

Genealogy: Nietzsche, Deleuze and Foucault

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Genealogy is a hermeneutical form of analysis and critique sprung from the mind of the German philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche. Unlike the Kantian critical theory of analysis, which focuses on logical consistencies and inconsistencies, genealogy instead looks at things through a historical lens and problematizes all that stands as an issue to one as well as to the development of humanity. Genealogy is a historical hermeneutical analysis and critique which is fundamentally anti-realist, anti-dialectical and against the ascetic ideal to thus test the theoretical and practical credibility of ideas and practices, end them through transformation and show new pathways towards the affirmation of life. Lastly, I would like to note that when I analyze Nietzsche's three essays I will give a very broad overview of their contents so as to give more time for Deleuze and Foucault.

Prior to the publication of *On the Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche did argue at times from a historical perspective due to his expertise in philology, though his analyses and critiques were still in need of development. During this pre-genealogy stage Nietzsche also mentioned earlier so called genealogies in the preface to the *On the Genealogy of Morals* section 4. These genealogies prior to Nietzsche's were dialectical and reestablished the current values and ideals of that time, most notably the notions of a single origin in which morality could be traced back to, and that the evolution of morality is a smooth gradual kind of evolution. In response to these prior genealogies and to the crisis which Nietzsche saw in both Christianity and humanistic atheism, *On the Genealogy of Morals* was written as a new method of analysis and critique, a bridge to becoming, and a polemic. In reading *On the Genealogy of Morals* one comes upon the preface and encounters the topology of the philosophical battlefield in which Nietzsche finds himself. Nietzsche is up against the all-too-scholarly so called genealogies which have dominated the times and which have failed in his eyes to properly analyze evolution (particularity in *On the Genealogy of Morals* the evolution of morals).

The first essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals* outlines two kinds of morality that Nietzsche sees as running through archaic to contemporary times, these two moralities: master and slave morality. The first essay, also, analyzes how a form of slave morality—the Christian tradition—conducted its insurrection over the dominant master morality of ancient times, thus establishing itself as the norm and propagating itself from generation to generation. Master morality “experiences itself as determining values; it does not need approval; it judges, ‘what is harmful to me is harmful in itself’; it knows itself to be that which first accords honor to things; it is value-creating” (Nietzsche 1886, p. 270). Nietzsche gives us hermeneutical examples of this value creation and meaning change in the first essay when he examines several languages and the etymology of their key moral terms. Putting his training as a philologist to good use, he derives the origins of German words such as *schlecht* (bad) and *schlicht* (simple) (Nietzsche 1887, I, 4). In his analysis, notions of good, strong or noble always ran parallel to that of bad, weak or common.

Slave morality on the other hand adopts “a pessimistic suspicion about the whole condition of man will find expression, perhaps a condemnation of man along with his condition,” and “essentially a morality of utility” (1886, p. 260). Nietzsche says that master morality is born from an affirmation of life, of one’s own environmental background that has provided the grounds for existence; master morality celebrates the animal vitality of people. Nietzsche is envisioning and defining the organism known as man as another kind of animal which roams freely exerting its strength over others, and not having any type of fundamental resentment of life. Animality also reflects to his notion of the unconscious, which is aggressive and needs to express itself upon the world.

In the exertion of their strength, proponents of master morality have been known to dominate other peoples by capturing them and forcing them under the rule of the masters. This is what Nietzsche calls the creation of societies. Part of this rule under the masters is to be bound by the masters’ ideals or what Nietzsche calls “nobler ideals” (1887, I, 8). These ideals are the expression and the exertion of strength and affirmation of life of the masters over the slaves. Nietzsche explains in the first essay that the masters did not think that they were doing any actual harm to the slaves in their form of treatment to them. The masters thought that they were doing good by making the slaves stronger through such harsh treatment so that slaves might come to affirm life as masters do. Their ideals would be bridges for their process of becoming stronger people. On the other hand, this was not the view of the slaves being treated as they were

under the rule of the masters, who later formed resentment towards life that would develop into hatred and dogmatism.

In the second essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals* that Nietzsche outlines even more the material and psychological conditions for slave morality when compared to the first essay in which it was a general overview to a certain extent. Slave morality comes about through resentment, and this resentment is a resentment of life when the animality of man is limited or denied the ability to express its aggression through an exertion of strength. It is here that we find those people who were rounded up in the first essay by those marauding masters, who then find themselves grouped together and forced into labor or fighting, in the creation societies. It is here too that these slaves find themselves in need of material necessities or wants that only the masters can provide. So, the slave makes a promise to fulfill a deed towards the master, and so for the slave to ensure a guarantee towards the master in case of non-payment, the slave puts up something which he or she still has some possession of such as freedom, a wife, a body part or one's life. At this moment was created the contractual relationship of a creditor and debtor and an early form of justice.

This early form of justice was not based upon modern ideas of morality. "Punishment was not exacted because the trouble-maker was held responsible for his action, that is, it was not exacted on the assumption that only the guilty man was to be punished" (1887 II, 4). Instead punishment arose from the creditor-debtor relationship as a way of repayment for pain ensued by another. Nietzsche gives us an example of a parent punishing its child for harm done. But for this to happen there must also be some form of measurement of pain so as to deal out the correct amount of punishment. Though it should be pointed out that throughout history and through various cultures this measuring process of pain and punishment has never been stable and has constantly changed.

During this process Nietzsche tells us that this is the point in which the animal known as man develops a memory, thinking, conscience, and a psychology. Man has a short memory much like other animals and in order for a memory to develop so that a slave may remember his/her promise to a master, pain is used. From this application of pain, Nietzsche tells us that a memory-a narrative of one's life-is formed, as well as the conscience. The conscience forms through memory as one internalizes the experience of the master, for example the master's voice, the master's body or presence when one is being punished. And when one has internalized the master and acts according to the master's rules without having being told or

punished, that is called responsibility. Man is now a domesticated animal, a trained animal.

In the third essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche comes full circle in describing the phenomena of the ascetic ideal from the second essay. He examines the meaning of ascetic ideals and performs a critique on the ascetic ideals of religion, particularly Christianity and science. Nietzsche explains that the meaning of ascetic ideals is to praise or affirm particular modes of existence, phenomenology and psychology. But ascetic ideals also present a challenge to humanity to overcome that ideal, and a challenge to other possible ideals.

As one goes along through the third essay composing *On the Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche claims that he backs up saying that science is not the antithesis of religion as it claims or shows itself to be through its work trying to prove the non-existence of god. In Nietzsche's hermeneutical analysis he explains that religion and science both adhere and complement ascetic ideals that search for an ideal objective world, strive to know its truths, practice self-denial in objectivity, and encourage us to anesthetize ourselves and the world through a set of practices of subjectivity and a use of language such as political correctness which all the more tames the language of critiques.

As time went on we find another philosopher who Nietzsche quite seriously and in one of his famous books which systematized Nietzsche analyzed genealogy, this is Deleuze.

Reading Deleuze's *Nietzsche & Philosophy* (1983), one comes to see an analysis of Nietzsche's genealogy. Deleuze focuses more on existential modes of being which he calls "forces," and the construction of meaning and how it is used in relation to those existential modes of being.

According to Deleuze, Nietzsche's genealogy it is not only a historical hermeneutical analysis, but a text through which we understand critique and evaluation in a more profound way. What we find within genealogy is the problem that values presuppose evaluations that point to an evaluator, and that evaluations presuppose values on the basis that things are given some sort of appraisal that tend to be seen as principles. But from this Deleuze says that to evaluate, to critique is to affirm one's differential element, that is, to affirm one's origin in the Nietzschean sense. Critique is that of an active mode of existence that plays an offensive position of attack and not revenge; attacking is "the natural aggression of a way of being" (Deleuze 1983, p. 3) in affirming one's origin. Deleuze also goes on to mention that:

Evaluation is defined as the differential element of corresponding values, an element which is both critical and creative. Evaluations, in essence, are not values but ways of being, modes of existence of those who judge and evaluate, serving as principles for the values on the basis of which they judge. This is why we always have the beliefs, feelings and thoughts that we deserve given our way of being or our style of life. There are things that can only be said, felt or conceived, values which can only be adhered to, on condition of "base" evaluation, "base" living and thinking. This is the crucial point; *high* and *low*, *noble* and *base*, are not values but represent the differential element from which the value of values themselves derives. (Deleuze 1983, p. 1-2)

Genealogy means both the value of origin and the origin of values. Genealogy is as opposed to absolute values as it is to relative or utilitarian ones. Genealogy signifies the differential element of values from which their value itself derives. Genealogy thus means thus means origin or birth, but also difference or distance in the origin. Genealogy means nobility and baseness, nobility and vulgarity, nobility and decadence in the origin. The noble and the vulgar, the high and the low-this is the truly genealogical and critical element. But, understood in this way, critique is also at its most positive. The differential element is both a critique of the value of values and the positive element of a creation. This is why critique is never conceived by Nietzsche as a *reaction* but as an *action*. (Deleuze 1983, p. 2-3)

Since we have touched upon the idea of values let us examine how a thing attains its value and meaning for us. Deleuze explains Nietzsche's idea of how a thing attains its sense through "force" (Deleuze 1983, p. 2). It is forces that appropriate, dominate things or express things. From this we now see phenomena not as appearances or apparitions but as signs or symptoms "which find [their] meaning in an existing force." (Deleuze 1983, p. 3) Deleuze mentions in his book that the history of a thing is created by the differing forces which have appropriated, dominated and exploited a thing, and with this is a notion of plurality which shows that there is always more than one force or one meaning in life. "The history of a thing, in general, is the succession of forces which take possession of it and the co-existence of the forces which struggle for possession. The same object, the same phenomenon, changes sense depending on the force which appropriates it. History is the variation of senses,..." (Deleuze 1983, p. 3). From this look at how a thing attains its meanings we now see that a thing or event has a multitude of meanings that shed light on the multitude of forces behind these meanings that construct a history of a thing, or *histories* of a thing.

At this point of Deleuze's look at genealogy we come across the ideas of essence and interpretation. Deleuze tells us that with this myriad of forces and meanings playing a role in the history and meaning of a thing, the idea of essence does not go away. We must not think of a thing in the world as existing neutrally but instead a thing will have an affinity to the force in current possession of the thing, thus becoming the expression of a force. Out of all the meanings of a thing the essence of a thing is that one meaning with gives it the strength with which a thing has the most affinity towards. From meanings and essence we get a notion of interpretation which is an evaluation or weighing of the meanings and to understand what is the essence of something. But interpretation gets more complex when we see how a new force comes about and overtakes an object, thus giving it a new meaning. For something like that to happen a force would have to first mask itself with the other forces already in possession of the object. This mask would be a certain kind of practice of subjectivity that a particular force would practice and believe in to mask itself as those forces in current possession of the object. The force masking itself would latter gain control of the forces that it struggles with and can only take over its mask by giving it a new meaning thus giving the object that is controlled a longer history and a new essence. Deleuze adds that interpretation is also an art of piercing masks and it is best done by those far-sighted ones, those genealogists. The genealogist must ask, why does this force mask itself and keep on wearing its mask while it is being changed or reshaped?

Deleuze is telling us here that the genealogist must also be a psychologist of a sort to understand differing forces and what a force wants. With this, Deleuze advises us that "The difference *in* the origin does not appear *at* the origin" (Deleuze 1983, p. 5) indicating as well that the uniqueness of a force or thing is not present at its founding or in its conditions of existence but that there is a historical process that culminated in its current essence.

In section 3 of *The Tragic* entitled "The Philosophy of the Will" Deleuze explains Nietzsche's conception of the will as not a mysterious psychological or mystical thing, but instead as a plurality of forces, and that a force in relation to another force is defined as a will. A will is necessarily exercised upon another will such that one commands and one that obeys to a greater or lesser extent. A will wills obedience and only a will can be obedient, and so will can only affect another will, not matter. It is the plurality of forces related to one another in commanding and obeying roles that directs us towards an origin. Here we find the role of hierarchy that Nietzsche

and Deleuze will say is inseparable from genealogy, since it is hierarchy that gives difference its identity.

The origin is the difference in the origin, difference in the origin is hierarchy, that is to say the relation of a dominant to a dominated force, of an obeyed to an obeying will. Hierarchy is the originary fact, the identity of difference and origin. And so, the meaning or sense of something is its relation or affinity to the possessing force, and the value of something is the hierarchy of forces which are expressed in the thing "as a complex phenomenon. (Deleuze 1983, p. 8)

Section four entitled "Against the Dialectic" considers whether Nietzsche is a dialectician with his historical accounts, and the answer is no! The whole idea of a plurality of forces in relation to one another—that a force sees another force as its object and thus enters into relations with other forces—may seem dialectical but is actually staunchly anti-dialectical. It is what is called "pluralism." This is genealogy versus the dialectic. In opposition to the dialectic, which conceives of the negative, negation or contradiction as already existing, Deleuze says that Nietzsche's pluralism of a commanding and obeying forces is against this notion of a pre-existing negative. The obeying force does not deny the commanding force since it can affirm and enjoy its difference under the command of the dominant force. The negative appears not in the essence of something but as a result of the activity of an active force, of an active aggressive existence affirming its difference. We should note this aggressive aspect in relation to Nietzsche's notion of an aggressive unconscious. Deleuze says that, "Difference is the object of a practical affirmation inseparable from essence and constitutive of existence." (Deleuze 1983, p. 9) This is the answer to the earlier question of what a force or will wants, and what it wants is to affirm its difference. Difference is for Nietzsche and Deleuze another kind of empiricism, one that is a practical affirmation or "Yes saying" to life in opposition to the dialectical negative, negation or "no." Nietzsche and Deleuze are together saying "Yes" to life and away with the dialectic's contradictions and responsibilities of the "labour of the negative."

The dialectic brings the negative to the forefront in its relation to other forces, specifically ones that dominate the obeying ones. This negative consists in the negation of all that is different, all that does not affirm its existence, all negating forces that offset their sense of a stable identity in relation to those other forces. These other forces, the dominant ones in relation to those other obeying ones, produce an aggressive affirmation of their difference. This affirmation then results in the obeying forces or slaves to see themselves in relation to

this affirmation and deny it through their sense of insecurity and inferiority as the dominant forces or masters displace their sense of a stable subjectivity. Through this they deny the masters' aggression and affirm resentment, revenge, and reaction, resulting in a sense of contradiction in relation to identity, time, and environment. Though Deleuze notes that, "Nietzsche shows that what is negative in the master is always a secondary and derivative product of this existence." (Deleuze 1983, p.10) An important part in the understanding of the dialectic is that it is the slave who performs that dialectic and for there to be the master-slave dialectical relationship depends upon power reconceived as the representation of power and the denial of the affirmation of difference—the denial of the will to power. The wills of the dialectic, the slaves, want to be recognized and represented as superior within already-existing forms of power. It is here then that Deleuze exclaims,

The slave only conceives of power as the object of a recognition, the content of a representation, the stake in a competition, and therefore makes it depend, at the end of a fight, on a simple attribution of established values. (Deleuze 1983, p. 10)

The dialectic for me poses several problems, that of living a psychologically healthy life and living an authentic life. The slaves for me are narcissists and psychotics and puts to question those many stunted analyses *on* Nietzsche and the Übermensch as from what perspective are they analyzing Nietzsche.

Interestingly, these views separate Nietzsche from those who try to categorize him in modernist theories, calling him exclusively an existentialist or idealist, Nietzsche traverses these categories that amount to confinements of thought and becomes a nomad, as depicted in his Zarathustra and in Deleuze's essay "Nomad Thought" (1980).

Moving on, we now encounter another French philosopher, one who is also known for being influenced by Nietzsche, this is Foucault. I would mention here that I am only looking mostly at Foucault's form of genealogy and not so much his analysis on Nietzsche's genealogy as depicted in his essay entitled "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (1971).

In "Two Lectures" from *Power/Knowledge* we find four main points that he outlines when doing philosophy of power. The first point is,

[I]t should be concerned with power at its extremities, in its ultimate destinations, with those points where it becomes capillary, that is, in its more regional and local forms and institutions. Its

paramount concern, in fact, should be with the point where power surmounts the rules of right which organize and delimit it and extends itself beyond them, invests itself in institutions, becomes embodied in techniques, and equips itself with instruments and eventually even violent means of material intervention. (Foucault 1980, p. 96)

The second point is,

the case of studying power at the point where its intervention, if it has one, is completely invested in its real and effective practices. What is needed is a study of power in its external visage, at the point where it is in direct and immediate with that which we can provisionally call its object, its target, its field of application, there—that is to say—where it installs itself and produces its real effects. (Foucault 1980, p. 97)

The third point is,

always be kept in mind is that power, if we do not take too distant a view of it, is not that which makes the difference between those who exclusively possess and retain it, and those who do not have it and submit to it. Power must be analyzed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localized here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application. (Foucault 1980, p. 98)

At this point of Foucault's methodology he is saying that individuals are not somehow separate from power or objectively standing in relation to it, but instead individuals are the effects of power. The individual as an effect of power is to be seen as a symptom of a type of power, of the power relations that intersect and embed within the individual mentally and bodily. Essentially what Foucault is going for is a type of power ontology that is somewhat distinct from Nietzsche's.

The fourth methodological point reads,

the important thing is not to attempt some kind of deduction of power starting from its centre and aimed at the discovery of the extent to which it permeates into the base, of the degree to which it reproduces itself down to and including the most molecular elements of society. One must rather conduct an ascending analysis

of power, starting, that is, from its infinitesimal mechanisms, which each have their own techniques and tactics, and then see how these mechanisms of power have been-and continue to be-invested, colonized, utilized, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended etc., by ever more general mechanisms and by forms of global domination. (Foucault 1980, p. 99)

Lastly, we have the fifth methodological point is concerning the problem of ideology to which Foucault says,

I do not believe that what has taken place can be said to be ideological. It is both much more and much less ideology. It is the production of effective instruments for the formulation and accumulation of knowledge-methods of observation, techniques of registration, procedures for investigation and research, apparatuses of control. All this means that power, when it is exercised through subtle mechanisms, cannot but evolve, organize and put into circulation a knowledge, or rather apparatuses of knowledge, which are not ideological constructs. (Foucault 1980, p. 102)

But when we read one of Foucault's most famous essays entitled "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," we find something interesting that genealogy creates. In genealogy there are three uses of what Nietzsche calls the "historical sense" that create what Foucault calls a counter-memory. Counter-memory means a divorce or cutting off from any anthropological and metaphysical modal of history (which are also called memory) and hence a break with traditional history or the dialectic. This divorce from dialectic the opens up a new conception of time that can account for what the dialectic cannot account for concerning history and time, blasting apart superstitions such as objectivity and truth which hinder or pose a threat to humanity.

In the last section of this essay, Foucault asserts that there are three uses that historical sense gives rise to, which all correlate with and oppose the modalities of history suggested by Platonism. The first use is what is called the parodic. This parodic use refers to the use of history in which the historian offers people the prospect of changing their identities by presenting them individual historical figures as alternatives. This venerates past identities and past events, but never gives a new interpretation or an honest sense of transformation concerning someone's identity. In contrast to this, Foucault mentions that the genealogist will know that this method is only a disguise that points to our unreality as a symptom does to a disease. The genealogist's response to the historian's charade will be to push this masquerade of identities to the breaking point and, "prepare the great carnival of time where masks are constantly

reappearing.” (Foucault 1971, p. 94) This push by the genealogist will supposedly create dissociation with the identities of the past in regards to our own fragile identity and create an “unrealization” through the myriad choices of possible identities from the past (1971, p. 94). By taking up these masks we are giving new life to the ridiculousness of history and possibly finding a new realm of originality by parodying history by a force interpreting an old mask. This is in contrast to veneration, this is parody. Foucault points out that Nietzsche in his *Untimely Meditations* called this parodying “monumental history” in which so called high points in historical development were to be reestablished (1971, p. 94). This reestablishing of historical high points was later criticized by Nietzsche as restricting access to the actual creations of life and its intensities. Thus, we now have Nietzsche parodying the monumental.

The second use of historical sense is to systematically dissociate and destabilize identity. This second use of historical sense opposes itself to any ideas of a stable identity or the rediscovery of a forgotten identity by analyzing history, and is against what Nietzsche calls “Anitquarian history” which tries to create continuities with the past rooting our present to it or as Nietzsche says, “it tries to conserve for posterity the conditions under which we were born” (1971, p. 95). Nietzsche criticizes this form of history for restricting creativity and instead supporting laws of loyalty to the continuity of past and present. In response to this form of history, genealogy makes us question our so called native language, native land, and what governs us, to expose the heterogeneous systems that intersect us and inhibit any formation of an identity, though all the while masked by what we phenomenologically experience as the self.

The third use of historical sense is in regards to the sacrifice of the subject of knowledge. When Foucault looks at this particular part he mostly goes over Nietzsche’s warning of the will to knowledge which also fuels a will to truth. The will to knowledge functions historically and psychologically to require a sacrifice, a sacrifice that has mutated from a religious sacrifice of bodies to that of knowledge which requires the subject and humanity at large. Nietzsche’s warning of the will to knowledge and the will to truth are seen all over his texts, and indicate that this will to knowledge knows no limits and no sacrifice is too great, save for its own death. As we can already see the will to knowledge spawns a will to truth which indicates a point of end or limit, though in how it functions breaks apart all limits such as superstitions, illusions and etc. The way in which the will to knowledge functions then exposes a contradiction

within its functionality and structure and re-installs new superstitions and illusions such as a truth or objectivity. I think that this could also reveal a self-deluding pathology within the seekers of knowledge and truth. We then have Foucault saying about the will to knowledge is, "it creates a progressive enslavement to its instinctive violence." (1971, p. 96)

In reading genealogy, I have come to further understand how this method can be applied to differing areas of philosophy, for example phenomenology. When Foucault mentioned that genealogy essentially creates a counter-memory I have come to see this as destabilizing the phenomenological subject (this also complements what Nietzsche is saying not only in *On the Genealogy of Morals* but in Book three of *The Will to Power*) and questioning certain aspects of phenomenology. An example of this is that genealogy in creating a counter-memory phenomenologically broadens the horizon of experience not only in the present but in the past and future. This broadening of the horizon of experience through genealogy in the past, present, and future delineates paths in which new modes of existence, phenomenology, psychology, and expressivity can be experienced. Another example of how genealogy questions certain aspects of phenomenology lies in the attribution of mental illness. We must ask how much of a role mental illness plays in learning and in interpretation, e.g. the way in which someone phenomenologically perceives the world and others. When talking about mental illnesses and phenomenology in genealogy, we can see this in Nietzsche's accounts of semiotics where he designates particular animal figures to different types of persons in *The Gay Science*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *On the Genealogy of Morals*.

In addition we can see the role of psychoanalysis in Nietzsche's and Deleuze's work and that lack of it in Foucault's is significant. Foucault eliminated one of the two aspects of Nietzsche's genealogy which was constituted by the material and psychological conditions: Foucault eliminated the psychological. In Foucault, eliminating the psychological aspect of his form of genealogy thus created problems for his position in that he did not sufficiently ground his work and did not show a prescription to his genealogical diagnosis, which thus created a relativism. Though that is not to say that we should do away with Foucault's work, but instead I think we can salvage some of the work specifically in how he further systematizes genealogy in a clarified form and his meticulous documentation. Then again if we really want to perform a far more meticulous documentation, diagnosing the problems in which we find and prescribing a prescription to the problems, we have to go back to Nietzsche and Deleuze. By going back to Nietzsche and Deleuze not only can we

get the material conditions but the psychological and phenomenological conditions as well when doing genealogy.

In conclusion, and reading all the aforementioned, I have come to agree with the genealogical method as a method for research and critique to which I will put into action in the future for my own investigations and critiques.

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