of this trap, a "definition" of life that avoid the claim of unbrokenness, the metaphysics of life, and that includes thinking and knowledge as part of existence.

This can be done if we do not define "life" by some fundamental terms, but approach it, in line with the genealogical method, from the perspective of gaps, distances, dislocations. Such dislocations occur regularly; they are events. An event breaks the existing state of affairs, creates a difference at the level of existence, leads to unforeseen situations, circumstances, configurations that do not fit existing patterns. The diagnosis of a "hostility to life" therefore does not require a denial of change and a claim of unbrokenness. It is connected to the level of answers given to these dislocations; to activities. (41) But in order to speak of the answers and solutions given, we have to redefine the neutral, broad overcoat category of dislocation or difference. A dislocation that call for an answer, for activity, is, if we remain at the level of intellectual pursuits, a "question" or a "dilemma"; if we want to give their corresponding name at the level of daily affairs and interpersonal relations, they are "problems" and "conflicts". In this way, we can now define the meaning of "hostility to life". This is an inability to solve properly the problems, or face and manage the conflicts.

Of course, in a way, all conflicts and problems are answered after a time. But such an answer does not necessarily represents a proper solution. It may contain all sorts of omissions, avoidance, a lack of ability to stand up, attempts to hide and sweep away, to dissimulate; attempts that may succeed or fail, but which do have a significant and cumulative impact on reality. A genealogical analysis does not want simply to reconstruct the past, but to show how the past produced the present, and even to evaluate the way problems and conflicts was solved in the past, and assess their impact in this way. The diagnosis that Nietzsche is putting forward here therefore does not have to rely upon a metaphysics of existence or a romantic philosophy of life, but makes perfect sense in a Cartesian framework. It is not necessarily a prophetic statement about the extinguishing of the "forces of life" as a claim



that certain countries, cultures, or civilisations may arrive at a point that they become unable to solve the problems and conflicts they encounter. From this perspective, a new assessment will be possible about the links between Nietzsche and fascism. As it is well known, he was first considered a forerunner of fascism. Later, the untenability of this position was demonstrated by Walter Kaufmann. But we can now state more: he was the first diagnost of the oncoming of fascism, not simply by denouncing the emerging German militarism, but feeling in the air the oncoming of a kind of hysterical behaviour, (42) an escape from solving the problems and conflicts, by at once pursuing the most violent methods, and affirming an ideal situation where all conflicts and problems would disappear. For Germany, such an argument today may only have a historical relevance. For East-Central Europe, this gives access to the heart of the present. (43)

From this perspective, it is easier to make sense of the closing sentences of the section as well. It is about pity; the placing of the question of pity at the centre of the hostility to life, and his whole philosophy. This is somewhat surprising, as neither in his former books, nor in the *Genealogy* itself is there such an overwhelming emphasis placed on pity. The answer is that pity involves a perspective from which hostility to life and sheer accident or bad luck cannot be differentiated.

An individual can find itself in a bad situation through a number of different ways, through misfortune, handicap, illnesses, often accumulated effects of accidents, and so on. It may have a number of different causes that can often hardly be disentangled, and where the difference between private and public, close and distant, personal and impersonal evaluations may give quite different results. All this takes us into the thick of some of the most intriguing and difficult distinctions to be made - perhaps, into the heart of the problem of distinction, the faculty of separation, of critical powers, and of the way an individual can stand up and organise his own existence. (44) However, a non differentiating feeling of pity, if it reduces all evaluations to a single, context-free perspective, especially when it becomes the



major or even the sole motivation of activity and conduct, is proof of a lack of the ability to differentiate, of the impairment of the critical powers, and ultimately, results in the loss of the individuals' abilities and powers to lead their own life. (45)

### Section Six

This section is perhaps the most important part of the *Preface*. (46) This point can be taken even further. This paper argues that as a result of the posthumous Prefaces, Nietzsche's work reached a new height, that is exemplified in the *Genealogy*. This, however, also implied a loneliness that was too much to bear even for Nietzsche, and led directly toward his madness. It also argues that the *Preface* provides a crucial link between the previous Prefaces and the *Genealogy*, and in the sense of Nietzsche's problem and methods, is more important than the book itself. Now, this series of arguments can be crowned by the statement that Section Six of the *Preface* summarises, in an extremely tight form, all of these points.

First, the section is at a privileged place. It can be shown in detail that the whole book has a carefully built musical structure. The same holds true for the *Preface*, where, after an introductory section, different threads of the argument are introduced one by one, until they are all collected and connected together. This is done in this section, and with the highest possible notes. After this, Section Seven is more restrained, while Section Eight is only an after-note.

Second, it takes up the major points discussed in Sections Two through Five. The section starts with the last point mentioned in Section Five, pity. But, from here, he returns to section two, and restates the unifying framework of his *will to knowledge*; but does it by introducing the arguments of Sections Three and Four about his intellectual trajectory and the way he found, after a lot of time and work, his question. Finally, at the middle of the section, concludes with the specification of the genealogical



method already mentioned in the second paragraph of Section Three.

But third, the previous points are not just repeated and connected here, but developed a bit further than previously. Concerning the *will to knowledge*, he is focusing on questions, especially on the way on should learn to ask questions. And concerning the genealogical method, he specifies the two instances genealogy focuses on: the conditions of emergence, and the lasting effects. In each case, the emphasis is placed not on the "thing" itself (in our case, religious morality), but what immediately precedes and what follows him in the order of reality.

These sentences give the clearest formulation of genealogy as a methodological tool. But they are fitted into a context (one may say, this is what defines the conditions of emergence of genealogy itself) that specifies that genealogy is more than a simple tool of analysis. All this may be considered to be in line with the whole *Preface*. It has already been mentioned before that the *Preface*, in its structure, in the arguments put forward, in its peculiar circularity and the attempts to handle this circularity, presents and illustrates the method itself. This is a method whose use cannot be separated from the intellectual path of the thinker itself.

But surprisingly - and this is the fourth major point - Nietzsche is doing here something different. He does imply that the circle can be closed. In this section, the only previous section that is not alluded to is the very first. It is treated perhaps as a simple introduction. The point that "men of knowledge" are unknown to themselves is still held as valid. But Nietzsche here seems to imply that they can at least know exactly their question, their problem. And even more: this question is no longer simply their own, but it is a new demand. This language already forecasts the terminology Nietzsche will soon use about his "task" and his being a "destiny".

Once this demand is found, Nietzsche claims or implies that he has become completely external to the circle of morality and the will

to truth he was previously caught in. All the carefulness he proceeded with in avoiding the pitfalls of Hegelian dialectics were useful up to this point, but should now be abandoned. Therefore, believing himself to have become external to morality, he can now use terms he could not have done earlier: to give a critique of moral values; and he is not only able to do so, but calls it his task or destiny.

From this position, he proceeds to give a diagnosis of morality. He claims that his method and the resulting perspective he acquired made him able to question morality, its very values, for the first time; to diagnostise it as "a danger, a seduction, a poison, a narcotic", and, most importantly, returning to the play with time the whole method of genealogy is so entangled with, but now from the opposite direction, he denounces it as promoting living at the expense of the future. Finally, from this position, he can turn to the final point of conclusion, the most encompassing diagnosis: the "type of man" (i.e. modern man) as a product of this morality. Needless to say, here Nietzsche no longer belongs to this type of man; he implies that he managed to free himself completely.

### Section Seven

Section Six defined genealogical method in the clearest terms, and also, making the leap, went to the highest stylistic pitches. Section Seven reassesses and repeats some of the points made in the previous section in a different style and from a different perspective: that of actual work, and of his tradition. Nietzsche first restates the novelty of the project, in two key senses: one is open space, and the other the repeated emphasis on questions. He restates his alone-ness in the search, and the hope for company. Finally, he repeats the topic that itself shows the novelty: it is morality as an object. His position of complete exteriority is reasserted in the clearest possible terms. (47)

At this point, he returns to the other element of the tradition he was part in, this time meaning the background of his research,



and not morality or life, the work of Rée. For the sake of the argument, he assumes that the questions of Rée were identical to his own, (48) and reduces, with exaggerated modesty, genealogy to a simple question of method. (49) The problem is not that it is not true, that genealogy is not "grey", but that it is not its central aspect. Moreover, this very point can only be understood if we index it to the peculiar self-referential modality of the project. Genealogy has to be grey, because this is the only way in which one can write about oneself, without emotions and the need for identity; trying to analyse that part of oneself which is no longer part of the "self", therefore can be subject to analysis. In other words, the moral past of mankind is interesting only to the extent that actual living human beings are products of this long "civilising process". (50)

This is the point where Nietzsche can revisit Rée, and define his links to this approach. The two are similar, as both take an external perspective of morality as it existed so far, the "moral past of mankind". But the implications of the two approaches are opposite. Rée gives an external description of morality, as if it were only a kind of error. In this perspective, once these errors are pointed out, they simply cease to operate. In this way, Darwinism (and, one could add, the concept of *Homo oeconomicus* as well) made possible a peculiar connection, a short-circuiting between the past and the present: a link between simple, natural animal existence, and the characteristics assumed and promoted by modern society. They both start with a natural order of things. For the first, it means the satisfaction of natural needs and desires. For the second, there is a certain kind of competition, selection, elimination of the weak and sick. The system of thought that provided a connection between the two, social Darwinism, not surprisingly exerted a peculiar fascination and horror. (51)

According to this story, history is nothing but the long story of wandering astray, of following all sorts of false gods, principles, and values; the history of repression, oppression, and wars. Instead of searching for the deep meaning of this history, one should declare that all this is non-sense. The true principles of

natural wants and their satisfaction should be re-established. The task is to sweep history away. But there is one major point, one important thing about this history: the moral past, the recognition of the need to compensate for the events of misfortune. One can even define the specificity of human beings in this way. While in the kingdom of animals, the simple principle of natural selection is working, in the world of human beings, another - and merely negative! - principle is added: the compensation for disadvantages, or pity.

In this way, morality becomes redefined as a mere compensation, separated from the actual, positive conduct of life. Moreover, any question of morality as ethics seems to be devoid of any sense, a repression of natural wants and desires. (52) One should pursue one's own natural inclination, and bother only with two major points, two types of interdictions, related either to human nature (man as an "animal", a being with instincts and desires) or human dignity (man beyond the animal state, a being with morality): the need to respect the liberty of others, and to help and support the weak.

Both these codes imply an identity with others, in the sense of empathy. The first defines it in the positive sense: everyone should be allowed to do the same thing, and that therefore no one is supposed to do things which would hinder the doings and activities of the others. The second builds upon a negative empathy, in the sense that provision should be made to those who failed, or were unlucky. The underlying idea is that these two simple, almost self-evident principles are sufficient, and everything else concerning morality and religion is immaturity, error, nonsense.

In this way, one can discover, through the arguments that connects and distances Nietzsche and Rée, not simply the fundamental principles of the French revolution (liberty, equality, and fraternity), and the basic paradigms of social and political thought ever since (liberalism, socialism, and conservatism), but also their tight internal structure. The links between liberty and



liberalism, and equality and socialism are well-known. But, as the above argument makes it obvious, there is not only an opposition between the principles of liberty and equality, and the related political ideologies, but a fundamental communality. It is at this level that we can link these two, and separate them from conservative ideologies; a link that connects them through the principle that was often claimed "missing": fraternity. (53)

The principle of fraternity occupies a peculiar position in the sacred trio of the principles of the French Revolution. It is full of paradoxes. This is the principle that has not been chosen as the major slogan by any of the major ideologies and political parties, and yet, it looms large behind many of them. One could easily propose to close the circle of analogies by associating fraternity with conservatism, the conservative cries for community, order, and close (quasi-blood) personal relationships. But, after all, this was a principle of the Revolution, and not the Restoration. There are differences between the traditional references to community, and the revolutionary principle of brotherhood. Thus, one can propose that fraternity was the most revolutionary and the least realised of the three principles. But this would underestimate the truly "conservative" character of the slogan.

The reconstruction of its internal structure can help us to find the proper place of fraternity in the universe of modern political discourse. (54) The first point is that statements of principles made in the same period may not belong to the same "age" in the sense of the history of the thought. Rather the opposite is true: in periods of intensive change, the last and clearest statements of the values and principles of the previous period coexist with the first formulations of the oncoming new era. Condillac and Kant lived and worked in practically the same period. (55) Fraternity as a slogan is not a modern principle, but the last formulation of the millennial dream of the brotherhood of mankind, characteristic of all chiliastic and reformist movements in Europe, since the Middle Ages.



But it is neither completely a thing of the past. The idea of fraternity is crucial for the functioning of modern political discourse, and of modern societies in general. Not as an explicit target, but as the hidden assumption underlying all the others. It is through fraternity, through the assumption of both an internal, inherent solidarity with the others, but also (as this is also implied in the concept of brotherhood) through the acceptance of the separate entity and dignity of each and every individual that socialism and liberalism can coexist together as principles, can talk the same language and share the same political space. It is because the principle of fraternity is fundamental to modern societies, but only as a hidden assumption, that on the other hand, all explicit attempts to promote this beyond, or even opposed to, liberalism and socialism are doomed to fail; (56) but it is also the reason why the attempts that try to rely solely upon one part of the linked ideologies (liberty in the case of Reaganism and Thatcherism, and equality in the case of Communism) have potentially one-dimensional characteristics, and - fortunately - can succeed neither. Finally, this explains how socialism and liberalism are linked together in the form of social liberalism, that today seems to be the only socio-economic model that has a degree of explicit appeal.

At this point, one may start wondering about the place of this whole discussion. So far, genealogy was understood as a way in which a thinker could come to terms with his or her own work, to specify its underlying problem, and drive it toward perfection. Yet, in this section, the topic concerns the taken for granted assumptions of modern political thought, a topic that was certainly not at the centre of Nietzsche's life and work. And yet, it is only with this discussion that the circle about the genealogical method is completed, and the full potential of the approach is realised. Because genealogy is not simply a way to look into oneself, an improved version of psychoanalysis, but an approach that enables its proper users not only to specify the stakes of their own work, but at the same time to establish connections with the central problems of their age. Methodology until Nietzsche assumed that in order to get access to and solve problems that have both



general, theoretical, and concrete, practical relevance, the subjectivity of the researcher should be eliminated. But Nietzsche has shown us a way in which, through not just expressing, but working on this subjectivity, it is possible to arrive further than any positive method would enable us: to get access to what positivism takes for granted. For any type of problems whose solution requires this in-depth understanding, genealogy is indispensable.

Fraternity, thus, is not absent from modern societies. Quite the contrary, it is their fundamental background assumption. But it is exactly at this level that Nietzsche finds faults, and gives his diagnosis. His concern is not with the fact of this brotherhood, but with its modality. The universal link that binds together modern societies, according to Nietzsche, is based on the shared characteristic of suffering, and the corresponding feeling of pity. This is the lasting effect of the past morality. And the overlooking of the crucial importance of fraternity in modern societies may be due to the difficulty to face the fact of this effect.

As in this whole configuration that is spun by the principles of the French Revolution and the modern political ideologies and morality, there is a univocal affirmation concerning past morality: it is dead, and is without any contemporary effect, apart from the left-overs of the past that remained in the ideas of the conservatives parties. It is at that point that Nietzsche is introducing the third major element of genealogy: layers, at the level of being, especially the human being. This is at once an assumption of the genealogical approach and a result of its discovery. It explains not simply the type of questions Nietzsche was raising, but also their modality: the difficulties he encountered in the formulation of these questions. The major point of attack is the radical, absolute denial of this short-circuiting between the "first and last" men, the idea that the whole history of morality does not matter, belongs to books written for children. This was the idea that made it possible for the British moral philosophers to approach morality as their object; (57) but it also meant that they misunderstood the significance of the



point. Nietzsche makes the opposite claim: the very being that is rediscovered by social Darwinists, liberals, and socialists, is itself the product of a long period of development; his whole being is fully invested with layers of morality.

This is the fundamental assumption of Nietzsche's whole work. This is the reason why history - moral history, in this case - matters: not because it is, or should be, alive, but exactly because it is, and at the moment it becomes, dead. This assumption guided Nietzsche's previous research, but was specified only at the end. But now, it is possible to re-connect it to the starting point and the diagnosis. Because, for Nietzsche, morality is not simply present still at the level of behaviour, but this is what guides the action of the "modern type of man", or rather what makes him unable to act, to engage in proper activities. And it is also through this point that Nietzsche returns to the starting sentence of the *Preface*.

Modern man does not know himself, cannot know his being, because he is unable to realise that his actions are only possible on the assumption that whatever he does is something natural, although all this is only the long product of morality. "Men of knowledge" also do not know themselves, but for a different reason. They do not even want to search their "true being", but they know their limits, they are able to investigate whatever is the product of long history in their own conduct. The opposite is the case with "modern men", who are only able to continue their way of conducting themselves, without regard for ethical principles, because on the one hand, they have already interiorised these principles, and because they mistake these internalisation as the "natural state" of mankind. In order to continue acting, they have to misunderstand themselves.

This misunderstanding is necessary and different not only from that of the "men of knowledge", but also from the lack of self-understanding characteristic of all other cultures. Nietzsche has two general points here. First, one cannot always question oneself, and especially not in the moment of action. This is an interpretation of Hamlet Nietzsche gave already in the *Birth of the*



*Tragedy* , and adhered to it ever since. (58) Second, it is extremely difficult to situate oneself outside one's own world. Most cultures are unable to do so, to the extent that they often call themselves by the term "man". Modern man (following Christianity) could do so and became universal. But this had a price. Like Christianity, which - especially if we consider the difference it made - is more an ethics than a religion, and could only emerge as an institutionalised religion on the condition that some admittance was made to the very tradition it tried to overcome, modern European man and society also needed this self-misunderstanding in order to spread its influence around the world. (59) It had to believe himself to be at once natural and universal.

By today, this self-misunderstanding has produced a result. The whole world is following, at least in principle, and only in a certain way, some of these universalistic values. One can debate about the meaning and value of this influence, of this type of "conquest". But one point seems to be certain: that it is not possible to wage these debates in any meaningful sense outside the very principles of modern European culture - liberty, equality, and human rights; political democracy, the rule of the law, and the right and freedom to work, to act. But what is even more necessary today, when socialist and third-worldist dreams and nightmares are collapsing, is to realise the exact stakes and assumptions of such ideals, and foremost of all, the specificity of the Western type of subjectivity, and the way all the development of the Western culture has been based upon and tied to this type of man. Not just in the sense of civilisation, policing, external constraints, and the need to fabricate an identity. But at the very basis of the idea of "progress" itself, at the ground level of its reality and materiality: the necessity of taking up the challenge, not leaving it; to be courageous of standing up to oneself; to compose oneself, and not just leave it to the winds; (60) and finally, the most important question being the extent to which contemporary practices either build upon this type of subjectivity by taking it for granted, or undermine its very values by denying the possibility of such an autonomous personality in the age of corporate market structures.

It is obligatory to pose these questions as a fundamental matter of theoretical reflection and daily political and social existence, and not be satisfied with the ideas of natural development (economic, political, or social), and innate abilities or human nature; ideas that may have been useful errors, but ceased to be so in the present world. At any rate, such ideas do not work any more - and the first proof for that is already arriving from East Central Europe.

Because Nietzsche's work reaches the hidden assumptions, the taken for granted realities of modern man and society, it offers us an approach and a method to pose and answer such questions. It helps to introduce thinking into problems of reality that cannot be solved by way of simple problem-solving thinking - where the solution of the problems themselves requires reflexivity.

To return to the text, Nietzsche finishes the section by a discussion of cheerfulness, following upon and indicating his distance from the pair seriousness/ morality. Here again, two points are mixed together. The first is that the end of the old morality, the death of God is not a sad event for Nietzsche. On the contrary, it is a sign that what was important in that morality has already become part of existence, it has become possible to overcome it. But it still leaves open an issue, important for Nietzsche: does this lasting effect mean that it has permeated the world? The differentiation between these two different types of lasting effects will be at the heart of the *Genealogy*. And it is here that the other, more questionable side of cheerfulness comes into the picture. Nietzsche is ready to accept that the whole world is still full of the effects, on condition that he himself is excepted. He is laughing cheerfully at the others, from the outside - at the end, arriving at the type of attitude that would have been available at the start, but that he refused to pursue.



## Section Eight

This is just an after-note, an additional commentary. It is written from the perspective of reception and audience. Nietzsche is making three points here. First, he claims that it is difficult to understand this book without acquaintance with the previous ones. Given the self-referential and personal character of the work, as indicated throughout the whole *Preface*, this remark is not surprising. But the reason he gives is not simply related to the content missed, but, in a way quite faithfully to the genealogical method, to the conditions of emergence. The point is that it is not enough to read these books, but must be read properly, in the sense of recovering their conditions of emergence. Thus, another circle is introduced here: the genealogical method has special requirements, poses special obligations not just on the author, but on the audience as well. This is what the final point of the *Preface* restates, with an aim to give a hand. Nietzsche provides some indications about how to read, how an aphorism should be decoded, through rumination. This takes us back to the beginning of the *Preface*, and the whole undertaking of the posthumous *Prefaces*. In a sense, they represent shortcuts, summaries, easy accesses to Nietzsche by Nietzsche. But, on the other hand, such shortcuts only work if acquaintance with the books themselves is assured. They help to digest their meaning, but are pointless without them. They only teach to read and understand, and do not supplement the actual work of the reader.

## Summary: a definition of the genealogical method

Let's summarise the three major aspects of genealogy. First, it is a concrete method to study certain problems; a method whose specificity is that instead of tackling directly its object, the analysis centres upon the two end-points: the conditions of emergence and effects. It is a method that wants to assess the value of its object, by analysing the circumstances and the kind of forces that contributed to its emergence; and also wants to

uncover the extent to which this particular piece of reality may survive, in hidden undercurrents, its eventual demise.

Second, this method is based on the central assumption that reality is not simply a uniform surface, but is built of manifold interconnected layers, building upon each other. The systematicity of present reality is given by the peculiar configuration of these elements; but the elements, containing themselves numerous layers, live well beyond the concrete realities or things and the systems that connect them in their particular form. This is the reason why such a historical investigation is necessary in order to come to terms with the present.

Finally, the genealogical approach is more than a simple method - even if connected to evaluations, or assumptions about the layers. It involves a special type of attitude, a relation the investigator has to himself, or rather to his "problem". This is the most important and the least discussed aspect of the "genealogical method". Claims are often made about the identity of method and content or substance, or that it is not possible to separate Nietzsche's, Weber's, or Foucault's methods from the concrete historical investigations they are making. This is clearly a misunderstanding, and is too close to the old, Hegelian-Marxist claim about the identity of method and substance, or theory and practice. It is not the topic or the content that matters, but the interconnections, the joint search for the problem and the method, and for the link to one's life and age. The concrete investigations are merely testing grounds for the distillation of both the problem and the method. Which does not mean that they are accidental. The approach requires, again flying against the face of received wisdom, that they must be autobiographical, have to be connected to the first version of the formulation of the problem and the method itself, and not simply the link to the present problems. Any autobiographical work is obviously about the present, about present beings; and the need to connect it to external problem only helps to localise and exteriorise the problem, to come out of a possible short-circuiting, the "subjective-personal" trap. The crucial problem of the method is how to wedge this gap inside



oneself, between what is external and is to be overcome in oneself, and what remains of the "self" as the taken for granted.

This is a very demanding and specific approach, only suitable in the case of very special kind of problems - where the problem of the investigation itself problematic; when it is a study about one's own experiences, but not about one's self; only for those who are at once willing to engage upon a long and tedious research project, and also cannot help doing so. It also has its dangers. Nietzsche, Weber, and Foucault all struggled with these dangers and traps, not always with success.

#### An application: Shakespeare, Weber, Foucault

As an application for the use of the genealogical method, understood as the way in which the full outburst and completion of an oeuvre is the effect of work done on one's own previous work, in the context of its public presentation, let's shortly review the cases of three major figures of thought, Shakespeare, Weber, and Foucault. The neglect of the effects such an undertaking, a genuine *publicatio sui* in the early Christian sense, may have on the author himself is a peculiar phenomenon of modern scholarship. (61) A renewed attention may help us to explain a number of other enigmas positivistic research could not even address.

##### *1. Shakespeare*

The exact dating of the writing of Shakespeare's plays has always received widespread attention in Shakespeare scholarship. By today, with a few exceptions, the dates have been fixed with considerable precision. (62) Their actual publication has so far been much less in the centre of interest, perhaps because it was less controversial. But a joint consideration of the possible links between writing and publication brings out something peculiar. Practically all the books that were published in Shakespeare's lifetime, and where a strong hand of the author is to be suspected,

fall between the years 1597 and 1600. (63) Only Titus Andronicus was published before, in 1594, and, except for pirate or semi-pirate editions, only *Hamlet* and *Troilus and Cressida* after.

However, Shakespeare did not publish in these four years all the plays he wrote before. A careful principle of selection was established. The immature early works, like the three parts of *Henry VI* and the first comedies, except *Love's Labour's Lost*, were left out, just as later plays that turned out less perfect, like *King John*. The parallel is close with the way Nietzsche published his earlier works in 1886-87, leaving out all the *Untimely Meditations*. (64)

But the parallels are not restricted to the facts of publication. They also extend to its conditions and effects. First, with respect to conditions, starting from 1594, the feverish activity of Shakespeare was not restricted to publication. This was also the period when his work was the most productive in quantitative terms. He was writing even three plays in a single year. But this was brought to a close in the very last years of the 16th century, once the publication stream ran out. The combination of feverish publication and writing had a tremendous effect on Shakespeare, culminating first in an implosion, and then an enormous creative explosion. First, just around 1600, he wrote three enigmatic problem plays, *As You Like It*, *Measure for Measure*, and *All's Well That Ends Well*, often interpreted as being highly autobiographic. (65) These plays, by the way, have not been published by Shakespeare. Thus, the reflection on self has led him first to a preoccupation with his own life and being, just as it happened with Nietzsche. But after this came an even bigger explosion. In the first years of the 17th century, Shakespeare wrote much less than before. Academic administrators today would disapprovingly shake their heads in light of such a lapse of productivity. But this is the time when Shakespeare wrote the four greatest plays of all times: *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*.



Finally, in between the implosion and explosion, and in a way bridging the two, there is a peculiar play, presenting all sorts of perplexities: *Troilus and Cressida* ; (66) a play whose exact dating is uncertain, suggesting that Shakespeare must have written it in an extended period of time, just as it happened with *Hamlet* ; a play that perhaps has never been performed in Shakespeare's lifetime, yet was published in a proper manner, in a way that is, concerning plays written after 1600, comparable again only with *Hamlet* , evidently with a considerable amount of effort, in spite of not being the playbook of a successful performance; a play that is not a tragedy, neither a comedy or a tragicomedy, its genre being rather absurd or grotesque, showing more similarity to Beckett, Ionesco, or less well known East European playwrights like Mrozek or Örkény than to anything written in the 16th or 17th centuries, therefore consistently misread and misunderstood for centuries, suffering continuous attempts of "correction", receiving proper attention and understanding only after the First World War. This suggests that in this play, Shakespeare gained an understanding of the dynamics of European civilisation that enabled him to look ahead, into the twentieth century.

This paper argues that what made him do so was the application of the same kind of method that was later rediscovered by Nietzsche, and termed genealogy. The work on the previous work not only helped him to come to terms with his own life, and produce on this basis the most powerful literary pieces of all times, but also to settle the relationship between his work and his age; to see things that everyone else failed to notice, or took for granted. (67) He realised the collapse of the medieval world order, based on the principle of belligerence and recurrent dynastic wars, and produced the first laic pacifist manifesto, well before the famous plan of Abbé St Pierre; (68) he understood that the end of the medieval world was due not simply to a betrayal of its values, but to the surfacing of a fundamental incompatibility between its two major values, justice and glory; (69) and realised that the way out is given by the idea of reason of state. (70) He fully understood that reason of state is not simply a political theory, but the governing principle of a social order where the

management of individual passions becomes perhaps its most important component. (71) The relationship he established with his work, and through his work, with his life, gave him access to the heart of his age, and even get a piercing glimpse into the future.

## 2. Weber

There are two facts about Max Weber that, even if not unknown by those who possess a fair knowledge of his works, are still not considered to be of much significance. First, Weber collapsed in 1897, was not able to work at all for long years, and did not resume regular teaching and failed to give public talks until the very end of his life. (72) Second, almost his whole oeuvre remained unpublished.

These facts are only interpreted in a negative sense, as unfortunate incidents, due to the objective facts of illness and the early and untimely death that prevented the accomplishment of his work. Any internal connection between these aspects of life and the work has so far been left unexplored. However, using the methodological considerations of this paper, new light can be shed on these elements of the life and work of Weber, with much broader theoretical relevance.

The first evidence to be questioned is the objectivity of illness, that has been so far taken for granted as a natural fact. However, this should not necessarily be the case. It was just at the time when Weber lived that the relation between organic and psychic illness has been re-posed, and the causal primacy of the first questioned. The reference is not to Freud and psychoanalysis, but to Grodeck and the concept of psychosomatic illness. (73) There are many indications that Weber's breakdown was not just a matter of physical exhaustion, but was due to the impact of conflicting and over-burdening duties and expectations, especially related to the public presentation of his work, his *publication sui*.



Once the deepest crisis was over, Weber could return to work around 1904. What he produced was not at all of light quality. These were the years when both the *Protestant Ethic* and some of his most demanding methodological works were written. (74) But his work had definite limits in another sense. He was unable to teach, and was even refusing to give simple public talks. His house became a meeting place for many of the central figures of contemporary intellectual and even political life, where Weber was always at the centre of attention, but years and years passed before he was able to open his mouth in a public gathering.

The difficulty of building a bridge between the private and the public was also characteristic of his written work. He failed to publish any more books, though became quite close to it at the very end. The few articles, mostly methodological, that were published came to light in small journals, often edited by himself, that can be more properly considered as working papers of an association than open public forums. One of the reasons for this can be given in terms of a characteristic of his illness: what Weber dreaded and could not stand was the presence of deadlines. He was able to resume his work only when all threats of deadlines were cleared away from him.

All this points out that the central problem of Weber was not due to organic illness or mental fatigue, but a tremendous difficulty he had about externalising his work. This can be made sense of in the following way. Weber was caught in between two conflicting exigencies: the strong moral obligation to fulfil both his professional duties in the strictest terms, and his internal, personal standards raised about his own work. He had to meet at the same time the expectations others had about him, and his own expectations about himself. In the context of contemporary German academic life, the satisfaction of both demands proved impossible, even given his incredible capacity to work.

The conflict broke out with his nervous breakdown and depression. But once traces of the provoked sickness left his body, Weber was still unable to resume his duties, as the causes of the



problem did not disappear. In answer, he close himself upon himself, imploded into his work, went ahead with his personal research, but he both lacked the forum in which to present his work to a wider public, and the will to do so. He was caught in a vicious circle: he could not publish his works, due to a number of uncertainties and fears; but the lack of publication prevented him to acquire the distance necessary for further elaboration and eventual completion. In spite of reading Nietzsche, he could not arrive at the full use of the genealogical method.

The slow process through which Weber "reconstructed" himself, relying solely on his own powers, lasted for over two decades. It was only after the war was over that, perhaps also due to the shocking impact of the events, Weber showed signs of regaining his full strength, being able to give a full course, and also getting ready to publish properly his work: to re-edit the *Protestant Ethic* in a book format, and start the publication of his works on religious sociology. In the Spring of 1920, he stated several times that he felt to possess the energy he had decades ago. (75) It was at that moment that his efforts were cut short by his death.

### 3. Foucault

The dilemma in which Michel Foucault's intellectual life and work were caught since the start was the same as Weber's: he could not teach and write whatever was dictated by professional standards and obligations, but only what he firmly and personally believed in. (76) Just as Nietzsche or Weber, Foucault took knowledge and truth as extremely serious matters; and just like Shakespeare or Nietzsche, his life and work were not separated, but were fuelling each other. This made him realise, right after graduation, that he could not engage upon the career of a professional teacher of philosophy. He therefore got some other degrees, and took up relatively odd jobs until 1970. In that year, he suddenly became promoted to a chair of the *Collège de France*. Due to his high, mostly academic sponsors, he jumped over the whole hierarchy, arriving suddenly at the top. (77) This was the moment, one could say, when the burden of all external obligations and duties



vanished for him forever; when his work should have settled down, and driven on without obstacles. And yet, this was the moment when lost direction, and belief in himself. (78)

The review of his own work, required by the candidature, (79) and the public lectures he had to give only underlined this crisis. Already in his famous inaugural lecture, he mentioned a difficulty to talk. (80) There, he solved this dilemma by referring to the unseen presence of his predecessor, Jean Hyppolite. (81) But he soon realised that the trouble was deeper, located in himself. Just at the moment when he was given the chance of free public speech, he lost the ability to talk. The result was that he gave up control over his work, and converted to the role of the spokesman of the oppressed. He tried not to become identical with the fashionable versions of Marxism, Maoism, and critical theory, but only ended up doing the same thing, perhaps with much more consistency, and even more radicalism. While Weber wasted his time in a military hospital, in private lawsuits, and in trying to become a member of the parliament, Foucault championed the otherwise noble cause of the right of prisoners. Both have forgotten about the Nietzschean warning against choosing the easy road of pity; a lapse of memory that only points out the seriousness of the intellectual crisis and the uncertainty about themselves they all shared in the respective moments of their life.

Foucault's Dantean wondering in the underworld came to an end around the mid-1970s. In the first lecture he gave in 1976, he was drawing a critical picture of his past five years of works, finding refuge only in the contribution it had to actual, on-going struggles. (82) But the radicalism of post-1968 was soon over, and Foucault had to realise that there were more important things to accomplish in his life. He wanted to break away from his audience, from the topics that preoccupied his work in the early 1970's. He reorganised the time-schedule of his lectures in 1976, (83) suspended them altogether in 1977, reorganised the whole course of 1978 after the fourth lecture, and failed to deliver the promised course on bio-politics in both 1979 and 1980, discussing quite different topics instead. In 1976, he announced a new



project on the history of sexuality, a topic that was most personal, and even central to his whole life, and escaped into a proposed six-volume project, in order to justify for himself the suspension of his course of 1977. Finally, he reorganised his whole work, shifting its emphasis, in a series of displacements between 1980 and 1983, first to early Christianity, then to the first centuries of the Roman Empire, and finally to the crisis of Athenian democracy and the Socratic moment in philosophy.

He was working all by himself, on himself, and after the publication of the Introductory volume of the sexuality project that he considered a double failure, in terms of content and effects on audience, he failed to publish anything for years. The depth of this crisis, of this desperate attempt to come to terms with his own work and the problem that was its moving force, was reached in 1979, after ending his course in April. After two obituaries written on the occasion of the death of a colleague and friend, Maurice Clavel, for half a year he even failed to publish his usual short journalistic pieces. He was intensely preoccupied with suicide; in April 1979, he even wrote a short piece on just this topic. (84) Everything seemed to draw to a collapse.

And yet, at this very moment, he succeeded to escape the crisis, by externalising it, with the help of accidents. When invited to give a lecture in California, he met two American scholars, Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, who were just working on a book on Foucault. This led him to re-think and re-read his own earlier work, to reflect upon them, reinforcing the earlier, less resolute and scattered attempts. (85) This external impact made him able to detach himself from the analysis of contemporary governmentality and bio-power, to take up the suggestions of his friend, Paul Veyne, and re-organise his project towards antiquity. (86) After the lectures given in 1980 on early Christianity, of which there are not even traces in the well-known presentations given in October 1979 in Stanford, (87) he was finally able, even if not to publish, but at least write a manuscript - this is what was to become eventually the fourth, unpublished volume of the history of sexuality-project, *Les Aveux de la chair*. And this,



finally, in the form of an introduction, gave him the occasion to do a coherent review of his whole work. (88)

With this, Foucault was on his way to recovery. He was still weak and uncertain, and longed for a change of identity. (89) For a time, he only published anonymously, or appeared in public when asked by friends he could not refuse. (90) But, step by step, he pulled himself out of the hole he ended up being, to a large extent due to his own earlier mistakes. The lectures given between 1980 and 1983 are all stages in a breath-taking intellectual development. In each year, Foucault's thinking is gaining depth. His ideas are on a roll, and, slowly overcoming the earlier self-doubts, he is engaged in a project of writing a certain kind of book of books: not the book that gives all the answers, but the one that opens up all the questions. (91) Though treating different topics, the lectures have a fundamental coherence: they are all focusing on the central problem of Foucault's work, discovered through these exercises of self on self, and defined as the study of the links between truth and subjectivity. (92) This whole progression is marked by new manuscripts written at the end of each course. Though these are not yet ready for publication, each of them is accompanied by new versions of the Preface, new ways of summarising his former work and defining his problem, that usually serve as starting points for the course of the next year. (93)

The decisive moment comes in the first lecture in 1983. There are three points showing that Foucault has completed the circle around himself, his project gained its final focus and equilibrium, though not in the sense of coming to a rest - rather, exactly due the contrary. First, he begins the lecture by stating that the course will only be concerned with taking up some points left untied in the previous twelve years. The form of the lecture repeats that of the first lecture of 1976. Foucault is again taking a step back with respect to all the work he did before at the *Collège de France*. But the content is the opposite: instead of acknowledging a failure, he implies coherence. Second, the major part of the lecture contains an analysis of Kant's *What Is Enlightenment*, a text that was

crucial for Foucault, and that he was yet unable to analyse so far in a wide public. (94) Third, the title of the course contains a peculiar word, *parrhesia*. It is defined by Foucault as the free and courageous telling of the truth, and most of the course deals with this tradition in different branches of ancient thought. (95) But the major point is that it is with this concept that Foucault was able to pin down not simply the problem guiding his concrete research, but also the problem that was behind the major turns of his life: his inability to teach philosophy in 1948, or his difficulties with speech at the *Collège de France* in 1970, and at the same time the problem never solved explicitly by Weber, and even Nietzsche: the way in which any serious and honest intellectual work is at the same time a publication of the self, a work by the self on the self, and finally an act of telling the truth about others and implicitly about the self. These were the three themes on which Foucault was working in the *Collège de France* between 1980 and 1984; themes that were on the one hand extremely personal, but one the other enabled Foucault to address and reformulate some of the most fundamental points of modernity, and of all intellectual work.

In this period, the topic of sexuality, apart from the lectures of 1981, perhaps the least interesting of all five, was a marginal concern for Foucault. In 1982-83, he was seriously considering rearranging the order of publication of his works, to publish outside the sexuality project, (96) realising that the problem of sexuality was only an external conditions making his research possible, and not the central topic. It was just at that moment that he was told that he has little time left, and had to reorganise all his plans again. (97) As he had to make the most of the little time that was left to him, he decided to complete the sexuality project, by bringing in as much material from the 1982 lectures as it was possible to do; to keep the 1984 lectures he wanted to postpone in order to finish his book, in order to present at least in speech some of the ideas that most preoccupied him at the period; and with the Introduction to *L'Usage des plaisirs* to summarise, with artistic precision and perfection, interweaving, as far as it was necessary, material belonging to Acknowledgement, Preface,



and Introduction, the results of the long series of works on his previous works that were done, with such a crucial effect, between 1980 and 1983. (98) A point must be emphasised in the strongest possible terms: sexuality was not in the centre of Foucault's late work, does not give access to his most important late ideas, and the fact that this and only this became published is due to the combination of his wish to meet promises made earlier, and the need to make the most out of the available material, once he knew that not much time was left to him. (99)

It is only by reading through all the unpublished manuscripts, listening through the tapes of the lectures given at the Collège de France that one can realise to what extent it is true that the life of Foucault, just as that of Weber, ended just at the moment when they were gaining or re-gaining their highest creative potential. (100) One could say that the years wasted in the service of different causes and the lack of knowledge about the proper techniques of self in due time weighed exceptionally heavily on both of them. Nietzsche became mad when realising the potential opened up in a world where God was dead by these techniques originating in Antiquity, and transmitted through Christianity; Weber and Foucault, in spite of their reliance on Nietzsche, needed almost to rediscover them, and did so all too late.

Foucault had the same dream as Shakespeare about waiving farewell to his audience, revealing that in this relationship, the mighty Prospero only played the role of the fragile Ariel, and retire to his county house. (101) Only, it was not given to him to make a reality out of this dream.

### A last remark

At this point, we can return to the starting sentence of the paper: the surprising claim about Nietzsche's method. Hopefully, both the analysis of Nietzsche late works and their application have shown that genealogy is in fact a method; it is even in a strict sense a technique that can be applied by almost anyone in his or her own

work. But, undoubtedly, the meaning of both words are displaced when applied to genealogy. It is certainly not a method or a technique in the sense of giving tools for objective research. Rather, genealogical method is a technique of self. Whoever is applying it to solve uncertainties concerning one's own project and at the same time to increase creative potential has to accept the possible risk of transforming his or her own subjectivity in the process.



## Notes

- (1) This paper is a chapter from a book in progress, entitled 'Nietzsche, Weber, Foucault: In Search of a Problem'. It benefits a lot from discussions with participants of my seminar at the European University Institute, particularly Monica Greco, Sebastian Rinken, and Stefan Rossbach. In its revision, a seminar paper by Stefan Rossbach entitled 'The Author's Care of Himself: On Nietzsche, Foucault, and Luhmann', part of his Ph.D. project entitled 'The Autopoiesis of International Relations' proved to be most useful and reinforcing.
- (2) See for e.g. Jacques Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles* (The University of Chicago Press, 1979); and Michael Allen Gillespie and Tracy B. Strong (eds) *Nietzsche's New Seas: Explorations in Philosophy, Aesthetics, and Politics* (The University of Chicago Press, 1988).
- (3) For the most often quoted work, see 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', in Paul Rabinow (ed), *The Foucault Reader* (N.Y., Pantheon, 1984). However, there are two problems here. First, the translation of the paper is far from being perfect, rendering especially the last paragraphs obscure and incomprehensible in English. Second, though this text is usually revered as the last word and key to Foucault's relationship to Nietzsche, (for a recent example, see Leslie Paul Thiele, 'The agony of politics: the Nietzschean roots of Foucault's thought', *American Political Science Review* 84 (1990), 3: 907-925, that on p. 915 simply repeats the standard arguments of the literature) it is in fact the product of very peculiar period in Foucault's life, and by no means exhausts Foucault's methodological reliance upon Nietzsche, not to say Nietzsche's method. For some important late remarks, see 'The Return of Morality', in Lawrence D. Kritzman (ed), *Politics, Philosophy, Culture* (Routledge, London, 1988).
- (4) For studies on Weber and Nietzsche, see Wilhelm Hennis, 'The Traces of Nietzsche in the Work of Max Weber', in Hennis, 1988; Robert Eden *Political Leadership and Nihilism: A Study of Weber and Nietzsche* (Gainesville, Florida, 1984), and 'Weber and Nietzsche', in W. Mommsen and J. Osterhammel (eds.), *Max Weber and his Contemporaries* (London, Allen, 1987); David Owen, 'Autonomy and 'inner distance': a trace of Nietzsche in Weber', in: *History of the Human Sciences*, 1991, 1:81-91; and Colin Gordon, 'The Soul of the Citizen: Max Weber and Michel Foucault on Rationality and Government', in: Scott Lash and Sam Whimster (eds.), *Max Weber, Rationality and Modernity* (London, Allen, 1987).
- (5) In an unpublished interview, Foucault stated that "si Nietzsche m'intéresse, c'est dans la mesure où Nietzsche a été pour



Weber absolument déterminant, même si en général on ne le dit pas". See 'A propos de Nietzsche, Habermas, Arendt, MacPherson', April 1983 conversation at Berkely; Foucault Archives, D 250 (8), p.14. This may be an overstatement, explaining why it remained unpublished, but the possibility of such an overstatement having been made is important. Also, in the lectures given at the *Collège de France* between 1980 and 1984, Weber's work was one of the few recurrent and important points of reference. These lectures are unpublished, but can be consulted in tape in the Foucault Archives at the *Bibliothèque de Saulchoir* in Paris. For the permission to use the Archives, I am grateful for the Centre Michel Foucault.

(6) See *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979 [1975]); *The History of Sexuality, Vol. One: The Will to Knowledge* (New York, Vintage Books, 1980 [1976]); and Colin Gordon (ed), *Power/ Knowledge: Selected interviews and Other Writings by Michel Foucault, 1972-1977*, (Brighton, Harvester Press, 1980).

(7) See, for e.g., its explicit acknowledgement at the beginning of the first lecture given in 1976 (see Colin Gordon (ed), *Power/ Knowledge*, pp. 78-79), and also the often cited 'Truth and Power' interview, whose almost every word, referring to Foucault's own trajectory, is incorrect (*ibid.*, pp. 109-111.).

(8) For perhaps the first such example, see J. Miller, 'Some Implications of Nietzsche's Thought for Marxism', *Telos*, no.37 (1978).

(9) See Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Univ of Chicago Press, 1982), p.106.

(10) See Jeffrey Minson, *Genealogies of Morals: Nietzsche, Foucault, Donzelot and the Eccentricity of Ethics* (London, Macmillan, 1985), which is weak on precise methodological analysis, rather motivated by an attempt to re-vitalise socialist project; and Thiele, 'The agony of politics', 1990, where the topic is politics and struggle.

(11) For e.g. in the important Fifth Book of the *Gay Science*, published in 1887, there are four crucial sections about origins, (No-s 348, 349, 353, 355) discussing some of Nietzsche's key ideas on history, yet there is no use of the word "genealogy".

(12) See the Preface to the *Genealogy of Morals*, section 8.

(13) For e.g., it was so widely asserted that this was Nietzsche's key work that Walter Kaufmann even took issue with it, and tried to reevaluate Nietzsche's last writings.

(14) Such prefaces were written for the *The Birth of Tragedy*, separately for the two volumes of *Human, All-too Human*, for *Daybreak*, and for the *Gay Science*; only the *Untimely Mediations* were left out.



(15) Nietzsche finished the last Preface (to *Gay Science*) in the Fall of 1886, which included new material in the Fifth Book, from earlier notebooks, and followed with the Preface to the *Genealogy of Morals* in July 1887.

(16) I have not yet encountered any comprehensive, serious attempts to treat and analyse the Prefaces together. A section of a recently published article does contain a short and interesting analysis of the Prefaces, but putting the emphasis on the middle period of Nietzsche, therefore leaving out the Preface to the *Birth of the Tragedy* altogether. See Howard Caygill, 'Affirmation and eternal return in the Free-Spirit Trilogy', in Keith Ansell-Pearson (ed) *Nietzsche and Modern German Thought* (London, Routledge, 1991). In 1992, for the first time, they have been published together as *Tentativo di autocritica, 1886-1887* (Genova, Il Melangolo, 1992), but the emphasis is on their relevance for style, not method.

(17) This is certainly true for Christianity, the main topic of the book - one should only recall the several instances of the New Testament. For e.g., see Matthew 5:46-8, 8:22, 12:46-9, and esp. 10:35. One could even risk to say that this was the target of Jesus: to destroy and replace traditional social order, based on genealogical relations; even if he was also obliged to make many explicit and implicit compromises.

(18) Nietzsche states here that the third section is an example about how to decipher an aphorism. This is, of course, true, but is far from being the whole story.

(19) As an indication, let me refer to one of the bests, the classic work of Deleuze, that starts with the following sentence: "Le projet le plus général de Nietzsche consiste en ceci: introduire en philosophie les concepts de sens et de valeur." (Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche et la philosophie*, Paris: P.U.F., 1962, p.1.). Incidentally, Deleuze has this tendency to start his works with such loaded, unequivocal sentences. The concluding section to his 1986 book entitled *Foucault* starts with the following sentence: "Le principe général de Foucault est: toute forme est un composé de rapports de forces." (Paris, Minuit, p.131). Apart from the fact that I do not agree with any of these statements, the problem is that it immediately defines and limits the project of Deleuze as an imposed interpretation.

(20) A short counterposing of Durkheim and Weber may help to illustrate this point. Sociology, we are told, is built on the common points between these two major thinkers. Yet, their best known books, that on a first look share a number of similarities, start in a fundamentally different way. Durkheim starts *Suicide* with stating the necessity to give an objective definition of the topic,



while Weber spends the whole first part of the *Protestant Ethic* trying to specify his problem.

(21) This can be contrasted to the similar terminology in *Schopenhauer as educator*. There Nietzsche is using, in somewhat pejorative sense, the word *Gelehrten*, i.e. "learned" men. The difference does not appear clearly in the English translations ("men of learning" vs "men of knowledge"). See in *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge University Press, 1983), p.169.

(22) Even the word "commitment" is misleading here, as that would assume as if Nietzsche would exists "outside" his will to knowledge, while the point is that his whole being is identical with this search.

(23) See Nietzsche's comments against the lovers of the question mark in *Beyond Good and Evil*.

(24) For an attack against such concerns from the perspective of modern historiography, see Marc Bloch on "L'idole des origines", in his *Apologie pour l'histoire ou métier d'historien* (Armand Colin, Paris, 1974), pp. 37-41.

(25) This point is valid for the reconstructions of trajectory done in all the Prefaces.

(26) This concept is elaborated later in the notes published as *Will to Power*, where *will to knowledge* is defined as a form of the *will to power*.

(27) For a definition, see section 4 of the late Preface to the *Gay Science* on the "Egyptian" search and unveiling that is reprinted in toto in the end of *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, Nietzsche's last published work, and also *Gay Science*, 343.

(28) It is after Kant that these two aspects of "criticism" have been separated. One line of thinkers continued to renew the concern with the "true" Kantian sense of "criticism". This is true for the different neo-Kantian schools, Russell and analytical philosophy, and logical positivism. On the other hand, there are the different branches of critical theories or critiques of society, decrying the concern with the truth of statements or the "linguistic turn". This whole opposition can be summed up by two words, Vienna and Frankfurt, casting a large shadow of almost all aspects of intellectual development since WWII - paradoxically, both referring to scholars who exerted their most important influence as exiles. Two problems about this separation should be mentioned here. On the one hand, all versions of neo-Kantianism forgot to be concerned with questions of being, its different possible and existing modes and forms, relegating it to the realm of metaphysics. On the other hand, critical theories suffered from two fundamental defects. First, they based their methodology on Hegel, when - as this Chapter wants to prove - this, concerning the difference it made with respect to Kant, has been completed





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digested and superseeded by Nietzsche. Second, directly following from the deficiencies of Hegel's dialectics, critical theorists got the link between Hegel and Kant wrong. They interpreted Hegel as fully superseding Kant, and not as a partial displacement within his general thought, and therefore, following Marx, fell back to a pre-Kantian epistemological stance. This can be seen for example in the reflection-theory of Lukács, according to which all theoretical concepts and works of art are and should be evaluated solely as reflections or representations of "reality". The point is reinforced by the recent, fervent reappraisal of Kant, widespread among former Marxist or critical theorists.

(29) The point is that professional expertise has no access to its own taken for granted assumptions. When such assumptions are embedded in reality, this deficiency does not appear at the pragmatic level. However, when the frameworks of reality are different, professional expertise becomes either meaningless, or a simple tool for social engineering. The latter occasionally may even be useful or necessary, but professional knowledge cannot say when and how.

(30) Even the language used is the same. Thus, Chicago and supply-side economists asserted already from the mid-1980s that the problem was not with their theories, but with Reagan, who did not apply their theories fully.

(31) This point is close to the well-known metaphor of Quine about repairing a ship on the sea: it is possible to change some of its components, but not all at the same time.

(32) It is this perspective that gives us access to understanding the current situation, the depth of the problems of East-Central Europe. The problem is not simply the "legacy of communism", but of a deep-seated, pervasive "hostility to life".

(33) In this operation, the role of Schopenhauer was crucial for Nietzsche; the acknowledgements given both in the *Untimely Meditations* and Section Five are well-deserved. Hegel and Schopenhauer tried to treat respectively the two major lacunas in Kant's system: change (dialectics) and introspection (ascesis). Nietzsche brought their points together in a way that rendered both of them (though not Kant) obsolete.

(34) To illustrate this method of "partial opposites", let's take the example of a computer that, instead of zeros and ones, works with negative and positive values. The method of Nietzsche is to take some of these values and switch them to the opposite. The basic points of this technique are the following. First, only a few such values are changed; second, there, however, the change is complete, and not gradual; but third, even so, the whole structure, in the sense of the elements, the building blocks, the forms of this



structure remain unchanged. It is a series of such changes that eventually build up a brand new system or global structure.

(35) This recalls Nietzsche's often repeated caveat about the importance of keeping silent long enough. As we shall see in the application, a lack of willingness or opportunity to do so created fundamental problems for both Weber and Foucault.

(36) This is a point like all points about Nietzsche's "genealogy": they are difficult enough to decode and understand, but even more difficult to follow. There are only too many "Nietzschean" and "Foucauldian" theorists and researchers who are professing to follow some or other aspects of the genealogical methods, but who establish their identity by writing and publication, and do not tolerate different readings. This is a temptation that is around everyone, in each and every single act of writing and talking, and most of the time can only be corrected ex post - when the stakes of admitting mistakes are already too high.

(37) In *Schopenhauer as Educator*, first published in 1874, twelve years before the late Prefaces, Nietzsche poses the following question: "But how can we find ourselves again? How can man know himself?", and lists a few lines below, after discussing the difficulties and dangers of the whole issue, as possible tools, "our memory and that which we do not remember, our books and our handwriting". Here, however, he claims to have found a better method: "Your true educators and formative teachers reveal to you what the true basic material of your being is". (p. 129). Needless to say, later Nietzsche overcame this view - though to reach this state, he had to go through it. This explains why Nietzsche did not feel it necessary to reprint again the *Untimely Meditations* in 1886, even if he republished both earlier and later works. This is elaborated in the relevant sections of *Ecce Homo*.

(38) Philosophers do not need to establish their own tradition, and often pour scorn on the social sciences making such a fuzz about the "classics" and the "origins" of the discipline. But this is only so because philosophers have Socrates, Plato and Aristotle as an everpresent reference point, not to mention authors closer to us like Hobbes, Descartes, Locke, or Kant. If one would take away only the names listed, philosophy would all but collapse immediately. This hypothetical situation is a real one in which innovators in the field of research related to society, politics, and culture often find themselves. As an example, let me only refer to the case of Dumézil, who in his last years gave a detailed account of his related troubles. See Georges Dumézil, *Entretiens avec Didier Eribon* (Paris, Gallimard, 1987), and *Mythes et dieux des indo-européens*, ed. by Hervé Coutau-Bégarie (Paris, Flammarion, 1992).



(39) In the late Preface to the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche himself said that he "spoiled" the Greek problem. It seems that he was not fully able to overcome this tendency or inclination even later.

(40) Needless to say, from the perspective of the method described in this chapter, there is no point in joining a post-modern, anti-Cartesian and anti-Husserlian reading of Nietzsche.

(41) The three categories described here correspond to the three types of verbs, related to states of existence, events, and activities.

(42) See one of the most important articles of the Hungarian thinker István Bibó, 'A német politikai hisztéria okai and története' (The causes and history of the German political hysteria), in: *Válogatott tanulmányok* (Selected studies), Budapest, Magvető, 1986 [1945]. Unfortunately, Nietzsche conflated his analysis of Christianity and contemporary Germany.

(43) This idea of problem- and conflict escaping is taken from Agnes Horváth: *Konfliktus nélküli terület: az államérdek politikai diskurzusai Magyarországon* (Area without conflict: the political discourses of reason of state in Hungary). Manuscript, April 1993.

(44) In fact, "criticism" in the original sense (*diacrisis* in Greek, *discretio* in Latin) meant just this faculty of separation. The history of the links and separation of criticism and judgment, and the way in which this is connected to the curious loss of this power in modern societies (leading to the desperate search for objective methods), and finally how all this is linked to the crucial distinction between the "private" and the "public" (the neglect of privacy is an "indiscretion"; however, this meaning of "discretion" is relatively new, dates from the 18th century, replacing the earlier meaning, which was the ability to distinguish, thus was connected to the self, and not to the others) would be a fascinating topic that cannot be pursued here.

(45) Taking Nietzsche's point further, it is possible to make some points about contemporary East European and Western societies. Nietzsche's diagnosis about "hostility to life" does have a large degree of validity in both cases, though in different manners. In East Europe - not simply as a result of Communism, but of whole centuries of "parasitic" relationship to the West - an extremely dangerous situation of complete inability to distinguish and to solve problems emerged. In the West, on the surface, things look completely opposite. This is a civilisation that seemingly became able to solve all the problems it encounters, where problem-solving and pragmatism became its very philosophy of life. However, there is a paradox even here. Perhaps because of its pragmatism and because of the importance attributed to problem-solving, individuals are not left to actually solve the problems themselves, by their own strength and ingenuity, but are provided with ready-made models of action at each and every



step; and the strength of character, its composure and unity is not measured by the way one is actually making distinctions and solving the problems, but the way one takes up and identifies with such models as his own. To use medical language, one can say that Western societies immunise their members against the possibility that they may not be able to solve their problems; while East-European societies have become immunised against this immunisation. The Western case leaves us with the possibility that once one has learned his way around in society, may step outside the masks or the normalising techniques and, without leaving the broad horizon, compose himself. The trick here that this requires partly the same solution of "stepping outside" the official powers that was necessary in non-modern societies to realise an autonomous, sovereign existence, while modern society claims that it actually does realise such a possibility on a mass scale (this, of course, does not make sense, as it is a contradiction in terms); but the situation is still obviously not the same, because social order in modern societies does not (or no longer does) apply the kind of violent methods exercised elsewhere.

(46) It is all the more surprising that Foucault did not refer to this section in his famous methodological article on Nietzsche.

(47) "I had reasons to look about me for scholarly, bold, and industrious comrades (I am still looking)." p.21.

(48) Note that this will be immediately denied in the first sections of Essay One.

(49) It is this aspect of genealogy that will be taken over by the Foucault of the 1970s, and not the much more important section 6.

(50) But this necessarily includes the investigator himself, whose alone-ness is only a matter of degree, and not a complete difference. This is the way the spirit of Nietzsche can be used against some of his late words.

(51) Foucault's studies of bio-power in 1975-76 are at once attempts to excavate this connection and show the extent to which Nietzsche himself was caught in it.

(52) This is an effect of Freud. The aim of Freud was to depenalise sexuality, its inclinations; to eliminate the guilty feelings individuals had about themselves concerning wishes, desires, and dreams over which they did not have a conscious control. But the effects were broader than that. The idea that one has no control over his sexual desires and should not "repress" them promoted irresponsibility and the devaluing of the possibility of an ethical conduct of life. The ambivalences of this issue are well reflected by Marianne Weber's biography of Max Weber, especially if read together with the Introduction by Günther Roth.



- (53) In revising these paragraphs, I was helped by the nearly completed dissertation project of Veronica Munoz Dardé on fraternity.
- (54) The term "structure" is used here in the sense of Dumézil, and not Lévi-Strauss.
- (55) See *The Order of Things*. Perhaps one day the same thing will be said about Habermas and Foucault.
- (56) One could again evoke Elias here - to talk about the brotherhood of mankind today in the West is like instructing adults about eating habits. The arrangement may not be perfect, but the working of the idea is assumed.
- (57) Perhaps this is the reason why Nietzsche calls them "genealogists", even if they use the term "moral philosophers".
- (58) See the *Birth of Tragedy*, p. 60: "Knowledge kills action; action requires the veils of illusion: this is the doctrine of Hamlet".
- (59) See for e.g. the way the concept of "natural rights" is at the center of the controversy since the 17th century - as it has recently reemerged in debates in the history of political thought.
- (60) See Letter 32, 'On Progress', and also Letter 52, 'On choosing our teachers', in *Seneca in ten volumes, vol. 4., Epistulae Morales* (London, Heinemann, 1979).
- (61) This concept, taken from Tertullian, was central for Foucault's 1980 lectures at the *Collège de France*. See also 'Sexuality and Solitude', *London Review of Books*, 21 May-3 June 1981.
- (62) Particular uncertainty remains with the dating of *Troilus and Cressida*.
- (63) See G. B. Harrison, *Introducing Shakespeare* (Penguin, 1966), pp. 164-5, and Germaine Greer, *Shakespeare* (Oxford Univ Press, 1986).
- (64) Since the 17th century, it is a recurrent idea of Shakespeare scholarship that Shakespeare was a "natural" talent, without much erudition or consciousness about what he was doing. For a recent example, see Greer, p.5: "An essential aspect of the mind and art of Shakespeare ... is his lack of self-consciousness". However, as the arguments of this paper make it plain, such an idea does not even make sense, and is based on a fundamental misconception of his age, a period that was termed the age of neo-stoicism (See Gerhard Oestreich, *Neostoicism and the early modern state*; Cambridge University Press, 1982). Shakespeare's references to nature should not be taken as early examples of romanticism. His views on nature owe much more to Seneca's idea of *natura*: the external world obeys rational laws, and its knowledge can help us to behave rationally, by taking a proper care of the self. About this, see Foucault's 1982 lectures at the *Collège de France*, especially 17 February.



(65) For a recent and most thought-provoking example, see Ted Hughes, *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being* (London, Faber and Faber, 1992).

(66) For e.g. a recent study of the play starts with the following statement: "*Troilus and Cressida* is Shakespeare's most puzzling work"; see Peter Hyland, *Shakespeare: Troilus and Cressida* (London, Penguin, 1989), For overviews, see Priscilla Martin (ed), *Shakespeare: Troilus and Cressida* (London, Macmillan, 1976), and Kenneth Palmer (ed), *Troilus and Cressida* (London, Methuen, 1982). Another fact neglected so far is that this play has a Preface. Though it is generally doubted that it has been written by Shakespeare, this would be worth paying more attention.

(67) The claim is not that talent is not required, but that it is only a necessary, and not sufficient condition for creativity.

(68) The desire for peace was also a central element in the thoughts of Christian humanists like More, Erasmus, or Vives, in the early 16th century. The difference is that for Shakespeare, Abbé St Pierre, and later Saint-Simon, it was not just a wish, but a definite vision of the future.

(69) See the two main speeches by Ulysses (i.iii) and Hector (ii.ii), in the two major counsel scenes.

(70) See the famous discussion of reason of state by Ulysses (iii.iii), quoted for e.g. by Meinecke in his classic work on *raison d'état*; see Friedrich Meinecke, *Machiavellism: The Doctrine of Raison d'état and its Place in Modern History* (London, Routledge, 1957).

(71) For e.g., the speech by Ulysses referred to above is introduced by the information Ulysses, as a representative of the state, gathered about the private love affairs of Achilles, to the great surprise of the latter.

(72) For this, and most other facts about Weber's life, see Marianne Weber: *Max Weber: A Biography* (Oxford, Transaction Books, 1988 [1926]). I must also acknowledge the profound influence the work of Wilhelm Hennis (see note 4) exerted on some of these arguments.

(73) This analysis builds upon the on-going dissertation project of Monica Greco. For the main thesis, see 'Psychosomatic Subjects and the "Duty to Be Well": Personal agency within medical rationality', forthcoming in *Economy and Society*, 1993.

(74) See the *Critique of Stammer* (N.Y. The Free Press, 1977 [1906]), and *Roscher and Knies: The Logical Problems of Historical Economics* (N.Y. The Free Press, 1975 [1903-06]), both translated by Guy Oakes, who also provided them with useful introductions.

(75) Thus, in the Spring of 1920, he said that "'I am working the way I did thirty years ago, I have an abundance of ideas.'" See Marianne Weber, 1988, p. 687.



(76) Recently, much is made of Foucault's homosexuality, used — sometimes to explain the content and relevance of his work. However, in my view, it only matters in enabling him to make a distance from what others took for granted, and has no impact on the content of his ideas. Everything else belongs to the tragic story of one of the greatest thinkers (and perhaps even human beings) of this century, who has never been able in his private life to get over the deprivations he suffered due to his repressed homosexuality in his youth. For recent and crucial biographical material, see Hervé Guibert, *À l'ami qui ne m'a pas sauvé la vie* (Paris, Gallimard, 1991), which is a novel, but the character 'Muzil' is a faithful rendition of Foucault; Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard U.P., 1991); and James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (N.Y., Simon and Schuster, 1992). I have not yet been able to consult Miller. See also Alan Ryan, 'Foucault's Life and Hard Times', *The New York Review of Books* 40 (1993), 7:12-17, a fair review of the three books.

(77) Thus, for e.g., on the occasion, Georges Dumézil, who was abroad at that time, wrote several letters in support of Foucault's candidature, stating that ""Attention, ne laissez pas passer le génie."" See Georges Dumézil, *Entretiens avec Didier Eribon* (Paris, Gallimard, 1987), p.217.

(78) Foucault spends 1967-69 with re-thinking his own method. The original aim is to make it clear for others. In fact, it leads to a questioning of self. For an example of his self-doubts, see 'Politics and the Study of Discourse', in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality, with two lectures by and an interview with Michel Foucault*, ed. by Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), which alludes to months spent in meditation on the question concerning the potential impact of his work, related to the fear of being enclosed in the ivory tower of pure intellectual games.

(79) This is contained in the second French edition of Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault* (Paris, Flammarion, 1991), and remained unpublished in English.

(80) See *L'ordre du discours* (Paris, Gallimard, 1971), pp. 7-8.

(81) *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.

(82) Colin Gordon (ed), *Power/ Knowledge*, pp. 79-81.

(83) This has been left out of the English edition, but is contained in *Difendere la società* (Firenze, Ponte alle Grazie, 1990), pp.19-20.

(84) See 'Un plaisir si simple', *Gai Pied* no.1, April 1979.

(85) See, for e.g., two interviews in the collection edited by Colin Gordon: 'Truth and Power' (June 1976), and 'The History of Sexuality' (December 1976); an absolutely crucial interview given in March 1977, where the English version just on this point is



misleading; (see 'Power and Sex', *Telos* no.32, Summer 1977, p.157, and for the original, 'Non au sexe roi', *Le Nouvel Observateur* no. 644, March 12, 1977, p.105); and the end of the third lecture of the 1978 course at the Collège de France, given in 25 January.

(86) Paul Rabinow tells the story that when they first met, Foucault called them, with a smile, "mes assassins"; see 'Recollection', in *University Publishing*, Summer 1984, p.16. Their intervention became instead, in a playful relation with the analytic of finitude, a central concept of Foucault's *The Order of Things*, and the book of Dreyfus and Rabinow, a source of life.

(87) See 'Omnes et Singulatim: Towards a Criticism of 'Political Reason'', in S. M. McMurrin (ed.) *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 1981). It should be pointed out that two other thinkers exerted a considerable influence on Foucault's 1980 course: Goffman, especially with *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*; and Elias with *The Court Society*.

(88) This was published anonymously in France, as Maurice Florence, 'Foucault', in: *Dictionnaire des philosophes* (Paris, PUF, 1984), and translated as "(Auto)biography", in *History of the Present*, 1988, no.4.

(89) See Hervé Guibert, 1991, pp. 24-25.

(90) See *ibid.*, 26-27; also, until well into 1981, his only publications were two discussions where he remained anonymous, and a few other discussions and prefaces reflecting earlier obligations.

(91) See Hervé Guibert, 1991, pp. 37-38. Therefore, due to the central importance of the lectures Foucault gave at the *Collège de France* in his last period, all writings in the huge secondary literature that do not have some kind of first-hand knowledge of and in-depth work on the last Foucault are of very limited value. For the few exceptions, see the works of James Bernauer, Hubert Dreyfus, Colin Gordon, Paul Rabinow, and John Rajchman. For a path-breaking study that is only available in Spanish, but is being translated into French, see Maité Larrauri, 'Verdad y racionalidad en Michel Foucault', Ph. D. dissertation, University of Valencia, 1990.

(92) For some of the clearest statements, see the first lecture of 1981, given in 6 January; 'The ethic of care for the self as a practice of freedom', in James Bernauer and David Rasmussen (eds), *The Final Foucault* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1988), interview given in 20 January 1984; and 'The Return of Morality', in Kritzman (ed), 1988, interview given in 29 May, 1984, four days before Foucault's collapse.



(93) An example is the 'Intended Preface to the History of Sexuality', in Rabinow (ed), *The Foucault Reader*, used in the first lecture of 1983.

(94) Due to its fundamental importance for understanding Foucault's work and his problem, and for methodological reasons concerning genealogy and the study of authors, a few sentences should be said on the trajectory of Foucault's analysis of this text. From circumstantial evidence, based on the important interview given in March 1977 (see note 85), it can be shown that Kant's text produced a significant effect, represented an experience for Foucault in early 1977. He first analysed the text in April 1978, in front of the same restricted audience of a philosophical association that first heard the 'What is Author' lecture in 1969, and in it, Foucault's first wish of anonymity. (See *Conférence inédite à la Société Française de Philosophie*, Foucault Archives, D 212). In the following years, the text has been mentioned, but not analysed in detail, in a number of publications. See 'Preface' to Georges Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological* (Boston, Riedel, 1978); 'Postface', in Michelle Perrot (ed), *L'impossible prison* (Paris, Seuil, 1980), written probably in 1978; 'Pour une morale de l'inconfort'; a review of a book by Jean Daniel, *Le Nouvel Observateur* no 754, 23 April 1979, pp.82-83; 'The Subject and Power', Afterword to Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, based on a lecture given in November 1981 at the USC; and 'Structuralism and Post-Structuralism', *Telos* no.55, Spring 1983, pp. 195-210, an interview given in May 1982. The first full-blown public presentation was in the first lecture of 1983 at the Collège de France, on 5 January. The second hour of this lecture, in a re-worked version, has been partially published as the first part of the essay 'What Is Enlightenment?', in Rabinow (ed), *The Foucault Reader*, pp. 32-38. Most of the transcript of the first hour of the lecture has been published in Foucault's life, in 31 May 1984, translated as 'Kant on Enlightenment and Revolution', *Economy and Society* 15 (1986), 1: 88-96. From the secondary literature, for an excellent analysis, that, however, does not cover some of the material, see Colin Gordon, 'Question, ethos, event: Foucault on Kant and Enlightenment', *Economy and Society* 15 (1986), 1: 71-87.

(95) The last two courses Foucault gave at the Collège de France, though are the most important, are the least known. This is partly due to the fact that Foucault failed to prepare even their outline, and are thus not included in the *Résumé des cours, 1970-82* (Paris, Juillard, 1989). For a carefully edited version of the seminars Foucault gave on parrhesia in 1983 in Berkeley, see 'Discourse and Truth: The Problematisation of Parrhesia', manuscript edited by Joseph Pearson; Foucault Archives, D213.

For a much less careful edition of parts of some of the 1983-84 lectures, see Ulrike Reuter *et al* (eds), *Das Wahrsprechen des Anderen* (Frankfurt, Materialis Verlag, 1988).

(96) See Eribon, 1991, p.319; see also the conversations with Dreyfus and Rabinow, 19 and 26 April 1983, in Foucault Archives, D 250 (5) and (9).

(97) See Hervé Guibert, 1991, pp. 32-33.

(98) The source of the idea about the instrumental use of the thought of mortality is the dissertation project of Sebastian Rinken, entitled 'The self vis-à-vis death: does AIDS make a difference?'.  
(99) As an indirect proof, whenever in the last interviews he was asked about sexuality, Foucault started his answer by stating how bored he became with the topic. This, usually but incorrectly, is assumed to hold only for the 1970's.

(100) For the clearest statement of the importance Foucault attributed to the unpublished lectures, see 'The ethic of care for the self as a practice of freedom', in Bernauer and Rasmussen (eds), 1988, p.1.

(101) Foucault in fact has bought an abbey near his home town. See Eribon, 1991.





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