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**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON**

FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS, AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

School of Humanities

**On Nietzsche's Genealogical Mode of Inquiry**

by

***Allison M. Merrick***

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS, AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES

Doctor of Philosophy

ON NIETZSCHE'S GENEALOGICAL MODE OF INQUIRY

by Allison M. Merrick

The subject of this thesis is Friedrich Nietzsche's methodology, the genealogical mode of inquiry, which came to fruition in *On the Genealogy of Morals*. The precise nature of the genealogy, as a mode of inquiry, is a site of contest amongst scholars, with the central debates pivoting around four questions which arise upon considering the methodology: (1) what is the critical import of Nietzsche's genealogical mode of inquiry? (2) What form of critique does it take? (3) To whom does Nietzsche address his reflections? And (4) what role, if any, does history play in Nietzsche's genealogical narratives? Accordingly, this thesis seeks to offer and to defend answers to the central questions that are generated by the consideration of Nietzsche's methodology.

In order to get a foothold into these debates and to provide the boundary within which these disagreements occur the first chapter has as its object of inquiry an examination and evaluation of Nietzsche scholars' responses to these issues. In chapter two I defend my interpretation against these rival views, and contend that the genealogy takes the form of an immanent critique, and that it is intended, at least, to reach all of Nietzsche's contemporaries.

The adage "genealogy is history correctly practiced" is treated in the remaining three chapters, in which I attempt to morph what appears to be at present an uninformative formulation into an informative one by arguing that for Nietzsche historiography is best seen as a form of artistry. And, this I submit, serves to shed light upon the genealogical mode of inquiry, and to shape the boundary by which the equation of genealogy as methodology with history becomes instructive.

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## **DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP**

I, Allison M. Merrick declare that the thesis entitled *On Nietzsche's Genealogical Mode of Inquiry* and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- none of this work has been published before submission.

Signed:

Date: 10/09/2009

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## NOTES ON SOURCES:

### ABBREVIATIONS AND CITATIONS

<i>AC</i>	<i>The Anti-Christ</i>
<i>AOM</i>	<i>Assorted Opinions and Maxims (Human, All Too Human, Pt. 1, Vol. II)</i>
<i>ASC</i>	“Attempt at Self Criticism” (1886 Preface to <i>The Birth of Tragedy</i> )
<i>BGE</i>	<i>Beyond Good and Evil</i>
<i>BT</i>	<i>The Birth of Tragedy</i>
<i>CW</i>	<i>The Case of Wagner</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>Daybreak</i>
<i>EH</i>	<i>Ecce Homo</i>
<i>GM</i>	<i>On the Genealogy of Morality</i>
<i>GS</i>	<i>The Gay Science</i>
<i>HH</i>	<i>Human, All Too Human</i>
<i>HL</i>	“On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life” (The second of the <i>Untimely Meditations</i> )
<i>NCW</i>	<i>Nietzsche contra Wagner</i>
<i>RWB</i>	“Richard Wagner in Bayreuth” (The fourth of the <i>Untimely Meditations</i> )
<i>TI</i>	<i>Twilight of the Idols</i>
<i>UM</i>	<i>Untimely Meditations</i>
<i>WP</i>	<i>The Will to Power</i>
<i>WS</i>	<i>The Wanderer and His Shadow (Human, All Too Human, Pt 2, Vol. II)</i>
<i>Z</i>	<i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i>

With the exception of the *Untimely Meditations*, which I cite using both section numbers and page numbers, all Nietzsche’s works in English are referred to by section number, and where applicable essay number, or title, as well. So, for example, *The Gay Science* section 125 will be cited as (*GS* 125), while *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Essay III, section 27 will be cited as (*GM* III 27) and part 9 of the section of *Twilight of the Idols* entitled “Expeditions of an Untimely Man” will be cited as (*TI* “Expeditions” 9).

## INTRODUCTION

Friedrich Nietzsche diagnoses a dissolving Christianity: a world-view that has, on his account, broken itself into irreconcilable pieces through a “monstrous logic of terror” (*GS* 343). More pointedly, perhaps, he identifies that we have “outgrown Christianity and are adverse to it, and precisely because we have grown *out* of it...”(*GS* 377). We have, Nietzsche claims, outgrown that which once sheltered us, and provided us with meaning. And the growing pains are acute; for in maturing we must leave behind the adjoining comfort, stability, and support such a world-view furnishes us with. Walking without the crutches of a theological or metaphysical world-view is, for many, painstaking and may lead to resignation.

Yet, for Nietzsche, things seem to be different. This event carries with it the potential of a “second innocence,” a possibility unparalleled in two millennia of history (*GM* II 20). It ushers in its wake, according to Nietzsche, “happiness, relief, exhilaration, encouragement, dawn” (*GS* 343). The event, the “news that ‘the old god is dead,’” is met, by Nietzsche, with “gratitude, amazement, premonitions, expectation” (*GS* 343). The event carries with it so much potentiality, a capacity for growth and development that we, Nietzsche simultaneously informs us, are squandering. Nietzsche’s philosophical task then is to demonstrate how we are still wedded to Christian morality, how we stand squarely in the shadows of this world-view, and why the event of the death of God should strike us, as it does him, as carrying with it so very much potential.

Nietzsche’s task then is to convince those to whom he is writing of the momentousness and the potentiality of this event. Yet, if the event is, in fact, so cataclysmic that it can, in effect, split humanity in two: ((1) those born before the deed and (2) those born after) then the question surfaces, how does Nietzsche go about relating the ramifications of this substantial cultural and historic event? (*GS* 125) Or, to put the point another way: How does Nietzsche attempt to demonstrate “what the event really means—and how much must collapse now that this faith has been undermined”? (*GS* 343) The answers lie, I submit, in Nietzsche’s methodology, which finds its most forceful demonstration in the text *On the Genealogy of Morals*.



Much has been made of Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* in recent years, attesting both to the complexity of the work, and to the acuity of Nietzsche's insights.<sup>1</sup> Within the cover of the text one finds a wealth of penetrating psychological, historical and philosophical theses, in a style of great rhetorical sharpness. One also finds, I contend, a methodology that has come to fruition. The subject of this thesis is Nietzsche's methodology, the means by which he attempts to draw out the salient features of the momentous event, the ways in which he attempts to convince us of the ramifications of the event, and finally how he attempts to convince us, his readers, to take up the task of a re-evaluation of our most cherished values.

## 1. The Form of the Argument

The subject of this thesis is Nietzsche's methodology: the genealogical mode of inquiry. Of methods generally, in *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche writes: "The most valuable insights are the last to be discovered; but the most valuable insights are *methods*" (AC 13). Taking Nietzsche at his word, the object of this thesis is to provide a cogent and convincing account of Nietzsche's method, "the most valuable" of insights.

Though scholars have toiled to provide a decisive account of the methodology, disagreements abound. Martin Saar, for example, finds:

Commentators on [Nietzsche's] work especially during the last ten years have tried to elucidate the problem and have proposed a variety of interpretive suggestions but none of them has systematically and reconstructively put an end to the debate. But the sense that genealogy is a central category in Nietzsche's work persists.<sup>2</sup>

I contend that these disagreements pivot around four questions that arise when considering the methodology: (1) what is the critical import of Nietzsche's genealogical methodology? (2) What form of critique does it take? (3) To whom does Nietzsche address his remarks? And, (4) what role, if any, does history play in Nietzsche's genealogical narratives? The aims of this thesis include contributing to this debate by providing answers to each of these questions.

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<sup>1</sup> In the last two years, for example, four book length treatments of the text have appeared: (1) Daniel Conway's (2008) *Nietzsche's On the Genealogy of Morals*, (2) Lawrence Hatab's (2008) *Nietzsche's On the Genealogy of Morality An Introduction*, (3) Christopher Janaway's (2007) *Beyond Selflessness Reading Nietzsche's Genealogy*, and (4) David Owen's (2007) *Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morality*.

<sup>2</sup> Saar, Martin (2002) p. 231

In responding to the first two questions Tyler Krupp has recently commented: ...self-styled Nietzscheans...have simply taken for granted that genealogy is inherently critical. Some go so far as to equate critique as such with genealogy. Remarkably little philosophical work has been done by these adherents to show how exactly genealogy is inherently critical. Absent such philosophical clarification, the never-ending barrage of ‘critical’ genealogies becomes a bit tedious....<sup>3</sup>

The first two chapters, accordingly, have as their object of inquiry, the critical import and the functionality of the methodology, and do not assume at the outset that the genealogical methodology possesses and inherently critical function. In chapter one, I provide a foothold into the vast secondary literature on Nietzsche’s genealogical method by targeting the work of two scholars: Brian Leiter and Raymond Geuss. I contend that their respective formulations fail, in the end, to offer the methodology with its most forceful and cogent articulation. In chapter two, I provide an account of the shape of Nietzsche’s critique of “morality” and argue that it takes the form of an immanent critique of particular belief structures.<sup>4</sup> There, I also defend the view that Nietzsche, in the *Genealogy*, targets at least three pernicious forms of faith exemplified by, (A) the Christians who have faith in the Christian God. (B) The adherents of Christian morality after the death of the Christian God, and (C) those who are unreservedly committed to the unconditional value of truth. And, this, in turn is to suggest that Nietzsche’s target-audience includes those who are “faithful,” and that Nietzsche is, at least in principle, targeting all of his contemporaries.

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<sup>3</sup> Krupp, Tyler (2008) p. 316

<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, and in accord with contemporary Nietzsche scholarship, I employ the term “morality” to denote the following set of commitments:

“(a) An identification of moral actions as unegoistic, that is, in terms of ‘selflessness, self-denial, self-sacrifice, or sympathy and compassion.’ (b) An interpretation of suffering as punishment and, hence, the centrality of the mechanism of guilt to moral reflection. (c) A view of moral agency as composed of, and hence to be judged in term of, the intentional choices of actors characterized by freedom of the will. (d) The valuation of ‘slave’ values (e.g. obedience and humility) as intrinsic values and the devaluation of ‘noble’ values (e.g. commanding and boldness). (e) A conception of intrinsic values as unconditional and, hence, of moral obligation as unconditional. (f) A conception of morality as universally applicable.” Owen, David (2007) p. 69.

For similar accounts see: Geuss, Raymond (1999) p. 171, Leiter, Brian (2002) pp. 74-81 May, Simon (1995) pp. 104-107.

The final three chapters have as their object of inquiry the adage that “genealogy is history correctly practiced.”<sup>5</sup> At least from *Human All Too Human* onwards, Nietzsche is clear that we are in need of a “retrograde step” in order to make sense of ourselves (*HH* 20). However, Nietzsche’s historical philosophy has not been adequately explored within the secondary literature. What is common is the simple equation of genealogy, as a mode of inquiry, and history, and as Christopher Janaway has recently pointed out: “...This formulation [that genealogy is history, correctly practiced] may run the risk of being uninformative: there are notable differences between genealogy and other forms of history.”<sup>6</sup> As such the aim of the final three chapters is to shape the boundary by which the equation of genealogy with history becomes instructive. Chapter three presents an answer to the question: what, for Nietzsche, is history correctly practiced? Chapter four explores the claim that Nietzsche’s *Genealogy* is an interesting fable lacking historical veracity. The worry here is that despite Nietzsche’s insistence to the contrary it nevertheless seems that Nietzsche’s *Genealogy* is not the product of serious archival research for it lacks annotation, or, to employ Foucault’s image, it appears anything but “grey, meticulous, and patiently documentary.”<sup>7</sup> After treating and dismissing the contention that Nietzsche’s genealogical narratives represent nothing more than useful thought experiments which lack historical veracity, I turn in chapter five to argue that history correctly practiced for Nietzsche is a form of artistry. That is, that the genealogist imposes a particular shape and form upon the historical and it is in this way that the equation of genealogy, as methodology, and history becomes informative.

## **2. A Word on Source Materials**

Before embarking, a word on my use of Nietzsche’s texts is in order. Two points are worth making here: the first point is in regard to periodization and the second point concerns the use of Nietzsche’s unpublished writings. On the topic of periodization it is well known that Hans Vaihinger introduced the tripartite division of Nietzsche’s corpus. Accordingly and broadly construed, Nietzsche’s works from then

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<sup>5</sup> This expression, that “genealogy is history correctly practiced,” was first formulated by Alexander Nehamas (1995) in *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*: “Nietzsche does not, as Foucault does, contrast genealogy with history but insists that genealogy simply *is* history, correctly practiced” p. 246 fn. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Janaway, Christopher (2007) p. 10

<sup>7</sup> Foucault, Michel (1971) p. 130

on have been divided into three periods: the early (1872-1876), the middle (1877-1882), and the late (1883-1889), with priority given to Nietzsche's mature works of 1883-1889. Given the nature of this project and that Nietzsche's most sustained discussion of history is found within the "early" period, I will use early work to help to illuminate Nietzsche's mature conception of history. Though I will discuss the issue in greater detail in chapter three, for our purposes here Breazeale's discussion will suffice:

Not only did [Nietzsche] repeatedly recommend [his *Untimely Meditations*] as essential documents for understanding the *development* of his thought, but he also described them as—and, indeed claimed, that he had explicitly intended them to serve as—'lures' or 'fish hooks' for attracting and capturing the attention of the readers he was so desperately trying to reach....As mentioned, Nietzsche believed that the *Untimely Meditations* were also especially useful for providing his readers (once 'hooked,'...) with essential insight into the development of his philosophy and with an understanding of what he was trying to accomplish in his later writings.<sup>8</sup>

Accordingly, I employ the conceptual distinctions found within the second of the *Untimely Meditations*, to shed light upon Nietzsche's mature conception of and use of history.

Turning to the second point, it is well established now that Nietzsche's unpublished writing collected under the title of *The Will to Power* does not deserve the privileged position which Heidegger accords to the collection— namely, that the *Will to Power* represents Nietzsche's "planned *magnum opus*" and his "chief philosophical work."<sup>9</sup> Despite this widespread agreement concerning how the *Will to Power* should be regarded Bernd Magnus has pointed out Nietzsche scholars can still be roughly divided into two groups: "lumpers," "who regard the use of Nietzsche's *Nachlass* as unproblematic," and "splitters," "who "distinguish sharply between the published and unpublished writings."<sup>10</sup> My approach to Nietzsche's notebooks belongs in a third category. Such a category would not simply view the use of Nietzsche's unpublished notebooks as unproblematic, nor would such a category simply neglect them entirely. My approach to Nietzsche's unpublished works, and it

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<sup>8</sup> Breazeale, Daniel (1997) pp. xxiv-xxv.

<sup>9</sup> Heidegger, Martin (1979) p. 7 and p. 3. Heidegger goes on to makes a stronger claim regarding the privileged position of the *Will to Power*. Heidegger suggests that: "...Nietzsche's philosophy proper, the fundamental position on the basis of which he speaks in these and in all the writings he himself published, did not assume a final form and was not itself published in any book, neither in the decade between 1879 and 1889 nor during the preceding years. What Nietzsche himself published during his creative life was always foreground." pp. 8-9

<sup>10</sup> Magnus, B. (1986) pp. 82-83

might be added not only those collected under the title *The Will to Power*, belongs to this third category. I refer to the notebooks and employ them only to elucidate interpretive issues found within the published writings. Thus, I do not base any of my interpretive claims, or reconstructions of Nietzsche's positions, on the sole evidence of his unpublished writings.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Contesting the Philosophical Function of the Genealogical Mode of Inquiry

What is the critical import of Nietzsche's genealogical mode of inquiry? What form of critique does it take? To whom does Nietzsche address his critique? These questions have sparked much debate, and continue to fuel a division of opinion in Nietzsche scholarship. Thus, for example, when considering the critical import of Nietzsche's genealogical methodology, Raymond Geuss, Brian Leiter and Bernard Reginster have recently, and respectively, argued that the methodology is best seen as superfluous or incidental to Nietzsche's critique of morality, whereas Martin Saar, for instance, finds the methodology indispensable to Nietzsche's critical enterprise.<sup>11</sup> Opinion regarding the form of Nietzsche's critique is also divided. There are scholars who argue that Nietzsche's genealogical method takes the form of an immanent critique, there are scholars that argue it takes the form of a transcendent critique,<sup>12</sup> and there are some scholars in the middle.<sup>13</sup> Concerning Nietzsche's intended audience, disagreements also abound. Views here can be broadly broken down into four categories: (1) Nietzsche circumscribes his audience to those who are "predestined for his insights." (2) Nietzsche restricts his writings to those who have faith in the

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<sup>11</sup>See, for example, Bernard Reginster's (2006) p. 199, Brian Leiter's (2002) p. 177, and Martin Saar's (2002) pp. 234-237

<sup>12</sup> On the immanent critique side of the divide see: Christoph Cox (1999) p. 243, David Owen's (1995) "Genealogy as Immanent Critique" (pp. 39-41.) and Daniel Conway (1994). On the other side of the divide, I take Brian Leiter's (2002) views to be representative of the position that attributes to Nietzsche's genealogy the form of a transcendent critique.

<sup>13</sup> Gemes and Janaway (2005) provide a succinct illustration of how such an approach might operate: "One might claim that the structure of Nietzsche's argument is two-tiered. At first he launches an internal critique of received moralities, as a means of undermining these moralities, then he introduces his own normative agenda to replace that of those moralities he has undermined through his internal critique" (p. 736).

I take John Richardson's (1996) conception of Nietzsche's methodology to be representative of this "two-tiered" approach. For example, Richardson writes:

"Nietzsche aspires not just to match his society's view structure, even as it will be, but to improve it, and by a standard not just internal to those views themselves. He views himself not just as discovering and announcing a momentum in our ideas; he presumes to shift them, under the warrant of a transcending view. He aspires to see and judge his neighborhood—this perspectival locale—not just from inside but from a stance (by a standard) that is true of all life: by the essential value of power or health. He speculates that power is the basic aim of all wills, so that all are subject to a basic evaluation as healthy or sick; he hopes that any better view than his own—even from outside our society, even from outside our species—would concur in this standard he mainly employs. Indeed, I think Nietzsche aspires to a transcending view not just in how he evaluates social wills but in his framing conception of society as consisting of such wills" (p. 282).

Christian God. (3) Nietzsche targets solely the atheists. Or, (4) Nietzsche intends his writings to appeal to all of his contemporaries.<sup>14</sup> Given the vast expanse of differing responses to the fundamental questions that arise when considering Nietzsche's genealogical mode of inquiry a foothold into these debates is vital.

I take up this task by focusing upon the work of two scholars: Brian Leiter and Raymond Geuss. Despite their ostensibly differing accounts of the purpose of Nietzsche's genealogical mode of inquiry, I draw out two fronts of disagreement between their respective formulations and my own.<sup>15</sup> The first site of contest is the functionality of the genealogical mode of inquiry insofar as both Leiter and Geuss take Nietzsche's genealogical investigations to be incidental to Nietzsche's critique of morality. The second point of conflict concerns the circumscription of Nietzsche's target audience. These clashes represent a fundamental dispute concerning the functionality, the objectives of the methodology, as well as the projected audience of Nietzsche's narratives, and as such, the stakes are high.

Accordingly, I begin by sketching Leiter's conception of the genealogical mode of inquiry as an incidental feature of Nietzsche's critique of morality. Here, Brian Leiter is not alone in his assessment of the genealogical mode of inquiry, and as a result I tease out a connection between the work of Leiter and that of Bernard Reginster on the grounds that both scholars reach the same conclusion from

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<sup>14</sup> According to this classification the arguments for these respective conclusions can be found within the works of the following scholars:

- (1) Brian Leiter (2002) concludes that: "[Nietzsche] has nothing to say to those readers who don't share his evaluative tastes." p. 176 fn. 9 See also (2002) pp. 153-155 and (2000) esp. p. 291
- (2) Raymond Geuss (1999) writes: "...Christianity will dissolve itself and Nietzsche's genealogy will contribute to that process. That genealogy is experienced by the Christian as a form of criticism need not imply that is how it looks from the perspective of the genealogists" p. 21
- (3) Christopher Janaway (2007), for example, finds: "Nietzsche's attacks seem better addressed to the non-religious (or not especially religious) person who clings to a conception of morality inherited unthinkingly from Christianity" p. 7 Ken Gemes (2006) too finds: "The question of exactly who Nietzsche's intended audience for the *Genealogy* is extremely complex. In the text he sometimes refers to 'we knowers' (*GM P:1*), sometimes to 'modern humans, that is, us' (*GM II:7*). If we take as our model, liberal, secular intellectuals I do not think that we will be far off the mark of his 'knowers' and 'modern humans'" p. 206 fn. 2 Aaron Ridley (2007) also notes: "Nietzsche's primary target-audience, like the madman's, is not Christian believers, but self-proclaimed atheists, those who do not need to be convinced that God is dead, but who *do* need to be convinced that the consequences of that fact are, or should be, momentous." p. 92
- (4) David Owen (2007), for instance, writes: "On the reconstruction that I have proposed, Nietzsche is concerned to offer internal reasons to reject 'morality' to...the entire body of his contemporaries." p. 135

<sup>15</sup> I will present my positive account of the methodology in chapter two below.

Nietzsche's statement of his objectives in the Preface to the *Genealogy*. I then turn to an examination of Leiter's claim that the genealogical method takes the form of transcendent critique. In response, I argue that Nietzsche's genealogical mode of inquiry cannot legitimately be seen to function as transcendent mode of critique. I then tease out a connection between the work of Leiter and of Geuss on the grounds that both scholars, despite their otherwise dissimilar accounts, argue that there is no explanatory power in considering the genealogical mode of inquiry as methodologically similar to the tracing of a pedigree. Lastly, I turn to my assessment of Geuss' formulation of the critical function the genealogical mode of inquiry and suggest that the methodology has more critical import than Geuss' interpretation indicates.

Before embarking we should recall Nietzsche's pithy discussion in the second of his *Untimely Meditations* concerning the state of his contemporary intellectual climate:

The work never produces an effect, only another 'critique': and the critique itself produces no effect either, but again only a further critique. There thus arises a general agreement to regard the acquisition of many critiques as a sign of success, of few or none as a sign of failure. At bottom, however, even given this kind of 'effect' everything remains as it was: people have some new thing to chatter about for a while, and then something newer still, and in the meantime go on doing what they have always done (*HL V 87*).

Heeding Nietzsche's diagnosis, the aim of this chapter is not to engage in the ceaseless reduplication of critique by means of further critique. Rather, the aim of this chapter is to argue that one of Nietzsche's central methodological objectives is to produce an effect, in the non-pejorative sense. Thus, the objective of this chapter is to chart a set of possible ways of viewing the critical import and the functionality of the methodology as well as noting some preliminary answers to the question concerning the intended audience of Nietzsche's genealogical narratives. I contend that these respective formulations fail to represent the methodology with its most cogent articulation. As a result Nietzsche's methodology is left in the precarious position of being ineffectual in the sense that Nietzsche warns against in the second of the *Untimely Meditations*. Put slightly differently: Even if Nietzsche's genealogical mode of inquiry is successful, along the methodological lines charted by, for example, Leiter and Geuss, their respective formulations fail to take into account the most salient features of the methodology. Engaging the *Genealogy* in the manner in which



they describe then leaves in its wake the greater possibility that people may nevertheless “go on doing what they have always done” (*HL V 87*).

In view of that I shall begin my analysis by charting and evaluating the responses of Leiter and Reginster to the question: what is the critical import of the genealogical mode of inquiry?

## **1. On the Critical Import of the Genealogical Mode of Inquiry**

As previously mentioned, the critical import of Nietzsche’s genealogical mode of inquiry is a site of contest in the secondary literature. The fronts of disagreement are represented in the following two positions: (1) the genealogy, as a mode of inquiry, is superfluous to Nietzsche’s critique of morality. In other words, the fact that Nietzsche’s critique of morality occurs whilst he offers a genealogy of our moral constructs is an incidental rather than an essential feature of his critique. (2) Nietzsche’s genealogical method is indispensable and inseparable from his critique of morality. Put slightly differently, Nietzsche’s genealogical mode of inquiry is itself a critical enterprise. The motivation for viewing Nietzsche’s genealogical mode of inquiry as distinct from a critique stems from the worry that if Nietzsche’s genealogical narratives are inherently critical, then he may commit the genetic fallacy, the fallacy of stating that the origins of a practice tell us something about its current value. To ward off the undesirable conclusion that Nietzsche’s methodology commits such a fallacy, and to lend credence to my claim that Nietzsche’s genealogical narratives are a critique, I begin by addressing the work of Bernard Reginster and Brian Leiter. Both of these scholars have argued that Nietzsche’s genealogical methodology is but one means towards a critique of our moral valuations, and hence that the genealogy, as methodology, is not in virtue of that fact a critique. Hence, their respective arguments present a serious scholarly challenge to the thesis that I wish to advance, and, accordingly I will examine their arguments carefully before offering an alternative reading.

### **1.1 Genealogy as “One Means Among Many:” The Reginster/Leiter Objection**

Is there a genetic fallacy lurking in Nietzsche's genealogical investigations into the origins of our morals? In conducting a genealogical investigation into the origins of morals does Nietzsche commit the methodological fallacy of suggesting that the origins of a set of valuations illuminate their current value? Or, as Robert Solomon succinctly puts it: "Is the 'genealogy' in fact nothing but a sophisticated version of the genetic fallacy...?"<sup>16</sup> In response to these sorts of questions several scholars have argued that Nietzsche's genealogical investigations into the origins of morality must be distinct from a critique. In this section I will highlight two such interpretations found within the works of Bernard Reginster and Brian Leiter. Both scholars are committed to the claim that Nietzsche's genealogical investigations into the origins of our moral frameworks are different from a critique of the varying moral frameworks that emerge from such an investigation, and accordingly, Nietzsche's methodology bypasses the charge of committing the genetic fallacy.<sup>17</sup>

Scholars, for some time now, have attempted to salvage Nietzsche's genealogical investigations from the charge of a lurking genetic fallacy. The work of Reginster and Leiter is no exception.<sup>18</sup> Both scholars cite textual evidence in which Nietzsche clearly demonstrates an acute awareness of the fallacy and from this, both Reginster and Leiter contend that Nietzsche's historical investigations into the origins of morality do not commit such a fallacy.<sup>19</sup> The first piece of evidence both scholars cite is found within *The Gay Science* where Nietzsche writes: "Even if a morality has grown out of an error, the realization of this fact would not as much as touch the problem of value" (GS 345). While the second is a contemporaneous note from the *Nachlass*:

The inquiry into the *origins of our evaluations* and tables of good is in absolutely no way identical with a critique of them, as is so often believed: even though the insights into some *puenda origo* certainly brings with it a

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<sup>16</sup> Solomon, Robert (1994) p. 97

<sup>17</sup> For Reginster's argument see (2006) pp. 197-200; for Leiter's argument see (2002) pp. 177

<sup>18</sup> See for example: Daniel Conway's (1994) "Genealogy and Critical Method," David Couzens Hoy's "Nietzsche, Hume and the Genealogical Method," Paul Loeb's "Is There a Genetic Fallacy in Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals;" and Alexander Nehamas' (1985) pp. 107-110.

<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, as Paul Loeb (1995), notes "the phrase 'genetic fallacy' was not coined until 1914...and most importantly, the phrase did not become an influential term of art until 1938, when it was introduced to characterize what was widely regarded as an epistemological mistake of the newly formed discipline 'sociology of knowledge'...In sum, the charge of a genetic fallacy was deployed very recently, outside of logic proper, and at least in part to combat the influence of Nietzsche's genealogy of morality" p. 128.

*feeling* of a diminution in value of the thing that originated thus and prepares the way to a critical mood and attitude towards it (WP 254).<sup>20</sup>

From these passages both Leiter and Reginster conclude that Nietzsche has an acute awareness of the genetic fallacy and his genealogical investigations into the *pudenda origo* of morality are distinct from a critique of morality. Though such investigations prepare the way for a critique they are not in themselves critiques. Reginster explicitly makes this point: “Genealogical inquiry into the origin of morality provides the sort of knowledge that is required for critique of it, but is not *itself* such a critique”<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, both scholars are at the same time committed to the claim that: “Even to produce a ‘feeling of diminution’ and to ‘prepare the way’ for a critique is to already accomplish a project of some importance.”<sup>22</sup> Thus, on this view, Nietzsche’s genealogies serve the function of creating suspicion regarding our valuations, but the genealogy as a mode of inquiry does not serve as a critique of those valuations. Given that for Leiter and Reginster the genealogical mode of inquiry functions in this particular way, Nietzsche escapes the charge of the genetic fallacy because his methodology “forbids any *direct* critical inference from genealogical inquiry....”<sup>23</sup>

In contrast to these accounts I will present a reconstruction of Nietzsche’s methodology that does not fall prey to the charge of a genetic fallacy and places emphasis upon the critical function of the genealogical mode of inquiry. I begin my reconstruction with a reading of Nietzsche’s Preface to the *Genealogy*, particularly section 5, in order to tease out a distinction between the Reginster/Leiter view and my own. Secondly, I place a significant amount of explanatory weight upon Nietzsche’s “major point of historical method” presented in the Second Essay of the *Genealogy* (GM II 12). In so doing, I argue Nietzsche’s historical methodology explicitly excludes any direct inference from the origins of a concept through to its present day purpose, and, hence, value. Thus, with Nietzsche’s methodological insights placed at

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<sup>20</sup> Nietzsche also demonstrates an “awareness” of the fallacy in *Daybreak*: “the more insight we possess into an origin the less significant does the origin appear” (D 44).

<sup>21</sup> Reginster, Bernard (2006) p. 198

<sup>22</sup> Leiter, Brian (2002) p. 179 Similarly Reginster argues that: “Presumably a certain value judgment is not necessarily objectionable because it is found to have an objectionable origin (*pudenda origo*). At best, such a discovery might make us suspicious towards it, but it is not itself a criticism—it only ‘prepares the way to a critical mood and attitude towards it’” pp. 197-198.

<sup>23</sup> Reginster, Bernard (2006) p. 198

the forefront of my interpretation, the charge of a genetic fallacy is rendered misleading, and the critical import of the genealogical mode of inquiry is maintained.

## 1.2 Nietzsche's "Real Concern:" Reading *GM* Preface 5

Both Reginster and Leiter point to the Preface of the *Genealogy* where Nietzsche makes the following declaration: "Even then my real concern was something much more important than hypothesis-mongering, whether my own or other people's, on the origin of morality (or more precisely: the latter concerned me for the sake of a goal to which it was only one means among many)" (*GM* P 5). Leiter employs this passage to substantiate his rendering of the genealogical mode of inquiry as incidental to Nietzsche's critique of morality in the pejorative sense, and also to demonstrate that Nietzsche's critique of morality does not depend upon a genealogy of it.<sup>24</sup> For example, Leiter insists:

The genealogy of morality...is but *one* instrument for arriving at a particular end, namely a critique of morality. This should alert us to the possibility that the critique of morality does not *depend* on the genealogy of morality, though the genealogy may help us arrive at it.<sup>25</sup>

While Reginster takes this passage to prove the following point:

...[I]n the Preface, [Nietzsche] declares quite explicitly that the genealogical investigations upon which he is about to embark are 'only one means among many' to carry out his critique of morality. One might instead simply attend to the effects the prevalence of a certain moral code has on culture *here and now*.<sup>26</sup>

Reginster, like Leiter, takes the genealogical mode of inquiry to be an incidental feature of Nietzsche's critique of morality because one is tracking the *effects* of a particular moral code.<sup>27</sup> Further, Reginster suggests that instead of looking to the history of our moral codes, as the genealogist does, one could simply attend to the

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<sup>24</sup> Hereafter, and in following Leiter, I shall use the acronym MPS to stand for "morality in the pejorative sense."

<sup>25</sup> Leiter, Brian (2002) pg. 177

<sup>26</sup> Reginster, Bernard (2006) p. 199. It should be noted that Richard Schacht too finds: "This, [Nietzsche's] professed 'real concern' from the time of *Human, All-Too-Human* to that of the *Genealogy* and beyond, 'was something much more important hypothesis-mongering...on the origin of morality.' The issues to which he addresses himself is that of the 'value of morality,' to the treatment of which such reflections were 'only one means among many.'" Schacht (1983) p. 421

<sup>27</sup> For example, Leiter maintains that the "effects" we are meant to track are the *effects* MPS has upon the flourishing of higher human beings.

“effects the prevalence of a certain moral code has *here and now*.”<sup>28</sup> Reginster thus renders Nietzsche’s genealogical investigations superfluous for we can simply concentrate upon the effects a certain moral code has for us, *here and now*, instead of looking for the manner in which such practices were provided with meaning within varying systems of purposes.

There are two related problems with this rendering. These worries stem from the claim that no genealogical insight is needed to ascertain the effects a prevalent moral code has *here and now*. Firstly historiography correctly practiced, for Nietzsche, methodologically excludes *any* direct inference from the points of origin to the present day employment of the concept (*GM* II 12). In the Second Essay of the *Genealogy* Nietzsche introduces his “major point of historical method” as follows: “the cause of the origin of a thing and its eventual utility, its actual employment and place in a system of purposes, lie worlds apart” (*GM* II 12). Nietzsche’s methodological insight, here, highlights the myriad of interpretations that have been arbitrarily welded together to formulate the “meaning” of our present day concept. Insofar as Nietzsche’s methodology places emphasis upon the *here and now*, he demonstrates that we have become, and, perhaps currently are, wedded to one interpretation of a concept to the exclusion of other possible meanings. Understood in this way Nietzsche’s historical methodology employs the past as a means to understand the present, particularly how we have become committed to one mode of evaluation at the expense of others. Thus, contra Reginster, Nietzsche’s historical methodology places an emphasis upon the *effects* a moral code has here and now, and, as such, Reginster’s alternative suggestion concerning how we could go about investigating our moral codes is not, in fact, an alternative. For Nietzsche’s historical methodology, understood as an employment of the past to understand and evaluate the present, already achieves the task set by Reginster’s alternative suggestion. Further, it is also worth noting here Nietzsche’s historical methodology explicitly rules out any direct inference from the point of origin to the present day implementation of a concept; his methodology is not liable to the charge of a genetic fallacy.

The second problem concerns the rendering of the genealogy as a superfluous exercise, which carries with it no critical import. As abovementioned, Reginster’s and Leiter’s respective assessments hang upon a particular reading of the Preface of

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<sup>28</sup> Reginster, Bernard (2006) p. 199

the *Genealogy*, section 5, in which they claim that Nietzsche's investigations into the origins of morality are one means among many. Both Reginster and Leiter take this to signify that genealogy is one mode of inquiry among many. Nietzsche's point, however, is twofold. The first and more minor point is that an investigation into the origins of morality can be conducted with varying degrees of methodological success. As both Reginster and Leiter concede, Nietzsche clearly thinks that one can methodologically investigate morality in a number of ways.<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, Nietzsche offers a distinct methodological approach to the investigation into the origins of morals, a methodology, which Nietzsche repeatedly suggests improves upon that of his contemporaries.<sup>30</sup> And (2) the methodology is intended to create the framework within which we can take up the task of calling into question "the *value* of morality," more pointedly, "the value of the 'unegoistic,' the instincts of pity, self-abnegation, self-sacrifice..." (*GM P 5*). In the following section of the Preface Nietzsche expresses the salient points as follows:

This problem of the *value* of pity and of the morality of pity...seems at first to be merely something detached, an isolated question mark; but whoever sticks with it and *learns* how to ask questions here will experience what I experienced—a tremendous new prospect opens up for him, a new possibility comes over him like a vertigo, every kind of mistrust, suspicion, fear leaps up, his belief in morality, in all morality, falters—finally a new demand becomes audible. Let us articulate this *new demand*: we need a *critique* of moral values, *the value of these values themselves must first be called into question*—and for that there is needed a knowledge of the conditions and circumstances in which they grew, under which they evolved and changed...(GM P 6)

Three interrelated methodological points are made here: (1) the problem of the *value* of our moral values produces the need for a total critique. A critique, in other words, of morality as such. (2) A total critique requires knowledge of the conditions, the circumstances, in which the values we assume to be universally binding evolved and changed. The problem Nietzsche identifies here is that our values have always been taken unreflectively in the manner they present themselves: as universally binding, as transhistorical and "as given, as factual, as beyond all question..." (*GM P 6*).

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<sup>29</sup> For example, Nietzsche presents a number of ways in which the "naïve genealogists" have conducted their misguided investigations into the origins of morality. Such methodologically misguided investigations include: (1) assuming that the origins of a practice are meant to tell us something about its current value (*WP 245*) and (2) as in the case of Rée presenting both a historically untenable and a psychologically implausible account. Accordingly one can investigate the origins of morality with varying degrees of methodological success.

<sup>30</sup> See for example: (*GM P 7*), (*GM I 1-2*), (*GM II 4*) and (*GM II 12-13*)

Accordingly, (3) the new demand, then, is simultaneously a demand for *both* an historical knowledge and a total critique that feeds off of such knowledge. If this reading is persuasive, then it follows that the genealogical method is not detached from total critique. And, as abovementioned, total critique requires the calling into question the *value* of “morality as such,” through recourse to a particular kind of historical knowledge. We must, in other words, “stick with” Nietzsche in order to “learn” that the genealogical mode of inquiry simultaneously serves these functions (*GM P 6*). Furthermore, if this reading is cogent, then we are in the position to part-company with Reginster and Leiter on the grounds that Nietzsche’s genealogical mode of inquiry is a total critique, and as such the methodology serves a critical function.

There is one further issue worth pursuing that relates solely to Leiter’s formulation of Nietzsche’s genealogical mode of inquiry. From the foregoing it should be clear that Leiter contends that Nietzsche’s genealogical narratives “produce a ‘feeling of diminution’ and...‘prepare the way’ for critique;” they are not simultaneously a critique.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, Leiter argues that Nietzsche “employs his genealogical method in order to *critique* morality (more precisely, MPS).”<sup>32</sup> The subject of the following section will be Leiter’s reasons for this assessment. More pointedly, Leiter offers a version of the genealogical method that takes the form of a transcendent critique, and so the subject of the following section is an examination and an evaluation of this claim.

## **2. Leiter: Genealogy and Transcendent Critique**

It has been argued that: “Brian Leiter (2002) offers the most comprehensive account of the *Genealogy*’s contribution to the critique of morality.”<sup>33</sup> Given that, the

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<sup>31</sup> Leiter, Brian (2002) p. 179

<sup>32</sup> Leiter, Brian (2002) p. 173

<sup>33</sup> Reginster, Bernard (2006) p. 292 (fn. 36) It is worth noting that Reginster goes on to express a worry regarding Leiter’s formulation of Nietzsche’s genealogical method: “[Leiter’s] account of the genealogical method, however, remains somewhat tentative.” On this point Reginster’s is not, as it were, a lone voice in the wilderness. Ken Gemes and Christopher Janaway (2005), in their critical review of Leiter’s *Nietzsche on Morality*, express some reservations regarding Leiter’s characterization of the genealogical mode of inquiry (see esp. pp. 736-737). Aaron Ridley (2005) and David Owen (2007) each, respectively, note that Leiter, in order to sustain his interpretation of the genealogical mode of inquiry, is forced to usher in “a somewhat desperate tactic” to sidestep the “problem of authority,” a tactic which, for both Ridley and Owen, ultimately collapses (Ridley, Aaron 2005 p. 180 and Owen, David 2007 pp. 132-134). Though, as noted, many scholars have expressed concerns regarding the exegetical cogency of Leiter’s formulation of Nietzsche’s genealogical mode of inquiry,

aim of this section is to explore Leiter's contention that Nietzsche's genealogical method functions as a transcendent critique. A transcendent critique operates by assessing a framework from a standpoint outside of the world-view under analysis, and Leiter is unabashedly committed to the claim that Nietzsche's critique of morality takes this form. For example, he writes: "...morality is criticized from a broadly 'scientific' and 'truth-seeking' standpoint which is *not* internal to Christian morality, but which Christian morality helped produce."<sup>34</sup> Leiter's reasons for this assessment hang upon what he takes to be the central objective of Nietzsche's genealogical method: "...to free...nascent higher types from their 'false consciousness,' i.e. their false belief that the dominant morality is, in fact, *good for them*."<sup>35</sup> In order to achieve this particular objective, Nietzsche's genealogical method, accordingly, proceeds in three stages: (1) Nietzsche demonstrates that the "point of origin of a morality has special *evidential* status as to the *effects* (or causal powers) of that morality, for example, as to whether morality obstructs or promotes human flourishing"<sup>36</sup> (2) Nietzsche exposes the pernicious causal powers of morality in the pejorative sense, by uncovering the fact that these causal powers belong to the "permanent" element of morality.<sup>37</sup> (3) Nietzsche in exposing the effects of adopting MPS provides independent reasons, reasons external to MPS, for his target audience, the "nascent higher human beings," to "stand ready to revisit (indeed, revalue) MPS given what he has shown them about its origin and its effects."<sup>38</sup> Thus, Leiter concludes that: "...morality is criticized from a broadly 'scientific' and 'truth-seeking' standpoint, a standpoint which is *not* internal to Christian morality..."<sup>39</sup>

This formulation of the functionality of the genealogical mode of inquiry as transcendent critique runs into two exegetical difficulties both of which pivot around Leiter's central claim that the causal powers of an evaluative practice belong to the permanent element of MPS. As such, both of these objections hang upon a particular reading of Nietzsche's major point of historical method. Hence, the place to start is with a close examination of Nietzsche's "major point of historical method" as

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there remains neither a systematic reconstruction of Leiter's conception of how the genealogical mode of inquiry is to operate nor a refutation of his formulation. This section will offer both.

<sup>34</sup> Leiter, Brian (2002) p. 175 fn. 7

<sup>35</sup> Leiter, Brian (2002) p. 28

<sup>36</sup> Leiter, Brian (2002) p. 177

<sup>37</sup> Leiter, Brian (2002) p. 178

<sup>38</sup> Leiter, Brian (2002) p. 179

<sup>39</sup> Leiter, Brian (2002) p. 175 fn. 7



presented in the Second Essay of the *Genealogy*. In the section that follows I engage in a detailed reading of sections twelve and thirteen of the Second Essay, and argue that though Leiter's reading of the passages in question begins with a great deal of promise it ultimately succumbs to exegetical confusion thus rendering his claims concerning the functionality of the genealogical mode of inquiry unacceptable.

## 2.1. "Stability" in Nietzsche's Historical Methodology: Reading GM II 12-13

It is widely assumed that in the Second Essay of the *Genealogy* Nietzsche engages in a discussion of his "major point of historical method," and that this discussion is meant to tell us something about his genealogical methodology, about genealogy correctly practiced (*GM II 12*). The example Nietzsche uses to elucidate his major point of historical method is the concept of punishment. Leiter suggests, and I concur, that this discussion is important "primarily for what it tells us about the practice of genealogy *generally*, hence about the genealogy of morality."<sup>40</sup> Nietzsche argues in this section that the recognition that must guide historical inquiry, and his genealogical investigations, is "the cause of the origin of a thing and its eventual utility, its actual employment and place in a system of purposes, lie worlds apart" (*GM II 12*). The salience of this point, as Leiter rightly puts it, is this:

...the genealogist of punishment does not view the *present* purpose of punishment as having evidential value regarding the origin of punishment: at the point of origin, punishment may have had a wholly other purpose. Indeed, throughout its history, punishment may have had multiple purposes (meanings), as appropriated by different peoples and historical epochs, so that its present purpose is but *the latest* 'functional meaning' imposed upon the practice.<sup>41</sup>

In other words, Nietzsche's methodological point is predicated upon the avoidance of the error of "seeking out some 'purpose' in punishment, for example, revenge or deterrence, then guilelessly plac[ing] this purpose at the beginning as the cause of origin" (*GM II 12*). This methodological error leads the naïve genealogist to deduce that the procedure of punishment was invented for the purpose of revenge or deterrence; and, in its most circular form, such a methodological blunder yields the

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<sup>40</sup> Leiter, Brian (2002) p. 171 Or, as Leiter puts the point elsewhere, Nietzsche "uses the opportunity to articulate (and illustrate via a case study) what is distinctive of genealogy."

<sup>41</sup> Leiter, Brian (2002) p. 169

tautological conclusion “that punishment was devised for punishing” (*GM II 12*). There is another point worth making here, a point absent in Leiter’s assessment of the passage: Nietzsche’s reflections on historical methodology serve to expose the error of assuming that the “concept” of punishment is stable. The error is the assumption that there is a fixed, stable definition of a concept. More positively, Nietzsche, here, is demonstrating his own anti-essentialist commitments. In other words, Nietzsche’s reflections on the correct practice of history are at the same time a demonstration in how to avoid the “essentialist temptation to think there is a ‘concept’ of punishment.”<sup>42</sup>

The omission of Nietzsche’s anti-essentialism, as methodologically relevant, leads Leiter to afford the stability of an evaluative practice an elevated status in Nietzsche’s historical methodology. This particular issue arises out of Nietzsche’s refinement of his major point of historical method in section thirteen of the Second Essay. There, in returning to the topic of punishment, Nietzsche writes:

...one must then distinguish in it two sorts of things: first that which is relatively *permanent* in it, the practice, the act, the ‘drama,’ a certain strict sequence of procedures; on the other hand that which is *fluid* in it, the meaning, the purpose, the expectation tied to the execution of such procedures (*GM II 13*).<sup>43</sup>

Leiter takes this passage to have the following significance:

Genealogy, then, presupposes that its object has a stable or essential character—its *Brauch*—that permits us to individuate it intelligibly over time. What the genealogist denies is that this stable element is located in the object’s purpose or value or meaning (its *Sinn*): it is precisely *that feature* which is discontinuous from the point of origin to present-day embodiment.<sup>44</sup>

Leiter here curiously changes Nietzsche’s claim regarding the “relative *permanence*” of the practice into a claim concerning the “*stable* or *essential* character” of the practice. Where Nietzsche explicitly attributes to the practice a relative permanence Leiter, assigns to the practice a stable and essential character, thus morphing Nietzsche’s clearly qualified statement into an absolute one. And this slippage poses additional problems at the exegetical level because it forces Leiter to maintain that

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<sup>42</sup> Ridley, Aaron (1998) p. 111

<sup>43</sup> Following Leiter I have quoted the Cambridge translation.

<sup>44</sup> Leiter, Brian (2002) p. 170

only the meaning, “precisely *that feature*,” is “discontinuous from the point of origin to present-day embodiment.”<sup>45</sup>

Nietzsche’s methodological point, contra Leiter, is that the practice is also changeable, though to be sure, to a lesser degree than the meaning or the purpose ascribed to the practice. Hence, for Nietzsche, practices are not absolutely permanent. An example may be useful here. Consider the “old German punishments,” or to be more precise the old German “practices,” as Nietzsche presents them in the Second Essay: “stoning...breaking on the wheel...piercing with stakes, tearing apart or trampling by horses... [and] boiling the criminal in oil or wine” (*GM II 3*). The practice of stoning, the strict sequence of procedures associated with stoning, for example, has enjoyed relative permanence, though, to be sure, the meanings ascribed to the practice have changed dramatically over time. If we consider the practice of boiling the criminal in oil or wine, for example, then we note that the same degree of permanence found in the practice of stoning is absent in the latter case. Hence, Nietzsche’s claim: “The form [the custom, the act, the drama, the strict set of procedures] is fluid, the meaning even more so” (*GM II 12, 13*). In light of Nietzsche’s point, Leiter’s assertion that *only* the meaning is “discontinuous from the point of origin to present-day embodiment” is exegetically unsound.<sup>46</sup>

This particular exegetical confusion has consequences for Leiter’s construal of the genealogical method, because it leads him to claim that there is an essentially permanent element of MPS that the genealogist is meant to uncover. The candidate that Leiter puts forth as the enduring element of MPS is the causal powers, or the effects, of adopting this particular evaluative practice. Thus, Leiter claims that Nietzsche’s central methodological objective, in conducting his genealogical inquiry, is to demonstrate the pernicious causal powers, the insidious effects of adopting MPS as an evaluative practice, upon the flourishing of human excellence. And this Leiter claims is perfectly consistent with Nietzsche’s historical methodology. A point he elucidates as follows:

This idea—that the origin of MPS sheds evidential light on the causal powers of MPS—is still compatible with the genealogical hypothesis that the meaning or purpose of morality is fluid over time. The causal powers belong, as it were, to the ‘permanent’ element of MPS, but it is perfectly intelligible that some objects might have stable causal powers, but very different meaning or value

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<sup>45</sup> Leiter, Brian (2002) p. 171

<sup>46</sup> Leiter, Brian (2002) p. 171

for different people at different times. Thus, for example, the causal powers of the sun have been stable over time, yet its ‘meaning’ or ‘purpose’ as understood by human beings has been remarkably various.<sup>47</sup>

Again, Leiter takes the causal powers, the effects of adopting MPS as an evaluative practice, to be stable. And this, in turn, makes sense of Leiter’s analogy. By employing the analogy of the sun Leiter’s argument implies that MPS, like the sun, possesses constant causal powers, powers that are “stable over time.” Leiter’s reading then, at least implicitly, suggests that Nietzsche’s genealogical method seeks to uncover, as it were, “the *factum brutum*,” the stable causal powers, denuded of all interpretation (*GM III 24*).<sup>48</sup>

Leiter draws a weak analogy here. There is a clear difference between the sun’s causal powers and the “causal powers” of an evaluative practice, like MPS, for example. The sun possesses stable causal powers independently of the “meaning” or “purpose” ascribed to the causal powers by human beings. In other words, in virtue of being a brute natural object, the sun has such “stable causal powers.” An evaluative practice, MPS, by contrast, has causal powers only in so far as it is garnished with such powers within a system of purposes. That is to say, it possesses such powers only in virtue of the “meanings,” or “purposes” ascribed to the practice within a system of purposes. So if, for example, one adopts MPS as a means of judging oneself and others, and accordingly judges actions in terms of “the intentional choices of actors characterized by freedom of the will,” then this adherence to MPS may “causally” prevent one’s flourishing if one is a nascent higher human being.<sup>49</sup> Yet, here the causal powers are mediated through the meaning ascribed to the practice within this system of purposes. Accordingly, an evaluative practice is garnished with stable causal powers by human beings, whereas the sun is not.

Leiter’s version of Nietzsche’s genealogical mode of inquiry is rendered problematic by the account of Nietzsche’s “major point of historical method” that I have presented above. Nietzsche explicitly rules out the kind of stability of our practices, or the form that Leiter’s formulation of the genealogical method requires.

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<sup>47</sup> Leiter, Brian (2002) p. 178

<sup>48</sup> It is worth noting that in the *Nachlass* Nietzsche writes: “‘Things that have a constitution in themselves’—a dogmatic idea with which one must break absolutely” (*WP 559*). In the following note Nietzsche argues: “That things possess a *constitution in themselves* totally apart from interpretation and subjectivity is a *totally futile hypothesis*: it presupposes that *interpretation and subject-being are not* essential, that a thing freed from all relationships would still be a thing” (*WP 560*).

<sup>49</sup> Owen, David (2007) p. 69

This claim is evidenced in Nietzsche's assertion that: "The form is fluid the meaning even more so" (*GM II 12*), as well as by Nietzsche's claim, previously discussed, that the act, the drama, the practice, a strict set of procedures, is only relatively permanent (*GM II 13*). Rather than suggesting that practices are enduring, Nietzsche is pointing to the embeddedness of our practices within systems of purposes. Understood in terms of Nietzsche's mini-genealogy of punishment the point I want to stress is this: instead of attempting to uncover the fundamental causal powers of a practice, a genealogical inquiry explores the varying systems of purposes within which the practice has been employed and asks: which interests has the practice, of boiling the criminal in oil and wine, for example, been made to serve? Which of the varying systems of purposes, if any at all, best serves our interests? These sorts of genealogical questions remind us that practices become welded to particular interests and these interests are in turn embedded within a system of purposes. Through his mini-genealogy of punishment Nietzsche demonstrates the impossibility of uncovering a singular causal power of a practice. In so doing Nietzsche provides us with the tools to understand how throughout the course of history our practices, like the meanings that we ascribe to them, have been malleable. If this interpretation is correct, then it seems that a genealogical inquiry would yield something rather different than the grand proclamation that our practices possess "stable causal powers."

In this section I have argued that Nietzsche's refinement of his historical methodology, in section thirteen of the Second Essay, claims that the practice has relative permanence whilst the meaning is far more changeable. I argued that this point renders exegetically unsound Leiter's account of Nietzsche's major point of historical method. Moreover, I suggested that Leiter's misreading of Nietzsche's historical methodology makes his account of Nietzsche's genealogical method problematic. I have not, as of yet, connected these worries up with Leiter's claim that Nietzsche's genealogical method takes the form of a transcendent critique. In the following section I will elucidate this connection. In so doing I will argue that Leiter is not only mistaken in ascribing to Nietzsche's genealogical mode of inquiry the form of a transcendent critique, but I will also suggest that this error leads Leiter to conclude that genealogy is an incidental feature of Nietzsche's critique of morality.

## **2.2 Nietzsche's Transcendent Critique of MPS**

A transcendent critique functions by assessing a framework from a standpoint outside of the world-view under analysis, and it is Leiter's contention that Nietzsche mounts such an attack on MPS. Leiter puts the point this way: "...morality is criticized from a broadly 'scientific' and 'truth-seeking' standpoint which is *not* internal to Christian morality, but which Christian morality helped produce."<sup>50</sup> For Leiter, Nietzsche's transcendent critique of morality proceeds from the assumption, or "the thesis that the causal powers of the object are stable over time."<sup>51</sup> From this thesis Nietzsche, through recourse to the genealogical mode of inquiry, demonstrates that MPS has the effect of thwarting the flourishing of human excellence. Or, as Leiter claims: "only the genealogy in conjunction with the thesis that the causal powers of an object are stable over time supports the claim that MPS in fact has the pernicious effects Nietzsche attributes to it." Thus, according to Leiter, Nietzsche's genealogical method demonstrates, from a "scientific" or "truth-seeking" standpoint, that MPS, in fact, has this particular effect upon the flourishing of nascent higher human beings. It is worth noting that because Nietzsche's objective is to examine these pernicious causal effects his genealogical narratives are incidental to his critique of MPS. Hence Leiter writes: "no recourse to the genealogy of MPS is required to establish this causal claim."<sup>52</sup>

There are two problems with this rendering of Nietzsche's genealogical method. The first problem stems from Leiter's claim that the external assumption that guides Nietzsche's transcendent critique is "the thesis that objects possess stable causal powers over time." This thesis requires clarification. According to Leiter the object that possesses these stable causal powers is the practice of evaluating oneself and others. And this formulation is clearly problematic. In the previous section I argued at length that this formulation runs afoul of Nietzsche's major point of historical method: namely Nietzsche does not attribute to our practices an absolute stability.

The second worry stems from the first problem. It is Leiter's contention that the genealogy, as a mode of inquiry, is incidental to Nietzsche's critique of MPS because Nietzsche is investigating the "causal powers" of MPS. And, as such, there are many ways in which one could go about investigating such a causal claim. Or, as

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<sup>50</sup> Leiter, Brian (2002) p. 175 fn. 7

<sup>51</sup> Leiter, Brian (2002) p. 179

<sup>52</sup> Leiter, Brian (2002) p. 179

Leiter puts the point: “An additional virtue of this reading of the connection between genealogy and critique is that it explains why Nietzsche describes the genealogy as ‘one means among many’ towards a critique of morality...”<sup>53</sup> As previously discussed, it remains far from clear that Nietzsche takes the genealogical mode of inquiry to be “one means among many.” Rather, one of Nietzsche’s points here seems to be that one can methodologically investigate the origins of morality with varying degrees of methodological success. And this is a point Leiter, at least, implies in introducing the salient features of the genealogical mode of inquiry. For example, Leiter writes that a genealogical inquiry is “different” from the tracing of a family pedigree. A pedigree is often conducted with the intention to positively valorise one’s origins, thus showing that one is of a distinguished origin. Yet, this type of an investigation into origins is not, according to Leiter, a genealogy. If this is correct then it seems that *any* investigation into the origins of a person, an institution, or a practice is not *ipso facto* a genealogical investigation. After all, one can hypothesize about the origins of morality in a variety of distinct ways. One can, for example, claim, along with the “English psychologists” that the present function or value picks out the original function or value. This hypothesis concerning the origin of morality, Nietzsche tells us, is naïve (*GM I* 1-3, *GM II* 12). Thus, when Nietzsche claims that “hypothesizing about the origin or morality” is but “one means among many” he is not making the stronger claim that a genealogical inquiry is “one means among many.”

There is one additional point worth making here. In the Preface Nietzsche tells us that “we need a *critique* of moral values, *the value of these values themselves must first be called into question*—and for that there is needed a knowledge of the conditions and circumstances in which they grew, under which they changed and evolved” (*GM* Preface 6). Leiter’s assessment of the genealogical inquiry as incidental to Nietzsche’s critique of morality forces him to make the following claim: “In fact, as we shall see, ‘need’ is too strong: a genealogy is one way of getting at the critique, but it is not, strictly speaking, necessary for it.”<sup>54</sup> Thus, Leiter concludes that Nietzsche overstates his point in arguing that having historical knowledge about the “conditions and circumstances in which [our moral values] grew, under which they changed and evolved” is essential to his critique of those values. Yet, if the

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<sup>53</sup> Leiter, Brian (2002) p. 177

<sup>54</sup> Leiter, Brian (2002) p. 176 fn. 9

interpretation of Nietzsche's Preface that I have offered is cogent, then we need not follow Leiter to this undesirable conclusion.

Given the forgoing we should reject Leiter's conception of Nietzsche's genealogical method as a form of transcendent critique for three related reasons. First, Leiter's rendering of the genealogical method rests upon a misreading of Nietzsche's major point of historical method. Second, this particular misreading leads Leiter to erroneously conclude that "practices" for Nietzsche are stable or essential. And, third, this commitment leads to Leiter's assessment that the genealogy is an incidental feature of Nietzsche's critique of morality, which is directed solely towards those who are predisposed to Nietzsche's evaluative tastes. The final clause, no doubt, requires clarification, for as mentioned in the introduction to this Chapter the intended audience of Nietzsche's genealogical narratives is a contested issue in the secondary literature. Accordingly, I now turn to an examination and evaluation of Leiter's argument for circumscribing Nietzsche's intended audience to a handful of interlocutors.

### 2.3 Leiter on Nietzsche's Audience

Brian Leiter claims: "[Nietzsche] has nothing to say to those readers who don't share his evaluative tastes."<sup>55</sup> Put slightly differently, he asserts that Nietzsche circumscribes "his audience to those who share his evaluative taste: to those for whom no justification would be required, for those who are simply 'made for it,' 'those whose ears are related to ours,' who are 'predisposed and predestined for Nietzsche's insights."<sup>56</sup> Leiter's reasons for this assessment are as follows, and I quote at length:

...[Nietzsche] is quite concerned to circumscribe his audience. As he puts it most simply at the beginning of *The Antichrist*: 'This book belongs to the very few;' in particular Nietzsche's ideal reader is marked by 'Reverence for oneself' (*A* Pref)—one of the defining traits, he tells us elsewhere, of the 'noble' person (*BGE*: 287). Similarly, in his autobiography Nietzsche says regarding 'the air of my writings' that '[o]ne must be made for it' (*EH* Pref: 3). He claims, too, that, 'Ultimately, nobody can get more out of things including books, than he already knows (*EH* III: 1; cf. *BGE*: 87).... Now if we assume that Nietzsche, in the revaluation, is simply giving expression to the evaluative taste of a certain type of person—a 'higher' or 'noble'

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<sup>55</sup> Leiter, Brian (2000) p. 290

<sup>56</sup> Leiter, Brian (2000) p. 291 See also Leiter (2002) esp. pp. 151-153



person...then it would, indeed, make sense for Nietzsche to want to circumscribe his audience to those who share Nietzsche's evaluative taste, those for whom no justification would be required...<sup>57</sup>

Leiter's central thesis is that Nietzsche's project of re-evaluation simply expresses, or brings to the fore, the evaluate taste of a particular type of person, a higher or noble person, and given that, he must methodologically circumscribe his audience to those who already share his evaluative tastes. There is without a doubt much textual evidence to support Leiter's argument. Yet, I take it that this evidence may be misleading.

Firstly, there is additional textual evidence, which points to the opposite conclusion. In Book Five of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche describes us as "the heirs of Europe's longest and bravest self-overcoming" (*GS* 357). We are heirs of this longest and bravest self-overcoming insofar as we recognize "...what it was that really triumphed over the Christian god: Christian morality itself, the concept of truthfulness that was understood more rigorously, the father confessor's refinement of the Christian conscience, translated and sublimated into scientific conscience, into intellectual cleanliness at any price" (*GS* 357). And in the penultimate section of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche reiterates the salience of this point as follows:

All great things bring about their own destruction through an act of self-overcoming...In this way Christianity *as a dogma* was destroyed by its own morality; in the same way Christianity *as morality* must now perish, too: we stand on the threshold of *this* event. After Christian truthfulness has drawn its *most striking inference*, its inference *against* itself; this will happen, however, when it poses the question '*what is the meaning of all will to truth?*'...As the will to truth thus gains self-consciousness—there can be no doubt of that—morality will gradually *perish* now: this is the great spectacle in a hundred acts reserved for the next two centuries in Europe—the most terrible, most questionable, and perhaps also the most hopeful of all spectacles—(*GM* III 27).

Here, Nietzsche is clear: Christianity is suffering from an incurable internal contradiction. Moreover, the self-overcoming of this internal contradiction is manifested in three ways: (1) through the self-overcoming of Christianity as dogma, (2) through the self-overcoming of Christian morality, (3) through the self-overcoming of the belief in the unconditional value of truth. Thus, this passage

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<sup>57</sup> Leiter, Brian (2000) pp. 149-150

suggests that Nietzsche's target audience is not limited to those who share his evaluative tastes.

Secondly, Nietzsche's claim that "all things bring about their own destruction" is hard to settle with Leiter's contention that the genealogy, as a mode of inquiry, takes the form of a transcendent critique (*GM* III 27). Leiter's staunch and misguided commitment to viewing the genealogy as a transcendent critique thus leads him into the uncomfortable position of circumscribing Nietzsche's target audience to those who are predestined for Nietzsche's insights. Leiter's account of the methodology cannot explain Nietzsche's rendering of the genealogical method as a means which can contribute to the "self-overcoming" of Christianity.

I have argued that in circumscribing Nietzsche's target audience to a handful of predestined interlocutors Leiter's reading runs into two problems: (1) Leiter's reading cannot account for why Nietzsche, in the *Genealogy*, contends that the self-overcoming of morality can be manifested in relationship to the overcoming of at least three distinct commitments. And (2) that Leiter's account cannot adequately explain how Nietzsche's genealogical mode of inquiry is meant to contribute to these sorts of overcomings. As a result, it seems that Nietzsche's genealogical inquiries are directed to a larger group of interlocutors than solely those who are already predestined for his insights.

At this point it may be useful to begin to sketch a connection between Leiter's formulation of the genealogical mode of inquiry and the account of the methodology offered by Raymond Geuss. Both scholars, despite their ostensibly dissimilar accounts, are committed to the claim that there is no exegetical advantage in viewing the genealogical mode of inquiry as a kind of pedigree: a topic to which I now turn.

### **3. Genealogy as Pedigree**

There is a debate in the scholarship surrounding whether or not Nietzsche's genealogical mode of inquiry is best seen as a type of pedigree. As abovementioned Leiter and Geuss, despite their differing accounts concerning the functionality of the genealogical mode of inquiry, are nevertheless both committed to the claim that Nietzsche's genealogical methodology is radically distinct from the tracing of a pedigree. Hence, in contrast with scholars such as Nickolas Pappas who argue that

Nietzsche's genealogy "traces the pedigree of modern institutions and practices" and Paul Loeb who contends:

... '[G]enealogy' is a kind of 'history' of family pedigrees, and it is used to determine the legitimacy or value of a person by tracing his line of descent... Metaphorically applied to altruistic values, therefore, Nietzsche's notion of genealogy is meant to suggest the history of plebeian ancestry that proves their disvalue from an aristocratic standpoint.<sup>58</sup>

both Leiter and Geuss assert that Nietzsche's genealogical mode of inquiry differs in every respect from the tracing of a pedigree. Rather than rejecting the commonplace equation of genealogy and pedigree out of hand, I argue that there is some exegetical advantage in interpreting Nietzsche's genealogical inquiry as a type of pedigree. More specifically I argue that for Nietzsche, an important aspect of the genealogical mode of inquiry, often overlooked in the secondary literature, is the ability of the methodology to assess an ideal in terms of its own internal standards. Nevertheless, it is important to note that in suggesting that one of the most salient features of the genealogical exercise is brought to the forefront in viewing the genealogical mode of inquiry as a type of pedigree, I am not, at the same time, making the stronger claim that Nietzsche's genealogical exercise should be solely viewed and understood as a type of pedigree.

Leiter's argument against viewing the shape of Nietzsche's genealogy as a pedigree takes the following form:

In the standard dictionary definition, 'genealogy' is the study of family pedigree... In the genealogy of morality, his aim is critical not positive, and he is concerned *precisely* to break the chain of value transmission by showing that the value or meaning of the genealogical object is discontinuous over time...<sup>59</sup>

Whereas Geuss' argument is premised on a similar assertion: "Giving a 'genealogy' is for Nietzsche the exact reverse of what we might call 'tracing a pedigree.'"<sup>60</sup> As such, Geuss elucidates the objectives of a pedigree as follows:

(1) In the interests of a positive valorization of some item (2) the pedigree,

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<sup>58</sup> Pappas, Nickolas, (2005) p. 109 and Loeb, Paul (1995) pp. 126-127

<sup>59</sup> Leiter, Brian (2002) p. 167

<sup>60</sup> Geuss, Raymond (1999) p. 1

starting from a singular origin (3) which is an actual source of value (4) traces an unbroken line of succession from the origin to that item (5) by a series of steps that preserves whatever value is in question.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, both Leiter and Geuss conclude that the genealogical mode of inquiry forbids any direct inference from the point of origins to the current value. To suggest otherwise, they rightly contend, would violate Nietzsche's major point of historical method. Consequently, they argue that Nietzsche's genealogical inquiry is distinct from the tracking of a pedigree.

Despite the obvious merits of these formulations I will nevertheless suggest that we should be careful in hastily dismissing the explanatory power of an analogous connection between a certain type of pedigree, and Nietzsche's methodological aims. An example may be useful here. Suppose a person attempts to claim the estate of a deceased, albeit estranged, relative. In order to claim the right to the property that person needs to demonstrate a very specific linkage. In this case, due to the elevated position the person is claiming, and in order to be held as a proper candidate for the assets, the tracing of a pedigree, i.e. being a legitimate heir, is crucially important. If their pedigree is found suspect, then as a result, they have no right to the property.

Similarly, Christianity professes an esteemed pedigree. The claim to a revered pedigree is manifested in the assertion that "...the things of the highest value must have another, *peculiar origin*—they cannot be derived from this transitory, seductive, deceptive, paltry world, from this turmoil of delusion and lust" (*BGE* 2). Nietzsche undermines this self-proclaimed position by demonstrating the conditional and contingent circumstances from which it arose. By tracing the pedigree that Christianity has claimed for itself, Nietzsche demonstrates that the appropriation of an esteemed origin is unwarranted. Nietzsche challenges the presumption that "...the higher must not be *allowed* to grow out of the lower, must not be *allowed* to have grown at all...Moral: everything of the first rank must be *causa sui*. Origin in something else counts as an objection, as casting a doubt on value" (*TI* 'Reason' 4). As such, Nietzsche seizes upon the pedigree that Christianity has offered in order to legitimize itself and thus mounts an immanent critique of the framework.

Given the foregoing it should be clear that viewing the genealogical mode of inquiry as elucidating a certain type of pedigree has a limited explanatory power. To

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<sup>61</sup> Geuss (1999) p. 3

be clear, the particular pedigree that is traced is not one Nietzsche himself offers. Rather, Nietzsche explores the pedigree offered by Christianity to disvalue the privileged claims it offers in order to legitimize itself. In this way, Nietzsche can be seen as calling into question the pedigree, the authoritative backing, immanent to a particular system of purposes. The tracing of this particular kind of pedigree is an essential component of Nietzsche's genealogical inquiry.

There is one further issue worth exploring here that pertains solely to Geuss' formulation of the genealogical mode of inquiry. Geuss' dismissal of the explanatory power of the particular kind of pedigree elucidated above, leads him to exclude as methodologically relevant, the authority upon which a particular system of purposes presents itself as based. Geuss makes the following set of claims:

To be sure a genealogy *can* undermine various *beliefs* about the origins of different forms of valuation. If I have a certain form of valuation I may need to believe certain things—if I am a Christian I may need to believe certain things about the origin of Christian forms of valuation. So if those beliefs are undermined, I may feel my values undermined, too, but this is as it were *my* problem, not part of the intention of the genealogy.”<sup>62</sup>

Geuss sketches the salience of this methodological point as follows:

It is a particular and idiosyncratic problem of Christianity that it cultivates truthfulness and introspection and is a form of valuation which requires its devotees to make claims and have beliefs that won't stand up to truthful introspective scrutiny (such as that moral actions arise from altruistic sources). This means that Christianity dissolves itself (*GM* III. 27, *FW* §357) and Nietzsche's genealogy will contribute to that process.<sup>63</sup>

There are two problems with this rendering of the genealogy as a mode of inquiry. First, Geuss limits the scope of Nietzsche's target audience to those who profess a faith in Christian morality. Nietzsche's target audience, to be sure, includes the Christians, but it also includes those who profess a faith in Christian morality without the attending faith in a Christian God as well as those who have faith in the unconditional value of truth. Second, the power of Nietzsche's genealogical mode of inquiry lies in its ability to call into question such systems of purposes. And one way in which Nietzsche's genealogical mode of inquiry can achieve this methodological aim is to question the authority upon which a particular institution presents itself as based. In other words it is my contention that the undermining of our inherited

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<sup>62</sup> Geuss, Raymond (1999) p. 20

<sup>63</sup> Geuss, Raymond (1999) p. 21

values is an intention of the genealogical mode of inquiry and moreover that the genealogy may succeed in this endeavor. Or, as Ruth Abbey puts the point: “Geuss claims that the exposure of origins is irrelevant to Nietzsche’s assessment of the value of goods, it seems [contra-Geuss] that the power of the genealogy to loosen the hold of values will depend upon how any morality presents itself, how it gives itself authority.”<sup>64</sup> The authority upon which a particular institution presents itself as based is of tremendous importance to Nietzsche’s genealogical exercise. Bernard Williams, for example, writes:

...a genealogy in terms of actual history is almost bound to be critical to some extent...The idea...that the concepts or values under explanation are likely to claim an authority which rejects the appearance of contingency, and so resist being explained in real terms at all. But this is true to a greater extent of some values and institutions than others. As Nietzsche remorselessly pointed out, it is true to a much greater extent of the morality system than of other ethical formulations, because of its desperate need to be self-sufficient.<sup>65</sup>

Accordingly, Nietzsche’s genealogical mode of inquiry can be seen as a kind of pedigree in the following sense: Nietzsche calls into question the authority upon which a particular system of evaluation operates. Moreover, he challenges the notion that such systems of purposes are self-sufficient, which is evidenced in their claims to a distinguished origin: that “...everything of the first rank must be *causa sui*” (*TI* ‘Reason’ 4). Thus, a central aspect of the genealogy as a mode of inquiry is explained through recourse to the explanatory power of this particular kind of pedigree.

There is one further issue that deserves some critical reflection. Geuss argues that genealogy is critique: a claim I support. Yet, the manner in which Geuss unpacks the claim leaves something to be desired. In the next section, through a description and an evaluation of Geuss’ argument, I substantiate this claim.

#### **4. Geuss: Genealogy as Critique**

Geuss claims that the genealogical mode of inquiry serves a critical function. The objective of Geuss’ investigation is to discern precisely which form of critique genealogy as methodology takes. Geuss begins by formulating three “basic types of critique:” (1) the ordinary everyday use of the term critique, (2) the Kantian form of

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<sup>64</sup> Abbey, Ruth (2000) p. 6

<sup>65</sup> Williams, Bernard (2000) p. 159

critique, and (3) critique as a way of “problematizing something” or as “putting into question.”<sup>66</sup> He concludes by arguing that the genealogical mode of inquiry takes the form of a problematizing critique, and that it is Foucault’s use of the method of genealogy that most directly exemplifies the critical function of the methodology. Thus, Geuss contends it is in the work of Foucault, rather than that of Nietzsche, that we witness the uncompromising and immanent critique that ultimately overcomes the Kantian formulation of critique. After explicating and reconstructing the three forms of critique abovementioned I argue that Geuss is correct to conclude that Nietzsche’s genealogical mode of inquiry takes the form of a problematizing, or immanent, critique, yet his predilection for the Foucauldian critique is rendered, at best, tenuous.

#### 4.1 The Everyday Use of Critique

Geuss argues that the term critique when employed in conventional parlance possesses an “unambiguously negative connotation.”<sup>67</sup> When one is critical in this general sense, one must be engaged in an activity of *nay* saying. Further, one must provide reasons for one’s rejection of a particular position, and these reasons, Geuss contends, are language-game specific. This differentiates the justification of a position, which includes the presentation of positive reasons, from the critique of a given position, which is the presentation of negative reasons or grounds.<sup>68</sup> Geuss contends that Nietzsche’s genealogy, as a mode of critical reflection, does not take this form of critique. He substantiates this assertion by referring us to the first section of Book Four of *The Gay Science* where Nietzsche asserts that: “Let *looking away* be my only negation!...for I wish only, one day, simply to be a Yes-sayer” (*GS* 276).<sup>69</sup> Here, it is worth noting that it is far from obvious that Nietzsche is adopting the sustained methodological objective of looking away as his only viable mode of negation.

Nevertheless, I take it that Geuss’ point is that the genealogical mode of inquiry as a form of critique is more nuanced than the everyday use of the term implies. Geuss puts the point in this way: “A genealogy is ...not a critique in the everyday sense...it does not automatically imply the rejection of what is subjected to

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<sup>66</sup> Geuss, Raymond (2002) pp. 209-210

<sup>67</sup> Geuss, Raymond (2002) p. 209

<sup>68</sup> Geuss, Raymond (2002) p. 209

<sup>69</sup> Geuss, Raymond (2002) p. 210

genealogical analysis.”<sup>70</sup> As such a genealogical investigation is not *ispo facto* a critical exercise. To suggest otherwise, Geuss contends, would “conceal the relevant genealogical questions.”<sup>71</sup> In other words, to view the genealogical mode of inquiry as solely a critical enterprise would obscure an important feature of the methodology: that of calling into question particular systems of purposes by investigating why particular concepts, such as “‘contrition,’ ‘sin,’ ‘punishment,’ and ‘church’ come to be binding and universally applied...” within a particular framework.<sup>72</sup> Geuss concludes that genealogy does not take the form of critique in this everyday sense, and he explores a second option, which he again renders implausible.

## 4.2 The Kantian Critique

Geuss concludes his argument regarding the tenability of viewing the genealogical mode of inquiry as taking the form of Kant’s transcendental critique in this way: “...the programme of transcendental grounding is obsolete and should therefore be abandoned.”<sup>73</sup> This claim is substantiated by the following analysis of the Kantian formulation of the objectives of critique:

Kant believed that there was nothing of relevance outside the competence of pure reason, that it was impossible to undermine reason itself by calling it into question; or more precisely: that the very attempt to do so would logically lead to the sort of transcendental reflection that reveals the absolute and universal validity of the rationality implied in science, morality and the associated language game of grounding and justification.<sup>74</sup>

Geuss contends that the Kantian critique reifies the value of reason by establishing the transcendental conditions by which reason is universally valuable within the systems of science and morality. Given that Geuss’ objective in the essay is to illuminate Foucault’s objection to the Kantian mode of critique, and to post-Kantian uses of this mode of critique, he is silent concerning Nietzsche’s opposition. I propose the following reconstruction on his behalf.

In the Preface of the First Edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant elucidates his objectives as follows:

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<sup>70</sup> Geuss, Raymond (2002) p. 212

<sup>71</sup> Geuss, Raymond (2002) p. 212

<sup>72</sup> Geuss, Raymond (2002) p. 212

<sup>73</sup> Geuss, Raymond (2002) p. 210

<sup>74</sup> Geuss, Raymond (2002) p. 210



...to call to reason to undertake anew the most difficult of all its tasks, namely, that of self-knowledge, and to institute a tribunal which will assure to reason its lawful claims, and dismiss all groundless pretensions, not by despotic decrees, but in accordance with its own eternal and unalterable laws. This tribunal is no other than the *critique of pure reason*.<sup>75</sup>

Accordingly, Kant's aim is to employ the methodology of critique by placing reason before the court of reason itself, in order to accomplish the most difficult of all its undertakings: the task of self-knowledge. In employing this methodology Kant is in the position to dismiss "all groundless pretensions" and "despotic decrees" and is able, more positively, to determine the limits and the scope of reason. Of his methodology, Kant tells us:

...[I]t is nothing but the *inventory* of all our possessions through *pure reason*, systematically arranged. In this field nothing can escape us. What reason produces entirely out of itself cannot be concealed, but is brought to light by reason itself immediately the common principle has been discovered.<sup>76</sup>

The critique of reason, by pure reason, is a total critique insofar as "nothing can escape" its field of inquiry, and immanent, insofar as the critique of pure reason is entirely of itself and by itself. For Kant, critique is intended to be both immanent and total. And the treatise, itself, is presented as a "treatise on the method."<sup>77</sup> Yet, I argue that Nietzsche takes issue with the methodology of Kant's critique on both fronts, and contends that Kant failed to usher in both an immanent and a total critique.

If Kant fails to usher in an immanent critique, then the obvious question to ask is: On what grounds does his project fail? To begin to sketch an answer to this question we would do well to look to the 1886 Preface to *Daybreak*, where Nietzsche poses a set of questions: "...[I]s it not peculiar to demand of an instrument that it should criticise its own usefulness and suitability? That the intellect should 'know' its own value, its own capacity, its own limitations? Was it not even a little absurd?" (*D* P 3) Paradoxically, Nietzsche points out, the faculty of reason is incapable of accomplishing "the most difficult of all its tasks," as set by Kant. Kant makes reason, as Deleuze puts it: "both the tribunal and the accused; [he constitutes reason] as judge and plaintiff, judging and judged."<sup>78</sup> In other words, for Deleuze:

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<sup>75</sup> Kant, Immanuel (1965) p. 9 (A xi)

<sup>76</sup> Kant, Immanuel (1965) p. 14 (A xx)

<sup>77</sup> Kant, Immanuel (1965) p. 24 (B xxiii)

<sup>78</sup> Deleuze, Giles (2006) p. 85

Kant lacked a method which permitted reason to be judged from the inside without giving it the task of being its own judge. And, in fact, Kant doesn't realize his project of immanent critique. Transcendental philosophy discovers conditions which still remain external to the conditioned. Transcendental conditions are principles of conditioning and not of internal genesis.<sup>79</sup>

Kant's project of formulating an immanent critique fails because he lacks the method that would provide him with the framework within which he could call into question the value of values immanent to a particular system of purposes. Or, as Nietzsche puts the point, the instrument of reason that Kant employs is "an instrument...incapable of judging itself" (*DP* 3).

Accordingly, the second point of contention grows out of the first. Kant's inability to judge competing claims based upon reasons immanent to a system of purposes leads him to fail to usher in a total critique. The problem, according to Nietzsche, is that Kant's methodology does not permit him to call into question the value of our moral values: "There are questions in which man is *not* entitled to a decision about truth and untruth; all the highest questions, all the highest value problems, lie beyond human reason ... To comprehend the limits of reason—*that* alone is truly philosophy..." (*AC* 56) In other words, the lack of a methodology that permits him to call into question claims immanent to a system of purposes forces Kant to reify the value of entrenched values. In so doing Kant fails to achieve a total critique. Deleuze puts the point in the following way:

Kant merely pushed a very old conception of critique to the limit, a conception which saw critique as a force which should be brought to bear on all claims to knowledge and truth, but not on knowledge and truth themselves; a force which should be brought to bear on all claims of morality, but not on morality itself.<sup>80</sup>

In taking the "value of these 'values' as given, as factual, as beyond all question..." Kant reifies the value of truth, knowledge and morality "in support of popular prejudice" (*GM* P 6, *GS* 193). More pointedly, for Kant, and all "metaphysicians," this prejudice is expressed, philosophically, in the presupposition that "the things of the highest value must have another *peculiar* origin—they cannot be derived from this

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<sup>79</sup> Deleuze, Gilles (2006) p.85 Nietzsche in the *Genealogy* delays the question of whether or not Kant intended an immanent critique: "[Did] Kant's *victory* over the dogmatic concepts of theology ('God,' 'soul,' 'freedom,' 'immortality') damaged that ideal?—it being no concern of ours for the present whether Kant ever had any intention of doing such a thing" (*GM* III 25).

<sup>80</sup> Deleuze, Gilles (2006) pp. 83-84

transitory, seductive, deceptive, paltry world...Rather from the lap of Being, the intransitory, the hidden god, the ‘thing-in-itself’ —there must be their basis, and nowhere else” (*BGE* 2). For Nietzsche, the failure of the Kantian project lies in Kant’s inability to usher in a total critique because of a failure to question the value of our values. Nietzsche, by contrast, calls into question “*the value of these values*” and hence formulates a total critique (*GM P* 6).

For Nietzsche, Kant’s greatest of tasks, the task of self-knowledge, remains to be completed—“we are unknown to ourselves we men of knowledge” (*GM P* 1).<sup>81</sup> In failing to call into question the value of knowledge, truth, and morality, Kant, at the same time, fails to ask the types of questions that, in their harvest, may yield such knowledge. In order to achieve self-knowledge we need a total critique, for we must call into question the value of our esteemed values by tracing the living crystallizations of the very systems of purposes through which we have made sense of ourselves. In other words, Nietzsche conceives of critique as both immanent and total.

The foregoing has been an aside. A departure that, I hope, has served to lend credence to Geuss’ contention that Nietzsche’s critique is markedly distinct from Kant’s implementation of critique. If the foregoing is cogent, then we are in the position to follow Geuss in examining the final mode of critique: a problematising critique.

### 4.3 The Problematising Critique

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<sup>81</sup> For example in *Daybreak* Nietzsche writes;

...under the appearance of attaining a full and final knowledge of the past, the movement as a whole set in general below feeling and –in the words Kant employed to designate his own task—‘again paved the way for faith by showing knowledge its limitations.’ Let us breath freely again: the hour of danger has passed! And strange: it is precisely the spirits the Germans so eloquently conjured up which have in the long run most thwarted the intentions of their conjurers—after appearing for a time as ancillaries of the spirit of obscurantism and reaction, the study of history, understanding of origins and evolutions, empathy for the past, newly aroused passion for feeling and knowledge one day assumed a new nature and now fly on the broadest wings above any beyond their former conjurers as new and stronger genii of *that very Enlightenment* against which they were first conjured up. This Enlightenment we must now carry forward...(*D* 197)

Here Nietzsche is claiming that the project of the Enlightenment must be carried a step further by the correct application of the history, and the study of origins and evolutions. In light of our discussion, it may be added, that in order to “fly on the broadest wings above and beyond [the] former conjurers,” we need both an historical knowledge of the circumstances under which our values changed, an historical knowledge, and a total critique, which calls into question the value of our most esteemed values.

The term “problematizing” refers “to the specific ways in which a topic is constituted as an issue for reflection and action within particular systems of judgments.”<sup>82</sup> A problematizing critique operates by identifying the system of purposes that consequently furnishes an issue with meaning. Geuss puts the point this way: “the principle targets of this problematizing approach are the apparently self-evident assumptions of a given form of life and the (supposedly) natural or inevitable and unchangeable character of given identities.”<sup>83</sup> The problematizing approach may thus be understood as a means of conducting an immanent critique of a given framework by challenging the seemingly “inevitable and unchangeable” self-evident assumptions immanent to that system.

Geuss provides us with the following example. Consider the Ecclesiastical Court of the Middle Ages. The success of such courts depended upon the functioning of a range of beliefs regarded, at the time, as self-evident: the absolute truth of the Christian Gospel and its saving message; the necessary division of all human beings as Orthodox Christians (proper Catholics) as Heretics, or as Pagans. Geuss points out that traditional theistic philosophical discussion, whether critical or Apologetic, investigates the truth or the potential justification of the traditional Christian doctrine and this is “to tacitly presuppose something like Christianity already exists as unified and internally coherent.”<sup>84</sup> This obscures the relevant genealogical question: how did these assumptions come to be universally binding?<sup>85</sup>

Further Geuss argues that Foucault’s work exemplifies the genealogical method as a form of problematizing critique. Foucault is concerned with arguing that “x is dangerous” rather than “x is bad” or “x is false,” and, further, Geuss finds this to be far superior to the Nietzschean recommendation of “looking away.”<sup>86</sup> Geuss states:

The dangerous is what we must *pre-eminently* concentrate attention upon, what we must *before all else* take care to consider. The dangerous can indeed be attractive or even valuable, but in cases of acute danger the aforementioned Nietzschean attitude of ‘looking away’ is not always the best strategy. Genealogy as pursued by Foucault, on the other hand, is a way of concentrating attention on a given situation in the context of an imminent danger.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Owen, David (2002a) p. 218

<sup>83</sup> Geuss, Raymond (2002) p. 211

<sup>84</sup> Geuss, Raymond (2002) p. 212

<sup>85</sup> Geuss, Raymond (2002) p. 212

<sup>86</sup> Geuss, Raymond (2002) p. 213

<sup>87</sup> Geuss, Raymond (2002) p. 213

Here, Geuss concludes that Nietzsche's proclamation found within Book Four of *The Gay Science* is an expression of his sustained methodological objectives and he further contends that this renders the Foucauldian application of the methodology superior to the Nietzschean use of the mode of inquiry.

However, it is far from clear that Nietzsche in the *Genealogy* is recommending a "looking away" stance towards the troubles of modernity. Recall, Geuss' assessment of Nietzsche's genealogical mode of inquiry rests upon Nietzsche's pronouncement that "looking away" shall be his only negation. I quote the passage, which is entitled "*For the New Year*," at length:

Today everyone permits himself the expression of his wish and his dearest thought; hence I, too, shall say what it is that I wish for myself today, and what was the first thought to run across my heart this year—what thought shall be for me the reason, warranty, and sweetness of my life henceforth. I want to learn more and more to see as beautiful what is necessary in all things; then I shall be one of those who makes things beautiful. *Amor fati*: let that be my love henceforth! I do not want to wage war against what is ugly. I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse those who accuse. *Looking away* shall be my only negation. And all in all and on the whole: some day I wish to be only a Yes-sayer (*GS* 276).

Perhaps the first thing that strikes the reader of this passage is the very intimate expression of Nietzsche's resolution: he aims, at the dawn of a new year, to let "looking away be his only negation." In spite of this ambition and his pronouncement that he does "not want to wage war against what is ugly. [He does] not want to accuse...[not even]...those who accuse," Nietzsche does "wage war against what is ugly" in his subsequent books. Nietzsche calls *Twilight of the Idols* a "grand declaration of war" and in *Ecce Homo*, he tells us: "I am warlike. To attack is among my instincts...to attack is with me a proof of good will" (*TI* Forward, *EH* "Why I Am So Wise" 7). Lastly, in *Ecce Homo*, amid a discussion of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche informs us that:

The task for the years that followed now was indicated as clear as possible. After the Yes-Saying part of my task had been solved, the turn had come for the No-saying, No-doing part: the revaluation of our values so far, the great war—conjuring up a day of decision (*EH* 'BGE' 1).

Though Nietzsche sought to, "some day," "let looking away be [his] only negation" it is clear that this is not a sustained methodological aim. Michael Tanner puts the point this way:

...that Nietzsche, our arch-diagnostician, could never look away, and that we would have lost much of his most valuable writing if he had, does something to mitigate the accusation that he never became only a Yes-sayer, and the fact that three of his last five books are attacks, two on Wagner and one on Christ, the only affirmative one about himself.<sup>88</sup>

As Tanner's point makes clear the extraordinary emphasis that Geuss places on the pronouncement that "looking away" shall be Nietzsche's only "negation" is misplaced, as this is not Nietzsche's sustained methodological objective. Given the foregoing we can conclude that Nietzsche's genealogical mode of inquiry takes the form of a problematising, or immanent critique, and that Geuss' predilection for the Foucauldian critique rests upon a misreading of Nietzsche's sustained methodological objectives.

## **5. Conclusion**

In exploring the vast terrain of contemporary Nietzsche scholarship, guided by the work of Bernard Reginster, Brian Leiter and Raymond Geuss, it is clear that there is much debate concerning the import, functionality and projected audience of Nietzsche's genealogical narratives. In an attempt to map out the territory within which these debates occur I have highlighted some of the responses to the most relevant questions that arise when considering Nietzsche's methodology, and throughout this chapter I have examined and offered correctives to the work of these scholars. For example, I argued that Geuss is correct in asserting that the Nietzsche's genealogical mode of inquiry takes the form of a critique and furthermore he is correct to note that the mode of critique is a problematising, or an immanent critique which can criticize particular entrenched narratives. Nevertheless, I argued that Geuss' formulation of the genealogical mode of inquiry stumbles over two hurdles. The first, and perhaps more minor falter occurs when Geuss states that Nietzsche's sustained methodological objective is to let looking away be his only negation, and hence Geuss opts to for the Foucauldian critique as the paradigmatic example of a problematising critique. The second slip occurs when Geuss circumscribes Nietzsche's target audience to those who believe in the Christian God. Whereas, to be sure Nietzsche's projected audience includes the Christian it also includes a larger set of

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<sup>88</sup> Tanner, Michael (1994) p. 44

interlocutors than solely the Christian. Similarly, contra Leiter, I argued that Nietzsche's target audience is not limited to those who share his evaluative tastes. Further, I argued that Leiter is also mistaken about the functionality of Nietzsche's genealogical mode of inquiry insofar as Leiter's rendering of the genealogical method rests upon a misreading of Nietzsche's major point of historical method. This misreading leads Leiter to erroneously conclude that "practices" for Nietzsche are stable or essential. Thus, Geuss' and Leiter's respective formulations of the genealogical mode of inquiry fail to present the methodology with its most cogent formulation.

If the foregoing analysis of these respective positions is cogent, then the central questions, which arise when considering Nietzsche's genealogical method, still await suitable answers. Chapter two will be devoted to presenting a conception of the methodology that avoids the pitfalls described above by providing another set of answers to the fundamental questions which arise when considering the methodology.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Genealogy as Critique

Nietzsche is not the first philosopher to engage in critique, nor is he, as he makes clear, the first philosopher to take up the task of conducting a genealogy of morals.<sup>89</sup> Though, at least in his estimation, his methodology breaks in decisive ways from the attempts made by his predecessors. The objective of this chapter is to also break with the accounts of the genealogical mode of inquiry offered in the first chapter. In so doing I argue that the functionality of the methodology may be cashed out as a form of immanent critique, and the target audience of Nietzsche's reflections capture a wide-ranging set of interlocutors. Accordingly, the argument of this chapter is presented in two parts. First I present my account of Nietzsche's genealogical mode of inquiry and argue that it takes the form of an immanent critique. Second I argue that given the embeddedness of an immanent critique, that is the intimate relationship between this mode of critique and the system that it criticizes, one must be mindful of Nietzsche's audience. In other words, if an immanent critique functions by assessing a framework in terms of its own internal standards, then delimiting the framework under analysis is of methodological relevance. As a result, I conduct a "typology of the faithful" in order to elucidate the ways in which Nietzsche aims his critical work towards the systems of belief and faith held by, at least, three distinct groups.

It may be useful at this juncture to briefly say something about how I employ the concepts of "transcendent critique" and "immanent critique." As previously discussed, in chapter one, a transcendent critique judges the position under analysis by an external benchmark. Transcendent criticism "attacks a theory from without, proceeding from assumptions or presuppositions which are foreign to the theory

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<sup>89</sup> Amidst a lengthy discussion of Nietzsche's style Michel Haar, for example, writes that the genealogical mode of inquiry is "[the] critical method discovered by Nietzsche himself..." (p. 7). Yet, this assessment, I take it, is too strong. Nietzsche references the naïve genealogists throughout the *Genealogy*, so, if there are such "naïve genealogists", then it stands to reason that there is a genealogical method that they employ naively. See for example (*GM I* 1-2), (*GM II* 4), and (*GM II* 12-13). Further Nietzsche, in the Preface, claims "The first impulse to publish something of my hypothesis concerning the origin of morality was given my by a clear, tidy, and shrewd—also precocious—little book in which I encountered for the first time an upside-down and perverse species of genealogical hypothesis..." (*GM P* 4) Here Nietzsche discusses Paul Rée's *The Origin of Moral Sensations*. He points out that Rée is guilty of formulating an "upside-down" genealogical hypothesis, and that his methodology is intended to improve upon Rée's formulation: "...to [perhaps] replace the improbable with the more probable..." (*GM P* 4).



criticized.”<sup>90</sup> Methodologically a transcendent critique can proceed by either: (1) rejecting the premises or the assumptions of a given position because a criterion outside the framework demonstrates that one or more of the premises is false, or (2) claiming that the conclusion of a given framework is unacceptable. And, as I mentioned in chapter one, Brian Leiter advocates the latter formulation of external critique as representative of Nietzsche’s methodological objectives, insofar as he insists that Nietzsche judges, from a position outside of Christian morality, that Christian morality has insidious effects upon the flourishing of higher human beings.<sup>91</sup>

As the term immanence suggests reference only to what exists, similarly, immanent critique maintains that the basis of criticism is contained within that which is criticized. Hence, immanent critique draws its resources from within the framework under analysis. Karl Popper effectively describes the objectives of immanent critique in arguing:

...the theory under analysis is not merely a system of assumptions, dogmas, conjectures, or what not; *it is an attempt to solve a problem*. Therefore it *can* be immanently criticized as, for example failing to solve its problems, or succeeding no better than its competitors, or as merely shifting the problem solved, etc.<sup>92</sup>

Drawing on Popper’s explanation concerning the shape of immanent critique, I take the form of Nietzsche’s immanent critique to proceed in two stages. First, Nietzsche seeks to identify the basic propositions or assumptions that are taken as fundamental within a specific world-view or an actual system of purposes. As such an immanent critique traces the contingent historical formulation of the institution under analysis.<sup>93</sup> Second, Nietzsche evaluates the system of purposes, judging it by its own explicit or implicit standards. Nietzsche attempts to demonstrate the inadequacies or contradictions within the particular system of purposes in question, thereby Nietzsche seeks to destabilize the system of purposes under analysis. In the sections that follow

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<sup>90</sup> Popper, Karl (1983) p. 29

<sup>91</sup> For example, Leiter (2002) argues, quoting Ken Gemes: “Nietzsche’s attack on Christianity (and Christian morality) is based on the fact that it enfeebles strong wills, not that it is false” p.161

<sup>92</sup> Popper, Karl (1983) p. 30

<sup>93</sup> Against this particular methodological objective John Richardson (1996), for example, argues: “This is not how Nietzsche mostly and most tellingly carries out such critique (exposes a view as a ‘mere perspective’)” (p. 290). I want to be clear: in stating that one element of a successful immanent critique is to demonstrate the historically contingent formulation of a systems of purposes which claims for itself a special epistemic status I am not suggesting that this stage is the only aspect of an immanent critique, nor am I suggesting that this is the most telling aspect of Nietzsche’s critique.

I elucidate how Nietzsche's immanent critique of morality functions, how it takes this particular form, and to whom Nietzsche's remarks may be intended.

## 2. The *Euthanasia* of Christianity (D 92)

Nietzsche is clear that the dominant mode of evaluation is losing its grip on us. The prevailing picture by which we have made sense of ourselves is on its last legs, and in *Daybreak* Nietzsche takes us to the "*deathbed of Christianity*:"

Really active people are now inwardly without Christianity, and the more moderate and reflective people of the intellectual middle class now possess only an adapted, that is to say a marvellously *simplified* Christianity. A god who in his love arranges everything in a manner that will in the end be best for us; a god who gives to us and takes from us our virtue and our happiness, so that as a whole all is meet and fit and there is no reason for us to take life sadly, let alone to exclaim against it; in short, resignation and modest demands elevated to godhead—that is the best and most vital thing that still remains of Christianity. But one should notice that Christianity has thus crossed over into a gentle *moralism*: it is not so much 'God, freedom, and immortality' that have remained, as benevolence and decency of disposition will prevail: it is the *euthanasia* of Christianity (D 92).

According to Nietzsche we are witnessing a shift. The benchmark constructs of Christianity are shifting from the metaphysical commitments to "God, freedom and immortality"<sup>94</sup> into a kind of gentle moralism with its correlative commitments to benevolence and to decency of disposition. The euthanasia of Christianity consists in abandoning the metaphysical commitment to the Christian God and forsaking the consequent metaphysical commitments of freedom and immortality of the soul, while nevertheless remaining steadfastly committed to the benchmark virtues of Christian morality: the modest demands of resignation, benevolence, and decency of disposition. So here, Nietzsche is aiding in the mercy killing of a framework that is

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<sup>94</sup> Nietzsche here is referencing Kant's claim that moral behavior requires the *res fidei* "God, freedom and immortality." In the Third Critique Kant (1987) puts the point thus:

"As for objects that we have to think a priori (either as consequences or as grounds) in reference to our practical use of reason in conformity with duty, but that are transcendent for the theoretical use of reason: they are mere *matters of faith*. One such object is the *highest good* in the world that we are able to achieve through freedom. We cannot prove the concept of this good, as to whether it has objective reality, in any experience that is possible for us, and hence adequately for the theoretical use of reason. But since practical pure reason commands us to use this concept in order to achieve that purpose as best we can, we must assume it as possible. This commanded effect, *together with the sole conditions conceivable by us under which that effect is possible*, namely, the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, are *matters of faith (res fidei)*, and they are moreover the only objects whatsoever that can be called matters of faith." p. 362 (469)

already itself diseased and dying by pointing out that the authoritative backing of our gentle moralism is no longer viable. In *Daybreak* Nietzsche forewarns us: Christianity is suffering from an incurable internal contradiction.

By Book Three of *The Gay Science* the euthanasia of Christianity is complete: “God is dead” (*GS* 108,125). The passing, however, goes oddly un lamented (*GS* 125). Though “the madman’s” interlocutors have themselves “wiped away the entire horizon,” and “unchained the earth from its sun” the magnitude and profundity of the killing remains unappreciated. The atheists, the “madman’s” interlocutors, remain unreservedly committed to making sense of themselves by reference to a boundary that no longer exists. They have failed to acknowledge the profundity of the momentous historical and cultural event. In Book Five of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche teases out the implications of this passing. There, he alerts us to the fact that the primary animating force in the culture of Western societies has become “unbelievable:”

The greatest recent event—that ‘God is dead,’ that belief in the Christian god has become unbelievable—is already beginning to cast its first shadows over Europe. For the few at least, whose eyes—the *suspicion* in whose eyes is strong and subtle enough for this spectacle, some suns have set and some ancient and profound trust has been turned into doubt...But in the main one may say: The event itself is far too great, too distant, too remote from the multitude’s capacity for comprehension even for the tidings of it to be thought of as having *arrived* as yet. Much less may one suppose that many people know as yet *what* this event really means—and how much must collapse now that this faith has been undermined because it was built upon this faith, propped up by it, grown on it; for example, the whole of European morality. This long plenitude and sequence of breakdown, destruction, ruin, and cataclysm that is now impeding—who could guess enough of it today to be compelled to play the teacher and advance proclaimer of this monstrous logic of terror, the prophet of a gloom and an eclipse of the sun whose like has probably never yet occurred on earth? (*GS* 343)

It is the crisis of legitimacy, the loss of transcendent authority, which in its wake leaves behind a bankrupt model of self-understanding. So it is not only the authority but also the content of morality that must be reconsidered. Christoph Cox puts it best: “...we soon learn that this event is not brought about from the outside, by some external cataclysm; nor is it some chance occurrence. Rather, the ‘momentous logic of terror’ set in motion by the ‘death of God’ is brought about from the inside,

through a critique necessitated by the very presuppositions of European thought.”<sup>95</sup> In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche calls this process “the self-overcoming of morality, out of truthfulness...” (*EH* ‘Destiny’ 3).

Given the foregoing we are in the position to consider how Christianity emerged and took hold as the dominant framework. Nietzsche tells us that methodologically: “In former times, one sought to prove that there is no God – today one indicates how the belief that there is a God could *arise* and how this belief acquired its weight and importance: a counter-proof that there is no God thereby becomes superfluous” (*D* 95). Through a typology of morals Nietzsche seeks to demonstrate how the dominant framework acquired its weight and importance, because as he claims: “One cannot refute Christianity; one cannot refute a disease of the eye” (*CW* “Epilogue”). Accordingly, I turn now to an examination of Nietzsche’s typology of morals.

## 2.1 A Typology of Morals

Nietzsche disentangles the worldviews, the systems of ideas, or the systems of purposes that have most distinctly shaped our self-understanding by offering a typology of morals. In order to ground the claim that “morality is only an interpretation of certain phenomena, more precisely a *mis*interpretation,” Nietzsche seeks to unsettle the view that Christian morality is the only type of morality (*TI* ‘Improvers’ 1). However, the roots of this interpretation are mature and as such tangled. They are knotted by the subtle and complex changes in valuation over the course of two thousand years. Thus, in order to disentangle them and to draw out the most recurrent forms of valuation, Nietzsche engages in what he labels a typology of morals. The first hint of this methodological objective is in *Human All Too Human* (*HH* 45),<sup>96</sup> though it finds its most forceful articulation in *Beyond Good and Evil* where Nietzsche argues:

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<sup>95</sup> Christoph, Cox (1999) p.17

<sup>96</sup> There Nietzsche writes:

*Twofold prehistory of good and evil*—The concept good and evil has a twofold prehistory: *firstly* in the soul of the ruling tribes and castes. He who has the power to requite, good with good, evil with evil, and also actually practices requital—is, that is to say, grateful and revengeful—is called good; he who is powerless and cannot requite counts as bad... Our present morality has grown up in the soil of the *ruling* tribes and castes (*HH* 45).

One should own up in all strictness to what is still necessary here for a long time to come, to what alone is justified so far: to collect material, to conceptualize and arrange a vast realm of subtle feelings of value and differences of value which are alive, grow, beget and perish—and perhaps attempts to present vividly some of the more frequent and recurring forms of such living crystallizations—all to prepare a *typology* of morals (*BGE* 186).

A typology of morals traces the different modes of evaluation that served within different systems of purposes in order to bring to the forefront the most vivid, salient, and recurring features of that system. In addition a typology of morals demonstrates a curiosity and historical awareness that Nietzsche finds lacking in philosophical investigations which attempt to provide a stable foundation for morality. Nietzsche continues:

Just because our moral philosophers knew the facts of morality only very approximately in arbitrary extracts or in accidental epitomes—for example, as the morality of their environment, their class, their church, the spirit of their time, their climate and part of the world—just because they were poorly informed and not even very curious about different peoples, times, and past ages—they never laid eyes on the real problems of morality; for these emerge only when we compare *many* moralities. In all ‘science of morals’ so far one thing was *lacking*, strange as it may sound: the problem of morality itself; what was lacking was any suspicion that there was something problematic here. What philosophers called ‘a rational foundation for morality’ and tried to supply was, seen in the right light, merely a scholarly variation of the common *faith* in the prevalent morality; a new means of *expression* for this faith; and thus just another fact within a particular morality; indeed, in the last analysis a kind of denial that this morality might ever be considered problematic—certainly the very opposite of an examination, analysis, questioning, and vivisection of this very faith (*BGE* 186).

Hitherto, Nietzsche claims, philosophers have treated the morality of their specific historical situation as universally binding and, without questioning this presupposition, sought to provide it with rational justification.<sup>97</sup> Accordingly, Nietzsche suggests that such philosophers have a *faith* in conventional morality. Nietzsche contrasts this methodologically myopic approach with his own, one of “examination, analysis, questioning and vivisection of this very faith” (*BGE* 186).

In contradistinction to this methodologically short-sighted approach Nietzsche’s own methodological objectives in conducting a typology of morals become clear: by “wandering through the many subtler and coarser moralities which have so far been prevalent on earth, or still prevalent” Nietzsche informs us that he

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<sup>97</sup> I will discuss this particular issue in greater detail, in reference to Nietzsche’s critique of Kant, in section 3.2.1 entitled “Christian Morality Buttressed by “Majestic Moral Structures.”

“found that certain features recurred regularly together and were closely associated—until [he] finally discovered two basic types of morality. There are *master morality* and *slave morality*...” (BGE 260). A typological inquiry highlights certain aspects of a system of purposes at the expense of other features in order to bring to the fore the most salient characteristics. Again, in contrast to the philosophers who demonstrate a *faith* in the morality of their particular historical situation, “their climate and part of the world,” those who are poorly informed, those who lack historical sense, Nietzsche demonstrates that only through comparing many different forms of morality can one highlight the problems with the dominant form of morality.

The relationship between a typology of morals and an immanent critique of a particular framework is also brought out in *Beyond Good and Evil*:

...[O]ne may doubt, first, whether there are any opposites at all, and secondly whether these popular valuations and opposite values on which the metaphysicians put their seal, are not perhaps merely foreground estimates, only provisional perspectives, perhaps even from some nook, perhaps from below, frog perspectives, as it were, to borrow an expression painters use. For all the value that the true, the truthful, the selfless may deserve, it would still be possible that a higher and more fundamental value for life might have to be ascribed to deception, selfishness, and lust. It might even be possible that what constitutes the value of these revered things is precisely that they are insidiously related, tied to, and involved with these wicked, seemingly opposite things—maybe even one with them in essence. Maybe! (BGE 2)

Here, Nietzsche is holding up the metaphysician’s own provisional perspective as well as the metaphysician’s uncritical commitment to the true and to selflessness, and arguing the oppositions are assumed in this metaphysical picture: the true as opposed to the false, selfless acts as opposed to selfishness. Nietzsche claims that these strict oppositions are unwarranted. Consequently, Nietzsche’s technique here is clearly to criticize the system by exposing the provisional perspectives and the uncritical commitments of the system. In other words Nietzsche need not take recourse to elements of theories or metaphysical positions outside of this picture in order to expose its own shortcomings.

Nietzsche continues this typological investigation in the *Genealogy*, albeit under a different methodological heading. Ridley puts the point this way: “In *Beyond Good and Evil* the method for exposing... [how historical, local and contingent our values are]...is described as a ‘typology.’ But in Nietzsche’s next book—said on its title page to be ‘A Sequel to My Last Book..., Which It Is Meant to Supplement and

Clarify’ —the ‘typology of morals’ has become the ‘genealogy of morals.’”<sup>98</sup> Nietzsche’s genealogical, typological inquiry, renders the claim that there is one morality which has always applied universally both historically unjustified and ultimately untenable. Additionally, Nietzsche’s genealogical inquiry renders problematic the dictatorial structure of Christian morality that precludes other interpretations. In this way, Nietzsche’s typology, at the same time, serves as “...a counter-force [to the totalitarian command of morality] which is a constant reminder that there is no such thing as a morality with an exclusive monopoly of the moral, and that every morality that affirms itself alone destroys too much valuable strength and is bought too dear” (*D* 164). The sway of an absolutely dominant morality is so cherished and so captivating because such a standardized interpretation of morality provides a hegemonic explanation of our moral values. In virtue of that fact, this picture of morality, robs us of the vigour and strength to, as Nietzsche puts the point in *The Gay Science*, take the necessary steps towards self-governance and towards self-maturity (*GS* 335).<sup>99</sup> In demonstrating that the commitment to a dictatorial conception of morality requires a resignation of personal responsibility, Nietzsche opens up the space for alternative perspectives and different modes of evaluation. He encourages us to “be able to stand *above* morality—and not only to *stand* with the stiffness of a man who is afraid of slipping and falling at any moment, but also to *float* above and *play*” (*GS* 107).

The typology of morals, or a genealogy of morals, is the methodological seed of Nietzsche’s immanent critique that grows and is manifested in three distinct ways with respect to at least three types of audience. I turn now to the audience of the genealogy.

### **3. Nietzsche’s Audience: A Typology of the “Faithful”**

Nietzsche clearly stresses the methodological advantages of conducting a typology or genealogy of morals. He claims that through tracking the living crystallizations of certain modes of evaluations, recurrent trends are brought to the forefront. Retaining the methodological objectives of a typology of morals, I argue that we can similarly track the most vivid and recurring forms of Nietzsche’s intended

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<sup>98</sup> Ridley, Aaron (1998) p. 7

<sup>99</sup> For example Nietzsche writes: “Anyone who still judges ‘in this case everybody would have to act like this’ has not yet taken five steps towards self-knowledge” (*GS* 335).

audience by constructing a typology of the faithful. I argue that Nietzsche is addressing his immanent genealogical critique to at least three types of interlocutors. Others, however, have suggested that Nietzsche's audience is far more limited in scope. As previously mentioned, in chapter one, Brian Leiter, for example, claims Nietzsche circumscribes "his audience to those who share his evaluative taste: to those for whom no justification would be required, for those who are simply 'made for it,' 'those whose ears are related to ours,' who are 'predisposed and predestined for Nietzsche's insights.'"<sup>100</sup> Or as Leiter most strikingly puts the point: "[Nietzsche] has nothing to say to those readers who don't share his evaluative tastes."<sup>101</sup> By contrast, I also discussed Raymond Geuss' argument for the inverse; insofar he identifies solely the Christian, that is, those who believe in the Christian God, as Nietzsche's audience.<sup>102</sup> Against these narrow versions, which restrict the intended audience of Nietzsche's genealogy to a handful of interlocutors, I argue that Nietzsche's audience can be rather broadly understood as the "faithful." The term "faithful" applies to, at least, three distinct assemblies of parishioners: (1) The Christians who have faith in God. (2) The atheists who have "faith" in Christian morality even without a Christian God. And (3) the scientists who have "faith" in science as a viable and self-sufficient alternative to the ascetic ideal.<sup>103</sup> Despite their differing manifestations of faith, each requires a voluntary "closing [of] one's eyes with respect to oneself for good and all so as to not suffer from the sight of incurable falsity" (AC 9).

Given that I am painting with broad-brush strokes in attributing a prominent explanatory power to "faith," and that I am employing the corollary concept of the "faithful" to pick out Nietzsche's audience, much hinges here on what Nietzsche means by "faith." So, a word on usage is in order. In *Human All Too Human* Nietzsche discusses the *origin of faith* and I quote this discussion at length:

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<sup>100</sup> Leiter, Brian (2000) p. 291 See also Leiter (2002) esp. pp. 151-153

<sup>101</sup> Leiter, Brian (2000) p. 290

<sup>102</sup> Geuss, Raymond (1999) p. 21

<sup>103</sup> I am using the conception of a "the faith in science" as a category that is not limited to those who are faithful in scientism. In sections 23-26 of the *Genealogy* Nietzsche tells us that modern science (*GM* III 23-25) and historiography (*GM* III 26) are not, as they claim, the rivals of the ascetic ideal, but each group of scholars express a deep-seated commitment to the ascetic ideal. As such "science" in this section refers to those who explicitly deny faith, they are atheists and anti-metaphysicians, yet despite this professed commitment they are nevertheless "faithful" in truth and objectivity. Nietzsche puts the point this way: "it is precisely in their faith in truth that its adherents are more rigid and unconditional than anyone" (*GM* III 24).



The fettered spirit takes up his position, not for reasons, but out of habit; he is a Christian, for example, not because he has knowledge of the various religions and has chosen between them; he is an Englishman, not because he has decided in favour of England: he encountered Christianity and Englishness and adopted them without reasons, as a man born in a wine-producing country becomes a wine-drinker. Later, when he was a Christian and Englishman, he may perhaps have also devised a couple of reasons favourable to his habits; but if one refutes these reasons one does not therewith refute him in his general position. Oblige a fettered spirit to present his reasons for opposing bigamy, for example, and you will discover whether his holy zeal for monogamy rests on reasons or on acquired habit. Acquired habituation to spiritual principles without reasons is called faith (*HH* 226).

Nietzsche maintains that all too often we unreflectively assume certain guiding principles based upon habit or upon the customs of our culture and not upon critical reflection. Thus, in certain cases one can be offered clear reasons to reject one's custom, yet nevertheless dogmatically retain such a custom as one's guiding principle. This for Nietzsche is faith: the adoption of guiding principles without reason.

Nietzsche targets those who are unreservedly and uncritically faithful. As such, I argue that Nietzsche offers each congregation of parishioners immanent reasons based upon the type of faith they profess to forsake their uncritical devotion. I elaborate Nietzsche's audience below so as to provide paradigmatic accounts of Nietzsche's emphasis on critique as immanent and to further demonstrate the effective use of genealogy as a methodology.

### **3.1 Faith in the Christian God**

As I mentioned the scope of Nietzsche's audience is debatable. Where some scholars, such as Raymond Geuss, see Nietzsche in direct dialogue with those who have faith in the Christian God, others, such as Christopher Janaway, think that there are good reasons to regard this highly selective view of Nietzsche's audience as mistaken. Janaway's argument proceeds as follows:

The *Genealogy*—subtitled *Eine Steitschrift*, 'A Polemic'—devotes much of its energy to a diagnosis of the origins of Christianity (Nietzsche describes it in these terms in his retrospective assessment in the section of *Ecce Homo* entitled 'Genealogy of Morals') and presents a many-sided critique of the influence of Christianity's values on contemporary European thought and culture. But is the *Genealogy* well calculated to persuade genuine Christians out of their faith? Are Christians its main target audience? There is a second-hand anecdote that tells of Nietzsche imploring an elderly believing Catholic of his acquaintance not to read his books because 'there was so much in them that was bound to hurt her feelings'; and he would have been right to think

that some Christians might be more offended than persuaded by the *Genealogy*. Some might laugh or just turn away. But a *Streitschrift* should do more than insult or provoke rejection—and if Nietzsche had been solely or primarily concerned to influence Christian believers, his book might seem a miscalculation. Nietzsche’s attacks seem better addressed to the non-religious (or not especially religious) person who clings to a conception of morality inherited unthinkingly from Christianity.<sup>104</sup>

Janaway’s central thesis indeed enjoys textual support. Consider, for example, what Nietzsche tells us about Christian faith in *The Gay Science*:

*Believers and their need to believe*—How much one needs a *faith* in order to flourish, how much that is ‘firm’ and that one does not wish to be shaken because one *clings* to it, that is a measure of degree of one’s strength (or, to put the point more clearly, of one’s weakness). Christianity, it seems to me, is still needed by most people in old Europe even today; therefore it still finds believers. For this is how man is: An article of faith could be refuted before him a thousand times—if he needed it, he would consider it ‘true’ again and again, in accordance with that famous ‘proof of strength’ of which the Bible speaks (*GS* 347).

Here, Nietzsche is arguing that if a Christian *needs* their faith, then no amount of persuasion let alone a direct refutation could possibly prompt the Christian to renounce their faith. And this point, on the face of it, seems to suggest that Nietzsche is not addressing those who profess a belief in Christianity. Yet, Nietzsche, in the same passage, goes on to problematize precisely this reaction on the part of the Christian. He indicates that such a faith arises out of the need for a “thou shalt,” a command. Accordingly Nietzsche writes: “Once a human being reaches the fundamental conviction that he *must* be commanded, he becomes ‘a believer’” (*GS* 347). Nietzsche then suggests this need for a ‘thou shalt’ can be satisfied by either appealing to an external source or through the “pleasure of self-determination” (*GS* 347).<sup>105</sup> The believer can follow the “thou shalt” of self-determination rather than the

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<sup>104</sup> Janaway, Christopher (2007) p. 7

<sup>105</sup> Here it may be useful to distinguish between Nietzsche’s conception of “self-determination” and Kant’s treatment of the topic. In the First *Critique* Kant claims: “there is in man a power of self-determination, independently of any coercion through sensuous impulses” p. 465 (A534/B562). Accordingly for Kant, autonomy, the ability to self-legislate, and self-determination are cashed out as the disinterested choice to obey or disobey the moral law. In the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant describes the moral law in this way:

“...the moral law is given, as an apodictically certain fact, as it were, or pure reason, a fact of which we are a priori conscious, even if it be granted that no example could be found in which it has been followed exactly. Thus the objective reality of the moral law can be proved through no deduction, through no exertion of the theoretical, speculative, or empirically supported reason; and, even if one were willing to renounce its apodictic certainty, it could not

“thou shalt” of “a god, prince, class, physician, father confessor, dogma or party conscience” (*GS* 347). Accordingly, Nietzsche obstructs the believer’s *need* for an external command and argues that this need can be satisfied by creating one’s own “thou shalt”.

Thus, while it is certainly true that Nietzsche’s books may appear to the faithful, particularly upon first glance, as offensive and rather nasty, it nevertheless may be the case that the faithful have this reaction because Nietzsche does not allow them to escape from the dictates of their own system. While Janaway insists that Nietzsche’s genealogical narratives are too abrasive for the seriously faithful, it is my claim that this abrasion is the reason we can clearly identify them as included in Nietzsche’s audience. In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche insists, “Blindness to Christianity is the *crime par excellence*—the crime against life” (*EH* ‘Destiny’ 7). Though one could argue that the “blindness” to which Nietzsche refers is nothing more than the inability of the atheist, the non-religious person, to see that they are still wedded to Christian morality, another equally plausible account is that Nietzsche is exposing the inability on the part of the Christian to see a conflict within their own world-view. Contrary to scholars who insist that Nietzsche’s aim is to speak to those who share his evaluative tastes and contrary to those who suggest that Nietzsche’s audience consists solely of atheists, I argue Nietzsche is clearly speaking to at least some of those for whom Christianity still holds sway. These interlocutors are still persuaded by Christianity’s claim to epistemic authority as well as to the morality that derives from

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be confirmed by any experience and thus proved a posteriori. Nevertheless, it is firmly established of itself” p. 48 (47)

For Kant, as Richard White (1997) puts the point: “we experience the fact of obligation; as rational creatures we find ourselves commanded by the moral imperative, and in the decision to obey or disobey we discover the possibility of our freedom” p. 36

Nietzsche critique of Kant’s formulation of self-determination is, in short, that Kant’s conception of autonomy, as the ability to self-legislate, relies upon an account of the moral law, as a universal obligation or commandment. Thus, on Nietzsche’s account of Kant’s moral law, one is forbidden from generating one’s own imperative, and hence is not autonomous. For example, in *Daybreak* Nietzsche writes that there are “so many experiments to be made,” and one such experiment is with the idea that one may “submit only to the law which I myself have given, in great things and in small” (*D* 187). This is markedly distinct then from that Kantian conception of self-determination, which Nietzsche chastises as “blind, petty, and frugal” (*GS* 335). Nietzsche, by contrast, argues that we may displace Kant’s maxim with the following: “each one of us should devise *his own* virtue, *his own* categorical imperative” (*AC* 11). As Nietzsche, in *The Gay Science*, writes: “one could conceive of such a pleasure and power of self-determination, such a *freedom* of the will that the spirit would take leave of all faith and every wish for certainty, being practiced in maintaining himself on insubstantial ropes and possibilities and dancing even near abysses. Such a spirit would be the *free spirit* par excellence” (*GS* 347). So, for Nietzsche self-determination is the ability to self-legislate, and this requires that one leave all faith, the obedience to an external “thou shalt,” behind.

this commitment. I argue that Nietzsche renders this faith problematic in one of two ways and in so doing offers the faithful internal reasons to forsake their commitments.

### 3.1.1 Power

The first way one can argue that Nietzsche renders the Christian framework internally untenable is through a diagnosis of the role power plays in adopting a particular world-view. Reginster raises this as a viable candidate for what he terms the “internalist strategy of revaluation,” and describes how Nietzsche’s evocation of the concept of power could serve as the catalyst for an internal challenge:<sup>106</sup>

[Nietzsche’s genealogical] investigations would aim to show that the Christian condemnation of power (and the corresponding valuation of equality and neighborly love) have their ‘origin’ in the very desire for power they ostensibly condemn (see Z II 7, GM III 18, WP 179). Nietzsche would then invoke this fact to show that the Christians have a stronger commitment to the value of power than they themselves are prepared to acknowledge, a commitment that could even be strong enough to ground an internal challenge against those values they proclaim to be their highest.<sup>107</sup>

Two points are worth making here. The first is a rather general comment concerning the role “power” plays in Nietzsche’s philosophy. The second point concerns the manner in which, for Reginster, “power” can serve as the grounds for an internal challenge.

First, Nietzsche’s use of the concept of power, as well as Nietzsche’s proclamations concerning the “will to power” has received a fair bit of scholarly attention. Given that, the aim of my discussion is not to treat the scholarly reception and subsequent debate concerning the role of the “will to power.” Rather, the aim of this discussion is to illuminate Reginster’s suggestion that power can be employed to ground an internal challenge of Christian morality. Accordingly, Reginster concludes his lengthy discussion of the role the will to power plays within Nietzsche’s corpus by arguing that the “will to power...is a will to *the very activity of overcoming resistance.*”<sup>108</sup> For Reginster, then, the will to power is not simply the will to *control* or the will to *domination*. Rather, the will to power is the will *to* the activity of

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<sup>106</sup> Reginster, Bernard (2006) p. 200

<sup>107</sup> Reginster, Bernard (2006) p. 200

<sup>108</sup> Reginster, Bernard (2006) p. 127 A few pages later Reginster reaffirms his conclusion: “In my view, then, the will to power is the will to the overcoming of resistance.” (pp. 131-132)

overcoming resistance that has the by-product of increasing one's power.<sup>109</sup> As such the will to power is the "spontaneous, aggressive, expansive, reinterpreting, reordering, form-giving forces..." through which the feeling of power is then manifested (*GM II 12*).

Second, and using Reginster's definition of power, Nietzsche's immanent critique of Christian morality becomes clear. Nietzsche demonstrates to the Christian that despite an ostensible condemnation of power, that they are nevertheless wedded to a particular form of power understood as the activity of overcoming resistance.<sup>110</sup> The structure of Nietzsche's immanent critique may proceed, according to Reginster, as follows: (1) Nietzsche demonstrates that the "origin" of the Christian world-view finds its roots in the need for a feeling of power. (2) Nietzsche suggests that the subsequent condemnation of power on the part of the Christian is also an expression of this same need, though ostensibly condemned. (3) Via this demonstration the Christian is wedded to a desire for power to a greater extent than they acknowledge. (4) Thus, if the desire for power is a sufficiently motivating force, then such a demonstration *could* prompt the Christian to re-evaluate their commitments.

Yet, power when employed as a means to unpack Nietzsche's immanent critique of Christian morality, though plausible, does not carry the force that could prompt the Christians to forsake their belief. If the Christian's need for power is attained through a re-evaluation of noble morality, for example, then why would the Christian be prompted to forsake his particular set of commitments given that his particular need for a feeling of power has been satisfied? Though I agree with Reginster that the will to power, the will to impose a particular form upon content through the activity of overcoming resistance is an important feature of Nietzsche's account, I nevertheless do not think that it is the most profitable way of viewing the grounds of Nietzsche's immanent critique of Christianity. Rather, following Owen, I take the will to power to serve as the link between varying projects of re-evaluation. Owen puts the point this way: "The continuity between the motivation for the Christian re-evaluation of the values of antiquity and for Nietzsche's proposed re-evaluation of Christian values is, thus, that both are understood as expressions of will

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<sup>109</sup> Reginster, Bernard (2006) p. 132

<sup>110</sup> It is worth noting that in *The Anti-Christ* Nietzsche connects Christ, "the psychological type of the redeemer," with the inability to overcome resistance: "...an incapacity for resistance has become morality here ('resist not evil,' the most profound saying of the Gospels, the key to their meaning in a certain sense), blessedness in peace, in gentleness, in an *inability* to be an enemy" (*AC 29*).

to power.”<sup>111</sup> So understood, the will to power serves to explain the form-giving forces present in re-evaluations and not the re-evaluations themselves. Power is not the concept that prompts the Christian to re-evaluate their commitments. Rather, for Nietzsche, the will to power is the will to impose form and to re-order by overcoming a particular kind of resistance. As such the will to power is operating in any re-evaluation.

Given that the desire for power is not sufficiently strong to serve as the grounds for an immanent critique of Christianity I will offer another candidate that may possess this strength.

### 3.1.2 Truth

The Christian commitment to truth, and the cognate truthfulness, in contradistinction to the desire for power discussed above, may be a sufficiently robust commitment to prompt the Christian to forsake his belief. In *Daybreak* Nietzsche problematizes the Christian’s particular commitment to truth:

*What is truth?* — Who would not acquiesce in the *conclusion* the faithful like to draw: ‘Science cannot be true, for it denies God. Consequently it does not come from God; consequently it is not true—for God is the truth.’ It is not the conclusion but the premise which contains the error: how if God were *not* the truth and it were precisely this which is proved? If he were the vanity, the lust for power, the impatience, the terror, the enraptured and fearful delusion of men? (*D* 93)

As Nietzsche points out, there is nothing structurally wrong with the argument provided by the Christian; it is perfectly valid. Nietzsche raises the soundness of the argument as a potential problem and targets the assumption that “God is truth.”

Nietzsche renders this faith, the adoption of guiding principles without reason, problematic insofar as his investigations seek to demonstrate that at least two quintessentially Christian commitments are dubious: (1) the Christian commitment to truthful introspection of beliefs and (2) the Christian commitment that it is the only system through which we can make sense of ourselves. Prompting the Christian to acknowledge the improbability of both of these claims relies upon the fact that the Christian commitment to truthfulness is sufficiently motivating.

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<sup>111</sup> Owen, David (2007) p. 35

In *Daybreak* Nietzsche takes up the first of these commitments and argues that Christianity does not retain its ostensive commitment to the truthful contemplation of belief. Nietzsche puts this point as follows:

*Doubt as sin*— Christianity has done its utmost to close the circle and declared even doubt to be sin. One is supposed to be cast into belief without reason, by a miracle, and from then on to swim in it as in the brightest and least ambiguous of elements: even a glance towards land, even the thought that one perhaps exists for something else as well as swimming, even the slightest impulse of our amphibious nature—is sin! And notice that all this means that the foundation of belief and all reflection on its origin is likewise excluded as sinful. What is wanted are blindness and intoxication and an eternal song over the waves in which reason has drowned! (*D* 89)<sup>112</sup>

Rather than promoting reflection upon the reasons why one maintains belief in Christianity, Nietzsche points out that Christianity demands the reverse: blindness and absolute obedience. Any reflection upon the structure of belief, whether it takes the form of historical investigations regarding the origins of the system or an investigation of the suspicion that there may be something other than this system that will provide meaning is rendered sinful. Christianity is a closed system. It demands unreflective faith “in which reason is drowned.”

Furthermore Christianity presents itself as the only system and Nietzsche renders this presentation problematic. Christianity is merely one system amongst others and this renders the dictatorial structure of Christianity untrustworthy. Nietzsche frames the issue in this way:

*Morality in Europe today is herd animal morality*—in other words, as we understand it, merely *one* type of human morality besides which, before which, and after which many other types, above all *higher* moralities, are, or ought to be, possible. But this morality resists such a ‘possibility,’ such an ‘ought’ with all its power: it says stubbornly and inexorably, ‘I am morality itself, and nothing besides is morality’ (*BGE* 202).

Christian morality postures as the only picture, and Nietzsche, through his typology of morals renders this claim questionable.

In the *Anti-Christ* Nietzsche ties these two treads together:

[W]hat ... is to be prevented above all is the continuation of experimenting, the perpetuation *in infinitum* of the fluid condition of values, tests, choices, criticizing of values. A two-fold wall is erected against this: firstly *revelation*,

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<sup>112</sup> Nietzsche makes a strikingly similar point in *The Anti-Christ*: “Because sickness belongs to the essence of Christianity, the typical Christian condition ‘faith,’ has to be a form of sickness, every straightforward, honest, scientific road to knowledge *has* to be repudiated by the Church as a *forbidden* road. Even to doubt is a sin...” (*AC* 52)

that is the assertion that the reason for these laws is *not* of human origin, was *not* sought and found slowly and with many blunders, but, being of divine origin, is whole, perfect, without history, a gift, a miracle, merely communicated... Then *tradition*, that is, the assertion that the law has already existed from time immemorial, that it is impious, a crime against the ancestors, to call it into question (*AC 57*).

Faith in Christianity erects a two-fold wall around investigations concerning the values to which it ascribes, as well as any possible critique of the value of those values. Here the wall forbidding access to the “truthful” introspection of the Christian framework is constructed out of a faith in revelation and tradition. Faith in revelation forecloses historical investigations insofar as the values of Christianity are taken to be “perfect, without history, a gift, a miracle, merely communicated” (*AC 57*). Whilst faith in tradition fortifies Christianity as a closed system, a system that “has already existed from time immemorial,” and buttresses the claim that Christianity is the only system by which we can make sense of ourselves. Given the fortification of the Christian framework, behind the walls of revelation and faith, Nietzsche realizes that an external attack upon the framework will not penetrate the walls. Accordingly, Nietzsche must attack the superstructure from within.

Thus, the Christian commitment to truthfulness is invoked, by Nietzsche, to demonstrate that the Christian’s belief structure is inherently problematic. If this commitment on the part of the Christian is sufficiently strong, then his belief in Christianity may be undermined in two ways. First, Nietzsche points out that the commitment to the truthful examination of beliefs, allegedly encouraged by Christianity, requires one to scrupulously examine one’s commitments. Yet, according to Nietzsche, upon such an examination one finds that Christianity is a closed system, which relies upon belief without reason. Or, to put the point another way, Christianity demands the inverse of the ostensive claim to the truthful introspection of beliefs: faith, in which the call for the truthful introspection of one’s belief is “drowned” (*D 89*). Second, Nietzsche demonstrates that the privileged position Christianity claims for itself does not stand up to truthful historical inquiry. If the Christian cultivation of truthfulness is suitably rigorous, then Nietzsche offers the faithful immanent reasons to forsake their beliefs. As Geuss puts the point:

It is a particular and idiosyncratic problem of Christianity that it cultivates truthfulness and introspection and is a form of valuation which requires its devotees to make claims and have beliefs that won’t stand up to truthful introspective scrutiny (such as that moral actions arise from altruistic sources).



This means that Christianity dissolves itself (*GM III 27, GS 357*) and Nietzsche's genealogy will contribute to that process.<sup>113</sup>

Christianity can dissolve itself, on Nietzsche's account, in virtue of the fact that the Christian commitment to truthfulness prompts the faithful to forsake their commitments once it is recognized that Christianity's claims do not stand up to reflection. Thus, Nietzsche's immanent critique of Christianity attempts to illuminate precisely this disconnect and as such may contribute to the process of the self-overcoming of Christianity.

Yet, as I mentioned in the introduction to this section, Nietzsche targets other faiths as well, and the subject of the following section will be the faith in Christian morality.

### **3.2 Faith in Christian Morality**

The second congregation of the faithful that Nietzsche targets through an immanent critique of their belief structure is the atheists who are allegiant to Christian morality even without belief in a Christian God. These addressees have forsaken the commitment to the Christian God, yet nevertheless remain unwaveringly committed to Christian morality. They are committed to a secular "Christian" morality without the religious rationale that legitimizes it. This, for Nietzsche, is a peculiar and pernicious brand of faith.

Nietzsche introduces the philosophy of Schopenhauer as a paradigmatic case of this particular brand of faith (*GS 357*). Though Schopenhauer is commended for his "integrity," that is his "unconditional and honest atheism," Nietzsche nevertheless employs Schopenhauer's philosophy as an example of ardently maintaining a faith in traditional Christian morality void of the Christian God. Nietzsche describes Schopenhauer as "one who denies God and the world but *comes to a stop* before morality..." (*BGE 186*). Schopenhauer rejects Christian dogma but not Christian morality.<sup>114</sup> He remains "under the spell and delusion of morality" (*BGE 56*) insofar as he has faith in the "morality of pity;" a faith that suffering ought to be abolished (*GM Preface 5*). In expressing this brand of faith, God is not vanquished. Rather, we find ourselves in the "shadow of God" (*GS 108*).

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<sup>113</sup> Geuss, Raymond (1999) p. 21

<sup>114</sup> Interestingly in *Human, All Too Human* Nietzsche explicitly connects Schopenhauer's philosophy with Christianity. See (*HH 26*)

In order to prompt this particular kind of faithful interlocutor to re-evaluate their allegiance to Christianity morality Nietzsche exposes a contradiction within their commitments. A point made strikingly in *Twilight of the Idols*:

When one gives up Christian belief one thereby deprives oneself of the *right* to Christian morality. For the latter is absolutely *not* self-evident: one must make this point again and again, in spite of the English shallowpates. Christianity is a system, a consistently thought out and *complete* view of things. If one breaks out a fundamental idea, the belief in God, one thereby breaks the whole thing into pieces: one has nothing of consequence left in one's hands...Christian morality is a command: its origin is transcendental; it is beyond all criticism, all right to criticize; it possesses truth only if God is truth (*TI* "Expeditions" 5).

When one gives up the belief in God, one must, at the same time, abandon the morality that remains underwritten by such a belief. The absence of otherworldly grounding and sanctioning leaves Christian morality void of its justificatory underpinnings. And, under conditions such as these, Nietzsche contends, Christian morality cannot be sustained. The atheists have abandoned the belief in the Christian God, but nevertheless remained wedded to Christian morality despite the loss of its underpinnings. This is a faith in the unconditional value of Christian morality to which the atheist, as Nietzsche's argument makes clear, is not entitled to given their commitment to forsaking a belief in the Christian God. In other words the atheist has failed to draw the penultimate inference, that they have no "*right*" to Christian morality upon the removal of its underpinnings, and the failure to draw this inference creates a justificatory void, hence causing the entire superstructure to crumble.

In order to prompt this kind of faithful interlocutor to forsake their belief, Nietzsche relies upon their commitment to atheism. If the atheist's commitment is sufficiently strong then Nietzsche can demonstrate that Christian morality claims a form of transcendental justification that contradicts the central tenets of atheism. As such Nietzsche points out that the uncritical acceptance of Christian morality necessitates a belief in a metaphysical perspective in which these values are garnished with an authority independently of us. And this point should be sufficiently abominable to the atheist to prompt them to forsake their uncritical commitment to Christian morality.

In *The Anti-Christ* Nietzsche tells us: "Everyone knows [that God is dead]: and everyone nonetheless remains unchanged" (AC 38). And this, for Nietzsche, is outrageous. It is shocking that the atheists fail to draw the appropriate inference, to

determine that they are not entitled to Christian morality without the underpinnings of the Christian God, and hence remain “unchanged.” Yet equally distressing is the sight of Christian morality being propped up by “majestic moral structures” (*DP* 3). The superstructure of Christianity is becoming unbelievable, more pointedly, the “belief in the Christian god has become unbelievable,” and this, Nietzsche tells us, is “casting its shadows over Europe” (*GS* 343). In the wake of this cataclysmic event, which, at least according to Nietzsche, ought to leave in its passing the over-coming of Christian morality out of truthfulness, is rather greeted by a different set of responses. Philosophers, who note the crumbling foundations of Christian morality, have set about propping up this form of morality by other means. One such example is the design of “majestic moral structures,” architected by Kant, to buttress morality from its impending self-overcoming. Accordingly, I now turn to an examination of Kant’s efforts to reinforce Christian morality, as well as Nietzsche’s argument against such an elegant attempt, which seeks to seat another transcendental placeholder in the spot vacated by the Christian God.

### 3.2.1 Christian Morality Buttressed by “Majestic Moral Structures”<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> There are other ways, Nietzsche enumerates, in which one can reinforce Christian morality by providing the superstructure with further fortification. For example, in *The Gay Science* Nietzsche writes:

“These historians of morality (particularly, the Englishmen) do not amount to much: usually they themselves unsuspectingly stand under the command of a particular morality and, without knowing it, serve as its shield-bearers, for example, by sharing that popular superstition of Christian Europe which people keep repeating so naively to this day, that what is characteristic of morality is selflessness, self-denial, self-sacrifice, or sympathy and compassion” (*GS* 345).

Here Paul Rée, is criticized for reifying the morality of “selflessness, self-denial, self-sacrifice, or sympathy and compassion” (*GS* 345). And Rée’s work according to Nietzsche, a manifestation of the “contemporary Europe[an]...prejudice that takes ‘moral,’ ‘unegoistic,’ *désintéressé* to be concepts of equivalent value already rules today with the force of a ‘fixed idea’ and brain-sickness” (*GM* I 2). It is in this prejudice that Nietzsche identifies a connection between Rée’s work and Christian morality. Though Nietzsche’s objection, as elucidated in the *Genealogy*, to Rée’s project is twofold: (1) it is historically inaccurate, and (2) it is psychologically untenable (*GM* I 2-3), the point I want to emphasize here is that Rée, despite his naturalistic commitment to formulating a conception of morality which does not lean upon the crutches of metaphysical and transcendental explanations, nevertheless marches in line with the popular prejudices of his day, by remaining unreflectively committed to the elevated status of selflessness and self-denial. In so doing, he does not vanquish the shadow of God, but rather stands squarely in his shadow. For a detailed discussion of this issue see Janaway (2007) pp. 8-10 and pp. 74-89

To highlight another example of “the echo of Christianity in morality” consider utilitarianism. Nietzsche’s critique of utilitarianism is multifaceted. The salient issue for the purposes of this section is how, in Nietzsche’s estimation, the utilitarian are guilty of propping up Christian morality. Or, put slightly differently, how systems such as these “outchristian Christianity” (*D* 132). Mill (2004), in *Utilitarianism*, for example writes:

No doubt some of Nietzsche's most rhetorically charged attacks are aimed at Kant.<sup>116</sup> And, if buttressing the crumbling superstructure of Christian morality is nearly as objectionable as Nietzsche states, then we can see why Kant is the recipient of some of Nietzsche's most pointed insults. One such instance may be found in *The Gay Science* where Nietzsche writes:

*Kant's joke*—Kant wanted to prove, in a way that would dumfound the common man, that the common man was right: that was the secret joke of his soul. He wrote against the scholars in support of popular prejudice, but for scholars and not the people (*GS* 193).

Kant sought to garnish Christian morality with independent sanction, and in so doing reify the ethical principles of Christianity, the belongings, Nietzsche tells us, of popular prejudice. The irony according to Nietzsche then is that Kant sought to buttress the trapping of Christian morality in a manner that would dumfound the common man. Yet, the fundamental problem that Nietzsche identifies here is not one of style. Rather the worry is that Kant acknowledges the fragile nature of the superstructure of morality and instead of questioning the value of those moral values seeks to provide the crumbling morality with the reinforcement of rational justification.

To tease out the ramifications of buttressing the crumbling superstructure of morality with a form of rational justification, Nietzsche poses the following question:

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“I must again repeat, what the assailants of utilitarianism seldom have the justice to acknowledge, that the happiness which forms the utilitarian standard of what is right in conduct, is not the agent's own happiness, but that of all concerned. As between his own happiness and that of others, utilitarianism requires him to be as strictly impartial as a disinterested and benevolent spectator. In the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth, we read the complete spirit of the ethics of utility. To do as you would be done by, and to love your neighbor as yourself, constitute the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality.” p. 15

Here Mill is committed to two claims: (1) utilitarianism, as he understands it, takes into account the happiness of all concerned, and (2) utilitarianism, so understood, is perfectly consistent with the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Nietzsche's critique of Mill's formulation is that Mill provides the collapsing edifice of Christian morality with secular support. In *Daybreak* Nietzsche writes: “...in England [it was] John Stuart Mill who gave the widest currency to the teaching of the sympathetic affects and of pity of the advantage of others as the principle of behavior” (*D* 132). And Nietzsche, there, further claims that: “...men today feel sympathetic, disinterested, generally useful social action to be the *moral* actions—this is perhaps the most general effect and conversion with Christianity has produced in Europe...” (*D* 132). Thus, Nietzsche's critique is that instead of calling into question the value of selflessness, and pity Mill out-Christians Christianity in formulating a secular version of Christian morality by formulating a version of utilitarianism which requires the moral agent to be a “disinterested and benevolent spectator.” And, as John Skorupski (1989) writes: “Nietzsche considers impersonal benevolence to be the sterile hangover of Christianity” p. 36

<sup>116</sup> See, for example, (*HH* 25), (*GS* 335), (*AC* 11), (*TI* ‘Reason’ 6) (*TI* ‘Germans’ 7) and (*EH* ‘The Case of Wagner’ 2).

“Why is it that from Plato onwards every philosophical architect in Europe has built in vain?” (D P 3) The answer to the question, Nietzsche tells us, is that “all philosophers were building under the seduction of morality, even Kant—“ (D P 3). Kant, in Nietzsche’s estimation, was “apparently aiming at certainty, at ‘truth,’ but in reality at ‘majestic moral structures’: to employ once again the innocent language of Kant” (D P 3). Indeed, in the First *Critique* Kant writes:

But though the following out of these [moral] considerations is what gives to philosophy its peculiar dignity, we must meantime occupy ourselves with a less resplendent, but still meritorious task, namely to level the ground, and to render it sufficiently secure for moral edifices of these majestic dimensions. For this ground has been honeycombed by subterranean working which reason, in its confident but fruitless search for hidden treasures, has carried out in all directions, and which threaten the security of the superstructures.<sup>117</sup>

Here, Kant claims that given the fact that the superstructure of morality has been undermined by the inappropriate and misguided use of reason, the object of his inquiry, accordingly, is to secure the foundation of the “moral edifices of these majestic dimensions.”<sup>118</sup> So, Kant, in Nietzsche’s estimation, was correct to note that Christian morality is, in fact, in crisis. Yet, Kant goes wrong in attempting to fortify morality, instead of calling into question the value of Christian morality, the slave mode of moral reasoning. And as a result, Nietzsche informs us “Kant’s success is merely a theologian’s success” (AC 10) or, as he puts the point elsewhere, “Kant...in the end [is] an *underhanded* Christian” (TI ‘Reason’ 6). To tease out the ramifications of the latter point we would do well to examine Nietzsche’s critique of Kant’s “elegant attempt” as presented in the Third Essay of the *Genealogy*.

It is well known that Kant found it necessary “to deny *knowledge*, in order to make room for *faith*,”<sup>119</sup> and, of this Nietzsche writes: ““There is no knowledge: *consequently*—there is a God”: what a new *elegantia syllogismi!* what a *triumph* for the ascetic ideal!—“ (GM III 25). According to Nietzsche then Kant’s attempts to fortify one kind of moral reasoning concurrently represents a triumph for the ascetic ideal. But how do Kant’s world-view and his adjoining form of moral reasoning represent such a victory? The answer to this question is found in the Third Essay of the *Genealogy*, in which Nietzsche informs us that Kant’s transcendental project is but one of the latest manifestations of the ascetic ideal:

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<sup>117</sup> Kant, Immanuel (1965) pp. 313-314 (A 319/ B 376)

<sup>118</sup> Kant, Immanuel (1965) p. 314 (A319/B376)

<sup>119</sup> Kant, Immanuel (1993) p. 29 (B xxx)

Does one still seriously believe (as theologians imagined for a while) that Kant's *victory* over the dogmatic concepts of theology ('God,' 'soul,' 'freedom,' 'immortality') damaged that ideal? —it being no concern of ours for the present whether Kant ever had any intention of doing such a thing. What is certain, is that, since Kant, transcendentalists of every kind have once more won the day—they have been emancipated from the theologians: what joy!—Kant showed them a secret path by which they may, on their own initiative and with all scientific respectability, from now on follow their 'hearts desire' (*GM III 25*).

Kant's alleged victory over the dogmatic concepts of theology is represented in the claim that "*there is a realm of truth and being but reason is excluded from it*" (*GM III 12*). This claim, according to Nietzsche, opens up the "secret path" back to the ascetic ideal, and back to the matters of faith: God, soul, freedom, and immortality. And the path provided by Kant, Nietzsche tells us, is a "divine way out" (*GM III 25*). A means by which one may profess allegiance to the ascetic ideal behind the masks of "knowledge" and "scientific respectability" (*GM III 25*). In other words, one may pay their respects to the noumena, to the realm of truth and being, rather than to the traditional dogmatic concepts of theology, and, as so liberated, one is again free to "follow their 'hearts desire,'" back to the realm of "truth and being." In this way Kant renders the moral realm, the realm of truth and being, unassailable. As Nietzsche puts the point in *Daybreak*:

...to create room for *his* 'moral realm' [Kant] saw himself obliged to posit an undemonstrable world, a logical 'Beyond' —it was for precisely that that he had need of his critique of pure reason! In other words: *he would not have had need of it* if one thing has not been more vital to him than anything else: to render the 'moral realm' unassailable, even better incomprehensible to reason— for he felt that a moral order of things was only too assailable by reason! (*D P 3*)

In rendering the "moral realm" unassailable, as a logical Beyond, Kant reintroduces the concepts of "God," "soul," "freedom," and "immortality," as *matters of faith*.

And this, Nietzsche tells us, represents "a *triumph* for the ascetic ideal" (*GM III 25*). It is a victory for this mode of evaluation because we are again thrust back into a "closed system of will, goal, and interpretation" (*GM III 23*). A system that posits the categorical imperative as the rational foundation of morality and claims that it is the only means by which we can make sense of ourselves. And this Nietzsche points out assumes and exhibits a pernicious faith in the ascetic ideal. So, Kant's buttressing of morality is a deeper and more insidious faith than the faith exhibited by

the atheists who fail to draw the appropriate inferences, given that they have forsaken their belief in the Christian God. It is more pernicious because in buttressing morality from its impeding self-overcoming, Kant provides this mode of evaluation with the cover of “knowledge” and “scientific respectability.” In so doing, Kant precludes the possibility that there are other ways in which we can make sense of ourselves as ethical agents (*GM III 25*).

There is one additional way in which faith serves as a fortress behind which the ascetic ideal maintains its privileged position as the only mode of evaluation through which we can make sense of ourselves. Accordingly, I turn now to the last congregation of the faithful, those who profess a faith in the unconditional value of truth, as manifested in scientism.

### 3.3 Faith in Science<sup>120</sup>

Quite famously Nietzsche, towards the end of the Third Essay of the *Genealogy*, informs us that those who profess a faith in science, or more pointedly scientism, are not opponents of the ascetic ideal but rather they are “the *best* ally the ascetic ideal has at present”( *GM III 25*). They “certainly believe they are as completely liberated from the ascetic ideal as possible” (*GM III 24*), but Nietzsche points out that this self-assessment is mistaken, for the faith they hold in the unconditional value of truth represents the “*kernel*” of the ascetic ideal. However, upon first glance all of this sounds rather odd, as science rejects both metaphysical and theological explanations. And, given these commitments how can science then represent the “*kernel*” of the ascetic ideal? Further, as David Owen points out, “the arguments of both the first two essays of the *Genealogy* could be accepted, at least in principle, by scientific atheists...” So, in light of these considerations, we need to determine precisely the nature of the connection between an ardent commitment to scientism, to the unconditional value of truth, and to the ascetic ideal.<sup>121</sup>

Nietzsche takes up this task by describing the current intellectual terrain:

The ascetic ideal has decidedly not been conquered: if anything, it became stronger, which is to say, more elusive, more spiritual, more capacious, as science remorselessly detached and broke off wall upon wall, external additions that had *coarsened* it appearance (*GM III 25*).

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<sup>120</sup> Again, I am using the conception of a “the faith in science” as a category that is not limited to those who are faithful in scientism. Rather, such a category captures all those who profess a faith in the unconditional value of truth.

<sup>121</sup> Owen, David (2007) p. 126

Nietzsche is clear: the ascetic ideal has not been conquered. Rather the ideal is becoming both stronger and more elusive. Accordingly, then, Nietzsche's objective is "...to disclose to them what they themselves cannot see—for they are too close to themselves: this ideal is precisely *their* ideal, too...—They are far from being *free* spirits: *for they still have faith in truth*" (GM III 24).

Nietzsche's most succinct argument for contending that scientism is not the antithesis of the ascetic ideal but rather its latest, strongest, and most elusive manifestation is contained within Book Five of *The Gay Science* section 344, a passage to which he directs our attention in the *Genealogy*. There, Nietzsche tells us scientism reflects a faith in the unconditional will to truth. In the section under analysis, Nietzsche begins by telling us that the unconditional will to truth can be manifested in two distinct ways: (A) In the will not to allow myself to be deceived or (B) in the will not to deceive. Nietzsche tells us that the former does not adequately explain the unconditional will to truth, for it assumes that it is harmful, dangerous, and calamitous to be deceived. Nietzsche renders this claim groundless by virtue of the fact that both truth and untruth are, or at least can be, useful. The unconditional will to truth does not depend upon a prudential principle, a principle, that is, of utility and harm. Thus, Nietzsche concludes "the faith in science, which after all exists undeniably, cannot owe its origin to the calculus of utility," and as such the will to truth does not mean the "will not to allow myself to be deceived" (GS 344). We must, therefore, try to tread the second path.

Accordingly, Nietzsche tells us that the unconditional will to truth is manifested in the latter case, in the "will not to deceive, not even myself" (GS 344). Under this latter interpretation the unconditional will to truth is a ban on deceit, and with the claim "I will not deceive, not even myself" Nietzsche tells us we stand on moral ground. The unconditional value of truth, understood in this way, is a moral valuation which has its origins in the Christian value of truthfulness. Nietzsche puts the point this way:

...those who are truthful in that audacious and ultimate sense that is presupposed by the faith in science, *thus affirm another world* than the world of life, nature, and history; and insofar as they affirm this 'other world'—look, must they not by the same token negate its counterpart, this world, *our* world?...it is still a *metaphysical faith* upon which our faith in science rests—that even we seekers after knowledge today, we godless anti-metaphysicians still take our fire, too, from the flame lit by a faith that is thousands of years



old, that Christian faith which was also the faith of Plato, that God is the truth, that truth is divine (*GS* 344).

Here Nietzsche demonstrates that the unconditional will to truth, which is manifested in scientism's commitment to the unconditional value of truth, is actually the latest manifestation of a metaphysical faith. It is not anti-Christian, as it maintains, but rather the latest and most mendacious form of "faith." As Nietzsche states it in the *Genealogy*: "it is precisely in their faith in truth that its adherents are more rigid and unconditional than anyone" (*GM* III 24). Nietzsche reveals that behind the atheistic demands of scientism lurks a fundamental faith: a faith in the unconditional value of truth, which is a moral commitment.

Science does not create values: "Strictly speaking," Nietzsche writes, "there is no such thing as science 'without any presuppositions'...a philosophy, a 'faith,' must always be there first of all, so that science can acquire a direction, a meaning, a limit, a method, a *right* to exist" (*GM* III 24). Science is parasitic upon a system of purposes for its valuation, and, as such, scientism, coupled with its commitment to the unconditional value of truth, represents a faith in the ascetic ideal. So, in this way, Nietzsche argues that "science is not...self-sufficient...it first requires in every respect an ideal of value, a value-creating power...[science] never creates values" (*GM* III 24). As such the scientist's devotion to the unconditional value of truth is rendered problematic. Nietzsche exposes that such a commitment to the unconditional will to truth is a moral imperative, grounded on the Christian virtue of truthfulness, which is "the faith in a *metaphysical* value," a faith that the scientist ostensibly rejects (*GM* III 24). The scientist cannot legitimately be dedicated to "unconditional honest atheism" and the unconditional value of truth because these two beliefs are in conflict.

Nietzsche unsettles the scientist's faith in the unconditional value of truth by demonstrating that this faith depends upon the Christian faith, "which is also the faith of Plato, that God is the truth, that truth is divine" (*GS* 344). Moreover, insofar as the scientist is committed to "unconditional and honest atheism," the foundation for his belief in the unconditional will to truth is rendered problematic, as Nietzsche reveals that it is based upon a moral imperative, and hence a Christian obligation (*GS* 344). Thus, the scientist is offered reasons immanent to his system of purposes to forsake his faith in the unconditional value of truth. Accordingly, I turn now to examine the

relationship between the three types of faith elucidated above and the immanence of critique.

#### **4. Conclusion: “Faith” and the Immanence of Critique**

In this chapter I have argued in support of two claims: (1) Nietzsche’s genealogical methodology functions as an immanent critique of morality, by which he attempts to expose the inconsistencies of particular paradigms. And (2) Nietzsche offers such critiques to at least three distinct groups of interlocutors. In so doing, I argued that he provides an account of the commitments immanent to a particular system of purposes in order to expose a set of problematic assumptions, which could, if the assumptions are sufficiently motivating, serve to disrupt the interlocutors’ faith in morality. So, in each case, the “faithful” are offered internal reasons that may prompt them to give up their respective “faith.” Nietzsche’s razor perception is that the faithful remain devoted to their respective beliefs because they are thoughtlessly held captive by the allure of their faith. Nietzsche slices away the appeal of a hegemonic perspective by demonstrating that each group of devotees possesses internal reasons, reasons immanent to their system of purposes, to abandon their faith. And in claiming that Nietzsche offers an immanent critique of morality to at least three distinct sets of interlocutors, I also claimed that the target audience of Nietzsche’s genealogical mode of inquiry captures in its net a wider set of interlocutors than many scholars have noted.

Nietzsche’s genealogical mode of inquiry may serve to prompt the faithful to re-evaluate their commitments, and this, it is worth noting, serves another function. Nietzsche’s genealogical mode of inquiry may also awaken the “intellectual conscience.” Nietzsche, in *Daybreak*, ties these two points together. I quote the passage in its entirety:

*The need for little deviant acts.*— Sometimes to act *against* one’s better judgment when it comes to questions of *custom*; to give way in practice while keeping one’s reservations to oneself; to do as everyone does and thus to show them consideration as it were in compensation for our deviant opinions:— many tolerably free-minded people regard this, not merely as unobjectionable, but as ‘honest,’ ‘humane,’ ‘tolerant,’ ‘not being pedantic,’ and whatever else those pretty words may be with which the intellectual conscience is lulled to sleep: and thus this person takes his child for Christian baptism though he is an atheist; and that person serves in the army as all the world does, however

much he may execrate hatred between nations; and a third marries his wife in church because her relatives are pious and is not ashamed to repeat vows before a priest. 'It doesn't *really matter* if people like us also do what everyone does and always has done' —this is the thoughtless *prejudice!* The *thoughtless* error! For nothing *matters more* than that an already mighty, anciently established and irrationally recognized custom should be once more confirmed by a person recognized as rational: it thereby acquires in the eyes of all who come to hear of it the sanction of rationality itself! All respect to your opinions! But *little deviant acts* are worth more! (D 149)

Each brand of faith discussed above represents a fundamental discord or disconnect between one's stated principles and one's actions. One could be intellectually honest in terms of forsaking one of the three forms of faith elucidated, and yet nevertheless be intellectually dishonest in terms of failing to act accordingly. That is, one may, under the guise of being "humane, tolerant" or "not being pedantic," act as if they retain a "faith" they have otherwise abandoned (D 149). Nietzsche provides us with a set of striking cases within which this may occur, none more so than the example of a "person who takes his child for Christian baptism though he is an atheist" (D 149). For Nietzsche, it is not enough for one to abandon one's faith, privately, as it were. For in imitating a person of faith, one, at the same time, lends credence to the custom, and in so doing provides the custom with the sanction of "rationality." This reveals Nietzsche's commitment to sketching a connection between theory and practice.

There is one further point worth making here. If Nietzsche through his genealogical mode of inquiry seeks to trace the sidelined and overlooked features of a past, which is immanent to a system of purposes, then the methodology, in some sense, must rely upon the tracking of the living crystallizations which make up the particular system of purposes under analysis. Yet, Nietzsche informs us, in *The Anti-Christ*, that men of conviction, men of faith, by virtue of being held captive by a particular perspective cannot see behind or beneath their respective conviction. He puts the point in this way:

Men of conviction simply do not come into consideration where the fundamentals of value and disvalue are concerned. Convictions are prisons. They do not see far enough, they do not see things *beneath* them: but to be permitted to speak about value and disvalue one must see five hundred convictions *beneath* one — *behind* one...The man of faith, the 'believer' of every sort is necessarily a dependent man — such as cannot out of himself posit ends at all. The 'believer' does not belong to *himself*, he can be only a means, he has to be *used*, he needs someone who will use him...Conviction is the backbone of the man of conviction. *Not* to see many things, not to be impartial to anything, to be party through and through, to view all values from

a strict and necessary perspective — this alone is the condition under which such a man exists at all (AC 54).

Nietzsche is clear: Convictions are prisons and one that possesses a “faith” is necessarily myopic. According to Nietzsche, when one is held captive by a particular perspective, one “does not see far enough,” one gazes upon all things from a “strict and necessary perspective.” When one is held captive by a particular system of purposes, one is, according to Nietzsche, excluded from discussions of value and disvalue. The predicament of captivity, of being imprisoned by a particular perspective, is also diagnosed here; for Nietzsche claims that the man of faith is “necessarily a dependent man,” a man that does not belong to himself, but is in the service of his conviction. In diagnosing the predicament of the man of faith, Nietzsche additionally offers a remedy. The remedy for myopia is seeing “beneath” and “behind” one’s convictions. In other words, according to Nietzsche, one must first “see five hundred convictions,” that is, one must see the manner in which varying systems of purposes frame themselves and justify themselves, in order to then compare the value or disvalue of their competing claims. This, for Nietzsche, requires a certain kind of historical knowledge. In order to be freed from faith and conviction one requires historical knowledge, which facilitates the remedy for myopia. For the correct use of history allows us to tease out the living crystallizations of a system of purposes through which people have genuinely made sense of themselves, and it allows us to call into question claims immanent to that particular system of purposes. Robert Guay puts the point in this way: “Nietzsche’s genealogy, then, does not purport to offer historical facts with inherent normative implications, but the functional assessment of ideals in terms of their own internal standards.”<sup>122</sup> So, Nietzsche’s genealogical mode of inquiry requires a particular kind of historical knowledge in order to facilitate the “assessment of ideals in terms of their own internal standards.”

Yet, this is a grand claim. For as I mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, scholarly opinion here is sharply divided: there are scholars who claim that Nietzsche’s genealogical methodology is nothing more than the correct practice of history, and there are scholars who claim that the genealogical method, of which the *Genealogy* is a demonstration, is nothing more than the development of a fictional

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<sup>122</sup> Guay, Robert (2006) p. 355

account which is intended to free us from our faith, our conviction that one mode of morality is universally binding. Accordingly in the chapters that follow, I will broach the vexed topic in Nietzsche scholarship surrounding the role of history in Nietzsche's genealogical methodology beginning with an examination of Nietzsche's turn to "historical philosophy."

## CHAPTER THREE

### Nietzsche's Historical Philosophy

In *Human, All Too Human* Nietzsche writes: "...what is needed from now on is *historical philosophizing*, and with it the virtue of modesty" (*HH* 2). Further, he claims that "historical philosophy [is] the youngest of all philosophical methods." Historical philosophy, as a methodology, facilitates the questioning of grand and entrenched narratives, and is a method that came to fruition in *On the Genealogy of Morals*.<sup>123</sup> Despite Nietzsche's continued insistence upon the methodological importance of "historical philosophy," his employment of the methodology has not been adequately explored within the secondary literature. However, what is commonplace is the simple equation of genealogy and history. For example, Raymond Geuss argues: "Alexander Nehamas is doubtlessly right to claim that for Nietzsche 'genealogy' is not some particular kind of method or special approach, rather it 'simply *is* history correctly practiced.' So 'Why do genealogy' means 'Why do history?'"<sup>124</sup> Brian Leiter, too, substantiates Nehamas' assertion in arguing that: "The *Genealogy* employs the genealogical method—history rightly practiced—in order to criticize morality in the pejorative sense."<sup>125</sup> And furthermore, Leiter suggests that: "Foucault draws a false distinction between *Historie* and *Genealogie*, when, in fact, Nietzsche uses the terms interchangeably."<sup>126</sup> Yet, as Christopher Janaway has recently noted: "...this formulation [that genealogy is history, correctly practiced] may run the risk of being uninformative: there are notable differences between genealogy and other forms of history."<sup>127</sup> The objective of this chapter is to begin shape the boundary by which the equation of genealogy with history becomes instructive.

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<sup>123</sup> For example, in Nietzsche's preface to *On the Genealogy of Morality* he writes: "It was then [in *Human All Too Human*], as I have said, that I advanced for the first time those genealogical hypotheses to which this treatise is devoted..." It seems then that in Nietzsche's estimation, here, his work was "genealogical," at least from *Human, All-Too-Human* onwards.

<sup>124</sup> Geuss, Raymond (1999) p. 17

<sup>125</sup> Leiter, Brian (2002) p. 166

<sup>126</sup> Leiter, Brian (2002) p. 166

<sup>127</sup> Janaway, Christopher (2007) p. 10

It is well known that the second of the *Untimely Meditations*, “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” represents Nietzsche’s most sustained discussion on the topic of history, and as such marks the most reasonable place to begin to tease out Nietzsche’s thoughts on the topic of history. The second of the *Untimely Meditations* provides an answer to one of Nietzsche’s principal concerns: What is the value of history and of historical studies? There, Nietzsche identifies three modes of history: the monumental, the antiquarian, and the critical; if used correctly, these modes can create a viable way of relating to the past otherwise not evident in 19<sup>th</sup> Century historicism. Yet, only to add to the uncertainty surrounding Nietzsche’s use of history, Thomas Brobjer argues that the second of the *Untimely Meditations* is “not representative of Nietzsche’s view of the value of historical studies and methods,” and “shortly after having written the book, Nietzsche changed his views on history, and for the rest of his active life his views were rather different from the ones put forth in the second *Untimely Meditation*.”<sup>128</sup> I argue that this understanding of the role of Nietzsche’s meditation of history is misleading and, in due course, I treat Brobjer’s objection with a careful analysis.

Accordingly, the structure of this chapter is as follows. First, I unearth two formulations of history that Nietzsche opposes: the Augustinian and the Kantian teleological conception of history and Hegel’s philosophy of history. This serves to provide the shape of Nietzsche’s positive views on the topic of history. Second, I present a reconstruction of Nietzsche’s modes of history: the antiquarian, the monumental and the critical. Third, I broach the topic of the value of history by reconstructing a position I have labeled “Nietzsche’s pharmacy.” There, I treat Nietzsche’s use of the concept of “historical sickness” as well as the antidotes he suggests as a means to alleviate our affliction. Fourth, I argue that Brobjer’s evaluation of Nietzsche’s inquiry into the uses and disadvantages of history for life is confused and as such we can employ the second of the *Untimely Meditations* to unpack Nietzsche’s thoughts on history. Lastly, I argue that genealogy is best seen as an example of the critical mode of history first elucidated in the second of the *Untimely Meditations*. These reconstructions and reflections will serve to provide an answer to the question: What, for Nietzsche, is history correctly practiced? The overarching objective of this chapter is to begin to morph the, at present,

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<sup>128</sup> Brobjer, Thomas. (2004) 301

uninformative proclamation: “genealogy is history correctly practiced,” into an informative one.

## 1. Nietzsche’s Critique of Teleological Conceptions of History

The teleological conception of history is paradigmatic of the kind of history conducted in the medieval and early modern periods. For, as Richard Evans argues:

In the medieval and modern times, many historians saw their function as chronicling the working-out of God’s purpose in the world. Things happened, ultimately, because God willed them to happen; human history was the playground of supernatural forces of Good and Evil.<sup>129</sup>

The teleological formulation of human history purports to trace the essence behind historical epochs and to, accordingly, determine the course of historical development. Thus, the Augustinian formulation of historiography, which charts the divinely scripted narrative, and the Kantian formulation of historiography, which charts the progression of reason, both represent an excellent example of the kind of historiography that Nietzsche’s historical philosophy opposes.

Prado describes the Augustinian formulation of history as follows:

Augustine’s linear conception of history was a consolidated, teleological sequence of events set in motion and supervised by God; for Augustine, history is an unfolding story with a beginning (the Creation), a middle (the Incarnation) and an eventual (the Last Judgment).<sup>130</sup>

The Augustinian historiographer charts and chronicles the divinely sanctioned narrative, and flags the purposes of God in the course of human events. In *The Antichrist* Nietzsche provides a critique of the “imaginary explanations” at work in this form of historiography. It is worth quoting at some length:

In Christianity neither morality nor religion come into contact with reality at any point. Nothing but imaginary *causes* (‘God,’ ‘soul,’ ‘ego,’ ‘spirit,’ ‘free will’ — or ‘unfree will’): nothing but imaginary *effects* (‘sin,’ ‘redemption,’ ‘grace,’ ‘punishment,’ ‘forgiveness of sins’). A traffic between imaginary

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<sup>129</sup> Evans, Richard J. (1997) p. 15

<sup>130</sup> Prado, C.G. (1995) p. 33 Interestingly, Hegel (1861) too suggests that: “That the History of the world, with all the changing scenes which its annals present, is this process of development and the realization of the Spirit, — this is the true... justification of God in History. Only *this* insight can reconcile Spirit with the History of the world —viz., that what has happened, and is happening everyday, is not only not “without God” but is essentially his work.”(IV iii.). There is a debate in Hegelian scholarship surrounding the idea as to whether or not Hegel’s philosophy of history is best seen as teleological.



*beings* ('God,' 'spirits,' 'souls,'); and imaginary *natural* science...an imaginary *psychology*...an imaginary *teleology* ('the kingdom of God,' 'the Last Judgment,' 'eternal life')—This purely fictitious world is distinguished from the actual world of dreams, very much to its disadvantage, by the fact that the latter *mirrors* actuality, which the former falsifies, disvalues and denies actuality (AC 15).

Augustinian historiography shapes the happenings in the kingdom of God, which culminate in the Last Judgment and in the possibility of eternal life. Nietzsche argues that this form of historiography has the effect of falsifying, disvaluing and denying human history. It is predicated upon the Christian worldview in which the ultimate purpose, or *telos*, of human history is to be found in the traffic between fictional dogmas. Teleological historiography presents us with a paradoxical account of human history: The goal, the purpose, or the *telos* of human history is to be found in disvaluing and denying the temporal world, which is to deny that the events of human history are significant. In other words, the teleological formulation of history finds the purpose of human history outside of human history in the divine. This mode of historiography stands squarely in the "shadow of God."

For Nietzsche, the teleological formulation of history is clearly problematic and so too is the role of the historian within this conception of historiography. Prado puts the point this way: "under this [Augustinian] conception the historian's task is to integrate what are apparently unconnected events and discern, behind the resulting integration, the hand of God."<sup>131</sup> Within this mode of historiography the historian shapes and forms the events of human history in accordance with a grand narrative and as such is precluded from offering alternative versions of a particular historical event. As a result the historian working within this mode of historiography is forced to map out a linear development in which the only events of consequence are those that flag the inevitable progression towards the Last Judgment, towards eternal life. Nietzsche's formulation of historiography, by contrast, provides three distinct modes of history by which the historian can shape and form the events of human history. Thus, on Nietzsche's account the historian is not wedded to one univocal conception of an event. Rather, the historian can view the event as something to be emulated or as something to be revered. Additionally, Nietzsche's conception of historiography affords the historian with the ability to view subsequent entrenched narratives scrupulously. As such, Nietzsche's conception of historiography marks a departure

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<sup>131</sup> Prado, C.G. (1995) p. 33

from the teleological historiography insofar as the historian, when writing history, is garnished with the responsibility of discerning which mode of history is appropriate for his purposes.

It should be noted that the Augustinian picture of history is not radically distinct from the Kantian conception of history. Immanuel Kant also presents a teleological formulation of history and in “The Idea of a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Intent,” where he elucidates his objectives as follows:

...to try to discover whether there is some *natural objective* in this senseless course of human affairs, from which it may be possible to produce a history of creatures who proceed without a plan of their own but in conformity with some definite plan of nature’s...we want to see if we can succeed in finding a guiding thread in for such a history.<sup>132</sup>

In the essay, Kant presents nine theses that serve the function of sketching the manner in which the “guiding thread” in history, namely, reason, is manifested. Yet for our purposes an exploration of the first two theses shall suffice.

Accordingly, the first thesis states: “All natural capacities of a creature are destined to evolve completely to their natural end.” Moreover, Kant writes: “In the teleological theory of nature...an organization that does not achieve its end, is a contradiction.”<sup>133</sup> If we deny this fundamental principle then, “we no longer have a lawful but an aimlessly playing nature and hopeless chance takes the place of reason’s guiding thread.”<sup>134</sup> As such, the consequence of not viewing ourselves, *qua* humans, as guided by a teleological principle is to see human history ruled by chaos and hopelessness. Thus, the Kantian conception of history aims to circumvent these implications by elucidating the guiding thread in human history.

The second thesis states: “In man (as the only rational creature on earth) those natural capacities which are directed to the use of his reason are to be fully developed only in the race, not in the individual.” Kant’s worry is that human beings, taken individually, do not seem to be pursuing rational ends. Rather, individual human actions seem to be motivated out of “folly, and childish vanity and often even childish malice and destructiveness.” Thus, Kant concludes that only in viewing the human

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<sup>132</sup> Kant, Immanuel (1983) p. 30

<sup>133</sup> Kant, Immanuel (1983) p. 30

<sup>134</sup> Kant, Immanuel (1983) p. 30

species as a whole can we tease out the guiding principle of history.<sup>135</sup> Kant explicitly makes this point in what follows:

...Each individual man would have to live excessively long if he were to make complete use of all his natural capacities...[nature] requires a perhaps incalculable sequence of generations, each passing on its enlightenment to the next, to bring its seeds in our species to the stage of development that completely fulfils nature's objective. And the goal of his efforts must be that point in time, at least among the ideas of men, since the natural capacities must otherwise be regarded as in large part purposeless and vain.<sup>136</sup>

To avoid the unsatisfactory conclusion that human actions are purposeless and ultimately conducted in vain, Kant urges us to view human actions within the schema of the advancement of the species, which is to view individual human actions in accordance with the guiding thread of reason. As a result, we can view what appears superficially as purposeless as actually contributing the fulfilment of "nature's objective," and as such as rational.

Nietzsche's objection to the Kantian formulation of history is that it basks in the "shadow of God." Teleological explanations represent a deification of nature insofar as they presuppose a grand narrative in which all human actions are rendered meaningful. In encouraging the de-deification of nature Nietzsche writes: "Let us beware of saying that there are laws in nature...Once you know that there are no purposes you know that there is no accident; for it is only beside a world of purpose that the word 'accident' has meaning" (*GS* 109). Nietzsche here is articulating his commitment to naturalism, and to additionally rebuffing the ambitions of teleological explanations that purport to deduce and to illuminate the universal objectives, or purposes, of human history. Nietzsche's critique of the Kantian formulation of historiography parallels his critique of the Augustinian formulation of history. Teleological historiography, of both the Augustinian and Kantian variety, represent the deification of nature insofar as they profess to elucidate the over-arching goal of human history from a singular guiding thread.

There is one additional picture of history which Nietzsche goes to lengths to repudiate. It is to Nietzsche's critique the Hegelian formulation of history that I now turn.

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<sup>135</sup> Kant, Immanuel (1983) p. 29-30

<sup>136</sup> Kant, Immanuel (1983) p. 30

## 1.1 Nietzsche's Critique of Hegelian Historiography

Nietzsche's critique of Hegelian historiography permeates his reflections on the uses and disadvantages of history for life. I will begin by presenting Hegel's conception of historiography as found within *Reason and History: A General Introduction to the Philosophy of History* before turning to elucidate Nietzsche's evaluation of the Hegelian position.

Hegel presents "three modes of history:" original history, reflective history, and philosophic history, as methods for the writing of history. These modes are hierarchical, with philosophic history representing the pinnacle of historiography. The first mode of historiography is original history. This form of historiography is the mode of Herodotus and Thucydides "and other historians of the same order, whose descriptions are for the most part limited to deeds, events, and states of society, which they had before their eyes, and whose spirit they shared."<sup>137</sup> The original historian depends upon their first person perspective concerning the events in question. Hegel argues that: "the author's spirit, and that of the actions he narrates, is one and the same. He describes scenes in which he himself has been an actor, or at any rate an interested spectator."<sup>138</sup> The original historian does not create a theoretical interpretation out of their historical surroundings. Rather, for Hegel: "what the [original] historian puts into their mouths is no supposititious system of ideas, but an uncorrupted transcript of their intellectual and moral habitudes."<sup>139</sup>

The second mode of history, reflective history, has three sub-categories: universal history, practical history and critical history. Universal history has as its object the vast expanse of an entire civilization, and as such this mode of history "aspires to traverse long periods of time, or to be universal, [and, as a result] must indeed forego the attempt to give individual representations of the past as it actually existed."<sup>140</sup> Given the object of universal history a particular historical event "no

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<sup>137</sup> Hegel, G.W.F. (1997) I § 1.

<sup>138</sup> Hegel, G.W.F. (1997) I § 2

<sup>139</sup> Hegel, G.W.F. (1997) I § 3

<sup>140</sup> Hegel, G.W.F. (1997) II § 7

longer maintains its original proportions, but is put off with a bare mention.”<sup>141</sup> In contrast to universal history, practical history draws upon a particular historical event in order to “take the occurrence out of the category of the Past and makes it virtually present.”<sup>142</sup> Practical history sketches connections between past events and our present circumstances in order “enliven” our resolve. The final sub-category of reflective history is critical history, and Hegel argues that it is “properly designated as a History of History; a criticism of historical narratives and an investigation of their truth and credibility.”<sup>143</sup> Additionally, for Hegel, viewing historical narratives critically provides the groundwork for the transition from reflective historiography to philosophic history.

Philosophic history draws upon reason, and Hegel argues that “The only Thought which Philosophy brings with it to the contemplation of History, is the simple conception of *Reason*; that Reason is the Sovereign of the World; that the history of the world therefore, presents us with a rational process.”<sup>144</sup> The progress of reason is actual and, so too, is philosophic history. This is to say, for Hegel through the use of philosophic history reason is manifested in the world. Or as Hegel puts the point: “to him who looks upon the world rationally, the world in its turn, presents a rational aspect. The relation is mutual.”<sup>145</sup> And, philosophic historiography for Hegel contributes to the final stage of history insofar as it represents the manifestation of reason.

Nietzsche is critical of the Hegelian formulation of history, and in the second of the *Untimely Meditations* he argues that:

History understood in this Hegelian fashion has been mockingly called God’s sojourn on earth, though the god referred to has been created only by history. This god, however, became transparent and comprehensible to himself within the Hegelian craniums and has already ascended all the dialectically possible steps of his evolution up to this self-revelation: so that for Hegel the climax and terminus of the world-process coincided with his own existence in Berlin. Indeed, he ought to have said that everything that came after him was properly to be considered merely as a musical coda to the world-historical rondo or, even more properly, as superfluous (*HL VIII 104*).

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<sup>141</sup> Hegel, G.W.F. (1997) II § 7

<sup>142</sup> Hegel, G.W.F. (1997) II § 8

<sup>143</sup> Hegel, G.W.F. (1997) II § 9

<sup>144</sup> Hegel, G.W.F. (1997) III § 11

<sup>145</sup> Hegel, G.W.F. (1997) III § 13

Though Nietzsche is skeptical of the privileged position that Hegel ascribes to himself in the process of history, Nietzsche's central criticism is that the Hegelian formulation renders current events and actions superfluous to the world-process. Such events are superfluous when understood against the backdrop of philosophic history and as such under the Hegelian formulation of history we can only view ourselves as epigones.

Nietzsche writes:

The belief that one is a latecomer of the age is, in any case, paralyzing and depressing: but it must appear dreadful and devastating when such a belief one day by a bold inversion raises this latecomer to godhead as the true meaning and goal of all previous events, when his miserable condition is equated with a completion of world-history (*HL VIII*104).

The Hegelian conception of philosophic history, Nietzsche contends, fails to offer the modern man anything other than the feeling he is a latecomer, ushering in the completion of "world-history." In response to the stunting effects of Hegel's philosophy of history, Nietzsche provides us with a possible alternative by which we can view the actions of our predecessors in a manner that is heartening. Accordingly, Nietzsche writes:

What I mean by this—and it is all that I mean—is that the thought of being epigones, which can often be a painful thought, is also capable of evoking great effects and grand hopes for the future in both an individual and a nation, provided we regard ourselves as heirs and successors of the astonishing powers of antiquity and see in this honour and our spur. What I do not mean, therefore, is that we should live as pale and stunted late descendants of strong races coldly prolonging their life as antiquarians and gravediggers (*HL VIII* 103-104).

Hegelian philosophic history provides a univocal account of the value of history and as a result historiography, so understood, culminates in the proclamation that we are "pale and stunted late descendants of a strong race" basking in the reflection of past greatness. By contrast, Nietzsche's historical philosophy elucidates three modes of history through which we can make sense of ourselves, thus overcoming the unsatisfactory conclusions and totalitarian effects of Hegelian historiography. Accordingly, I now turn to an elucidation of Nietzsche's modes of history, and begin my discussion with the first form of historiography presented in his meditation on the uses and disadvantages of history for life.

## **2. History and its Modes**

## 2.1 Monumental History

The first mode of history that Nietzsche presents is the monumental approach to the past, which is useful for the man who looks for teachers and exemplars amongst his contemporaries, and is left wanting. Nietzsche describes this mode of history as follows:

Of what use, then, is the monumentalistic conception of the past, engagement with the classic and rare of earlier times, to the man of the present? He learns from it that the greatness that once existed was in any event once *possible* and may thus be possible again; he goes his way with a more cheerful step, for the doubt which assailed him in weaker moments, whether he was not perhaps desiring the impossible, has now been banished (*HL II 69*).

Nietzsche tells us that in viewing history monumentally, we can strengthen our resolve in knowing that exemplary actions were possible, and thus may be possible again. Or as Walter Kaufmann puts the point, monumental history provides the horizon by which we can note: "...the fact that man is capable of greatness, contemporary mediocrity notwithstanding."<sup>146</sup> As such noting exemplary achievements are crucial to formulating a monumental conception of the past, and as a result Nietzsche argues:

...monumental history will have no use for absolute veracity: it will always have to deal in approximations and generalities, in making what is dissimilar look similar, it will always have to diminish the differences of motives and investigations so as to exhibit the *effectus* monumentally, that is to say something exemplary and worthy of imitation, at the expense of the *causae*... (*HL II 70*)

To appreciate an individual monumentally, we must place an emphasis upon their exemplary achievement at the expense of their foibles, or their moments of weakness. An example may be useful here. Consider the actions of Rosa Parks, which led to the Montgomery Bus Boycotts of 1955. Viewed monumentally, Parks' actions are taken to be the impetus for the change in Alabama segregation laws. Thus, a whole host of other facts are obscured in drawing out the salient features of Parks' commendable actions. For example, there were two women who, prior to Parks, refused to give up their seats on a Montgomery Bus: Claudette Colvin and Mary Louise Smith.<sup>147</sup> Yet both Colvin and Smith were, in the eyes of the NAACP, unsuitable candidates for

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<sup>146</sup> Kaufmann, Walter (1950) p. 144

<sup>147</sup> Branch, Taylor (1988) p. 127

serving as the symbol of the momentous cause.<sup>148</sup> In constructing a monumental historical account of Parks, the historian must place an emphasis upon certain features at the expense of others. Thus the monumental historian highlights, for example, the actions of Parks, but not Colvin; the historian focuses upon Caesar's self-control and self-outwitting, but not his foibles; the historian calls attention to the pyramids, but not the slaves. Nietzsche puts the point this way: "How much of the past would have to be overlooked if it was to produce that mighty effect, how violently what is individual in it would have to be forced into a universal mould and all its sharp corners and hard outlines broken up in the interest of conformity!" (*HL* II 69) Hence, this sort of assimilation, of emphasising certain aspects of the past at the expense of others, is necessary for the production of monumental history.

At the same time, monumental history creates strange and unusual sorts of aggregates: it unfolds abstractions. Monumental history can have the effect of overshadowing contemporary greatness insofar as it can cause us to turn from the "fresh life of the present" towards a form of greatness that has already existed. This is the danger of this particular mode of historiography. However, if our understanding of ourselves becomes overshadowed by past greatness, Nietzsche offers alternative conceptions of historiography that we can employ in order to overcome these effects. I turn to the second mode of history elucidated in Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditation* on history.

## **2.2 Antiquarian History**

The second form of history that Nietzsche illuminates is the antiquarian mode of historiography, which is "usually designated as the real sense of history" (*HL* III 74). In contrast to the monumental mode of history, this brand of historiography encourages the historian to "...gives thanks for his existence. By tending with care that which has existed from old, he wants to preserve for those who shall come into existence after him the conditions under which he himself came into existence—and thus he serves life" (*HL* III 72-73). As such, the antiquarian mode of history aids in the formulation of a cultural identity. As Foucault puts the point: Antiquarian history "seeks the continuities of soil, language, and urban life in which our present is rooted,

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<sup>148</sup> Branch, Taylor (1988) p. 127



and, ‘by cultivating in a delicate manner that which existed for all time, it tries to conserve for posterity the conditions under which we were born.’”<sup>149</sup> Thus, the antiquarian historian preserves and reveres by meticulously collecting data, and as a result conserves for posterity the continuities of his culture.

However, like each mode of history, the antiquarian mode, too, is subject to decay for it promotes a myopic gaze upon the past:

The antiquarian sense of a man, a community, a whole people, always possesses an extremely restricted field of vision; most of what exists it does not perceive at all, and the little it does see it sees much too close up and isolated; it cannot relate what it sees to anything else and it therefore accords everything it sees equal importance and therefore to each individual thing too great importance. There is a lack of that discrimination of value and that sense of proportion which would distinguish between the things of the past in a way that would do true justice to them; their measure and proportion is always that accorded them by the backward glance of the antiquarian nation or individual (*HL III 74*).

The antiquarian mode of history, to a greater extent than the monumental or critical modes of history, glorifies the local situation and the native customs. If unchecked by reflection upon why these customs should be glorified, or why it should be the case that a particular type of moral construct has flourished, one is left only to glorify, unreflectively, the customs of one’s society.

Nietzsche, throughout the second *Untimely Meditation*, warns against the misuse of each type of history, and cautions his readers that antiquarian history may “grow too mighty and overpower the other modes of regarding the past” (*HL III 75*). An example may be useful here. Bernard-Henri Lévy writes: “... it’s [the antiquarian mode] that the United States, with its ubiquitous halls of fame, appears to fall. The museums that frenetically stock up, these places that combine everything and no longer discern what is worth being memorialized from what isn’t...”<sup>150</sup> As Lévy’s investigations make clear, the antiquarian mode of history has indeed overpowered “the other modes of regarding the past”:

The craze for the relic, this time. A taste for preservation and for museum, taken to the nth degree...even if it’s under the heading ‘fake,’ we might as well make a museum of everything right away. But even more striking, more extravagant: yes, everything is becoming a relic; a mere plate of cheese is becoming a museum piece, but the museum piece is a plate of cheese that has

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<sup>149</sup> Foucault, Michel (1971) p. 161

<sup>150</sup> Lévy, Bernard-Henri (2006) p. 239

not been eaten yet, or served—it's a kind of antemuseum, a prerelic, and extension into the realm of memory of what has not yet taken place.<sup>151</sup>

Lévy's description of the musuemification of history: "Everything is becoming a relic;" everything is preserved with an antiquarian reverence, which restricts the ability to place a value upon that which is revered. Or as Nietzsche puts the point: it is "the repulsive spectacle of a blind rage for collecting, a restless raking together of everything that has ever existed" (*HL III 73*). Antiquarian history, if employed in this manner, ceases to be fruitful. Nietzsche's point is this: when the desire to preserve, come what may, outweighs the motivation to create, antiquarian history serves only to degenerate and stunt life. Accordingly, Nietzsche introduces one final candidate, which can be employed to mitigate the precarious effects of monumental and antiquarian historiography.

### 2.3 Critical History

Critical history serves the particular function of assessing and evaluating entrenched historical narratives in order to mitigate the effects of the other modes of historiography. This form of historiography elucidates

...how unjust the existence of anything—a privilege, a caste, a dynasty, for example—is, and how greatly this thing deserves to perish. Then its past is regarded critically, then one takes the knife to its roots, then one cruelly tramples over every kind of piety (*HL III 76*).

Critical history is compelled by the need for a thorough critique of entrenched narratives. Such historiography tramples over the pieties of antiquarian mode of historiography and mitigates the elevated status of monumental narratives by bringing to the forefront the overlooked aspects of the past. Thus, critical history is a particularly perilous form of historiography because it is difficult to "know the limit to the denial of the past..." (*HL III 76*).

Accordingly, in *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche provides us with a portrait or a description of the historian operating within this mode of historiography:

Thanks to the unconquerably strong and tough virility of the great German philologists and critical historians (viewed properly, all of them were also artists of destruction and dissolution), a *new* concept of the German spirit crystallized gradually in spite of all romanticism in music and philosophy, and the inclination of virile scepticism became a decisive trait, now, for example,

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<sup>151</sup> Lévy, Bernard-Henri (2006) p. 46

as an intrepid eye, now as the courage and hardness of analysis, as the tough will to undertake dangerous journeys of exploration and spiritualized North Pole expeditions under desolate and dangerous skies. There may be good reason why warmblooded and superficial humanitarians cross themselves just when they behold this spirit— (*BGE* 209)

Here, the critical historian is presented as one who is sceptical of entrenched narratives and as one who calls into question particular interpretations of the past that have dominated at the expense of others. They are resolute spirits who seek out, with the steadiness of a surgeon's hand, the task of opening up the past to new interpretations. Given that, the critical historian cannot only judge and condemn previous interpretations of historical events but must create out of the room thus liberated. Nietzsche argues:

If the historical drive does not also contain a drive to construct, if the purpose of destroying and clearing is not to allow a future already alive in anticipation to raise its house on the ground thus liberated, if justice alone prevails, then the instinct for creation will be enfeebled and discouraged (*HL VII 95*).

If one employs critical history with the sole aim to destroy, then this mode of history is not used in the service of life. Critical history, as abovementioned, must open up the space for new possibilities, for fresh historical interpretations because, as Nietzsche claims: “so many retroactive forces are still needed” (*GS 34*).

#### **2.4 On the Use of the Modes of History**

Within each mode of history, there is always the opportunity for excess and thus, each mode of history requires a certain “soil.” Nietzsche maintains that using the wrong type of historical study for the wrong purpose will only grow a:

...devastating weed. If the man who wants to achieve something great has need of the past at all, he appropriates it by means of monumental history; he, on the other hand, who likes to persist in the familiar and the revered of old, tends the past as an antiquarian historian; and only he who is oppressed by a present need, and wants to throw off this burden at any cost, has need of critical history, that is to say a history that judges and condemns (*HL II 72*).

Nietzsche is careful to argue that one need not take each mode of history—the monumental, the antiquarian, and the critical—in equal measure. As such, each mode of history is available for use in a particular situation or climate. Just as a specific plant requires a certain soil, so too do we need a particular sort of historical

investigation. Nietzsche does not suggest that we can annul our relationship with history, but rather, that we can view history in proportion to our needs: by using the past monumentally to recall great deeds of antiquity, the antiquarian model to revere one's place or origin, and the critical mode of history to challenge entrenched formulations of the past we have the means to use history in a manner which serves life. Nietzsche puts the point in this way:

For since we are the outcome of earlier generations, we are also the outcome of their aberrations, passions and errors, and indeed of their crimes; it is not possible wholly to free oneself from this chain. If we condemn these aberrations and regard ourselves as free of them, this does not alter the fact that we originate in them. The best that we can do is to confront our inherited and hereditary nature with our knowledge...It is an attempt to give oneself, as it were *a posteriori*, a past in which one would like to originate in opposition to that in which one did originate...(HL III 76)

Each mode of historiography provides a unique way of forming and shaping the past such that we can provide ourselves with a past *a posteriori*. As such, Nietzsche's historical philosophy provides us with the means to shape the past such that we can understand where we came from, and hence, what we may become. Yet, this is a particularly precarious task, and often we can be overwhelmed by our historical situation. Nietzsche labels this our historical sickness, and in what follows I argue that he provides us with the antidotes, or the means to overcome our affliction.

### **3. Nietzsche's Pharmacy: Historical Sickness and its Antidotes**

Up till now, I have been discussing Nietzsche's modes of history as if aligning ourselves with the proper mode of history was a relatively straightforward task and as if our relationship to history was anodyne. This, however, is simply not the case. Nietzsche suggests that our relationship to the historical is precarious, and more often than not, we find ourselves overwhelmed and beleaguered by an over-saturation of history. This over-saturation of history is our "historical sickness," and its most dramatic expression is found within *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

'It was' — that is the name of the will's gnashing of teeth and most secret melancholy. Powerless against what has been done, he is an angry spectator of all that is past. The will cannot will backwards; and that he cannot break time and time's covetousness, that is the will's loneliest melancholy (Z "On Redemption").

Our historical sickness is manifested in the crushing weight of the “it was,” coupled with the realization that the will cannot will backwards. Hence, the past is a particularly heavy burden, and in the second of the *Untimely Meditations* Nietzsche puts the point in this way: “...the phrase ‘it was’: that password which gives conflict, suffering and satiety access to man so as to remind him what his existence fundamentally is—an imperfect tense that can never become a perfect one” (*HL I 61*). Given that the past is regularly regarded as a burden, what then is the value of history and of historiography? The value of historiography, Nietzsche argues, is its ability to aid us in the overcoming of such a burden. As Nietzsche puts the point in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*:

And how could I bear to be a man if man were not also creator and guesser of riddles and redeemer of accident? To redeem those who lived in the past and to recreate all ‘it was’ into ‘thus I willed it!’ — that alone should I call redemption” (*Z ‘On Redemption’*).

To redeem the past, one must be in the position to claim: “thus I willed it.” And to take up this task, the task of affirming the past and concluding “thus I willed it,” Nietzsche, in the second of the *Untimely Meditations*, provides us with the following schema: (1) there are some who are remarkably strong, the “most powerful and tremendous natures,” and can incorporate all that is past, and accordingly can affirm all that is past without crutches of the antidotes (*HL I 63*); and (2) there are those who are sufficiently strong to recognize that they require the horizons that the antidotes of the supra-historical and the unhistorical perspectives provide; and (3) there are those who are overcome by the past, and as such cannot affirm the past even with the aid of the antidotes. In the sections that follow I elucidate the first two points of this schema, and in so doing argue that there is a tension in Nietzsche’s thought concerning the plausibility of the claim that one can affirm the past without the crutches of the supra-historical and the unhistorical perspectives.

### **3.1 The “Most Powerful and Tremendous Nature”**

In the second of the *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche offers a version of the abovementioned schema:

The stronger the innermost roots of a man’s nature, the more readily will he be able to assimilate and appropriate the things of the past; and the most powerful and tremendous nature would be characterized by the fact that it would know

no boundary at all at which the historical sense began to overwhelm it; it would draw to itself and incorporate into itself all the past, its own and that most foreign to it, and as it were transform it into blood. That which such a nature cannot subdue it knows how to forget; it no longer exists, the horizon is rounded and closed, there are people, passions, teachings, goals lying behind it...if it is incapable of drawing a horizon around itself, and at the same time too self-centred to enclose its own view within that of another, it will pine away slowly or hasten to its timely end (*HL I 62-63*).

Here Nietzsche is clear: there are human beings who are sufficiently strong to incorporate all that is past, and transform it, as it were, into blood. Such natures employ their historical sense, their “sixth sense,” and at no point are overwhelmed or beleaguered by the past, by the “it was” (*BGE 224*). Furthermore, of these strong and resolved spirits, some recognize that they cannot subdue the past and accordingly that they require the antidotes of the unhistorical and the supra-historical perspectives. Thus, Nietzsche is offering two distinct versions of these strong and resolute spirits: (1) There are those who can face the past, all of the “it was” and affirm it, transform it into blood. These natures can face the past of humanity generally, and reply: “thus I willed it.” (2) There are those who are sufficiently strong to realize that they cannot affirm all of the past, and accordingly employ the unhistorical and the supra-historical perspectives. In creating such horizons, they transform the past into something that is affirmable. The past again becomes something that can be affirmed and such spirits say, “thus I willed it,” to that particular picture. Yet, is it plausible to raise as a viable option, as Nietzsche clearly does, the former case in which one is meant to be sufficiently strong to be able to incorporate all that is past, without the aids of forgetting or of creating new horizons and boundaries? Henry Staten, for example, thinks not. The tenability of Nietzsche’s contention is worth looking at in detail, and I begin by looking at Staten’s reasons for his rejection of Nietzsche’s thesis.

Staten’s argument takes the following form, and I quote at length:

...it is one thing to suffer for all humanity as for oneself, and quite another thing to affirm, to say ‘thus I willed it,’ to the suffering of all humanity as to one’s own. If I affirm my own suffering, this may be a salutary psychological phenomenon; I might in this way cease to resent and struggle against the injuries of my past and thus take responsibility for my life in a fuller way than formerly. We understand what it would mean to ‘will backwards’ in the case of our personal past. But what can it mean to affirm the past of humanity?<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Staten, Henry (1990) pp. 69-70

As Staten's argument makes clear, it may be plausible to suggest that one could be psychologically well disposed towards oneself, such that one could affirm one's own particular past. But this peculiar psychological phenomenon is quite distinct from the grander task, which is what Nietzsche's argument requires, namely that one affirm the totality, all that is past, humanity as a whole. This is to expect that which we could not possibly deliver. Nietzsche's argument is untenable insofar as we are expected to move from affirming the particular, our particular past, to affirming the universal, the whole of human history. Staten puts the point this way:

We can only judge history if we do not feel too vividly the reality concerning which we judge. Our compassion must not become too real, we must be a bit obtuse or lacking in imagination. If we were to feel in its full reality the grief of even one mother for the child that is slaughtered before her eyes we would not be able to bear it. How infinitely less could we bear even a glimpse of all the enslavements and holocausts of history, to say nothing of the infinitude of private and domestic tragedies and the savagery of the ordinary course of animal nature.<sup>153</sup>

As Staten's argument makes transparent, we understand on the personal level what it *may* look like to affirm one's own past. Yet, when we broaden our requirements out and attempt to affirm the whole of history as such, we are concurrently struck down by the horrors of history. We are struck by the particular horrors of history, and as such cannot affirm the totality. Thus, there is a tension in Nietzsche's thought here. For the demand of the resolute and strong spirit that they can transform the entirety of the past into blood and thus affirm the totality is on the face of it an implausible suggestion. Nietzsche's test is impassable: One simply cannot be so well disposed to the totality of human history as to be able to affirm it out of hand. A point Nietzsche seems to recognize in *Human, All Too Human*: "He, on the other hand, who really could participate in them would have to despair of the value of life; if he succeeded in encompassing and feeling within himself the total consciousness of mankind he would collapse with a curse on existence... (HH 33). And he admits in *The Gay Science*, amidst a lengthy discussion of pity and human suffering: "I know just as certainly that I need to expose myself to the sight of some genuine suffering and I am lost" (GS 338). Nietzsche did set the bar rather high in the second of the *Untimely Meditations*; so high in fact that Nietzsche himself would not count amongst the most powerful and tremendous natures.

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<sup>153</sup> Staten, Henry (1990) pp. 81-82

We are, as a result, thrust back upon Nietzsche's second suggestion insofar as we can affirm the past only by adopting the perspectives of the unhistorical and the supra-historical. Recall that Nietzsche states: "That which such a nature cannot subdue it knows how to forget; it no longer exists, the horizon is rounded and closed, there are people, passions, teachings, goals lying behind it..." (*HL I 63*). We require the past to be thinned down, rounded off, and veiled. In other words, we must reduce the effects of our historical sickness by employing the antidotes that these perspectives offer.

### **3.2 The Antidotes: the Unhistorical and the Supra-Historical Perspectives**

The unhistorical and the supra-historical perspectives provide the horizon by which the past is subdued, and as such are the antidotes to our historical sickness. These antidotes serve different functions; the former provides a horizon insofar as aspects of the past are forgotten, while the latter provides perspectives of art and religion to limit the effects of the past. Nietzsche elucidates their function as follows:

With the word 'the unhistorical' I designate the art and power of *forgetting* and of enclosing oneself within a bounded *horizon*; I call 'suprahistorical' the powers which lead the eye away from becoming towards that which bestows upon existence the character of the eternal and stable, towards *art* and *religion* (*HL X 120*).

The unhistorical represents the rounding off of the historical sense, by providing a boundary outside of which the past is forgotten, while the suprahistorical perspective provides the shape and form to the historical by taking one's gaze away from the transitory towards the eternal and stable powers of art and religion. By shaping, bounding, and forming the past through recourse to the perspectives of the antidotes, we concurrently structure the past in a way that can, as a result, be affirmed. As Nietzsche writes in *Beyond Good and Evil* the strength of one's spirit "should be measured according to how much of the 'truth' one could still barely endure—or to put it more clearly, to what degree one would *require* it to be thinned down, shrouded, sweetened, blunted, falsified" (*BGE 39*), – that is, to what extent such a spirit requires the adoption of either the unhistorical or the supra-historical perspectives upon the past in order to thin it down, veil or sweeten it. Nietzsche's discussion of the



application of historical sense maps onto his celebrated discussions of self-fashioning, which notably arises in *The Gay Science*:

To 'give style' to one's character—a great and rare art! It is practiced by those who survey all the strengths and weakness of their nature and then fit them into an artistic plan until every one of them appears as art and reason and even weakness delight the eye. Here a large piece of second nature has been added; there a piece of original nature has been removed—both times through long practice and daily work at it. Here the ugly that could not be removed is concealed; there it has been reinterpreted and made sublime. Much that is vague and resisted shaping has been saved and exploited for distant views; it is meant to beckon towards the far and immeasurable (*GS* 290).

In order to give style to one's character, one must employ history, as self-creation is not accomplished out of nothing, but rather, out of both our first nature and our second nature. Yet, as abovementioned, one cannot provide style to one's character by accepting all that is past, all that one is. Rather, one must select, shape, simplify, and form the past and oneself, such that one provides oneself with a past *a posteriori*. Further, it is worth reiterating that it is only a strong character that can undertake such self-fashioning, a character that can shape the past into something that is affirmable. Aaron Ridley states: "Style, on this reading, is not so much a matter of opportunistic self-exculpation as the (honest) last resort of a soul that can face no more. ('As an aesthetic phenomenon existence is still *bearable* for us' (*GS* 107).)"<sup>154</sup> As Ridley makes clear, the incorporating of the past into something that is ultimately affirmable is not an opportunistic and self-indulgent enterprise, but rather an attempt to make life bearable, and ultimately affirmable, by providing it with a shape and form by rounding off our historical sense. This is the value of history. History tells us where we came from, and accordingly, provides us with the perspective to see what we might become.

Yet, for most of this chapter, I have discussed Nietzsche's meditation on history as if it was universally accepted as representative of his views on history. However, as I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter there are dissenters. So I turn now to a discussion of the use of this meditation as a means to unpack Nietzsche's sustained thoughts on the topic of history.

#### **4. On the Use of the Second *Untimely Meditation***

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<sup>154</sup> Ridley, Aaron (1998) p. 140

Did Nietzsche radically change his position concerning the use of history after the publication of the second *Untimely Meditation*? Thomas Brobjer, all the while not denying the importance of history in Nietzsche's mature philosophy, ultimately answers this question affirmatively. He finds that "historical studies and methods are much more important to Nietzsche than has been recognized," and he asserts that:

...already in the first section [of *Human All Too Human*] Nietzsche contrasts metaphysical philosophy, with its belief in opposites, to historical philosophy 'the youngest of all philosophical methods,' which claims that there are no such opposites but only historical change... At least from this time onwards historical perspective will be important for determining Nietzsche's views.<sup>155</sup>

Though Brobjer is doubtless correct to assert that historical philosophy is central to Nietzsche's thought, I nevertheless suggest that concerning the value of the second *Untimely Meditation* he is mistaken.

For example, Brobjer argues that the second of the *Untimely Meditations*:

...is not representative of Nietzsche's view of the value of historical studies and methods. In 1875/1876, shortly after having written the book, Nietzsche changed his views on history, and for the rest of his active life his views were rather different from the ones he had put forward in the second *Untimely Meditation*.<sup>156</sup>

Additionally, Brobjer claims: "there are good reasons to believe that Nietzsche regarded this work as his least valuable book."<sup>157</sup> This critical assessment rests upon Nietzsche's unpublished notebook entries as well as letters, and culminates in the dismissal of the: "only affirmative statement regarding the second *Untimely Meditation*... found in his published books, notebooks and letters after 1874."<sup>158</sup>

Accordingly, in *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche writes: "In this essay the 'historical sense' of which this century is so proud was recognized for the first time as a disease, as a typical symptom of decay" (*EH* 'Untimely' 1).<sup>159</sup> Brobjer takes the import of this passage to be as follows:

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<sup>155</sup> Brobjer (2004) p. 304

<sup>156</sup> Brobjer (2004) p. 301

<sup>157</sup> Brobjer (2004) p. 303

<sup>158</sup> Brobjer (2004) p. 309

<sup>159</sup> Interestingly in *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche discusses and offers a description of what he means by historical sense. Nietzsche writes: "The *historical sense* (or the capacity for quickly guessing the order of rank of the valuations according to which a people, a society, a human being has lived; the 'divinatory instinct' for the relation of these valuations, for the relation of the authority of values to the authority of active forces)—this historical sense to which we Europeans lay claim as our speciality has come to us in the wake of that enchanting and mad *semi-barbarism* into which Europe

...it is at least likely that the statement, at this late stage, during the last few months before his mental collapse, indicates that his megalomania had grown to such a degree that he had problems recognizing or admitting previous 'mistakes.' Furthermore, considering that Nietzsche here is trying to get readers interested in his books, he is likely to emphasize that which he still finds valuable in them.<sup>160</sup>

Though Brobjer's rendering of the *Ecce Homo* passage is plausible it nevertheless remains inconclusive.

Brobjer deciphers the importance of each mode of history to Nietzsche's mature philosophy by examining how often Nietzsche returns to use these particular terms and concludes: "Nietzsche seems never again after 1874 to use the important concepts *monumental*, *antiquarian*, and *critical* history... This shows that he did not use his own concepts and, presumably that he himself was not persuaded by the argument and content of the book."<sup>161</sup> Rather, I argue that Nietzsche continues to make these conceptual distinctions throughout his latter works.

For example, in relation to art, in *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche argues that poets: "emulate the artists of earlier times who imaginatively developed the existing images of the gods and imaginatively develop a fair image of man;...and in doing so through the excitation of envy and emulation help to create the future" (*H* 99). The poet in this passage approaches his craft in the same way that the monumental historian approaches his. By using the greatness of the past, the poet demonstrates what is possible for the future. In *The Gay Science* we also see Nietzsche employ the antiquarian and the critical modes of history first presented in the Second *Untimely Meditation*. In *The Gay Science*, section 370, entitled *What is Romanticism?* Nietzsche returns to the notions implicit in the antiquarian and the critical modes of history:

*The will to immortalize...* It can be prompted, first, by gratitude and love; art with this origin will always be an art of apotheoses, perhaps dithyrambic like

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had been plunged by the democratic mingling of classes, and races: only the nineteenth century knows this sense, as its sixth sense" (*BGE* 224).

<sup>160</sup> Brobjer (2004) 310

<sup>161</sup> Brobjer (2004) 309-310. As Brobjer acknowledges, in a footnote, Nietzsche does return to use the term "antiquarian," in reference to historical study, in *The Gay Science*. Nietzsche in a discussion of Horace's translation of Alceaus or Archilochus and Propertius' translation of Callimachus and Philetas argues:

As poets, they had no sympathy for the antiquarian inquisitiveness that precedes the historical sense; as poets, they had no time for all those very personal things and names and whatever might be considered the costume and mask of a city, a coast, or a century: quickly they replaced it with what was contemporary and Roman (*GS* 83).

Rubens...or bright and gracious like Goethe, spreading a Homeric light and glory on all things. But it can also be the tyrannic will of one who suffers deeply, who struggles, is tormented, and would like to turn what is personal and singular, and narrow, the real idiosyncrasy of suffering, into a binding law and compulsion—one who, as it were, revenges himself on all things by forcing his own image, the image of his torture, on them, branding them with it (*GS* 370).

The antiquarian mode of history is evident in Nietzsche's treatment of Rubens and Goethe. Through the "gratitude and love," and pious reverence, it is also manifested. Critical history is in the passage where Nietzsche's employment of the "tyrannic will of one who suffers deeply," and as a result has to force his own image, the image of his torture, on things. Though Nietzsche does not return to use the particular terms antiquarian, monumental, and critical, it is clear that, contra Brobjer, Nietzsche has not given up the conceptual distinctions found within the second *Untimely Meditation*. Thus, if the conceptual distinctions first formulated in the second *Untimely Meditation* are firmly in place in Nietzsche's later writings, then we are entitled to employ the three modes of history as a means of unpacking Nietzsche's thoughts on history.

## **5. Genealogy as Critical History**

Given the foregoing we are entitled to employ Nietzsche's meditation on history as a means of unpacking his thoughts on history generally. However, which mode of history, if any, does Nietzsche employ in the *Genealogy*? What is clear is that Nietzsche is not employing the antiquarian mode of historiography. For, as many scholars have noted, the *Genealogy* lacks the tones and trappings of a scholarly thesis. Further, Brian Leiter has quite rightly stressed the significance of the subtitle of the *Genealogy* "A Polemic," such that the subtitle alerts us to the fact that "the tones and trappings of a scholarly treatise would simply be an impediment."<sup>162</sup> Given that the objectives of the *Genealogy* are not fulfilled through the invocation of the antiquarian mode of historiography we should try to discern whether Nietzsche in the *Genealogy* employs either the monumental or the critical mode of historiography. I argue that despite the apparent manifestation of the monumental form of historiography, it is nevertheless the critical mode of historiography which is most clearly evident throughout the *Genealogy*.

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<sup>162</sup> Leiter, Brian (2002) p. 181. Ken Gemes (2006) makes a similar point pp. 204-205

Monumental historiography is discernible in several places in the *Genealogy*. For example, in the First Essay Nietzsche holds up the nobles as those who are unreflectively “good,” “powerful” and as such the “rulers” (*GM I 11*). And, in the Second Essay he credits the “blond beasts of prey” with the formation of the modern state (*GM II 17*). There, Nietzsche writes:

...some blond beasts of prey, a conqueror and master race which, organized for war and with the ability to organize, unhesitatingly lays its terrible claws upon a populace perhaps tremendously superior in number but still formless and nomad. That is after all how the ‘state’ began on earth: I think that sentimentalism which would have it begin with a ‘contract’ has been disposed of. He who can command, he who is by nature ‘master,’ he who is by nature ‘master,’ he who is violent in act or bearing—what has he to do with contracts! One does not reckon with such natures; they come like fate, without reason, consideration, pretext; they appear as lightning appears... Their work is an instinctive creation and imposition of forms; they are the most involuntary, unconscious artists there are— (*GM II 17*)

From Nietzsche’s description here, we might be tempted to look upon the “blond beasts of prey” with the gaze of a monumental historian. That is, we are tempted to revel in the ability of such a small number of people to impose the form of the state upon the chaos, the formless, and the nomad. More pointedly, we could revel in the manner in which such a momentous task was accomplished: “without reason, consideration, pretext” (*GM II 17*). Similarly, of the nobles in the First Essay, when the nobles are viewed monumentally we may be prompted to admire their strength, vigour and their life-affirming stance, and further, to consider such a position worthy of imitation. Yet, this is to miss a great deal of the salience of Nietzsche’s thought, for he repeatedly tells us that such nobles are unreflective. They value the perfection of “*unconscious* instincts” at the expense of reason and cleverness (*GM I 10*). However, unreflectiveness in the manner of the noble is not a viable option for us. Nietzsche goes to lengths to connect the noble’s capacity for unreflectiveness with the fact that “the noble races...have left behind them the concept of ‘barbarian’ wherever they have gone...” (*GM I 11*). The concept of “barbarian” emerges “from a disgusting procession of murder, arson, rape and torture...” (*GM I 11*). Thus, though upon first glance it may appear as if Nietzsche is holding up the nobles or the “blond beasts of prey” as monumental figures, it nevertheless becomes clear upon further reflection that Nietzsche is not advocating such a picture as one that is worthy of imitation. As such, I argue that critical history is Nietzsche’s *modus operandi* in the *Genealogy*.

As early as 1873, in a notebook entry, Nietzsche writes: “Christianity has been entirely turned over to critical history.”<sup>163</sup> So, as Jörg Salaquarda, for example, concludes: “The genealogies of [Nietzsche’s] later writings involve what he terms ‘critical history.’”<sup>164</sup> Yet this immediate inference raises two questions: (1) what reasons are there for interpreting Nietzsche’s *Genealogy* as an exercise in critical historiography? And (2) if there are such reasons, then how is critical history manifested in Nietzsche’s later writings? I shall address these questions in turn.

The *Genealogy*, Nietzsche informs us, is “a sequel to my last book, *Beyond Good and Evil*, which it is meant to supplement and clarify.”<sup>165</sup> And of *Beyond Good and Evil*, in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche writes:

...the Yes-saying part of my task had been solved, the turn had come for the No-saying, No-doing part: the revaluation of our values so far, the great war—conjuring up a day of decision. This included the slow search for those related to me, those who, prompted by strength, would offer me their hands for *destroying* (*EH* ‘Beyond Good and Evil’ 1).

It is in *Beyond Good and Evil*, according to Nietzsche, that the “No-saying, No-doing” aspect of his re-evaluation of values commences, and he alerts us here that he wishes to engender others to partake in this task. So, if the *Genealogy* is intended to supplement and clarify his previous book, then it stands to reason that the *Genealogy* in some respects must be an activity in “destroying,” in “No-saying [and] No-doing.” Yet, in order to engage in this activity, of “destroying,” one must first scrupulously examine entrenched narratives, deep-rooted evaluative frameworks, to determine, or “to be clear just how unjust the existence of anything—a privilege, a caste, a dynast, for example—is, and how greatly this thing deserves to perish” (*HL* III 76). And, as Nietzsche makes clear in the second *Untimely Meditation*, this activity is the purview, the domain of the critical mode of historiography. Neither the monumental mode, nor the antiquarian mode of historiography frames history in such a way as to engender this particular response; monumental historiography selects exemplary models and figures from the past which are worthy of imitation, whilst antiquarian historiography patiently and piously focuses upon that which is considered valuable. Thus, given that Nietzsche describes his task as one of “No-saying [and] No-doing” and that this

<sup>163</sup> Nietzsche (1995) Note from the summer/fall of 1873: 29 [203]

<sup>164</sup> Salaquarda, Jörg. (1998) p. 113 fn.67. Kathleen Merrow (2004) also argues that “Critical history is the one that maps most closely on to his own genealogical method and responds to his own diagnosis of the ‘symptoms of his age.’” p. 239.

<sup>165</sup> Kaufmann, Walter (1966) p. 439

activity is taken up through the construction of a critical history, then we can conclude that Nietzsche's *Genealogy* is a demonstration of the critical mode of historiography.

However, if the foregoing is persuasive, then we are still in need of an account of how this mode of historiography is manifested in the *Genealogy*. The object of critical history is to, as Foucault puts the point, uproot "traditional foundations and relentlessly disrupt its pretended continuity."<sup>166</sup> In the *Genealogy* Nietzsche takes up this task, the task that is of "break[ing] up and dissolv[ing] a part of the past," by employing the critical mode of historiography, which is meant to "judge and condemn" entrenched narratives as well as the assumed stability of such accounts (*HL* III 75, 72). I will highlight two moments in which critical history, so described, is manifested in the *Genealogy*.

First, consider Nietzsche's mini-genealogy of the concept of "punishment," where critical history is manifested in, at least, two respects: (1) Nietzsche disrupts the claim, often assumed by the naïve genealogists, that the meanings of our concepts are stable and unchanging, and in so doing uproots the essentialist's commitment to a singular meaning of a concept. And (2) in disrupting the hegemonic interpretation of our concepts Nietzsche demonstrates that our concepts do not represent an unbroken continuity, but rather a constant struggle between varying meanings which have, in many cases, been retrospectively united with the concept. Accordingly, critical history is manifested through the tracing of the sidelined or overlooked meanings that the concept of punishment has been made to serve, which, at the same time, serves to break-up and dissolve the contention that the meanings that we ascribe to concepts have been stable and permanent over the course of history.

Second, Nietzsche's account of the slave revolt in morals can be viewed as a demonstration in critical historiography. Here this mode of history is manifested in two ways: (1) In teasing out our forgotten noble past Nietzsche disrupts the absolute dominance of the slave mode of evaluation. And (2) he "takes a knife to [the slave mode of evaluation] roots" insofar as he demonstrates that the morality, which was accepted as given, as ahistorical, and as beyond all question, is a product of a reinterpretation. Accordingly, slave morality loses the right to claims to absolute supremacy, and Nietzsche has broken up and dissolved a piece of the past in rendering such a claim untenable.

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<sup>166</sup> Foucault (1971) p. 154

Further, it is worth noting that Nietzsche in the final section of the First Essay writes: “assuming that it has been abundantly clear what my *aim* is, what the aim of that dangerous slogan is that is inscribed at the head of my last book *Beyond Good and Evil*. — At least this does *not* mean ‘Beyond Good and Bad’” (*GM* I 17). There are two points worth making relevant to our discussion of the critical mode of historiography: (1) Nietzsche’s aims in the First Essay include making sense of the “dangerous slogan” “beyond good and evil,” by demonstrating that the slave mode of valuation is a re-evaluation of another mode of valuation. Through this demonstration critical history is manifested insofar as Nietzsche disrupts the assumption that there is only one mode of human valuation. And (2) he raises as possibility another re-evaluation in morals is possible. For if a re-evaluation of the noble mode of evaluation was actualized by the slave mode of evaluation, then it stands to reason that another re-evaluation is possible (*BGE* 202). Thus, the critical mode of historiography seeks to both liberate the ground, and to provide the impetus to create upon the ground thus liberated (*HL* VII 95).

So, the critical mode of historiography is both discernable in the *Genealogy*, and is the mode of historiography which maps most closely onto the objectives, as presented in *Ecce Homo*, of this phase of Nietzsche’s writings, which he cashes out as the “No-saying, No-doing” portion of his work. For these reasons we can conclude that the *Genealogy* is an exercise, and demonstration of the critical mode of historiography.

## **6. Conclusion**

Historical philosophy for Nietzsche provides an account of where we came from, and as such provides an explanation of how we have become held captive by a number of problematic assumptions. His meditation on history provides a detailed account of how we can employ history to overcome such assumptions and it supplies a picture of the value of history generally. We can use history to shape and form our self-understanding.

I stated at the beginning that my overarching objective in this Chapter is to provide an account of Nietzsche’s historical philosophy and in so doing, to begin to morph the, at present, uninformative equation of genealogy with history into an



informative one. To supply an answer to the question of what history is correctly practiced for Nietzsche, I accordingly began by presenting two pictures of historiography, which Nietzsche opposes, in order to shape his positive views concerning the correct use of history. Moreover, I offered a reading of the second of the *Untimely Meditations* in order to demonstrate that history correctly practiced provides us with the tools to shape and form the past according to our current needs. I then raised and dismissed Brobjer's objection to the use of the meditation on history, before arguing that the *Genealogy* represents the critical mode of history. Nietzsche's use of the critical form of historiography thus represents the need to question entrenched narratives and provides us with an alternative picture of the past, one which has been obscured from sight: that our seemingly universal and binding conception of ourselves is itself a product of a re-evaluation, and as such, new interpretations are, or, at least, should be, possible. This served to provide an answer to the question: What, for Nietzsche, is history correctly practiced?

However, before I make good on my promise, to morph the uninformative equation of history with genealogy into an informative one, there is a pressing question that requires an answer: Does Nietzsche's insistence upon investigating the "actual *history of morality*" represent a sustained methodological objective? For many scholars have noted that the *Genealogy* unambiguously possesses a mythical and fictional quality. Thus, the question, which looms large within Nietzsche scholarship generally: Is the *Genealogy* an historical account or an interesting and useful fiction? is one to which I now turn.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Genealogy as History

The ongoing debate in Nietzsche scholarship regarding the relationship of genealogy to history requires attention. Though Nietzsche claims that “there is needed a knowledge of the conditions and circumstances in which [our values] grew under which they have evolved and changed...” many scholars have suggested that his genealogical accounts are best understood in fictional or mythical terms (*GM P 6*). I first examine what I will term the Williams and May objection. This objection is representative of the widely held position that Nietzsche’s genealogical “stories” possess a “mythical quality” and that this feature precludes such accounts from being genuine history.<sup>167</sup> The worry, precisely expressed by Bergmann, is “How can one fathom or imagine the process through which these qualities were elevated into values? ... In effect Nietzsche responds with a story. He himself provides much evidence for it and insists on its truth, but it also has a mythical quality...”<sup>168</sup> What makes the Williams and May objection unique in the secondary scholarship is that both Williams and May are committed to the claim that Nietzsche’s genealogical narratives, despite a mythical quality, serve a useful function; this mythical quality is cashed out by May as fiction, and by Williams as quasi-historical. I have joined them together in a single objection because the two interpretations concerning the historical veracity of Nietzsche’s genealogical narrative form one objection insofar as May’s commitments are a deeper version of Williams.’ Then I argue that the May and Williams objection to the historical veracity of Nietzsche’s genealogical accounts rests upon three errors. Finally, I conclude that the Williams and May objection is unfounded and Nietzsche’s *Genealogy* may be understood as an exercise in the correct practice of history.

#### 1. Genealogy as Useful Fiction: The May and Williams Objection

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<sup>167</sup> See, for example: White, Richard (1994) p. 67, and Acampora, Christa Davis and Acampora, Ralph (2004) pp.162-163. Also Lawrence Hatab (2008) concludes: “Nietzsche deploys quasi-historical, genealogical discussions to subvert the confidence in traditional belief systems.” p. 29

<sup>168</sup> Bergmann, Frithjof (1988) p. 29

In *Nietzsche's Ethics and his War on Morality* May unambiguously argues for the useful function of Nietzsche's genealogical stories despite their unreal quality. He puts the point this way:

Nietzsche's genealogical accounts, of which that of the masters and slaves is a paradigm, are best taken as fictional; but that does not prevent them from being valuable as ways of getting us to think, even if hypothetically, about the functions of our actual ethical practices and their motivations by relating them to possible earlier more elementary practices and motivations which are free of the search for 'timeless groundings'.<sup>169</sup>

May's interpretation is clear: history serves essentially no function within Nietzsche's genealogical account concerning the origins of morality. Nevertheless, May is without question committed to the claim that though Nietzsche's genealogical accounts are entirely fictional, they still perform a useful function. Similarly, in his article entitled "Naturalism and Genealogy" Williams argues:

There may also be a role for imaginary history, a fictional development story, which helps to explain a concept or value or institution by showing ways in which it could have come about in a simplified environment which contains certain kinds of human interests or capacities, which, relative to this story, are taken as given. The paradigm example is of course state of nature stories about the origins of the state...<sup>170</sup>

One of the advantages of a fictional genealogical narrative is that it allows us to examine the way a particular concept, or value may have come about. In this sense the fictional genealogy displaces the privileged position afforded to the value in question and allows for the re-evaluation of that value. For Williams the fictional genealogical narrative is especially useful for a re-evaluation of a value which one considered and esteemed as intrinsically valuable.<sup>171</sup>

The benefit of a fictional starting point is that it need not be thought of as historically rooted. In this sense one can demonstrate how it was possible to formulate a concept, say of justice, without, at the same time, being committed to providing historical evidence for that particular narrative. The fictional narrative is intended not only to make us more comfortable with our use of a particular concept, but further, to demonstrate that the concept is not inexplicable or mysterious. In this

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<sup>169</sup> May, Simon (1999) p. 74 Given this, it should come as no surprise that May takes issue with Foucault's rendering of Nietzsche's genealogical mode of inquiry: "Foucault's account of [Nietzsche's] genealogy, though bold and fascinating, invests it with an almost mystical power of historical insight and insufficiently recognizes the degree to which useful genealogies, including Nietzsche's own, can be fictional rather than painstakingly documentary." p. 74

<sup>170</sup> Williams, Bernard (2000) p.157

<sup>171</sup> Williams, Bernard (2000) p.156

sense the fictional genealogy can demonstrate that a new sort of theoretical explanation is possible. Within the context of a fictional genealogy, we can investigate the psychological processes contributing to our formulation and our understanding of concepts.

I argue that three errors, or problems, lead to the conclusion that Nietzsche's genealogies are best taken as useful fictions. These errors can be boiled down into the following three commitments: (1) Nietzsche's genealogical narratives take place in "prehistory." (2) History correctly practiced is not "painstakingly vague" but "patiently documentary." Thus Nietzsche's genealogical narratives, if they are to be considered historical, must take the form of the antiquarian mode of history first elucidated in 1874. (3) The absence of atomic facts warrants the claim that Nietzsche's genealogical accounts possess a mythical quality. In the following section I will offer useful correctives to each of these errors beginning with what I take to be the error of "prehistory." The suggestion, that I will subsequently urge us to resist, is that the concept of "prehistory" possesses a unique explanatory power. Secondly, and remaining on the textual level, I argue that by placing Nietzsche's *Genealogy* in the context of his corpus, particularly his most sustained discussion of the topic of history, the second *Untimely Meditation*, the implicit demand to count "history" only as the antiquarian mode loses its force. In so doing I argue that Nietzsche's emphasis in 1874 on varying modes of history should not be precluded. Lastly, I will problematize the role of "facts" in historical investigations. If each of these three errors is overcome, then so too is the claim that Nietzsche's genealogical narratives are useful fictions.

## **2. On the Use and Abuse of the Concept of "Prehistory"**

The events of Nietzsche's genealogical narrative take place in an unknown prehistory. This claim permeates the scholarship on the *Genealogy*. Consider two examples:

"In the First Essay of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche clarifies this basic typology of masters and slaves within the context of a mythical prehistory."<sup>172</sup>

"What Nietzsche says about prehistory in this [the second] essay follows unclear chronology."<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> White, Richard (1994) p. 65

<sup>173</sup> Pappas, Nicholas p. 148

Nietzsche scholars, plainly, employ the concept of prehistory to clarify the proceedings and the chronology of Nietzsche's genealogical narrative. The use of the concept of prehistory, if only implicitly, suggests that Nietzsche's narratives lack historical veracity, for they take place in an unrecorded and undocumented period of development. Thus, the use of the concept of prehistory lends credence to the thesis advanced by May and Williams that Nietzsche's genealogical accounts are mythical fictions, bizarre, but interesting fables.

To ward off this conclusion I present two possible ways of viewing Nietzsche's use of the concept of "pre-history" as a means of unpacking the events of the *Genealogy*. The overarching objective of this discussion is to surmount the interpretation of the *Genealogy* that suggests that the totality of Nietzsche's narrative charts the developments of an unknown "prehistory." The first option is undoubtedly radical in character: I argue that the concept of prehistory is both murky in nature and particularly unhelpful when employed to elucidate the proceedings of the *Genealogy*. By drawing on the work of Jaspers as well as the writings of Marx and Engels I problematize the commitment to a strict demarcation between the pre-historical and the historical. In so doing, I suggest that the concept of prehistory is unnecessarily employed by Nietzsche.<sup>174</sup> By contrast, the second alternative argues for the conservative thesis: The concept of "pre-history" is employed by Nietzsche to illuminate a certain set of the proceedings of the Second Essay of the *Genealogy*, and, accordingly is a viable concept. Nevertheless, I argue that even if we concede that some of the events of the Second Essay take place in "pre-history," we still must account for the events of the First and Third Essays, which clearly take place in "history." Thus, by travelling down either of these paths: (1) through problematizing the strict demarcation between the pre-historical and the historical, and, as a result, concluding that the concept of pre-history does not serve an illuminating role in the *Genealogy* or (2) by conceding that a set of the events of the Second Essay take place in "prehistory" we arrive at a destination, which overcomes the claim tacitly assumed in the May and Williams objection: all of the events of the genealogy take place in an unknown, undocumented, quasi-historical period.

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<sup>174</sup> Nietzsche employs the concept of "pre-history" in the Second Essay of the *Genealogy*: (*GM* II 2, 3,9,14 and 19)

## 2.1 On Forsaking the “Concept” of “Prehistory”

To substantiate the central thesis of this section: namely that Nietzsche unnecessarily employs the concept of “prehistory” to clarify the chronology of the Second Essay of the *Genealogy*, and, as a result, we should abandon our use of the concept as a means to unpack the proceeding of the *Genealogy*, I begin by charting the development of the concept of history to determine whether there is a strict demarcation between that which is considered squarely historical, and that which falls under the umbrella of the term “pre-history.” Then I trace Nietzsche’s employment of the concept in the Second Essay of the *Genealogy*. I conclude by drawing on the work of Karl Popper as well as the work of Marx and Engels to suggest that Nietzsche need not employ the concept of “pre-history” and that the events of the Second Essay can be considered properly historical.

The concept of history first arises out of the work of “Herodotus...who has remained father of Western history.”<sup>175</sup> Herodotus describes his work as the “activity of preserv[ing] that which owes its existence to men, lest it be obliterated by time, and to bestow upon the glorious, wondrous deeds of Greek and barbarians sufficient praise to assure their remembrance by posterity and thus make their glory shine through the centuries.”<sup>176</sup> Thus history, so understood, is the preservation of the deeds, in this case “glorious” and “wondrous,” of men such that prehistory would then denote everything before the work of Herodotus. The historical on this account has two defining features: (1) The historical is that which begins when human beings begin writing about other human beings, thus precluding all that is before recorded history. (2) The historical is historiography concerned with preserving for posterity “glorious” and “wondrous” deeds of human beings. However, it bears reflecting on how closely Nietzsche’s use of the concept history maps onto this commonplace understanding of the limits of history.

Returning to Nietzsche’s thoughts on history generally we can, by appealing to the second of the *Untimely Meditations*, quite easily do away with the second criterion. Here Nietzsche is clearly committed to the idea that history can play roles

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<sup>175</sup> Arendt, Hannah (1993) p. 41 As Arendt makes clear Herodotus does not use the term “history,” but the concept arises as a result of his work. In her *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy* she finds that: “the concept history...like so many other terms in our political and philosophical language, is Greek in origin, derived from *historein*, to ‘inquire in order to tell how it was’— *legein ta eonta* in Herodotus.”

<sup>176</sup> Arendt, Hannah (1993) p. 41

other than caring for the legacy of splendid and celebrated deeds; history can also be critical or patiently documentary.<sup>177</sup> The first criterion is not so easily done away with. For, it seems, as many scholars have noted, the events of the Second Essay quite clearly take place in “prehistory.” Prehistory here is understood as that which takes place before recorded history. If this is indeed the case, then the Williams and May objection stands insofar as Nietzsche’s account of proceedings in the Second Essay charts an unrecorded and undocumented period, and hence possess a mythical quality.

This is worth further investigation, for several thinkers have challenged the claim that history proper coincides with the advent of historiography. Jaspers, for example, argues that: “History extends as far back as linguistic evidence. ...Nowhere does linguistic evidence extend further back than 3000 B.C. History has therefore lasted about 5,000 years.”<sup>178</sup> On this account history does not originate with historiography but rather with the advent of language and with linguistic evidence. Jaspers puts the point this way: “Silence no longer reigns; men speak to one another in written documents, and thereby to us once we have learned to understand their scripts and their language; they speak in buildings, which presuppose organization...”<sup>179</sup> Accordingly, history is not limited to the particular activity of preserving for posterity the actions of other men through writing. Hence, prehistory, on this account, precludes that which takes place before linguistic communication of the most varying kinds and not that which takes place before the advent of historiography. Thus, at least for Jaspers, history proper has lasted roughly 5,000 years.

Marx and Engels also problematize the strict demarcation between the historical and the pre-historical, albeit to a greater degree than Jaspers. Thus, they arrive at a more contentious and, perhaps, controversial conclusion. Marx and Engels suggest:

...men must be in a position to live in order to be able to ‘make history.’ But life involves before everything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs...And indeed this is an historical act...The second point is that the satisfaction of this first need...leads to new needs; and this production of new needs is the first historical act. The third circumstance which, from the very outset, enters into historical development, is that men, who daily remake

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<sup>177</sup> See, for example, *HL* sections 2-3, pp. 67-77

<sup>178</sup> Jaspers, Karl (1953) p. 28

<sup>179</sup> Jaspers, Karl (1953) p. 44

their own life, begin to make other men, to propagate their kind: the relation between man and woman, parents and children, the *family*.<sup>180</sup>

So as not to be misunderstood they continue:

These three aspects of social activity are not of course to be taken as three different stages, but just as three aspects or...three 'moments,' which have existed simultaneously since the dawn of history and the first men...<sup>181</sup>

Historical acts on this account do not commence with historiography, nor is history equated with the practice of writing generally. That is, Marx and Engels challenge the tidy demarcation between the pre-historical and the historical by widening the category of the historical to include the production of the means to satisfy our most basic needs: eating, drinking and habitation.<sup>182</sup> In addition, on Marx and Engels' account, each of these historical acts takes place within the context of an established community and constitutes a social activity.

The aim of this discussion is not to arrive at some essential demarcation between the historical and the pre-historical.<sup>183</sup> Rather, the aim is to encourage the abandonment of the commonplace distinction between the historical and the pre-historical, which centers on the emergence of historiography as a means of unpacking each of the events of the *Genealogy*.

Nevertheless, Nietzsche does employ the concept of "pre-history" in the *Genealogy*.<sup>184</sup> Consider a few such instances:

A) "One can well believe that the answers and methods for solving this primeval problem [the problem, that is, of determining a satisfactory answer to the question: "how can one create a memory for the human animal?"] were not precisely gentle; perhaps indeed there was nothing more fearful and uncanny in the whole prehistory of man than his *mnemotechnics*" (*GM II 3*).

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<sup>180</sup> Marx and Engels (1978) p.149

<sup>181</sup> Marx and Engels (1978) p.150

<sup>182</sup> It is worth noting that in the midst of defending their conception of the historical Marx and Engels write: "Here we recognize immediately the spiritual ancestry of the great historical wisdom of the German who when they run out of positive material and when they can serve up neither theological nor political nor literary rubbish, assert that this is not history at all, but the 'prehistorical era.' They do not, however, enlighten us as to how we proceed from this nonsensical 'prehistory' to history proper..." p. 150

<sup>183</sup> There is good reason for this. Nietzsche, in presenting his "mini-genealogy" of punishment, explicitly denies essentialism in terms of our concepts. The example he provides there is of punishment, but I take it that Nietzsche's point applies to other concepts as well—the concepts of "history" and "prehistory" not excepted.

<sup>184</sup> See for example: (*GM II 2,3,9,14 and 19*)



B) “Still retaining the criteria of prehistory (this prehistory is in any case present in all ages or may reappear): the community, too, stands to its members in the same vital basic relation, that of the creditor to his debtors” (*GM II 9*).

C) “Thus one misunderstands psychology and the reality of things even as they apply today: how much more as they applied during the greater part of man’s history, his prehistory!” (*GM II 14*)

Given Nietzsche’s use of the concept of “pre-history,” coupled with the foregoing discussion of the rather murky nature of the concept, the question surfaces: What explanatory power does the concept of “pre-history” serve in aiding us in tracing the chronology of the Second Essay? The previous discussion should have already cast some doubt concerning Nietzsche’s use of the concept in B, above. For if Nietzsche is committed to a strict demarcation between that which is properly historical and that which is found under the umbrella term of “pre-history,” then there seems to be little reason for him to claim that “this prehistory is in any case present in all ages or may reappear” (*GM II 9*). In other words, if the concept of “pre-history” is meant to capture a set of events that take place in a largely undocumented period of development, then it seems absurd to, at the same time, suggest that such a mythological construct, or, at least, an undocumented feature, can be found, or traced, throughout all ages.

Further, in terms of illuminating the chronology of the Second Essay, one could claim that Nietzsche unnecessarily employs the concept of “pre-history.” If, following Marx and Engels, for example, we contend that the historical captures in its net a wide variety of acts including, but not limited to, the production of the means to satisfy our most basic needs, and if we maintain that each of these acts take place within the context of a community and, accordingly, are social activities, then Nietzsche’s use of the concept of “pre-history” is objectionable. The events of the Second Essay, despite Nietzsche’s insistence to the contrary, take place squarely in an historical period. Let us consider the first event, chronologically, of the Second Essay

of the *Genealogy*: the internalization of our animal instincts, and the origins of bad conscience.

The Second Essay, entitled “‘Guilt,’ ‘Bad Conscience,’ and the Like,” has as its object of inquiry the following question: “...how did that other ‘sober thing,’ the consciousness of guilt, the ‘bad consciousness,’ come into the world?” (*GM II 4*)<sup>185</sup> It is not my intention to undertake a detailed account of the emergence of “bad conscience,” nor do I intend to examine the varying ramifications of this mode of conscience. Rather, the objective is to determine how, according to Nietzsche, this form of conscience emerges, and whether or not it finds its genesis in the context of a community, and hence is an historical event on the account that Marx and Engels offer.

The bad conscience is a mode of consciousness. Of consciousness, in *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche writes: “consciousness does not really belong to man’s individual existence but rather to his social or herd nature...” (*GS 354*). Concerning bad conscience Nietzsche tells us that he regards this mode of consciousness as “... the serious illness that man was bound to contract under the stress of the most fundamental change he ever experienced—that change when he found himself finally enclosed within the walls of society and peace” (*GM II 16*). On Nietzsche’s account, then, it is through the social fabric of community woven out of the disparate strands of custom, including the varying threads of the creditor-debtor relationship, more pointedly, through the complex legal, political and religious manifestations of such a relationship, in which the origins of bad conscience are found.<sup>186</sup> Hence, the first event, chronologically, of the Second Essay takes place within the “walls of society,” it represents man’s “social or herd nature,” and as a result, according to the account of the historical provided by Marx and Engels, is an historical event, for it constitutes a social activity.

If the foregoing represents a cogent reconstruction of the first chronological event of the Second Essay, then we can conclude that Nietzsche’s use of the concept of pre-history is questionable. It is questionable because Nietzsche is committed to tracking the emergence of bad consciousness in terms of society, and this implies a

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<sup>185</sup> For example throughout the Essay Nietzsche talks of “the origin of bad conscious” (*GM II 16*) and (*GM II 17*).

<sup>186</sup> Nietzsche’s arguments are found, respectively in the following sections: The emergence of legal obligations is traced in (*GM II 5-10*), political obligations are sketched in (*GM II 9-10*), and the religious manifestation is sketched in (*GM II 19-20*).

level of cultural advancement, which his use of the notion of pre-history fails to capture. Accordingly, we can call upon the work of Marx and Engels to cast doubt upon Nietzsche's invocation of the concept of "pre-history," and further we are in the position to make the stronger claim that Nietzsche overstates this point in claiming that these events take place in "pre-history." Thus, one way to mitigate the May and Williams objection is to argue that the events that Nietzsche describes as taking place in an unknown "pre-history," actually take place in history, given the rather illusive character of charting a precise demarcation between that which is considered historical versus that which is deemed merely pre-historical.

However, given the radical nature of the thesis I have been advancing, one could nonetheless argue that the May and Williams objection stands insofar as Nietzsche does employ the concept of pre-history, and our commonplace understanding of this concept implies an undocumented and unknown period of development. And, for this reason, May and Williams are correct to conclude that Nietzsche's use of the concept of pre-history warrants the claim that the *Genealogy* possesses a mythical quality, and his quality precludes the narrative from being genuine history. In the section that follows I will argue for the milder thesis, which suggests that even if we grant that the concept of pre-history serves a function in illuminating a portion of chronology of the Second Essay of the *Genealogy* it nevertheless remains far from clear that the totality of the events of the *Genealogy* can be unpacked in accordance with the commonplace use of the concept of pre-history. That is, even if we permit a limited explanatory scope to the concept of pre-history it does not follow that *all* of the events of the *Genealogy* take place in such a period. The following section will be dedicated to substantiating this assertion.

## **2.2 On Retaining but Limiting the Scope of the Concept of "Pre-History"**

Given the number of times that Nietzsche employs the concept of "pre-history" in the Second Essay, one could argue that the narrative reconstructs events that took place in the prehistoric. This is possible even if it is admitted that the demarcation between the pre-historical and the historical is rather blurry. Further, one could similarly argue that Nietzsche appears quite committed to unpacking the events of the Second Essay by appealing to the concept of pre-history. Scholars who are

sympathetic to the thesis that I have been advancing, namely, that Nietzsche is engaged in “real history,” have made this claim. Brian Leiter, for example, writes:

The second major event (the subject of GM II) is actually the first chronologically: it calls our attention to an event from prehistory...that creatures like us give up the outward expression of our natural aggressive and cruel instincts.<sup>187</sup>

While David Owen finds:

...the question becomes that of how the task of ‘making man to a certain, necessary, uniform, and equal among equals, regular and consequently calculable (GM II 2) is accomplished? Nietzsche’s hypothesis is that this is achieved in the prehistory of humanity...<sup>188</sup>

And, on the face of it, there are good reasons for these assessments. After all, as both Leiter and Owen have pointed out, Nietzsche, in the Second Essay, claims that he is embarking on a discussion of how the animal-man became responsible, that is to say regular, uniform, and consequently calculable (*GM II 2*). There Nietzsche claims that “this labor performed by man upon himself during the greater part of the existence of the human race, his entire *prehistoric* labor, finds in this its meaning...with the aid of the morality of mores and the social straightjacket, man was actually *made* calculable (*GM II 2*). Though, on this reading, it is clear that Nietzsche understands some of the events of the Second Essay to have occurred in a pre-historical period of development this does not entail that the entirety of the *Genealogy* should be understood as taking place during an unknown prehistory. This final claim, that in the *Genealogy* Nietzsche traces an unknown, mythological period of development, is a tacit assumption in the May and Williams’ objection.

Claims of this sort are further evidenced in Richard White’s suggestion that: “In the First Essay of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche clarifies this basic typology of masters and slaves within the context of a mythical prehistory.”<sup>189</sup> Simply because one aspect of Nietzsche’s genealogical narrative, namely a certain set of the events of the Second Essay, takes place in “prehistory,” it does not follow that all of the events Nietzsche subsequently recounts are from the pre-historical period. Thus, White’s suggestion that the events of the First Essay take place within the context of a

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<sup>187</sup> Leiter, Brian (2002) p. 190 For Leiter’s argument for genealogy as history see Leiter (2002) especially pp. 180-181

<sup>188</sup> Owen, David (2007) p. 92 See Owen (2007) pp. 138-144 for his argument concerning genealogy as history.

<sup>189</sup> White, Richard (1994) p. 65

mythical prehistory simultaneously lends credence to the May and Williams' objection. For, the demand present in the May and Williams' objection is that all of the events of the genealogy have a quasi-historical and mythical quality. Recall, for example, May's claim: "Nietzsche's genealogical accounts, of which that of the masters and slaves is a paradigm, are best taken as fictional..."<sup>190</sup> Here, May is arguing that the events of the First Essay, particularly Nietzsche's account of the slave revolt in morals, has a mythical quality, and as such is best understood as a fictional account. Thus, for May, Nietzsche's "paradigmatic" genealogical narrative takes place in an undocumented and unrecorded period of development. This is an example of the error of attempting to unpack *all* of the events of the *Genealogy* in terms of an unknown period of development, and hence places an extraordinary interpretative significance upon a pre-historical, or, at least, quasi-historical, period of development.

Thus, another way we can mitigate "the mythical quality" of Nietzsche's genealogical accounts is to forsake the commitment to unpacking *all* of the events of the *Genealogy* by employing the concept of prehistory. Instead, and in accordance with the milder thesis, we are in the position, accordingly, to limit the scope of the postulates regarding the unknown or mythical aspects of Nietzsche's *Genealogy*. As a result, and granting the milder thesis, we can contend that the events of the First and the Third Essay take place in history proper, understood as that which takes place after the advent of historiography. I mentioned, in the introduction to this chapter that there are other ways to unpack these events as well. In the following section, I will highlight the problematic contention that Nietzsche's narrative, if it is to count as history at all, must take the form of antiquarian history.

### **3. Genealogy as Antiquarian History**

In this section I make two claims. The first claim is negative. I point out that Nietzsche's *Genealogy* is taken as a mythical fiction because of an implicit assumption that history correctly practiced must take the form of antiquarian history. This, in turn, leads to my positive claim: Nietzsche offers alternative versions of historiography in 1874, such that the demand that Nietzsche's *Genealogy*, if it is to be an historical account, must take the form of antiquarian history is rendered moot.

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<sup>190</sup> May, Simon (1994) p. 74

Nietzsche's *Genealogy* lacks the typical trappings of a work of history, and, as a result, May and Williams conclude that Nietzsche's genealogical narrative is best understood in mythical or quasi-historical terms. In what follows Ken Gemes precisely expresses this particular worry, which is evident in the May and Williams objection:

...the absence of all the scholarly apparatus typical of a historical work (references, footnotes and the like), the sweeping nature of Nietzsche's various historical narratives, their lack of historical specificity, and the fact that he subtitles his work a polemic—creates the unsettling feeling that Nietzsche is, despite his explicit rubric of historical interest, not really telling us about the history of our morality.<sup>191</sup>

Gemes' concern is one shared by May and Williams: Nietzsche's account is so vague and imprecise that one is left to conclude that the *Genealogy* is “a history that is not really a history.”<sup>192</sup> Thus, one way to counteract the mythical quality of Nietzsche's rhetoric is to call upon the work of scholars who have toiled to provide the *Genealogy* with the appropriate facts and other evidential substantiation that it clearly lacks. For example Brian Leiter, indeed, finds that “it certainly bears remarking that modern scholars have now largely supplied the scholarly annotations that are missing, demonstrating that in the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche did rely extensively on contemporary scholarship.”<sup>193</sup> Interpretations of this sort, however, simply reinforce the assumption that history correctly practiced is “patiently documentary.” This line of thought, if only tacitly, suggests that Nietzsche's *Genealogy* is not proper history. Therefore, we can provide the account with the evidential source materials that it lacks. In so doing we can morph what is clearly a polemic into what can be categorized as an appropriate historical treatise.

The assumption here, that real history is not “infuriatingly vague” but “painstakingly documentary,” is also present in the work of Williams. This point will become clear as we consider Williams' take on the interpretive conundrum Nietzsche's historical account in the *Genealogy* raises:

[Nietzsche's *Genealogy*] seems to hit on something with great exactitude, and at the same time of being infuriatingly vague...It has something to do with

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<sup>191</sup> Gemes, Ken (2006) pp. 204-205. See also, Leiter, Brian (2002) p. 181

<sup>192</sup> Gemes, Ken (2006) p. 205

<sup>193</sup> Leiter, Brian (2002) p. 181 Here, it is worth noting, Leiter cites the work of: “Clark and Swensen (1998); see also Thatcher (1989)...Unpublished work by Thomas Brobjer on the sources for the *Genealogy* complements the cited sources. For additional, sympathetic confirmation of Nietzsche's etymological evidence, see Migotti (1998): 767-70. “ p. 181 fn 12

history, though it is far from clear what history: there are some vaguely situated masters and slaves; then a historical change, which has something to do with the Jews or Christians; there is a process which culminates perhaps in the Reformation, perhaps in Kant. It has been going for 2000 years (*GM I 7*).<sup>194</sup>

Here Williams' assessment is clear: Nietzsche's genealogy is frustrating in its imprecise tracking of two millennia of history. Moreover, it is vague precisely because the trappings of a scholarly treatise are absent. And this rendering leads us to the implicit assumption present in Williams' argument: history correctly presented preserves and thus reveres through the meticulous collecting of source materials (*HL III 74*). Nietzsche labels such historiography, which is fixatedly concerned with preservation, the antiquarian mode of history and he goes on to make the rather striking claim that this mode of history "is today usually designated as the real sense of history" (*HL III 74*). Thus, the complete version of Williams' argument reads: if Nietzsche's genealogical accounts do not take the form of antiquarian history, then such an account is not history proper, but an infuriatingly vague quasi-historical narrative.

The supposition that Nietzsche's genealogy, if it is to be considered an historical account, must take the form of antiquarian history precludes the other modes of history presented in his reflections on the uses and disadvantages of history for life; the monumental and the critical modes of historiography. In his most sustained discussion of the topic of history Nietzsche tells us that the primary function of the antiquarian mode of history is to preserve and revere by tending to the past with a particular brand of piety. Antiquarian history thus provides the justification for and further encourages one to "cling to one's own environment and companions, one's own toilsome customs, one's own bare mountainside..." (*HL III 73*). Whereas the monumental and critical modes of historiography serve decidedly different functions. The former highlights exemplary achievements in order to demonstrate that greatness "was in any event once *possible* and may thus be possible again." The latter serves to mitigate the totalitarian effects of the other forms of historiography by providing the

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<sup>194</sup> Williams, Bernard (2000) p. 157 It is worth nothing here that Williams argues that Nietzsche's vaguely situated history traces the developments of some 2,000 years. This claim further evidences the point I emphasized in the previous section. The period of development that Nietzsche traces is history not prehistory, if Jaspers' contention, that history proper commences with the advent of language thus has lasted approximately 5,000 years, then it seems that Williams too finds that what Nietzsche is attempting to trace is history not some undocumented and unrecorded prehistory.

apparatus to view entrenched narratives scrupulously (*HL II 69*). In light of the other modes of history Nietzsche presents, we should forsake the commonplace temptation to equate historiography proper with antiquarian history. Nietzsche, in the second of the *Untimely Meditations*, indeed warns us that the antiquarian mode of history is not only the mode of historiography which is most closely associated with “real history,” but also that this particular mode of history is precarious precisely in its presentation of the past as monolithic. Nietzsche unambiguously forsakes this mode of historiography in the *Genealogy* insofar as he alerts us that his aims include shaking us from our “toilsome customs,” our entrenched evaluative frameworks. David Allison puts the point this way:

As [Nietzsche] describes the *Genealogy* in his later work, *Ecce Homo*, ‘The three inquiries which constitute this *Genealogy* are perhaps uncannier than anything else written so far.’ Uncanny: the German word is *unheimlich*, which derives from the old German word for home, *Heimat* and its derivative *Heimlich*, homely, comfortable, at ease in familiar surroundings. Uncanny, or *unheimlich*, thus means strange, weird, without a home. There is neither a dwelling nor a resting place, no sure place to sleep and to dream of good and evil, much less to celebrate their homecoming.<sup>195</sup>

This should alert us that the *Genealogy* is not a formless, shapeless, or otherwise arbitrary and unsupervised historical exercise. Rather, the historical takes shape by the very form Nietzsche, as historian, imposes upon it. And as indicated by Allison this form is designed to jolt us from our “comfortable resting place,” our entrenched sensibilities. Consequently, another means of neutralizing the Williams and May objection is to point out the implicit demand present in their arguments.

Furthermore the contention that antiquarian historiography is the only effective means to treat and discuss historical issues generates the final problem I mentioned in the introduction. That is that the univocal commitment to this form of historiography demands a thoroughly positivistic commitment to facts, and a lot of them. A commitment that is decidedly un-Nietzschean in character.

#### **4. On Historical “Facts” in the *Genealogy***

R.G. Collingwood neatly expresses the 19<sup>th</sup> century view of the role brute facts play in historiography: “Each fact was to be thought of not only as independent of all the rest but as independent of the knower, so that all subjective elements (as

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<sup>195</sup> Allison, David (2001) pp. 246-247



they were called) in the historian's point of view had to be eliminated. The historian must pass no judgment on the facts: he must say what they are."<sup>196</sup> Drawing on Collingwood's analysis it is my claim that this particular conception of the role of facts in historical analysis is lurking behind the claim that Nietzsche's genealogy is not an historical endeavor but a quasi-historical one. The quasi-historical nature of Nietzsche's genealogical account is evidenced by the absence of the traditional scholarly trappings of an historical treatise, that is, by the complete absence of unmitigated brute facts that can be ascertained from a neutral position.

Nietzsche is unambiguously critical of historiographers that purport to offer the unmitigated brute facts of an historical event. This commitment is expressed in an often overlooked tirade in the *Genealogy* in which Nietzsche labels historians with this particular commitment the historical nihilists.<sup>197</sup> The historical nihilists claim that their historical investigations simply hold up a mirror. Nietzsche insists that "[their methodology] rejects all teleology; it no longer wishes to 'prove' anything; it disdains to play the judge and considers this a sign of good taste—it affirms as little as it denies; it ascertains it describes..." (*GM* III 26). Briefly, Nietzsche criticizes such historians for this reason: it is paradoxical to suggest that an historical inquiry can be conducted from such a neutral position. Likewise Nietzsche challenges the view that historiography conducted from such an epistemic position yields the brute facts of an event.

Historical facts, for Nietzsche, are always bound to the particular system of purposes which provide them meaning. In other words historiography is always constrained by particular kinds of questions: What is this fact for? What does this fact serve to demonstrate?<sup>198</sup> As such, historiography is bound up with the interests

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<sup>196</sup> Collingwood, R.G. p. 114

<sup>197</sup> For example, Daniel Conway (2008) in his *Nietzsche's On the Genealogy of Morals*, devotes two sentences to the passage, and passes over in silence Nietzsche's talk of the "historical nihilists." p.142 Additionally, Lawrence Hatab (2008), in his discussion of this passage, too bypasses a discussion Nietzsche's critique of historiography. pp. 164-165 By contrast David Owen (2007) and Gary Shapiro (1982) do pick up on the importance of this passage.

<sup>198</sup> Here it may be useful to consider a 'rather homely' case study. Gordon Graham in *The Shape of the Past* provides us with one such case. Graham writes:

Suppose I wish to tell you about a special dinner party that turned into a fiasco... Let us agree that 'proper history' even in this homely sort of case, must renounce gratuitous embellishments and acknowledge the necessity of strict adherence to truth. Even so, there is more to telling the story successfully than the simple recipe 'tell us what happened' might be taken to imply. We need a grasp of relevance as well as truth...

Graham goes on to probematize the notion of an ideal observer, as he puts it an 'Ideal Chronicler,' who is meant to omit nothing from his story of how the dinner party turned into a fiasco. Graham concludes that:

of the particular historian. Additionally, the qualitative nature of historiography demands the historian select some of the facts, at the expense of others, in order to be able tell a cogent story. In other words *any* historical account involves the selection of some of the facts at the expense of others. In this the historian is much like, to use Howard Zinn's analogy, a cartographer:

It is not that the historian can avoid emphasis of some facts and not of others. This is as natural to him as to the mapmaker, who, in order to produce a usable drawing for practical purposes, must first flatten and distort the shape of the earth, then choose out of the bewildering mass of geographic information those things needed for the purpose of this or that particular map.<sup>199</sup>

Thus selection, simplification, and emphasis are interpretative necessities for the cartographer and the historian to produce coherent works. Once we explicitly acknowledge that the historian highlights, chooses and shapes the vast collection of historical data we can simultaneously note that the historian imposes a particular form upon the facts of history. This imposition of form upon content is an inherently interpretive and creative endeavor capable of re-orienting our perspectives.

In light of these considerations we can then conclude that genealogy is not a bizarre and interesting fable lacking the virtue of historical veracity. The May and Williams' interpretation denies the fundamentally interpretive role of the historian, and in so doing presupposes a static picture of historiography. Nietzsche in the *Genealogy* selects, simplifies and places emphasis upon certain historical facts at the expense of others. And in viewing Nietzsche's role as historian in this way the questions concerning the lack of brute facts in the *Genealogy* are rendered superfluous.

## 5. Conclusion

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...the Ideal Chronieler is a coherent conception, it is nevertheless apparent that no such device at our dinner party could, without amendment, provide us with the story we are seeking. This is for the rather obvious reason that a great many events which happened in the course of the evening are not *relevant* to that story; though they indeed did happen, they reveal nothing about how the dinner party turned into a fiasco. Some such events will not figure into the story because they are inherently trivial—a knife or fork becoming dirty as it is used, a wineglass becoming wet as wine is poured into it for instance. Other happenings, on the face of it trivial—nose blowings, for example, or many of the remarks made at the table—could in principle have been significant; a chance remark made in a sudden silence can take on unintended significance. But as it turns out, none of these play a part in this particular story...there is even reason to suppose that even if there were an Ideal Chronicle of the dinner, that is, a complete record of all that happened between the beginning and the end, the vast majority of the events it recorded would in all likelihood be irrelevant to what concerns us—the telling of *this* story. (pp.20-22)

<sup>199</sup> Zinn, Howard (1999) p. 8

In the Preface of the *Genealogy* Nietzsche claims: “My desire, at any rate, was to point out to so sharp and disinterested an eye as [Rée’s] a better direction to look, in the direction of an actual *history* of morality...” (*GM* Preface 7). Additionally, throughout the *Genealogy* Nietzsche criticizes other genealogists of morals for lacking “knowledge or will to knowledge of the past; even less of historical instinct, of that ‘second sight’ needed here above all... (*GM* II 4).<sup>200</sup> Thus, it seems, Nietzsche clearly takes himself to be engaged in a form of historiography. Yet, the rhetorical style, the lack of annotation, and the sheer vastness of the scope of the historical narratives presented in the *Genealogy*, has led to the May and Williams objection, which calls into question the historical veracity of the claims therein. And the May and Williams objection presents a serious scholarly challenge to the thesis I have been advancing, namely, that Nietzsche’s genealogical accounts are a demonstration in the correct practice of history.

To overcome this particular challenge I have argued that three errors plague the May and Williams objection, and furthermore that when the implicit assumptions present in their objection are brought to the fore they can be overcome. Beneath their contention that Nietzsche’s genealogy is best understood in mythical or quasi-historical terms we find the following three problematic assumptions: (1) Nietzsche’s genealogical accounts take place in an undocumented period of development, commonly known as pre-history. (2) Nietzsche’s genealogical narratives are not presented in the mode of antiquarian history, and hence are mythical or quasi-historical. (3) The absence of brute facts in Nietzsche’s account lends credence to the claim that he is offering a quasi-historical, or fictional narrative. As we saw in the first section of this chapter, there are two routes available to us as a means of trumping the contention that Nietzsche’s *Genealogy* takes place in a pre-historical period: we can either contend that (A) Nietzsche’s use of the concept of pre-history is unwarranted, and as a result, we can conclude that all of the events of the genealogy take place in history proper, *or* (B) we can argue that the concept of pre-history is useful as a means of unpacking a certain set of events of the *Genealogy*, notably those found in the Second Essay. I then argued that the demand that Nietzsche’s genealogical accounts must take the form of antiquarian history can too be overcome

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<sup>200</sup> See also (*GM* I 1-2), (*GM* II 12-13)

by placing emphasis upon the other modes of historiography Nietzsche offers in 1874: namely, the monumental and the critical modes. Lastly I argued that the final assumption present in the May and Williams objection, namely that Nietzsche fails to offer the brute facts of an event, and hence that the narrative he offers is best seen as mythical or quasi-historical, is too overcome by placing due emphasis upon the qualitative nature of historiography and by noting the historian's role in the production of any historical account. Given the foregoing, the objections to viewing Nietzsche's *Genealogy* as an exercise in historiography are overcome and, as such, Nietzsche's genealogical accounts can be seen as a demonstration in the correct practice of historiography. We are, as it were, inching closer to morphing the uninformative coinage "genealogy is history correctly practiced," into an informative one. Yet, at the moment, it still remains far from clear just how the *Genealogy* is a demonstration in the correct practice of history. Making this clear will be the subject of the following chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### The Art of History

The structure of this chapter is as follows. The first section presents Nietzsche's critique of "objectivity" in historiography where I argue that his central criticism of "objectivity" in historical inquiry is that it produces an ineffectual conception of historical knowledge. The second section focuses upon his positive conception of historiography as methodologically and epistemologically guided by Nietzsche's perspectivism: a position I have labelled affective history. Affective history maintains that the interest of an inquirer in his subject is of primary importance. As a consequence, the idea of "objectivity" and "disinterestedness" as modes of historical inquiry is problematized. The final section considers why Nietzsche finds artistry to be the most efficacious method in historiography. I conclude by suggesting that artistry of the sort Nietzsche advocates in historiography provides a way in which we can make sense of ourselves, understood, on the one hand, in terms of our cultural commitments, and on the other hand, in terms of our personal commitments.

#### 1. Nietzsche's Critique of "Objectivity" in Historiography

It is well known that towards the end of the Third Essay of the *Genealogy* Nietzsche asks whether or not science, in its current form, offers us an alternative to the ascetic ideal (*GM* III 25). He answers negatively. And responds with another question: Does historiography, in its current guise, offer an alternative to the ascetic ideal? (*GM* III 26) Again the answer is no. In this section I will explore Nietzsche's criticisms of historiography in the *Genealogy*.

It is worth noting that the relationship between science and historiography is not a concern isolated to the *Genealogy*. In the second of the *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche alerts us that: "there is indeed, rejoicing that now 'science is beginning to dominate life'." Life, thus dominated, he claims, is not of much value because "it is far less *living*" (*HL* IV 77). Whereas in the *Genealogy* Nietzsche puts the point this way: "Science as a means of self-anaesthetisation: *are you acquainted with that?*"

(GM III 24) Nietzsche's most pressing worry, first thematized in the *Untimely Meditations*, is methodological. The concern is that historical inquiry guided by “the man of science [who] stands aside from life so as to know it unobstructedly” is an essentially ineffectual conception of historical knowledge (HL X 117). The man of science is guided, methodologically, by his commitments to disinterestedness, objectivity and selflessness in inquiry. Nietzsche's worry regarding the transformation of history into science is that historical inquiry will be conducted with a kind of “intellectual stoicism which ultimately refuses not only to affirm but also deny; that *desire* to halt before the factual” (GM III 24).

In the *Genealogy* Nietzsche presents two types of “modern historiographers,” the “historical nihilists,” and “the contemplatives.” Both share not only this commitment to “objectivity,” but also his contempt: “I do not like these weary played-out people who wrap themselves in wisdom and look ‘objective.’” (GM III 26). These two types of historiographers “wrap themselves” in objectivity in rather distinct ways, and this cloaking has obvious consequences for the kinds of histories they produce. The “historical nihilist” accepts everything without making evaluations. This mode of historiography boldly claims: “that it is a mirror; it no longer wishes to ‘prove’ anything; it disdains to play the judge and considers this a sign of good taste—it affirms as little as it denies; it ascertains, it “describes”...(GM III 26). This type of historiographer has a particular understanding of the notion of “objectivity,” and this understanding, Nietzsche holds, is ascetic. Though, upon first glance, it may appear that refusing to play the role of “the judge” is a far cry from a “denial of the sensual” Nietzsche maintains “that general renunciation of all interpretation (of forcing, adjusting, abbreviating, omitting, padding, inventing, falsifying, and whatever else is the *essence* of interpreting)—all of this expresses, broadly speaking, as much ascetic virtue as any denial of sensuality (it is at bottom only a particular mode of this denial)” (GM III 24). The abdication of judgment, coupled with the impetus to depict and describe manifests itself in the unconditional value that the historian places upon detachment from personal interest. This is an allegiance to the absolute value of “objectivity.” Nietzsche’s concern regarding this mode of historiography stretches beyond the historian's commitment to “objectivity” and its corollary asceticism. Nietzsche insists that this kind of history “...is to a high degree ascetic; but at the same time it is to an even higher degree *nihilistic*, let us not

deceive ourselves about that!” (*GM III 26*). Nietzsche’s point is that such historians are “historical nihilists” because their commitment to “documenting” and to “describing” leads them to foreclose their interpretative and creative responsibilities. In forsaking such responsibilities the historian can no longer create history and is resigned to the position which claims that “here nothing will grow or prosper any longer...” (*GM III 26*).

The contemplatives are those historiographers that “flirt both with life and with the ascetic ideal...” (*GM III 26*). The contemplatives, or “the objective armchair scholars,” “employ the word ‘artist’ as a glove.” They “have taken sole lease of the praise of contemplation.” Referring back to the second of the *Untimely Meditations* clarifies the manner in which such historians cover themselves in the term “artist,” as well as their “praise of contemplation.” There, Nietzsche draws a particularly useful likeness between the historian’s feigned “objectivity” and “aesthetic phenomenon of detachment from personal interest.” Nietzsche writes: “And may an illusion not creep into the word objectivity even in its highest interpretation? According to this interpretation, the word means a condition in the historian which permits him to observe an event in all its motivations and consequences so purely that it has no effect at all on his own subjectivity: it is analogous to that aesthetic phenomenon of detachment from personal interest...” (*HL VI 91*) The analogy plays upon the inferential connection between the manner in which the artist and the historian methodologically approach to their respective productions. The analogous connection becomes clear once it is recognized that the contemplative historians cover themselves in the term artist in truly Schopenhauerian fashion. Schopenhauer, for example, finds:

For this alone is of interest to the intellect as such, in other words, to the subject of knowing which has become free from the aims of the will and is therefore pure; just as for the subject, knowing as mere individual, only the aims and ends of the will have interest. For this reason the result of every purely objective, as so of every artistic, apprehension of things is an expression more of the true nature of life and of existence...<sup>201</sup>

The artist’s apprehension of the true nature of life and existence depends upon the detachment of the will, and therefore affords pure knowledge insofar as the aims and interests of the subjective will have been temporarily dislodged. Placed into

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<sup>201</sup> Schopenhauer, Arthur *W2/XXXIV/406*

Schopenhauer's schema the contemplative historian, like the Schopenhauerian artist, finds the momentary detachment from personal interest the route to historical knowledge. And Nietzsche, in the second of the *Untimely Meditations*, renders this picture of knowledge problematic by critiquing this conception of detachment and relating it to the illusion of objectivity.

For Nietzsche the "illusion" that "creeps into the word objectivity" is the notion that the historian has the ability to analyze history from a standpoint, a point of view, outside of history (*HL VI 91*). Nietzsche, some years later, tells us that this "illusion" is analogous to the "absurdity of the eye turned in no particular direction" (*GM III 12*). However in the second of the *Untimely Meditations* Nietzsche puts the point this way:

In certain cases banality of ideas, the everyday wisdom which seems calm and tranquil only because it is tedious, ventures to pose as that artistic condition in which the subject becomes silent and wholly impenetrable. What is preferred is that which produces no emotion at all and the driest phrase is the right phrase. One goes so far, indeed, as to believe that he to whom a moment of the past *means nothing at all* is the proper man to describe it. This is frequently the relationship between classicists and the Greeks that they study: they mean nothing at all to one another—a state of affairs called 'objectivity!' (*HL VI 93*)

In other words the "objective armchair scholars," like the "historical nihilists," are committed to the mirage of "objectivity." They deny their interpretive role in inquiry because their fundamental scholarly responsibility, as they (mis)understand it, is "objectivity," as disinterested and detached inquiry. In light of their unconditional commitment to 'objectivity,' they then see themselves as possessing the "proper" historical disposition because "the past *means nothing at all*" to them.

It is worth noting that Nietzsche expresses one additional, more penetrating worry regarding this type of historian who hides behind the mask of objectivity and continues to flirt with life. This dalliance distinguishes the contemplative's approach to historiography from the historical nihilist's. Though Nietzsche is not clear in articulating what this particular sort of coquetry entails we can nevertheless introduce a candidate that will serve to explain this flirtation. Nietzsche identifies French historian, Ernest Renan as a contemplative historian in his rhetorically charged attack in the *Genealogy*:

The 'contemplatives' are a hundred times worse: I know of nothing that excites such disgust as this kind of 'objective' armchair scholar, this kind of



scented voluptuary of history, half parson, half satyr, perfume by Renan, who betrays immediately with high falsetto of his applause what he lacks...(GM III 26)

This rather flippant allusion to Renan is significant when placed in the context of Nietzsche's treatment of the French historian in *Beyond Good and Evil*.<sup>202</sup> There, Nietzsche reveals Renan as his antipode. Quoting Renan Nietzsche writes:

So let us make bold to say that religion is a product of the normal man, that man is closest to the truth when he is most religious and most certain of an infinite destiny...It is when he is good that he wants virtue to correspond to an eternal order; it is when he contemplates things in a disinterested manner that he finds death revolting and absurd. How can we but suppose that it is in this that man sees his best? (*BGE* 48)

Nietzsche subsequently reveals Renan as his antipode in what follows:

These sentences are so utterly *antipodal* to my ears and habits that on finding them my first wrath wrote on the margin '*la niaisere religieuse par excellence!*' But my subsequent wrath actually took a fancy to them—these sentences standing truth on her head! It is so neat, so distinguished to have one's own antipodes! (*BGE* 48)

I take Renan to be Nietzsche's antipode for two related reasons. First, Renan stands "truth on her head" in so far as he is committed to the claim that disinterestedness in inquiry yields fundamental truths about the nature of existence: "death is revolting and absurd" (*BGE* 48). Second, Renan's historiography aims to offer a naturalistic account of the origins of Christianity all the while remaining committed to Christian morality. As Gary Shapiro puts the point:

Renan, who had left seminary because he could not reconcile religion with his scientific knowledge, repressed religion. His later works, no matter how positivistic their official ideology, disclosed a return to the repressed. [Renan] allowed his readers [in his *History of the Origins of Christianity*] to believe themselves scientific and even a bit skeptical, while still allowing them to indulge in religious sentiments, to let them become 'voluptuous' and 'to stretch out comfortably.'"<sup>203</sup>

Thus, the contemplative brand of historiography is expressed in the feigned commitment to disinterested "scientific" inquiry. In the face of this apparent

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<sup>202</sup> I take *BGE* 48 to represent Nietzsche's most illuminating critique of the work of Renan, though it is worth noting that Nietzsche references the French historian several times. See, for example, *The Anti-Christ* sections 17, 29, 31 and 32, as well as *Twilight of the Idols* "Expeditions" sections 2, and 6. Renan's work is univocally cast in a negative light.

<sup>203</sup> Shapiro, Gary (1982) p. 215

methodological commitment the contemplative historian continues to ‘flirt’ with religious sentiments and dalliance of this sort props up Christian morality.

Coquetry of the sort exemplified in the work of Renan then distinguishes the contemplative’s approach to history from the historical nihilist’s. Recall that the historical nihilists are, at least, honest in their assessment of history; they make the claim that “nothing new will grow or prosper any longer.” The contemplatives, by contrast, express “lascivious historical eunuchism” (*GM* III 26). The eunuch symbolizes the fundamental impotence of this type of history. It is the unwillingness of the contemplative historian to explicitly acknowledge his underlying commitments that coupled with the willful “castration of the intellect,” and, despite the scholarly seduction of “objectivity,” is tantamount to an “aversion to life” (*GM* III 12, 28).<sup>204</sup> The historian as eunuch can never engage in the fruitful production of history because his inquiry is conducted under the shroud of indifference. This indifference is clearly problematic for Nietzsche: “to a eunuch one woman is like another, simply a woman, woman in herself, the eternally unapproachable—and it is a matter of indifference what they do so long as history is kept nice and ‘objective,’ bearing in mind that those who want to keep it so are for ever incapable of making history themselves” (*HL* V 86).

We can make some further sense of Nietzsche’s polemical critique of the contemplatives, of their “lascivious historical eunuchism,” if we look to the second of the *Untimely Meditations* where Nietzsche considers what becomes of historical understanding when the “great historical world-harem” is guarded by a “race of eunuchs.” Nietzsche tells us: “pure objectivity would certainly characterize such a race. For it almost seems that the task is to stand guard over history to see that nothing comes out except more history, and certainly no real events! — to take care of that history does not make any personality ‘free,’ that is to say truthful towards itself, truthful towards others, in both word and deed (*HL* V 84).” Three points are worth making. First, historical eunuchism is betrayed by the desire to guard history from the perspective of the individual historian, which is expressed in their dedication to “pure objectivity.” Second, the commitment to “pure objectivity” leads such a historian to

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<sup>204</sup> Ken Gemes provides a detailed account of Nietzsche’s use of the metaphors of impotence and castration, throughout his corpus, in “We Remain of Necessity Strangers to Ourselves: The Key Message of Nietzsche’s *Genealogy*” (particularly pp.195-197). Also *Z* “But now doth your emasculated ogling profess to be ‘contemplation!’ And that which can be examined with cowardly eyes is to be christened ‘beautiful!’ Oh, ye violators of noble names!” (‘Immaculate Perception’)

believe that he can document and describe the brute facts of history; he has the power to collect and preserve facts *qua* facts.<sup>205</sup> Third, this methodological approach lacks intellectual honesty insofar as it propagates a paradoxical account of historical knowledge (it is not “truthful to itself” or “truthful to others”). For these reasons, Nietzsche tells us “the contemplative’s” conception of history: “...offends my taste; also my patience: let him have patience who has nothing to lose by them—such a sight arouses my ire, such ‘speculators’ dispose me against the spectacle itself (the spectacle of history you understand)” (*GM* III 26). It is the desire to be pure spectators, the “instruction that does not become life,” the “lost and destroyed instincts,” the “ostentatious indifference,” in short the passionless pursuit of historical understanding that provokes Nietzsche’s critique of the contemplatives.

In sum, both the historical nihilists and the contemplative historians employ the concept of objectivity to the detriment of historiography. Nevertheless Nietzsche critiques their usages for different reasons. The historical nihilists are condemned because of their untenable and ultimately nihilistic commitment to abdicating judgment. Recall the historical nihilists’ claim that they can hold up a mirror to nature. In so doing they are committed to a form of historiography that purports to allow the facts to speak for themselves, and Nietzsche claims that this commitment is not only ascetic but also nihilistic. The contemplative historians, by contrast, offer a more pernicious picture of historical knowledge. Superficially they are methodologically committed to objectivity, and Nietzsche exposes this outward commitment as a façade. As Nietzsche argues in the case of Renan, the objective pretense conceals a more fundamental commitment, a deep-seated commitment to religious sentiments and Christian morality.

Thus what is needed in historiography in light of Nietzsche’s critique of the historical nihilists and the contemplatives is a historian who places due emphasis upon

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<sup>205</sup> R.G. Collingwood in *The Idea of History* proposes that historians working in the nineteenth-century were, broadly, under the influence of positivism and the sway of this picture “led the historian to adopt two rules of method in their treatment of facts: (i) Each fact was to be regarded as a thing capable of being ascertained by a separate act of cognition or process of research, and thus the total field of the historically knowable was cut up into an infinity of minute facts each to be separately considered. (ii) Each fact was to be thought of not only as independent of all the rest but as independent of the knower, so that all subjective elements (as they were called) in the historian’s point of view had to be eliminated. The historian must pass no judgment on the facts: he must say what they are” (131). Nietzsche, in light of Collingwood’s account, can be seen as critiquing the positivistic account of history. Nietzsche’s point, then, is the historian laboring under the positivistic account of history can only state the atomic facts of history but cannot bundle the facts together to create an “event.”

the perspectival character of historical knowledge and the tremendous responsibility that such a commitment entails. The good historian must greet “the great *passion* of the seeker of knowledge who lives and must live continually in the thundercloud of the heaviest responsibilities (by no means as an observer, outside, indifferent, secure and objective)” (*GS* 351). That is, the good historian must engage in a kind of affective history.

## 2. Affective History<sup>206</sup>

Affective history offers an account of historical understanding that departs from the picture of historical knowledge painted by the historical nihilists and by the contemplatives. Both sets of historians, to differing degrees, maintain that historical knowledge is only possible through the systematic detachment of the historian from his historical inquiry. By valuing “objectivity,” and the corollary concepts of selflessness and impartiality, they construct, as Nietzsche tells us in *The Gay Science*, a fundamentally impotent conception of historical knowledge:

‘Selflessness’ has no value either in heaven or on earth. All great problems demand *great love*, and of that only strong, round, secure spirits who have a firm grip on themselves are capable. It makes the most telling difference whether a thinker has a personal relationship to his problems and finds in them his destiny, his distress, and his greatest happiness, or an ‘impersonal’ one, meaning that he can do no better than to touch them and grasp them with the antennae of cold, curious thought. In the latter case nothing will come of it; that much one can promise in advance...(*GS* 345)<sup>207</sup>

Nothing will come of the methodological approach to the historical that is guided by the unconditional commitment to “selflessness” because the epistemological picture upon which it is based is fundamentally self-contradictory. Such a picture depicts “the victory of reason over the affects...” (*D* 58), of “...‘reason,’ ‘seriousness,’ [as] master over the affects” (*GM* II 4), without, at the same time, noting that the commitment to

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<sup>206</sup> I have opted for the term “affective” rather than “effective” to demarcate Nietzsche’s conception of history correctly practiced from both Foucault’s and Gadamer’s conceptions of “effective history.” For Foucault’s formulation see “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” and for Gadamer’s see *Truth and Method* pp. 299-302.

<sup>207</sup> Walter Kaufmann suggests that this section of *The Gay Science* as well as Nietzsche’s label of the “English Psychologists” in *On the Genealogy of Morality* is directed towards Paul Rée’s sterile, disinterested approach to his inquiry into the history of moral concepts. Christopher Janaway’s “Naturalism and Genealogy” explores at length Nietzsche’s critique of Rée’s methodological approach. What is important for our purposes here, as Janaway argues, is “Nietzsche is simultaneously opposing morality as selflessness and opposing selflessness as a mode of inquiry.” In this chapter I will only be discussing Nietzsche’s critique of “selflessness as a mode of inquiry.” (fn13.) (p. 343)

selflessness, to objectivity, or to reason, is itself an affective response to the demand for certainty.<sup>208</sup> This conception of knowledge is tantamount to “the castration of the intellect” because, as Aaron Ridley argues:

among the ‘affects’ to be suspended would be the desire to know (the will to truth) and the desire to produce rationally acceptable explanations of the phenomena we know about. To suspend these would be to leave behind only the ‘non-sensical absurdity’ of ‘contemplation without interest,’ i.e., of contemplation somehow conducted in the absence even of our cognitive interests (in things like simplicity, explanatory power, etc.), let alone those other interests (in things like convenience, survival, etc.) that give us reasons for wanting to know anything in the first place.<sup>209</sup>

Nietzsche’s point, as Ridley makes clear, is that it is irrational to posit an account of knowledge that is independent of all of our affective allegiances and our cognitive interests because such an account demands of the inquirer an impossibility. The historian can never rationally contemplate history from such an epistemologically disinterested standpoint. Affective history is a methodological approach to historical understanding that follows from Nietzsche’s epistemological doctrine of perspectivism and his rejection of the historical nihilist’s and the contemplative’s demand for interest-free inquiry.

Given Nietzsche’s critique of “objectivity” it follows that historical inquiry, if it is to be correctly conducted, must be guided by the commitments and the affective allegiances of the historian. In the *Genealogy* Nietzsche offers an example of such a history informed by his “major point of historical method” (*GM* II 12). The example Nietzsche employs to elucidate his major point of historical method is the “concept” of punishment. The recognition that must guide historical inquiry is “the cause of the origin of a thing and its eventual utility, its actual employment and place in a system of purposes, lie worlds apart” (*GM* II 12). Nietzsche’s reflections on historical methodology, here, generate his own anti-essentialist commitment that there is no singular, stable, enduring “concept” of punishment. Rather he suggests that our history of our concept of punishment includes a set of interpretations and re-interpretations such that “the entire history of a ‘thing,’ an organ, a custom, can in this way be a continuous sign-chain of ever new interpretations and adaptations whose

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<sup>208</sup> Nietzsche explicitly makes this point in Book Five of *The Gay Science*: “...that impetuous *demand for certainty* that today discharges itself among large numbers of people in a scientific-positivistic form. The demand that one *wants* by all means that something should be firm” (*GS* 347).

<sup>209</sup> Ridley, Aaron (2000) p. 92

causes do not even have to be related to one another but, on the contrary, in some cases succeed and alternate with one another in a purely chance fashion” (*GM II 12*).

In the following section of the *Genealogy* Nietzsche offers a nuanced description of his historical methodology: “...it is assumed without further ado that the procedure itself will be something older, earlier than its employment in punishment, that the latter is *projected* back and interpreted into the procedure (which has long existed but been employed in another sense)...” (*GM II 13*). Nietzsche’s thought is threefold. In terms of his inquiry into the “concept” of punishment, the nuanced version suggests, for example: (1) the procedure (the technique, “the form,” the practice, the “act,” the “drama”) of stoning antedates the “system of purposes” through which the practice of stoning is given a meaning of rendering harmless. (2) The “meaning,” the “purpose,” in this case, of rendering harmless, “is *projected* back and interpreted into the procedure” of stoning. (3) The procedure of stoning has long existed, but has “been employed in another sense” within a different “system of purposes.” Therefore, Nietzsche concludes, “one and the same procedure can be employed, interpreted, and adapted to ends that differ fundamentally.”<sup>210</sup> This suggests that “the systems of purposes,” the “patterns” of employment and interpretation, often provide *post facto* rationalizations of the procedure.

In *Daybreak* Nietzsche offers an early rendition of this last, rather weighty, point:

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<sup>210</sup> Nietzsche provides a list, albeit “incomplete,” of the various purposes to which punishment has been “employed, interpreted, and adapted:”

- (1) Punishment as a means of rendering harmless, of preventing further harm.
- (2) Punishment as recompense to the injured party for the harm done, rendered in any form (even in that of a compensating affect.)
- (3) Punishment as the isolation of a disturbance of equilibrium, so as to guard against the spread of the disturbance.
- (4) Punishment as a means of inspiring fear of those who determine and execute the punishment.
- (5) Punishment as a kind of repayment for the advantages the criminal has enjoyed hitherto (for example, when he is employed as a slave in the mind).
- (6) Punishment as the expulsion of a degenerate element (in some cases, of an entire branch, as in Chinese law: thus as a means of preserving the purity of the race or maintaining a social type).
- (7) Punishment as a festival, namely as the rape and mockery of a finally defeated enemy.
- (8) Punishment as the making of a memory, whether for him who suffers the punishment—so-called ‘improvement’—or for those who witness its execution.
- (9) Punishment as payment of a fee stipulated by the power that protects the wrongdoer from the excesses of revenge.
- (10) Punishment as a compromise with revenge in its natural state when the latter is still maintained and claimed as a privilege by powerful clans.
- (11) Punishment as a declaration of war and a war measure against an enemy of peace, of the law, of order, of the authorities, whom, as a danger to the community, as one who has broken the contract that defines the conditions under which it exists, as a rebel, a traitor, and breaker of the peace, one opposes with the means of war (*GM II 13*).

*Rationality ex post facto.* — Whatever lives long is gradually so saturated with reason that its irrational origins become improbable. Does not almost every accurate history of the origin of something sound paradoxical and sacrilegious to our feelings? Doesn't the good historian *contradict* all the time? (*D* 1)

Our “concept” of punishment, as Nietzsche argues in the *Genealogy*, is so saturated with “reason,” with *post facto* rationalizations, that it becomes inconceivable for us to appreciate that the procedure, stoning, for example, antedates the varying rationalizations of the procedure. This obscures the many ways in which the concept has been employed within a system of purposes. The good historian teases out the “improbable,” yet “accurate,” history of the employment of a concept. Thus the concept of punishment is viewed within the most varying “systems of purposes” which, *post facto*, provide the procedure with meaning. The good historian’s methodology is “paradoxical and sacrilegious to our feelings” precisely because the history of our concept of punishment includes rationalizations which have been retrospectively attributed to the procedure.

Additionally Nietzsche’s investigation into the concept of punishment implicitly suggests the good historian *contradicts* the traditional manner in which philosophers, namely the naïve genealogists, understand the concept of “purpose.” As previously argued Nietzsche stresses that, methodologically, the good historian would do well to avoid the *causa fiendi* error, to avoid the temptation of assuming that procedures are invented for a particular purpose. Here, I will discuss Nietzsche’s remarks on the concept of “purpose,” as presented in Book V of *The Gay Science*, in order to shed some additional light on his historical methodology. In section 360, Nietzsche calls for a “critique of the concept of purpose” because “people are accustomed to consider the goal (purposes, vocations, etc.) as the *driving force*, in keeping with a very ancient error; but it is merely the *directing force*; one has mistaken the helmsman for the steam. And not even always the helmsman, the directing force” (*GS* 360). The very ancient error, similar to the *causa fiendi* error, is the faulty assumption that the purpose is, ipso facto, the *driving force*. The purpose is not the sole explanatory principle. Nietzsche continues: “Is the ‘goal,’ the ‘purpose’ not often enough a beautifying pretext, a self-deception of vanity after the event that does not want to acknowledge that the ship is *following* the current into which it has entered accidentally?” (*GS* 360). This question leads us to ponder the possibility that *post facto* rationalizations occur so often that it is a self-deception of vanity to suggest

that the purpose is *always* the *driving force*. Nietzsche's treatment of the "concept" of punishment in the Second Essay serves to elucidate precisely this point: the naïve genealogists have always assumed that the purpose is the *driving force* due to a self-deception of vanity. As such they assume that the purpose contains all of the explanatory power in our understanding of the formulation of concepts. Nietzsche's point here and in the *Genealogy* is this: a better historical method with a nuanced account of the formation of our concepts, yields not a single unchanged "purpose" of a "concept," but a dynamic exchange of interpretations and re-interpretations containing elements that have been retrospectively attributed to the procedure.

Affective history is manifested in three respects given this reconstruction of Nietzsche's major point of historical method as well as his study of the concept of punishment and the concept of purpose. First, affective history is epistemologically guided by Nietzsche's perspectivism. This claim is evidenced by Nietzsche's careful analysis of the concept of punishment. Nietzsche investigates the varying "systems of purposes" that have employed the "concept" of punishment and suggests that "the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our 'concept' of this thing, our 'objectivity' be" (*GM* III 12). Nietzsche renders any disinterested knowledge claims untenable; there can be no knowledge without interest. Through a historical investigation, of the sort illustrated by Nietzsche's examination of the concept of punishment, we can unearth and bring to light the various systems of purpose within which a concept has been employed, and thus have a more complete understanding of the concept.

Second, affective history is methodologically guided by the avoidance of the error of positing a singular, stable, enduring concept. Rather than "seek[ing] out some 'purpose in punishment...[and] then guilelessly plac[ing] that purpose at the beginning as the *causa fiendi*," the affective historian investigates the sets of interpretations and re-interpretations, the varying systems of purposes, within which the concept has been provided with a particular meaning (*GM* II 12). By observing and noting the many systems of purposes within which the concept of punishment has been employed, the affective historian avoids the temptation of dogmatically asserting "along with the popular consciousness," that the "essential" purpose of punishment is to awaken the "*feeling of guilt*," or whichever interpretation has gained precedence over the others (*GM* II 14). Consequently, instead of looking for a metaphysical



substratum, which is meant to ground our concepts a priori, or placing all of the explanatory weight on the purpose of the concept, Nietzsche's historical methodology highlights the myriad interpretations that have been arbitrarily wedded together to comprise our present day employment of the concept.<sup>211</sup>

Lastly, affective history focuses particularly on the aspects of the past that are "hard to disentangle" or "hard to analyze." In the *Genealogy* Nietzsche offers us a few examples of his commitment to this final point. One such example is Nietzsche's examination of the concept of punishment because a singular interpretation of punishment has precluded other possible interpretations, analysis of the concept is difficult. Yet, another example is found within the First Essay where Nietzsche brings to the fore two types of morality: a master morality and a slave morality in order to analyze the dominant form of morality which he identifies as slave morality. Nietzsche discusses slave morality as that "which has only moved out of our sight today because it—has been victorious" (*GM I* 7). History conducted in the manner thus elucidated facilitates an awareness of "the conditions and circumstances in which [our values] grew, under which they evolved and changed" (*GM P* 6). Affective history must engage with the occluded elements of our past.

In spite of this, a historian thoroughly engaged in methodological anti-essentialism could argue that objectivity and disinterestedness in inquiry remains the most robust means of conducting an historical investigation. Such a historian would concur with Nietzsche's commitment to anti-essentialism, but nevertheless disagree with Nietzsche's methodological point that the interests of the inquirer are indispensable for an historical investigation. Affective history can respond to this particular challenge by again highlighting the point that a methodological commitment to disinterestedness and objectivity in inquiry yields a fundamentally unproductive harvest of historical understanding.

In several places Nietzsche makes this point clear. Yet perhaps the most striking example is found in the Foreword to the second of the *Untimely Meditations* where Nietzsche claims that:

We need history, certainly, but we need it for reasons different from those for which the idler in the garden of knowledge needs it...We need it, that is to

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<sup>211</sup> Or, as Raymond Geuss puts the point: "History, for Nietzsche, is just a sequence of contingent conjunctions, accidental encounters, and fortuitous collisions...not the story of the unitary development or self-expression of some single underlying, non-empirical agency." Geuss, Raymond (1999) p.182

say, for the sake of life and action, not so as to turn comfortably away from life and action...(HL 'Foreword' 59)

Nietzsche's point is transparent: vigorous historical investigations are necessary to stimulate and hearten our understanding of ourselves. Moreover, Nietzsche claims that we ought not abandon the brand of resolve that historiography of this sort requires by claiming that we can glean such understanding by turning "comfortably away from life." Thus, there is an indispensable connection between an affectively engaged historical investigation and our real needs. A poignant example of this connection is found in the Second Essay of the *Genealogy* where Nietzsche ties his mini-genealogy of punishment to the emergence of bad conscience. What appeared upon first glance to be a tangential historical investigation into the various meanings and purposes to which the concept of punishment was made to serve, ultimately finds grounding in what Nietzsche takes to be our real needs. Nietzsche's investigation into the concept of punishment demonstrates how we have come to incorrectly equate punishment with the awakening of the feeling of guilt (*GM II 14*). In so doing he demonstrates that his genealogy of punishment has direct bearing on the moralization of the concept of guilt out of the non-moral concept of debt (*GM II 4*).<sup>212</sup>

Similarly, recall Nietzsche's claim in *The Gay Science*:

It makes the most telling difference whether a thinker has a personal relationship to his problems and finds in them his destiny, his distress, and his greatest happiness, or an 'impersonal' one, meaning that he can do no better than to touch them and grasp them with the antennae of cold, curious thought. In the latter case nothing will come of it; that much one can promise in advance...(GS 345)

The methodologically misguided substitution for an affective inquiry of a passive, cold and impersonal one yields a deceptive and ultimately fruitless scholarly production. It is deceptive for this reason: a historian can only feign a commitment to neutrality for he must all the while select and highlight particular historical events at the expense of others. This process of selection is present in every interpretation (*GM III 24*). Thus, affective history, with the methodological commitment to exposing the historian's interests in an inquiry, exhibits intellectual honesty insofar as the affective historian can make transparent his reasons for opting to draw attention to certain aspects of the past while neglecting others. In other words, if Nietzsche is correct in

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<sup>212</sup> I will not engage here in a detailed examination of this particular point, for such a treatment see Aaron Ridley (1998).

asserting that selection is present in every process of interpretation, then the historian simulating impartiality can only maintain a fundamentally paradoxical position. That is to say, such a historian must, at once, hold two opposing methodological commitments: (1) the methodological commitment to neutrality in inquiry and (2) the methodological commitment to the highlighting of particular events at the expense of others. Consequently, the objection to affective history on the grounds that one can be committed to both anti-essentialism and impartiality in inquiry fails for it is methodologically paradoxical.

I should note, before moving on, that history conducted affectively serves to further demarcate Nietzsche's approach to history from the "man of science who halts before the factual," the man who methodologically aims to let the facts speak for themselves. In contrast to the methodological picture presented by the "man of science," Nietzsche, as early as his investigation into the uses and disadvantages of history for life, offers another conception of historical inquiry that is rooted, as I will argue, in this epistemological and methodological commitment to "affective history."

### **3. The Art of History**

In the second of his *Untimely Meditations* Nietzsche remarks that: "...only if history can endure to be transformed into a work of art will it perhaps preserve instincts or even evoke them" (*HL VII 95-96*). To make sense of this rather enigmatic claim, I will argue in this section that we should look to *Human All Too Human*, where Nietzsche contends that the historian is an artist engaged in "the higher species of the art of painting" (*HH 274*). This idea is worth looking at in some detail, so I quote the passage in its entirety:

*A segment of our self as artistic object.* — It is a sign of superior culture consciously to retain certain phases of development which lesser men live through almost without thinking and then wipe from the tablet of their soul, and to draft a faithful picture of it: for this is the higher species of the art of painting which only a few understand. To this end it will be necessary artificially to isolate those phases. Historical studies cultivate the ability for this painting, for they constantly challenge us, when faced with a piece of history, of the life of a nation or of a man, to conjure up a quite distinct horizon of ideas, a distinct strength of sensations, the predomination of this, the stepping-back of that. It is in this ability rapidly to reconstruct such systems of ideas and sensations on any given occasion, as for example the impression of a temple on the basis of a few pillars and pieces of wall that chance to remain standing, that the historical sense consists. The first result of it is that we comprehend our fellow men as being determined by such

systems and representatives of different cultures, that is to say as necessary, but as alterable. And conversely, that we are able to segregate parts of our own development and exhibit them in isolation (*HH* 274).

Three key points are made in this rather dense passage. The first is a claim concerning historical methodology, history as the “higher species of the art of painting.” The second and third claims concern the yields of practicing history in this way. The second claim focuses upon how we can come to understand the history of our culture, broadly construed. The third claim regards how we can understand our own development as individuals. In the pages that follow I will examine each of these claims in turn.

### **3.1 The Higher Species of the Art of Painting: A Monumentalized Past**

Methodologically a central feature of the “higher species of the art of painting” is the ability to “sketch a true picture of certain periods” by separating out episodes of our past *artificially*. The capacity to create such a painting entails that the historian, when examining the life of a man or of a nation, has the ability to “conjure up a quite distinct horizon of ideas” through an intricate process of selection. Through selecting, highlighting, and shaping history, by emphasizing “the predominance of this” or “the withdrawal of that,” the historian essentially creates a “distinct horizon.” In creating such a horizon the historian provides history with a form, and, as Ridley notes, “the imposition of form—any form—is regularly treated by Nietzsche as synonymous with artistry as such.”<sup>213</sup>

An example may be helpful to cash out what such artistry, the imposition of form, entails in historiography. I will single out one of Nietzsche’s modes of history, monumental history, as presented in the second of the *Untimely Meditations*. Through the imposition of form, the capacity to emphasize the predominance of this or the withdrawal of that, the historian can chisel the monumental figure of Julius Caesar, for example.<sup>214</sup> In order to view Julius Caesar monumentally we must

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<sup>213</sup> Ridley, Aaron (2007) p.210

<sup>214</sup> Goethe, as Nietzsche’s exemplar *par excellence*, has received a fair bit of attention in the secondary literature, so I will focus instead upon Julius Caesar as also embodying the traits that Nietzsche so admired in Goethe—self-mastery, self-integration, self-control. As Kaufmann (1974) argues: “Caesar came closer [than Napoleon] to Nietzsche’s ideal—but in him...it was not the military or political success that Nietzsche looked to, but the embodiment of the passionate man who controls his passions: the man who, in the face of universal disintegration and licentiousness, know this decadence as part of his own soul, performs his unique deed of self-integration, self-creation, and self-mastery...One gathers that Caesar was one of Nietzsche’s ‘educators.’” (p. 316)

withdraw the momentary lapses, the foibles, the oversights, the “purely human qualities have come together” in him in order to put emphasis upon that which is exemplary (*HH* 164). In the case of Julius Caesar, Nietzsche tells us that it was his mastery of himself through “self-control” and “self-outwitting” which placed him among the “marvellously incomprehensible and unfathomable men” (*BGE* 200).<sup>215</sup> Nietzsche, in viewing Caesar monumentally, conjures up “a quite distinct horizon of ideas.” Emphasis is placed upon his mastery of himself, his self-control, and all else is relegated to the background: his political ambitions, his insight that Rome was in need of a Constitution, his assassination on the Ides of March B.C.E. 44.<sup>216</sup> It is this kind of artistry that is *what one should learn from the artist*:

Moving away from things until there is a good deal that one no longer sees...or seeing things around a corner and as cut out and framed; or to place them so that they partially conceal each other and grant us only glimpses of architectural perspectives; or looking at them through tinted glass or in the light of sunset; or giving them surface and skin that is not fully transparent— (*GS* 299).

By paying close attention to how the artist makes things “beautiful, attractive, and desirable for us when they are not” we can learn what artistry in historiography involves (*GS* 299). In the case of monumental history, it is the ability to provide the past with a particular form by giving a frame through which we can view the exemplary figure typically obscured by the everyday character. In order to see Caesar as a man who achieved a kind of self-control worthy of imitation the historian must frame his exemplary activity by “moving away” from his all-too-human qualities or by looking at those all-too-human qualities in a different light. Such artistry provides the perspective, the horizon, and the form within which we can view Caesar as an exemplary figure. Without artistry of this sort, monumental history would not be possible. Such monumental figures would be “nothing but foreground” and we would be held captive by the perspective that Caesar’s, or any other monumental figure’s, purely human qualities are all that there is, “reality itself” (*GS* 78).

I argued that Nietzsche’s conception of monumental history is a form of artistry. The example of Caesar aids us in making sense of historiography as “the higher species of the art of painting.” Artistry in historiography is a matter of form-giving, of imposing an interpretation upon the raw material where the raw material is

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<sup>215</sup> See also (*TI* “Expeditions” 31).

<sup>216</sup> Collingwood, R.G. (1999) p. 217

taken to be the “life of a man or a nation” (*HH* 274). However, there are other ways to interpret Nietzsche’s conception of a monumentalized past. One way is to follow Julian Young, amongst others, and argue that “monumental history” simply entails “the use of partially or wholly mythological figures as ‘exemplars of our caste,’ ideals on which to model our life.”<sup>217</sup> This is to suggest that monumental history can achieve its aims only “at the expense of *any* historical specificity; history, in effect, becomes mythical fiction.”<sup>218</sup> This is a tempting reading because it appears at first glance that it can answer the question: why does it matter if I find in a partially mythical figure, such as Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, rather than an historical personage, the vivid description of an exemplar upon which I may model my life that I so desperately require? It seems at least plausible that it does not matter much. Through recourse to a partially mythical figure I have found my impetus. My *need* of a model, a teacher, a comforter has been satisfied. My desire to “transform” what I have “learned into a more elevated practice” has found its spur (*HL* II 68).

Despite the initial allure of such a reading there are two reasons to be suspicious of this sort of analysis of a monumentalized past. The first reason is that Nietzsche appreciates that the same *stimulus*, the need for a model, can be derived from both a monumentalized past and a mythical fiction. Nietzsche writes:

As long as the soul of historiography lies in the great *stimuli* that a man of power derives from it, as long as the past has to be described as worthy of imitation...it of course incurs the danger of becoming somewhat distorted, beautified and coming close to free poetic invention; there have been ages, indeed, which were quite incapable of distinguishing between a monumentalized past and a mythical fiction, because precisely the same stimuli can be derived from one world as from another (*HL* II 70).

Though some ages have been “incapable of distinguishing between a monumentalized past and a mythical fiction” Nietzsche draws a distinction. Monumental history, as he tells us, is not “free poetic invention,” though at certain points in history it has “come close.” The second reason is that monumental history concentrates upon that which is “imitable and possible for a second time” (*HL* II 70). If such exemplary actions are “possible for a second time,” then by implication such an action must have been performed for the first time. Despite the fact that a mythical fiction and a

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<sup>217</sup> Young, Julian (2006) pg. 72

<sup>218</sup> Gillham, Simon (2004) p. 142 emphasis added

monumentalized past can serve as the same stimulus, Nietzsche here certainly wants to place a wedge between a monumentalized past and a mythical fiction.

Another argument, offered by Alexander Nehamas, in *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, deserves some consideration, for Nehamas seems to suggest that we should view Nietzsche's treatment of Julius Caesar as based upon, not the historical figure, but Shakespeare's Caesar, the literary character:

Even when [Nietzsche] praises Julius Caesar as the 'most beautiful type' of character that contains 'inexorable and fearful instincts that provoke the maximum authority and discipline among themselves' (*TI IX 39*), we must not assume without question that he is thinking of Caesar as a historical figure. Rather, we must recall that he writes, 'When I seek my ultimate formula for *Shakespeare*, I only find this: he conceived of the type of Caesar' (*EH II 4*), who therefore turns out himself to be a literary character.<sup>219</sup>

It seems to me that there are, at least, two paths of interpretation available to us here. The first path suggests that Nietzsche, when alluding to Caesar, is solely referring to Shakespeare's Caesar, the literary character, rather than the historical figure. But this line of thought seems fruitless. It is barren in the first instance because one could simply argue the reverse; one should not assume without question that Nietzsche is referencing Shakespeare's Caesar rather than the historical figure. In the second instance this line of inquiry is unfruitful because it is hard to square with Nietzsche's training as a philologist as well as with Duncan Large's point that "Nietzsche's source for his characterization of Caesar was the same as Shakespeare's for his *Julius Caesar*, the *Parallel Lives* by the Greek biographer Plutarch."<sup>220</sup> So, it seems, we should try to tread the second path.

The second line of interpretation argues for a milder thesis: when Nietzsche alludes to Caesar he is imposing a particular form upon the historical figure and this sort of form giving is analogous to the playwright's imposition of form upon his characters. This path seems to me not only more productive, but perhaps also closer to the point Nehamas might be making by invoking the image of the literary character. For example, Nehamas finds Nietzsche so enamored by characters that are able to totalize their drives "into a controlled and coherent whole...[that his]

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<sup>219</sup> Nehamas, Alexander (1985) p. 227

<sup>220</sup> Large, Duncan (1998) p. 105 In two places Nietzsche discusses Plutarch's treatment of historical figures as easily lending themselves to monumental history: (1) "Sate your soul with Plutarch and when you believe in his heroes dare at the same time to believe in yourself" (*HL VI 95*). (2) "If one enthusiastically imitates Plutarch's heroes and feels a repugnance towards suspiciously probing the motives of their actions...one may well be furthering the wellbeing of human society..."(*HH 36*).

conception is always modeled on his view of literature and the arts. [Nietzsche] is so taken by this model that he even turns historical figures into literary characters so that he can attribute to them the unity that he finds essential for greatness.”<sup>221</sup> It seems from this that Nehamas finds Nietzsche imposing a form, a particular kind of unity upon the chaotic and, all too often, formless historical figures by highlighting or selecting certain attributes. On Nehamas’ reading this process is the transformation of “historical figures into literary characters” and on my reading this process is the “art of painting.”

When faced with these two interpretations of Nietzsche’s use of exemplary figures it seems to me that there is something conspicuously inadequate about Nehamas’ invocation of the image of the literary character. Such literary characters may be wholly mythical, or, as in the case of Shakespeare’s Caesar, an amalgamation of an historical figure and a fabled assemblage. Consequently, if we follow Nehamas in the employment of the notion of literary characters as a means to unpack Nietzsche’s conception of a monumentalized past, then we are again in the unsatisfactory position of elucidating monumental history as the use of partially or wholly mythical figures upon which we are to base our lives. Thus, it seems to me, the most rewarding means available to us remains the “art of painting”—the art, that is, of imposing a particular form upon the historical by emphasizing a predominance of this or a withdrawal of that.

A question still lingers: if both the literary character and the historical figure can serve as the same impetus, the same *stimulus*, then how can we be clear as to which well we are drawing from? As I will argue in the following section, Nietzsche’s employment of the concept of historical sense will serve to aid us in recognizing the source of this supply.

### 3.1.1. Our Historical Sense

“Historical sense” is a concept that Nietzsche employs throughout his corpus.<sup>222</sup> The most obvious thing to say about it is that it captures our sense of

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<sup>221</sup> Nehamas, Alexander (1985) p. 227

<sup>222</sup> For example: (*BT* 16), (*HL* Preface), (*HL* I), (*HL* III), (*HL* VII), (*HL* IX), (*HL* X), (*HH* 2), (*AOM* 10), (*GS* 337), (*BGE* 224), (*AC* 37), (*TI* ‘Reason’ 1), (*EH* ‘The Untimely Ones’ 1, ‘Beyond Good and Evil’ 2)



history, and this sense can be too great or too slight.<sup>223</sup> But we can do better; we can tease out the nuances of this, our “sixth sense” (*BGE* 224). To make a start, Nietzsche, tells us that: “Historical sense consists of being able, on any given occasion, to reconstruct quickly such systems of ideas and sensations, as for example the impression of a temple on the basis of a few pillars and pieces of wall that chance to remain standing” (*HH* 274). In its embryonic form, historical sense is the ability to reconstruct systems of purposes, or “systems of ideas” based upon the elements that have, by chance, remained. So, to lay the first stone, historical sense requires some element of artistry, or form giving, to move, as it were, from the pillars and pieces of wall to the temple.

A more fully developed account of this sense is found in *Beyond Good and Evil*: “The *historical sense* (or the capacity for quickly guessing the order of rank of the valuations according to which a people, a society, a human being has lived; the ‘divinatory instinct’ for the relation of these valuations, for the relation of the authority of values to the authority of active forces)—” (*BGE* 224).<sup>224</sup> Here historical sense is the ability to quickly identify the “order of rank” of “valuations according to which a people, a society, a human has lived” where “order of rank” is understood as the hierarchy of values within a particular system of valuation.<sup>225</sup> Concerning “order of rank” Nietzsche tells us that “every society, every individual always has present an order of rank of things considered good, according to which he determines his own actions and judges those of others” (*HH* 107). By implementing our historical sense, we investigate the differing ways in which a people, or a society, has ranked and judged actions according to their system of valuation. Nietzsche makes an additional claim regarding the order of rank of valuations: “The order of rank of desirable things itself is not erected or altered according to moral considerations; but once it has been

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<sup>223</sup> For further exploration of Nietzsche’s use of the concept of historical sense, in this way, see Brobjer (2004) pp. 316-319

<sup>224</sup> A strikingly similar account of our historical sense is found in Nietzsche’s notebooks: “The historical sense: the capacity to divine quickly the order of rank of the valuations by which a people, a society, a man lives—the relationship of these valuations to the conditions of life; the relation between the authority of values and the authority of active forces that are at work (the presumed relation usually even more than the actual one): being able to *reproduce* all this within oneself constitutes the historical sense” 35[2].

<sup>225</sup> Christoph Cox (1997) argues that “‘Perspective,’ for Nietzsche, comes to characterize the directedness of a particular form of life toward the conditions that preserve and enhance it, conditions that are codified in the ‘interpretation’ that directs the perspective” (p. 274). So, here, we can employ the concept of “system of purposes” or the concept of perspective, as Cox defines the term, to describe the system of purposes within which there is an “order of rank” of valuations.

established it then determines whether an action is moral or immoral” (*HH* 42). Here, Nietzsche is committed to the claim that any discussion regarding order of rank, whether an action is moral or immoral, only makes sense within a system of purposes. Once we identify the system of purposes we can then determine why certain actions are deemed moral while others are judged immoral. To lay the second stone, historical sense is the ability to identify the order of rank of valuations according to which a people, a society, a human has lived, and the order of rank is to be found in the relationship between the values and the active forces. The active forces are the appropriating powers; where appropriating, here, is understood by Nietzsche as the ability to impose or to create forms (*BGE* 259). The values, then, are the expressions of these forms.

An example may be useful here. In the First Essay of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche makes use of the historical sense and explores the order of rank of values within two systems of valuation: master morality and slave morality. I will not undertake a full analysis of the slave revolt in morals, but I will attempt to offer some evidence to support the claim that Nietzsche’s account of the revolt in morals is simultaneously a demonstration of the most salient features of our historical sense that I have just identified: the ability to quickly identify the relationship between the active forces and the values within a particular system of valuation. In order to identify the active forces and the values within varying systems of purposes, such as master morality and slave morality, one must have the ability “to collect material, to conceptualize and arrange a vast realm of subtle feelings of value and differences of value which are alive, beget, grow, and perish—and perhaps attempt to present vividly some of the more frequent and recurring forms of such living crystallizations—” (*BGE* 186). Nietzsche provides us with a demonstration of this in the First Essay of the *Genealogy*.

The active force, the power of appropriating, within master morality is the self-affirming posture of the nobles, the unreflective “triumphant affirmation of itself” (*GM* I 10). The noble mode of valuation “acts and grows spontaneously, it seeks its opposite only so as to affirm itself more triumphantly,” and this provides us with the order of rank within the noble mode of valuation. “The ‘good’ they say to themselves, this is to say, the noble, the powerful, high-stationed and high-minded...felt and established themselves and their actions as good, that is, of the first

rank, in contradistinction to all the low, low-minded, common and plebeian” (*GM I 2*). While the active force within the slave mode of valuation is the appropriating force of *ressentiment*. This force “becomes creative and gives birth to values” through an inversion of the noble mode of valuation, “the inversion of the value-positing eye—” (*GM I 10*). The “good man” within the noble mode of valuation becomes the “evil” man within the slave mode of valuation (*GM I 11*). We can then determine the order of rank within the slave mode of valuation. The reflective inversion of the noble mode of valuation is one in which the explanatory work is done by the concept of “evil.” And this is the slave’s “basic concept, from which he then evolves, as an afterthought and pendant, a ‘good one’ —himself!” (*GM I 10*) This is a demonstration of the application the historical sense. Nietzsche quickly charts the appropriating forces within two distinct systems of purposes and demonstrates how these forces find expression in two differing forms of valuation.

The application of our historical sense, the ability to quickly identify the “living crystallizations” of a system of purposes, makes visible an often overlooked feature of our moral past: “the order and rank of desirable things is not firm at all times...” (*HH 42*)<sup>226</sup> Our historical sense alerts us, in other words, to the fact that “morality” “as we understand it [is] merely *one* type of human morality beside which, before which, and after which many other types...are, or ought to be, possible” (*BGE 202*). The invocation of our historical sense aids us in teasing out the “living crystallizations” of a variety of perspectives, a variety of systems of purposes, through which people have made sense of themselves.

The issue that was left pending at the end of the last section has now been grounded through this discussion of Nietzsche’s conception of historical sense. A central tenet of “the higher species of the art of painting” is the ability to “sketch a true picture of certain periods” of our development and our “historical sense” is concerned with ascertaining the actual systems of purposes through which people have genuinely made sense of themselves. So, it seems, we are in the position to examine the results of conducting history as “the art of painting.”

### 3.2 The First Result

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<sup>226</sup> See also (*HH 102*) where Nietzsche writes: “But this standard [of order and rank] is always changing.”

The first result of “the higher species of the art of painting” is that: “we comprehend our fellow men as being determined by such systems, and representatives of various cultures, that is to say as necessary but as alterable” (*HH* 274). Historiography understood as the “art of painting” teases out the “order of rank” within systems of valuation. Thus historical inquiry of the sort Nietzsche advocates aids us in opening our eyes to the varying systems of values or of purposes that have dominated our culture. We can then note to what extent “our fellow men are determined” by, or held captive by, or entrenched within, certain modes of evaluation.<sup>227</sup> By understanding the historical establishment as well as the structure, or the order of rank, of the varying systems of purposes that have dominated our culture we can recognize to what extent we still remain entrenched within such systems and to what extent we are determined by such systems of valuation. Historiography allows us, in the first instance, to comprehend the varying systems of purposes within which our fellow men have made sense of themselves. In the second instance, historiography creates the horizon for us to be able to distinguish between that which is necessary and that which is alterable. This second point is methodologically important because, in “Richard Wagner in Bayreuth,” Nietzsche informs us that: “To me...the most vital questions for philosophy appear to be to what extent the character of the world is alterable; so as, once this question has been answered, to set about *improving that part of it recognized as alterable* with the most ruthless courage” (*RWB* III 207-208). History practiced in the manner elucidated above, provides us with the means to answer “the most vital questions for philosophy.” For only through such an historical investigation can we recognize “the part of the world that is alterable,” and, once so recognized, we can begin to go to work “with the most ruthless courage” on those aspects of our past.

### 3.3 The Second Result

The second result of conducting historiography in this way is that “we are able to segregate parts of our own development and exhibit them in isolation” (*HH* 274). Nietzsche tells us that: “Direct self-observation is not nearly sufficient for us to know

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<sup>227</sup> One would do well to avoid the temptation to read into this process of selection creation, on the part of the historian, *ex nihilo*, because Nietzsche explicitly rules this out: “For since we are the outcomes of earlier generations, we are also the outcomes of their aberrations, passions and errors, and indeed their crimes; it is not possible wholly to free oneself from this chain. If we condemn these aberrations and regard ourselves as free of them, this does not alter the act that we originate in them” (*HL* III 76).

ourselves: we require history, for the past continues to flow within us in a hundred waves; we ourselves are, indeed, nothing but that which at every moment we experience of this continued flowing” (*AOM* 223). For us to know ourselves we require a particular kind of historiography that allows us to determine the aspects of ourselves that are necessary as well as the aspects of ourselves that are alterable. And this is the ability to “exhibit” aspects of ourselves in isolation—something that should *win our gratitude*:

Only artists...have given men eyes and ears to see and hear with some pleasure what each man *is* himself, experiences himself, desires himself; only they have taught us to esteem the hero that is concealed in everyday characters; only they have taught us the art of viewing ourselves as heroes—from a distance, and as it were, simplified and transfigured...Only in this way can we deal with some base details in ourselves. Without art, we would be nothing but foreground and live entirely in the spell of that perspective which makes what is closest at hand and most vulgar appear as if it were terribly vast, and reality itself (*GS* 78).

The art of history contributes to a particular kind of self-knowledge. The art of history allows us to uncover and inquire into the varying systems of purposes within which we have made sense of ourselves. Without the ability to view ourselves from a distance, or as simplified and transfigured, we could be held captive by a number of problematic assumptions. Thus history, as the art of painting, has direct consequences upon the manner in which we see ourselves, and experience ourselves.

If the forgoing considerations represent a cogent re-construction of Nietzsche’s thoughts on the art of history, then there seems to be two additional points worth making. Both points are concerned with weaving together Nietzsche’s thoughts on the art of history and genealogy as methodology. In the section that follows I will broach the first of these points guided by the question: does the art of history preclude the other modes of historiography Nietzsche elucidates in 1874? Or put another way: given that much time in the chapter has been spent discussing the monumental mode of historiography, does the art of history exclude the antiquarian and the critical modes of historiography? After discussing this issue, I will then turn to treat the final point, and offer an answer to the question: how does the art of history shed light upon the genealogical mode of inquiry?

#### **4. On the “Artists of Destruction and Dissolution” (*BGE* 209)**

In chapter three, I concluded that the genealogical mode of inquiry, as demonstrated in the *Genealogy*, is best seen as the critical mode of historiography. However, in this chapter much time has been spent discussing the monumental mode of historiography as a demonstration of the art of history. Accordingly, the question surfaces: does the “art of history” preclude the other modes of historiography elucidated in 1874? I think not. There are two reasons for this assessment: (A) each mode of historiography requires a particular dimension of artistry, of shaping and providing the past with a particular form. And (B) each mode of historiography serves a particular need, such that the historian must select which of the modes of historiography best serves his particular purposes.

Consider antiquarian historiography. This mode of writing history requires that the historian select those instances which are worthy of reverence, those which may be held up and piously revered. So, the antiquarian mode of historiography would fail to be artistry, of the sort elucidated in this chapter, when everything collected is taken to be of equal value. That is, when antiquarian history is “blind,” when the object of history is collecting for the sake of collecting. Nietzsche expresses the salience of this last point as follows: When the antiquarian mode of historiography degenerates,

Then there appears the repulsive spectacle of a blind rage for collecting, a restless raking together of all things that has ever existed. Man is encased in the stench of must and mould...[the historian] succeeds in reducing even a more creative disposition...to an insatiable thirst for novelty, or rather an antiquity for all and everything...(HL III 75).

The corrosion of the antiquarian mode of historiography is signalled by the “repulsive spectacle of a blind rage for collecting,” the withering away of the form imposed by the historian, and this deterioration culminates in an “antiquity for all and everything.” An antiquity in which all is provided with equal value, such that the aspects of the past which are worthy of being piously revered are held on equal footing with the “dust of bibliographical minutiae” (HL III 75).

The same holds for the critical mode of historiography. The historian must select an aspect of the past, carefully examine it, and then condemn it (HL III 75-76). Nietzsche is clear here: “every past, however, is worthy to be condemned—for that is the nature of human things: human violence and weaknesses have always played a mighty role in them” (HL III 76). And this thesis can lead to the degeneration of

critical history insofar as one may draw the inference that: "...all that exists is *worthy* of perishing. So it would be better if nothing existed" (*HL III 76*). If whilst employing the critical mode of historiography, one concludes that it would be better if nothing existed, then one is not, as a result, free from the aberrations condemned. For condemning the aberrations of the past does not "alter the fact that we originate in them" (*HL III 76*). Thus, this mode of historiography requires that the historian shape the condemnation of the past in such a way as to engender not blind acceptance of "human violence and weakness," the conclusion that it would be better in nothing existed, but rather, enjoins us in the *a posteriori* attempt to provide oneself with "a past in which one would like to originate in opposition to that in which one did originate" (*HL III 76*). In other words, this mode of historiography requires that the historian shape his condemnation of the past in such a way as to enjoin further creation upon the ground liberated by his critique (*HL VII 95*). And this, I submit, is the art of critical history: the art of destruction and dissolution.

In *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche describes such artistry as follows:

Thanks to the unconquerably strong and tough virility of the great German philologists and critical historians (viewed properly, all of them were also artists of destruction and dissolution), a *new* concept of the German spirit crystallized gradually in spite of all romanticism in music and philosophy, and the inclination of virile scepticism became a decisive trait, now, for example, as an intrepid eye, now as the courage and hardness of analysis, as the tough will to undertake dangerous journeys of exploration and spiritualized North Pole expeditions under desolate and dangerous skies. There may be good reason why warmblooded and superficial humanitarians cross themselves just when they behold this spirit— (*BGE 209*)

The critical historian is an artist; more specifically, and when "viewed properly," an artist of destruction and dissolution. Imbued with a potent scepticism the critical historian breaks up the past, dissolving the most crystallized of elements with "courage and hardness of analysis" (*BGE 209*). This healthy and virile scepticism is the form of artistry exemplified by Nietzsche throughout the *Genealogy*. For his vivisection of morality, which culminates in the dissolution, the self-overcoming, of a particular picture of morality, is the project of one who is willing to "undertake dangerous journeys...under desolate and dangerous skies" (*BGE 209*).

An example may be beneficial here. Consider the First Essay of the *Genealogy* in which Nietzsche seeks to break up the hegemonic and totalitarian command of

“morality,” the slave mode of morality. That is in First Essay, as David Owen rightly puts the point:

... by presenting ‘morality’ as slave morality, as a counter-movement to, and re-evaluation of, noble morality, [Nietzsche] immediately and dramatically problematizes the presumption of his audience that ‘morality;’ is the only possible ethical perspective in making viable another mode of ethical reasoning and rhetorically situating the reader within the struggle between them, while also indicating that the enterprise of re-evaluation to which he enjoins his readers is not a novel phenomenon.<sup>228</sup>

In the First Essay, Nietzsche seeks to break up a piece of the past by demonstrating that the picture of morality that we assume is universally binding, and a-historical, the slave mode of morality, is the product of a re-evaluation of another mode of moral reasoning, noble morality. By offering us his intrepid eye, his vision, or his picture of the history of morality, Nietzsche, at the same time, seeks to dissolve the hold that the slave mode of morality has upon us. Here, in the First Essay, the artistry of destruction and dissolution is on display.

If the foregoing is cogent, then it follows that artistry in historiography is not limited to the monumental mode of history. Rather, when each mode of history is practiced in the service of life, then it is also a demonstration in the kind of artistry that Nietzsche envisages. As such we are in the position to consider the manner in which genealogy, as methodology, is the art of history.

## **5. Conclusion: Genealogy as the Art of History**

In viewing Nietzsche’s thoughts on the proper practice of historiography as the “art of painting” two methodological points, relevant to our discussion of genealogy, are brought to the fore: (1) the equation “genealogy is history correctly practiced” is informed by Nietzsche’s thoughts on the art of history. That is, the correct practice of history, for Nietzsche, is an affectively engaged activity in which the historian provides that past with a particular form. And (2) the critical component of the genealogical mode of inquiry is cashed out as the critical mode of historiography, in which (A) Nietzsche selects an aspect of the past, the slave mode of evaluation, which is worthy of condemnation. (B) Nietzsche carefully tracks the most recurrent forms of this mode of evaluation, which I have previously labelled as

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<sup>228</sup> Owen, David (2007) pp. 131-132



“faith,” in order to point out that this mode of evaluation is suffering from a set of incurable internal contradictions. In other words, Nietzsche seeks to demonstrate that the “faithful” possess reasons immanent to their system of purposes to forsake their unreflective faith. (C) Nietzsche, in seeking to expose the internal contradictions of this mode of evaluation, seeks to build upon the ground thus liberated. That is Nietzsche seeks to demonstrate that the slave mode of evaluation is but “*one* type of human morality, besides which, before which, and after which many other types, above all *higher* moralities, are, our ought to be, possible” (*BGE* 202). In other words, critical history in the hands of Nietzsche is not simply destructive for the sake of being destructive. Rather, this form of historiography is employed to demonstrate how we have become wedded to a particular mode of evaluation, to clarify how this mode of evaluation is in conflict with our other beliefs, and to demonstrate that there have been other ways in which human beings have evaluated themselves, through the noble mode of evaluation, for example, and thus a re-evaluation of our evaluative framework may be possible again.

If this argument is convincing, then it has noteworthy implications for the formulation that “genealogy is history correctly practiced.” The worry that the coinage may be uninformative has been overcome by viewing Nietzsche’s thoughts on the correct practice of history as an affectively engaged activity in which the past is provided with a particular form. And, this serves to simultaneously make sense of genealogy as methodology, for it is precisely this kind of artistry.

## CONCLUSION

Every thinker paints his world in fewer colours than *are actually there*, and is blind to certain individual colours. This is not merely a deficiency. By virtue of this approximation and simplification he introduces harmonies of colours *into the things themselves*, and these harmonies possess great charm and can constitute an enrichment of nature (D 426).

Selection, simplification, “forcing, adjusting, abbreviating, omitting, padding, inventing, [and] falsifying” each represent the “*essence of interpreting*” (GM III 24). So in painting a picture for us of our past the thinker must select, for example, out of the vast expanse of historical data those things that are relevant to this or that story. In selecting certain aspects the thinker is, according to Nietzsche, “blind to certain particular colours;” the thinker must overlook particular facets, to play down others, to embellish some, and to, out of necessity, “paint with fewer colours *than actually exist*” (D 426). Yet, Nietzsche is clear, this is not merely a shortcoming, but rather it allows the thinker to present an account that possesses “great charm and can constitute an enrichment of nature.” And, though it may seem peculiar, the *Genealogy* being described as “charming,” it nevertheless is Nietzsche’s attempt to demonstrate the essence of interpreting, the artistry that is the correct practice of history, and is his attempt to “constitute an enrichment of nature.”

I have attempted to offer a cogent reconstruction of Nietzsche’s genealogical methodology, and to make sense of the methodology as carrying with it the potential to constitute the kind of enrichment of nature Nietzsche envisages. I took up this task, in the first instance, by defending my view of the genealogical mode of inquiry, namely that it takes the form of an immanent critique, and that it intend to target the faith of at least three sets of interlocutors, against rival views. This served to shape the debate in Nietzsche scholarship concerning the methodology and to provide answers to the questions: (1) what is the critical import of Nietzsche’s genealogical mode of inquiry? (2) What form of critique does it take? (3) To whom does Nietzsche address his reflections?

I then turned to the vexed question in Nietzsche scholarship: what role, if any, does history play in Nietzsche’s genealogical narratives? After presenting an account of Nietzsche’s historical philosophy I turned to examine the Williams and May objection. I argued that the Williams and May objection represents a serious

scholarly challenge to my argument, namely that Nietzsche's genealogical narratives are historical in nature. I contended that the Williams and May objection rests upon three errors, and that if these errors can be overcome, then so too is claim that Nietzsche's genealogical narratives lack historical veracity. In the final chapter I attempted to shape the boundary by which the adage "genealogy is history correctly practiced" becomes instructive. There I maintained that the correct practice of history, for Nietzsche, is an affectively engaged activity in which the genealogist provides history with a particular form. And accordingly, that the correct practice of history is a kind of artistry. This served to concurrently make sense of the genealogical method as this form of artistry.

If the foregoing has been persuasive, then there is an additional point worth making here, which was first raised by Bernard Williams:

Nietzsche diagnosed the condition of modernity as one in which we, at once, have a morality which is seriously unstable under genealogical explanation; are committed (by that very morality, among other things) to transparency; and find very little to hand in the way of an alternative...Whether there is an alternative is not something that will be obvious to us...The question is, whether some other ways of living, something which includes other ways of thinking about living, will help us, or human beings who follow us, to live, and one of Nietzsche's most important lessons is that this consideration does not function as a criterion...It is a matter of whether it will indeed help us to live, and whether it will have done so is something that can only be recognized first in the sense that we are managing to live, and at a more reflective level, perhaps with the help of renewed genealogical explanation.<sup>229</sup>

The form of life-enhancement Nietzsche envisages, one that constitutes an enrichment of nature, cannot be prescribed. Rather, genealogy as artistry must be practiced, and the customs and norms by which we frame ourselves must be scrupulously examined and, if necessary, re-evaluated. This is not, as Williams makes clear, a purely intellectual exercise, for genealogy as methodology is concerned with how we actually live, and how we actually make sense of ourselves. The genealogical method is the art of history, and of history in 1874 Nietzsche tells us "we need it, that is to say for the sake of life and action, not so as to turn comfortably away from life and action" (*HL* Foreword 59). Accordingly, we may employ the form of artistry Nietzsche demonstrates in the *Genealogy*. Whether this methodology is successful or not is a question that can only find its answer after we have begun to live "beyond

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<sup>229</sup> Williams, Bernard (2000) pp. 160-161

good and evil,” and perhaps with the help of an additional genealogical narrative.

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