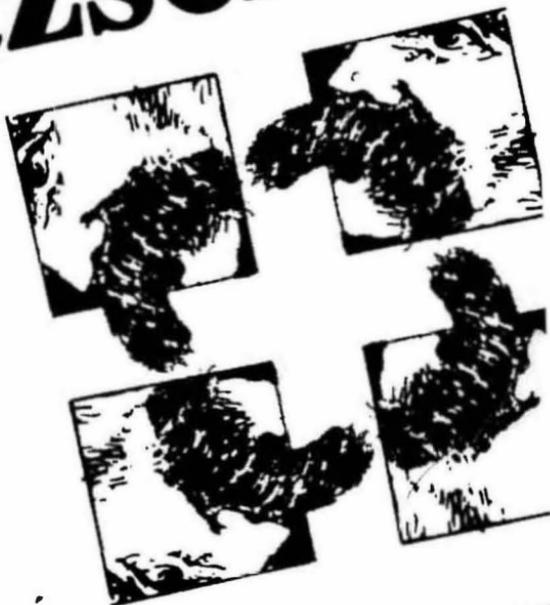


# semiotexto

POLYMORPH PRESS

VOLUME III, NO. 1

## Nietzsche's



Georges BATAILLE  
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Roger MCKEON  
Daniel MOSHENBERG  
John RAJCHMAN

## Return

*“Not by wrath does one kill  
but by laughter.  
Come, let us kill the spirit  
of gravity!”*

*Friedrich Nietzsche*

# semiotext<sup>e</sup>

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Columbia University  
New York, N Y 10027  
(212) 280-3956

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**Individual Subscriptions:** \$7.50 per volume; **Institutions:** \$18.00. Three issues comprise one volume. Add \$2.00 per volume for surface mail outside the U.S. and Canada. Check should be made payable to *Semiotext(e), Inc.* Use International Money Orders if outside the U.S.

*Semiotext(e)* is indexed in MLA Bibliography and French XX Bibliography. Please check our forthcoming issues and write to the Special Editor. All manuscripts should be accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope.

*Back Cover:* Diego Cortez (images/layout), Jimmy Desana (photographer)

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INTRODUCTION 1  
JAMES LEIGH

FREE NIETZSCHE

“... Nietzsche, the thinker without disciples, *par excellence*”; so said the French philosopher Gabriel Marcel nearly fifteen years ago.

So how does it happen that we are announcing Nietzsche’s return? Are we advocating a “return to Nietzsche,” or trying to horn in on Walter Kaufmann’s territory? Are we designating ourselves as his disciples, his rightful heirs? Or are we simply cashing in on a trend—attempting to transplant a (more or less) Gallic version of the philosopher who has certainly become the most-frequently-quoted-German in Paris?

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This issue was originally planned as a collection of essays on Nietzsche, some new, some well-known, French ones in translation, all “serious,” with

---

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*Free Nietzsche*

no intent other than making available certain alternative approaches to his work. A counterpoint to the frequent Anglo-Saxon rejection. But such a principle tended to present a NEW NIETZSCHE to replace the old, one that would necessarily grow old in its time and need replacement, and so on. And if for no other reason, considering Nietzsche's insistence on the *creation* of values against established values, but outside of such historical relativism, such an effect, whether intended or not, had to be avoided.

Besides they already did that. And they'll keep on doing it. No need to worry about that, one way or the other. Nomads, comets move about unpredictably, sometimes here, sometimes there. This time here.

We have decided that Fred should come back (this time) as the clarion of counter-culture, one not unrelated to that we talked about in the late 1960's, but not limited to that. Not just greening. For the relationship to (a) counter-culture(s) is unavoidably determined by certain currents that flow

if there is a purpose, an intent to all this, perhaps it is to channel, briefly, some of those currents, to rearrange them here and there and therefore

through Nietzsche's texts—an incessant critique of Unity, Self, continuity, stability, etc.—like so many variations on a theme.

No. Not really, Really variations in search of a theme. And if we say a theme we are already on the wrong track, have already broken one of the secret rules of misinterpretation (v. Deleuze). But an s, a simple plural doesn't work, either, for it is not at all the same as a theme that would be multiple *in itself*.

(Let me get a word or two in here: as I wrote in 1887, "we created the 'thing,' the 'identical thing,' subject, attribute, activity, object, substance, form, after having tried for a long time to make things identical, coarse and simple. We think the world is logical because we have made it logical.")

Thank you.

If there is to be a relationship to counter-culture, whatever it may turn out to be, it cannot take the form of a model to be followed, to be identified with. Perhaps nowhere better than in the notion of the Eternal Return can it be shown that Nietzsche precludes the possibility of identity, is in fact based on the dissolution of identity, on the renouncing of "being oneself *once and for all*" (v. Klossowski). And as Klossowski would have it, in the Eternal Return, identity is replaced (or displaced, or misplaced) by fluctuating intensities. Which works.

It would certainly be desirable for those who have not read Nietzsche extensively if it could be said once and for all *what* the Eternal Return is.

It is far easier to state what it is *not*: not the return of someThing for a Transcendental Subject; not a mechanistic repetition, "for if it were, it would not condition an infinite recurrence of identical cases, but a final state" (*The Will to Power*: 1066, trans. Kaufmann).

But unfortunately, the conditions of its operation prohibit this. In *Nietzsche et la philosophie*, Deleuze shows it to be a function of the will to power: the fact that forces must always exist in relationship with other forces is why force-in-relationship is called *will*: and that forces tend to go to the limit of their capability is how they demonstrate (their) *will-to-power*. When projected through the passage of time, the synthesis implied by the combination of forces "is" the Eternal Return: "in infinite time, every possible combination would at some time be realized; more: it would be realized an infinite number of times" (*WP*:1066).

If we consider the Eternal Return as a *mode of thought*, one whose principles are difference and repetition, intensity and tonality, what becomes important is the

*use* you make of it: you cannot appeal to Nietzsche or to the Eternal Return as guarantors, cannot make them your shield—only your sword, one of your swords. As such, they follow the general lines of the distinction Michel Foucault makes between history as Truth and history as genealogy. . . "Genealogy is history in the form of a concerted carnival" ("Nietzsche, Genealogy, History").

And the users are many:  
Rimbaud  
Cage  
Buñuel  
Valéry  
Shakespeare  
Borges  
Beckett  
...

semiotexte  
announces

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Selected essays on the political relevance of Art,  
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— Bernard-Henri Lévy,  
*Le Nouvel Observateur*

#### Schemes and Cunning.

*"Opponents? Lyotard's texts find them everywhere. . . And though he never looks for polemic and persistently rejects the thoughts of the Negative, his books do not cease to irritate."*

— Gilbert Lascault,  
*L'Arc*

#### Pyromaniacal Lyotard

*"The provocation will no doubt have its major impact in the political field. Lyotard very simply intends to use Marx 'libidinally,' to treat him as 'a work of art'. . . The political attitude mustn't proceed from a critical rejection, but on the contrary from a euphoric outbidding. . . Lyotard frees political involvement from resentment and guilt."*

— Michel Thévoz,  
*Le Monde*

Other Titles:

## NIETZSCHE AND PHILOSOPHY

by Gilles Deleuze

INTRODUCTION 2  
ROGER MCKEON

## Gaiety, A Difficult Science

Vademecum—Vadetecum

*Lured by my style and tendency,  
you follow and come after me?  
Follow your own self faithfully—  
take time—and thus you follow me.*

*—The Gay Science.*

Semiotext(e) assents and splits its sides. It bites its tail and bursts with laughter. Where is Nietzsche? Nowhere and anywhere, but you are bound to find a few scattered, glittering fragments. . .

The question is not, as you may already have sensed, of a return to Nietzsche. Is it that of Nietzsche's return then? Perhaps, in the sense of a back-fire kick or, on the pedantic mode, a return of the repressed. Repressed by whom? By the prevailing "Truth", in the paleo-positivistic style, i.e. Bertrand Russell:

The philosophers who cannot be refuted in this way are those who do not *pretend* (?) to be rational, such as Rousseau, Schopenhauer,

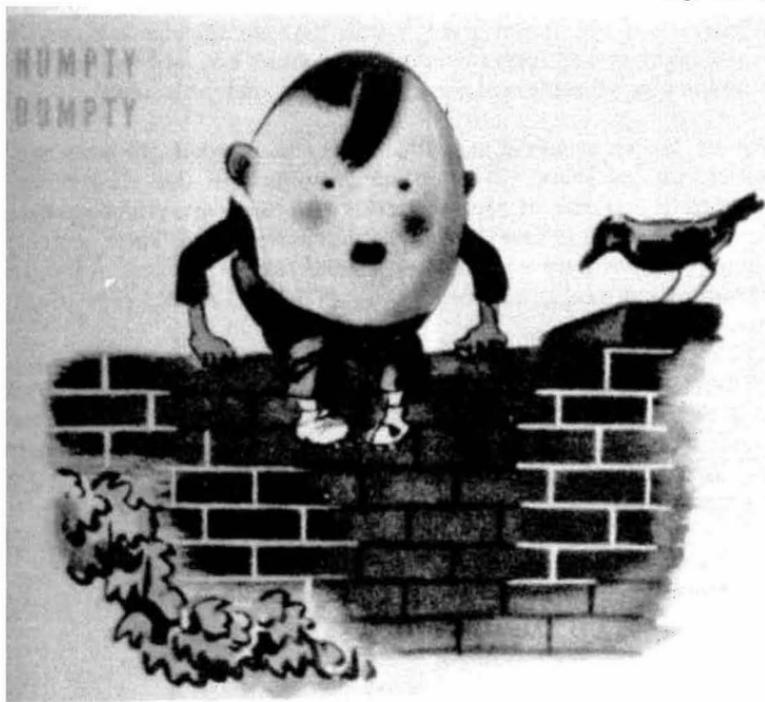
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Roger McKeon is a translator at the United Nations. He is presently editing and translating a collection of essays by Jean-Francois Lyotard.

and Nietzsche. The growth of unreason throughout the nineteenth century and what has passed of the twentieth is a natural sequel to Hume's destruction of empiricism. It is therefore important to discover whether there is any answer to Hume within the framework of a philosophy that is wholly or mainly empirical. *If not, there is no intellectual difference between sanity and insanity.* The lunatic who believes he is a poached egg is to be *condemned solely on the ground that he is in a minority* [ . . . ]. This is a desperate point of view, and it *must be hoped* that there is some way of escaping from it. (*History of Western Philosophy*, XVII: Hume, p. 699; italics and question mark mine).

What is Russell's right to enounce his "Truth"? The right of hope; a rather unexpected one, to say the least. Isn't this foundation of Reason just a little bit too precarious? What is the justification for metalanguages? Far be it from us to offer a Nietzschean synthesis; had we the means of so doing, we would still refuse to side with the masters and come into line with Reason(s). . . . Who needs the imperial reduction of diversity, the ultimate resorption of marginality, universal reconciliation and Russell's hope?

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,  
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall;  
All the King's horses, and all  
the King's men  
Cannot put Humpty Dumpty  
together again.



A dragon-fly's eye minus the optical nerve—Semiotext(e) demands more than a right to *misinterpretation* (see Deleuze); it asserts *sovereign multiplicity*. Loosen its sheets that they may fly, the reflections of shattered words need not abide by petty truths.

. . . assuming that one is a person, one necessarily also has the philosophy that belongs to that person; but there is a big difference. In some it is their deprivations that philosophize; in others, their riches and strengths. The former *need* their philosophy, whether it be as a prop. a sedative, medicine, redemption, elevation, or self-alienation. For the latter it is merely a beautiful luxury—in the best cases, the voluptuousness of a triumphant gratitude that eventually still has to inscribe itself in cosmic letters on the heaven of concepts. (*The Gay Science*. Preface for the second edition, 2).

What you are being offered here is not an opportunity to “form a notion” of Nietzsche. . . . Lyotard will gladly remind you that interpretation can be dispensed with, an “*intensive reading*” being at stake, the “production of new, different intensities.” Perhaps a counter-philosophy is emerging here, perhaps the great despotic Signifier is not as important as one would assume at the sight of Semiotext(e) cradling its words. Perhaps the position-discourses are in a secret connivance with desire, in spite of all magisterial appearances. There is no truth of Nietzsche: “There are no problems of interpretation of Nietzsche, there are only problems of *machination*: machinating Nietzsche's text, trying to find out with what external, current force he succeeds in *getting something through*, a flow of energy.” (“Nomad Thought”).

History does not repeat itself, truths have no singular and very little future, so might as well *forget* your useless memory and let Friedrich wander freely within you, all centers of *gravity* giving way under his steps.

We no longer believe that truth remains truth when the veils are withdrawn; we have lived too much to believe this. Today we consider it a matter of decency not to wish to see everything naked, or to be present at everything, or to understand and ‘know’ everything. [. . .] Are we not, precisely in this respect, Greeks? Adorers of forms, of tones, of words? And therefore—artists? (*The Gay Science*, *ibid.*, 4).

Or women? Ask Derrida about the undecidable and the pretensions of paranoia. Who are we to analyze Nietzsche? To determine that the cracks and crevices in his discourse allow for new and renewed “ultimate” interpretations? Are we nothing better than shabby moles digging into Nietzsche's undergrounds?

. . . and often I have asked myself whether, taking a large view, philosophy has not been merely an interpretation of the body and a

*Gaiety, A Difficult Science*

*misunderstanding of the body.* [. . .] What was at stake in all philosophizing hitherto was not at all 'truth' but something else—let us say, health, future, growth, power, life. (*Ibid.*, 2).

Interminable attempts at reduction: from Plato to Hegel, the hoarding insanity of concept. And if eternal chaos were irreducible in spite of hope? And if there were neither law nor ends in nature, and if you could at last abide by appearance? And digest the mustachio at your own sweet will? Ruminant my friend, ruminant.

Perhaps you will retort that the embracement of singularity leads the way to all sorts of fallacies, that it justifies the most scabrous abuses: Nietzsche, the father of fascism, Nietzsche the model of Hitler; the topic certainly lends itself to endless repetition. But Nietzsche did, it seems, proclaim his hatred for the State loud enough to reassure the distressed. And Bataille, as early as 1937: "Nietzsche's doctrine cannot be enslaved. . ." If Bataille does not suffice, however, lend your ear to Francois Fourquet ("Libidinal Nietzsche"), and while you are at it, file the case and dispose of the problem once and for all.

Forget the grid, find the courage to *lose* your time: words and fragments adrift are on your way, where you expect them least.

Can you still dance upon the madness of this world and find humor in the despair of meaning? The inane planet wanders randomly through the infinity of space.

But who is not afraid of being Friedrich Nietzsche?

GILLES DELEUZE

## Nomad Thought

If we ask what is, or what has become of, Nietzsche today, we know to whom we should turn: to those young people who are reading Nietzsche, who are discovering Nietzsche. Most of us here are already too old. What is it that the young are discovering in Nietzsche that is not what my generation discovered in him, that is certainly not what preceding generations discovered in him? How is it that young musicians today are concerned with Nietzsche in what they are doing, although they are not in any way making Nietzschean music, i.e., music like Nietzsche's own? How is it that young painters, young filmmakers are concerned with Nietzsche? What is happening, that is, what is it they are doing with Nietzsche? At best, all that can be explained from the outside is how Nietzsche has claimed for himself and for his readers, present and future, a certain right to *misinterpretation*. Not just any right, may I add, because such a prerogative has its secret rules, but a certain right to misinterpretation which I will soon elaborate and as a result of which Nietzsche cannot be commented upon in the same way as Descartes or Hegel. I say to myself: who today is the young Nietzschean? Is he the scholar preparing a paper on Nietzsche? Possibly. Is it someone who, in the course of an action, of a passion, of an experience, willingly or unwillingly, little does it matter,

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produces singularly Nietzschean utterances: that also happens. To my knowledge, one of the most beautiful recent texts, one of the most profoundly Nietzschean texts is that in which Richard Deshayes wrote, "living is not just surviving," just before being hit by a grenade during a demonstration. Both are perhaps not mutually exclusive. Perhaps it is possible to write on Nietzsche and then produce Nietzschean utterances during an experience.

We are all aware of the dangers awaiting us in the question, what is Nietzsche today? A demagogic danger: "let the young join us. . ." A paternalistic danger: advice to a young reader of Nietzsche. . . . And especially the danger of an abominable synthesis. The modern trinity—Nietzsche, Marx and Freud—is taken to be the dawn of our culture. Little does it matter that we are all defused beforehand. Marx and Freud may be the dawn of our culture, but with Nietzsche, something altogether different occurs: the dawn of a counterculture. Clearly, the functioning of contemporary society does not rely on codes. It is a society which functions according to other bases. Now if we consider not the letter of Marx and Freud, but the development of Marxism or that of Freudianism, we see that they have paradoxically launched into some sort of an attempt at recoding: recoding by the State, in the case of Marxism ("you are sick on account of the State, and you will be cured by the State"), but it won't be the same State), recoding by the family (sick because of the family and cured through the family, but not the same family), such are, in the perspective of our culture, the elements which truly constitute Marxism and psychoanalysis as the two fundamental bureaucracies. One public and the other private, they tend to bring about somehow or other a recoding of what has never stopped being decoded on the horizon. But the questions Nietzsche raises have nothing to do with this. His problem is elsewhere. It is to use all codes, past, present and future, to introduce something which does not and will not let itself be coded. To transfer it onto a new body, to invent a new body upon which it may wander and flow: upon our body, the Earth's, that of everything written. . . .

As for the main encoding instruments, we know what they are. Societies do not differ very much, not very many ways of encoding are available to them. We know of at least three: the law, the contract and the institution. For example, they can easily be revealed in the relationships that men maintain or have maintained with books. There are books which set forth the law, where the relationship between reader and book passes through the law. More specifically, in fact, they are called codes or sacred books. And then there is another kind of book that depends upon the contract, the bourgeois contractual relationship, and underlies lay literature and sales profits: I buy you, you afford me something to read—a contractual relationship taking everyone in, author, publisher, reader. And finally there is a third kind of book, the political book, preferably revolutionary, offered as a book of institutions, be they present or future. All sorts of mixtures come about: contractual or institutional books are treated as sacred texts. . . etc.. Indeed, the different types of encoding are all latently present to such an extent that we find them intermingled.

« Cahiers de Royaumont »

# NIETZSCHE

Proceedings of the colloquium of July, 1964  
published under the direction of *Gilles Deleuze*.



« Critique »

Pierre Clastres

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## *Nomad Thought*

Take an altogether different example, that of madness: the attempt to encode madness has taken all three different forms. First under the modalities of the law, i.e., the lunatic asylum: repressive encoding, the cloistering, the old cloistering that is to become in the future the last hope of salvation, when madmen will say, "Those were the good old days, when they used to lock us up, because worse things are happening today." And then the great conversion of psychoanalysis occurred: it had previously been understood that some people escaped the bourgeois contractual relationship as it governed medicine, those people were the madmen because they could not be contracting parties, they were legally "incapable." Freud's stroke of genius consisted in applying the contractual relationship to some of those madmen, in the broadest sense of the word, to the neurotics, and to explain that a special contract could be drawn up with them (thus the abandoning of hypnosis as a treatment). He was the first to introduce into psychiatry—and here, in the end, resides the novelty of psychoanalysis—the bourgeois contractual relationship which until then had been excluded. And there are yet more recent attempts, whose political—and at times revolutionary—implications are obvious, the so-called institutional attempts. Thus is the triple means of encoding rediscovered: it will be the law and if not the law, the contractual relationship, and if not the contractual relationship, the institution. And upon these encodings our bureaucracies flourish.

Faced with the decoding of our societies, the leaking away of our codes, Nietzsche is the one who does not endeavor to recode. He says: things still haven't gone far enough, you are just children yet ("the equalizing of European man is today the great irreversible process: it should be *accelerated* even more"). In his writing as well as his thinking, Nietzsche pursues an attempt at decoding: not in the sense of a relative decoding which would consist in deciphering antiquated, current or future codes, but in the sense of an *absolute* decoding—the introduction of something that isn't encodable, the jamming of all codes. It isn't easy to jam the totality of codes, be it at the level of the simplest writing and language. I see a likeness only to Kafka, to what Kafka does with German in relation to the linguistic situation of the Jews of Prague: he sets up in German a war machine against Germany. Through persistent indetermination and restraint, he succeeds in slipping something under the code of German that had never been heard. Nietzsche, on the other hand, deems or wishes himself to be Polish in relation to German. He takes hold of German in order to set up a war machine which will initiate something that is uncodable in German. Such is style as a political instrument. More generally, what does the effort of such thought consist in, which claims to infuse its flows beneath the law by disclaiming it, underneath contractual relationships by disowning them, underneath institutions by parodying them? Let me, quickly, revert to psychoanalysis as an example. How does a psychoanalyst as original as Melanie Klein nonetheless stay within the psychoanalytical system? She makes it very plain herself: the partial objects she tells us about, with their explosions, their rushes, etc., belong to "fantasy." Patients bring forth their experiences and Melanie Klein translates them into fantasies.

There is an explicit contract in that situation: give me your experiences and I'll give you back fantasies. And that contract implies an exchange of money and words. In this regard, a psychoanalyst like Winnicott actually remains on the borders of psychoanalysis because he has the feeling that a time comes when such a process is no longer relevant. There comes a time when translating or interpreting, translating into fantasies, interpreting in terms of signified elements or signifiers just isn't appropriate anymore. There comes a time when one has to share, become involved with the patient, get into it, partake of his own "state." Are we talking about some kind of a sympathy, an empathy, or an identification? It is surely more complicated than that. What we feel is rather the need for a relationship which would be neither legal, contractual nor institutional. That is precisely what Nietzsche affords us. We read an aphorism or a poem from *Zarathustra*. And be it materially or formally, such texts can be understood neither through the establishment or the application of a law, nor through the offer of a contractual relationship, nor through the setting up of institutions. The only conceivable equivalent might be "to be embarked with." Something Pascalian turned around against Pascal. We are embarked: a kind of Medusa's raft, the raft drifts towards frozen subterranean streams or maybe towards torrid rivers, the Orinoco, the Amazon, people are rowing together, people who do not necessarily like each other, who fight, who eat each other. Rowing together is sharing, sharing something irrespective of law, contracts, institutions. A drift, the movement of drifting, of "deterritorialization." I say it in a very vague, very indistinct way, since we are concerned with a hypothesis or a vague impression as to the originality of Nietzschean texts. A new kind of book.

What then are the distinctive features of a Nietzschean aphorism that would give that impression? Maurice Blanchot specifically stressed one of them in *L'Entretien infini*. It is the relationship with the outside. Indeed, opening a text by Nietzsche at random dispenses us for one of the first times from interiority, the interiority of the soul or of consciousness, the interiority of essence or of concept, in other words, from what has always been the principle of philosophy. What makes philosophical style is a relationship with the outside which is always mediated and dissolved by an interiority, within an interiority. Nietzsche, quite to the contrary, bases thought and writing on an *immediate* relationship with the outside. What is in fact a very beautiful picture or drawing? There is a frame. An aphorism is framed as well, but when does what is inside the frame become beautiful? When one knows and feels that the movement, the line within the frame comes from elsewhere, does not begin within the limits of the frame. The line began above the frame or next to it and it traverses the frame. As in Godard's film, the picture is painted *with* the wall. Far from constituting the boundary of the pictorial surface, the frame is almost the opposite, it is the immediate referral to the outside. But connecting thought with the outside is literally what philosophers have *never* done, even when they were talking about politics, even when they were talking about an outing or fresh air. Talking about fresh air or about the outside is not sufficient to connect thought directly or immedi-

ately with the outside. "They come like destiny, without cause, without reason, without consideration, without pretexts, they are there with the speed of lightning, too terrible, too sudden, too convincing, too much *other* to be even an object of hate." Thus reads Nietzsche's famous text on the founders of States, "those artists with their implacable stare" (*Genealogy of Morals*, II:17). Or is it Kafka in *The Great China Wall*? "No way of understanding how they reached the capital, which is so far from the border. Nonetheless, they are there, and with each morning their number seems to grow [. . .] to converse with them, impossible. They know not our language [. . .] even their horses are carnivorous!" Well, we say that such texts are infused with a movement that comes from the outside, does not begin within the page of the book, nor within the preceding pages, does not stay within the frame of the book, and is totally different from the imaginary movement of representations or from the abstract movement of concepts as they usually take place through words and in the mind of the reader. Something jumps out of the book, comes in contact with a pure outside. That, I think, is the right to misinterpretation for the entire works of Nietzsche. An aphorism is a play of forces, a state of forces each of which is always outside the others. An aphorism means nothing, signifies nothing, and has no more a signifier than a signified element. These would imply restoring the interiority of a text. An aphorism is a state of forces, the last of which is at the same time the most recent; the most present and ultimate/temporary one is always the *most external force*. Nietzsche poses it very clearly: if you want to know what I mean, find the force which gives a meaning, a new meaning if need be, to what I say. Connect the text with that force. There are no problems of interpretation of Nietzsche, there are only problems of *machination*: machinating Nietzsche's text, trying to find out with what external, current force he succeeds in *getting something through*, a flow of energy. In this respect, we all encounter the problem raised by certain of Nietzsche's texts which have a fascistic or an anti-semitic resonance. And since Nietzsche today is our concern, we must recognize that Nietzsche nurtured and still nurtures many young fascists. It was important at one time to show that Nietzsche was being used, diverted, completely distorted by the fascists, which was done in the review *Acéphale* by Jean Wahl, Georges Bataille and Pierre Klossowski. But this may no longer be the problem. Our struggle is not to be conducted at the level of the *text*, not on account of an impossibility to fight at that level, but because that struggle is no longer useful. Rather, we are concerned with finding, determining and joining the external forces which give to this or that sentence in Nietzsche its liberating meaning, its meaning in terms of externality. It is at the level of methodology that the question of Nietzsche's revolutionary character arises: the Nietzschean method itself makes the text something about which we should no longer ask ourselves, "is it fascistic, bourgeois or revolutionary *per se*?" ; rather it is a field of externality where fascistic, bourgeois and revolutionary forces confront one another. And if the problem is posed accordingly, the answer necessarily consistent with the method is: find the revolutionary force (who is Über-

mensch?). There is always a call to new forces which come from the outside, which cut across and overlap the Nietzschean text within the aphorism. *That* is the legitimate misinterpretation: treat the aphorism as a phenomenon awaiting new forces that come and “subjugate” it, or make it work, or else make it explode.

The aphorism is not only a relationship with the outside: its second peculiarity is to be in relationship with the intensive. And that is the same thing. Klossowski and Lyotard have exhausted the subject. The experiences I was referring to earlier, pointing out that they must not be translated into representations or fantasies; that they must not be sifted through codes of the law, the contract or the institution; that they must not be converted into currency; that on the contrary they must be turned into flows which carry us always further, closer to externality; these experiences precisely constitute intensity, intensities. Experience is not something subjective, not necessarily. It is not something individual. It is the flow, the splitting up of flows, since each intensity is necessarily related to another intensity in such a way that something passes through. It is what is under the codes, what escapes them and what codes mean to translate, convert, turn into currency. But with his writing of intensities, Nietzsche tells us: do not exchange intensity for representation. Intensity refers neither to signified elements which would be like representations of things, nor to signifiers which would be like representations of words. What then is its consistency, both as agent and as object of decoding? That is Nietzsche’s most mysterious aspect. Intensity has to do with proper names, names which are neither representations of things (or of persons) nor representations of words. Collective or individual nouns, Pre-Socratics, Romans, Jews, Christ, the Anti-Christ, Julius Caesar, Borgia, Zarathustra, all those proper names which come and go in Nietzsche’s texts. Neither signifiers nor signified elements, they are rather designations of intensity upon a body which can be the body of the Earth, the body of the book, but also the suffering body of Nietzsche: *I am all the names of history* . . . . There is a kind of nomadism, a perpetual shifting of those intensities designated by proper names, and which intermingle at the same time as they are experienced upon a full body. Intensity can be lived only in relation to its wandering inscription on a body, with the shifting externality of a proper name, and that is how a proper name is always a mask, the mask of an operator.

The third consideration is the relation of the aphorism to humor and irony. Those who read Nietzsche without laughing, without laughing often and a lot, and at times doubling up with laughter, might as well not be reading Nietzsche. Which is true not only for Nietzsche but for all the authors who make up precisely the horizon of our counterculture. Our decadence, our degeneration is demonstrated by the way we feel the need to introduce everywhere anguish, solitude, guilt, the drama of communication, the whole tragic nature of interiority. Even Max Brod tells how the listeners could not control their laughter when Kafka read *The Trial*. And what about Beckett? It is rather difficult to read him without laughing, without going from one

moment of joy to another. Laughter and not the signifier. "Schizo-laughter" or revolutionary joy is what comes out of great books, not the anguishes of our petty narcissism or the terrors of our guilt. One may call this the "comedy of the super-human" or the "clown of God." An indescribable joy always rushes out of great books, even when they speak of ugly, hopeless or terrifying things. Every great book is already bringing about transmutation and making tomorrow's healthiness. It is impossible not to laugh when codes are jammed up. If you place thought in relationship with the outside, Dionysiac moments of laughter spring forth: such is thought in the open air. Nietzsche is often faced with something he deems sickening, ignoble, abject. Well, Nietzsche laughs, and he would add on more if it were possible. One more effort, says he, it is not sickening enough, or: how splendidly sickening it is, here is a masterpiece, a venomous flower, at last ". . . man is becoming interesting." Such is the way Nietzsche treats what he calls bad conscience. And there are always Hegelian commentators, commentators of interiority without a sense of humor. They say: there, you see, Nietzsche does take the guilty conscience seriously, he makes of it a moment in the becoming-spirit of spirituality. They quickly pass over what Nietzsche does with spirituality because they can feel the danger. We see *then* that if Nietzsche permits legitimate misinterpretations, some are totally illegitimate, all those that are explained by a spirit of seriousness, of heaviness, by the ape of Zarathustra, that is, by the cult of interiority. With Nietzsche, laughter always refers to the external movement of different modalities of "humor" and irony, and *that* is the movement of intensities, intensive quantities, as Klossowski and Lyotard identify it: the way in which high and low intensities interplay, a low intensity being able to undermine the highest and even reach as high a level as the highest and conversely. This interplay of intensive scales is what commands the upwell of Nietzsche's irony, the declension of his humor, and develops as the consistency or quality of experience in its relation to exteriority. An aphorism is a pure material of laughter and joy. If we have not found what in an aphorism, what distribution of humor and irony, what apportionment of intensities make us laugh, we have found nothing.

One last point. Let us revert to the great text in the *Genealogy* on the State and the founders of empires: "they come like fate, without cause, without reason. . . ." In that text we recognize the men of so-called Asiatic production. On the foundations of primitive rural communities the despot puts together his imperial machine which over-codes everything with a bureaucracy, an administration which organizes the large-scale works and appropriates surlabor ("wherever they appear something new soon arises, a ruling structure that *lives*, in which parts and functions are delimited and coordinated, in which nothing whatever finds a place that has not first been assigned a 'meaning' in relation to the whole. . . .") But we can also ask ourselves whether that text does not tie together two forces which are distinguishable in other respects—and which Kafka distinguished for his part and even sets in opposition in *The Great China Wall*. For when we try to determine how segmentary primitive communities gave way to other ruling config-

urations, a question raised by Nietzsche in the second part of the *Genealogy*, we see the production of two strictly correlative but completely different phenomena. It is true that at the center, rural communities are caught up by and fixed within the bureaucratic machine of the despot, with its scribes, priests and functionaries: but on the periphery, the communities enter into another sort of unity, this time nomadic, in a nomad war machine, and are decoded instead of letting themselves be over-coded. There are entire groups who leave, who nomadize: archeologists have accustomed us to think nomadism not as a primary state but as an adventure which comes upon sedentary groups, a call from the outside, movement. The nomad with his war machine sets himself against the despot with his administrative machine: extrinsic nomadic unity against intrinsic despotic unity. Yet they are so truly correlative or interpenetrating that the despot's problem will be to integrate, to internalize the nomad war machine, while the nomad's will be to invent an administration of the conquered empire. They do not cease opposing each other, even when they merge into one another.

Philosophic discourse was born out of imperial unity, through many transformations, these same transformations which take us from imperial formations to the Greek city. Even in the Greek city, philosophic discourse remains in an essential relationship with the despot or the shadow of the despot, with imperialism, and with the administration of persons and things (which Leo Strauss' and Kojève's book on *Tyranny* proves in many ways). Philosophic discourse has always been in an essential relationship with the laws, institutions and contracts which constitute the problem of the Sovereign, which traverse sedentary history from despotic formations to democracies. The signifier is really the last incarnation of the despot. Thus if Nietzsche does not belong to philosophy, it is perhaps because he is the first to conceive of *another* type of discourse as counter-philosophy. That is to say a discourse which is fundamentally nomad, whose statements would not be produced by a rational administrative machine, by philosophers as bureaucrats of pure reason, but by a wandering war machine. It is perhaps in this sense that Nietzsche announces that with him new politics begin (what Klossowski calls the plot against his own class). We know only too well that in our own regimes, nomads are unhappy; we are driven to stabilize them and they find living difficult. Nietzsche lived like one of those nomads reduced to a shadow of themselves, going from boarding house to boarding house. However, the nomad is not necessarily someone who moves: there are stationary voyages: voyages in intensity, and even historically nomads are not those who move as migrants would, they are in fact the ones who do *not* move, and who begin to nomadize in order to stay in the same place while escaping the codes. We clearly know that the revolutionary problem today is that of finding a unity of localized struggle without falling back into the despotic and bureaucratic organization of the Party or the State: a war machine which would not reconstitute a State, a nomadic unity in relation with the outside which would not reinstate the internal despotic unity. There perhaps is the

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greatest depth of Nietzsche, the measure of his rupture with philosophy, as it appears in the aphorism: to have made thought a war machine, a nomadic power. And even if the voyage is immobile, even if it is undertaken without moving, imperceptibly, unexpectedly, subterraneanly, we must ask who are our nomads today, who are truly our Nietzscheans?

*Translated by Jacqueline Wallace*

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This translation was made possible through a grant from the Julian Park Foundation of the SUNY-Buffalo.

“Pensée nomade” was published in *Nietzsche Aujourd'hui*, U.G.E., 10/18, 1973.

## For Nietzsche

*You sleep in the light  
of your buried opera;*

*you absorb the earth's rays while beneath you  
posthumous miners are turning your body*

*into gold.*

Daniel Moshenberg

KENNETH KING

## The Dancing Philosopher

*"...And once I wanted to dance as  
I have never danced before; over all  
the heavens I wanted to dance. . .  
Only in the dance do I know how  
to tell the parable of the highest  
things."*

—Zarathustra

Isadora Duncan called Nietzsche the first dancing philosopher. One of the two books on her bedstand throughout her life was *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

Nietzsche after Hegel, Isadora after the ballet. Both returned to Greece for their primal intoxication, springing into a protean vision. Beyond system, method and the codification of ideas.

The *liberated* dance, though, is more than a mighty metaphor of Dionysian frenzy. Dancing is pure *becoming*: "You higher men, the worst about you is that all of you have not learned to dance as one must dance—dancing away over yourselves!"

Thinking and dancing proceed from the same flexion. Dancing finds its autonomy not in mechanical steps and repeatable patterns, but in the deeper rhythms of the body. Muscle delay—memory relay. Every dancer soon finds his muscles remember more than his brain.

Maybe one can step through time by making a gesture, a supreme gesture  
—*Mahamudra*.

*New York City, August 1977*  
*Excerpted from a work-in-progress*

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Kenneth King is a dancer-choreographer and writer. He edited, presented and acted a Nietzsche portrait-play entitled "High Noon" in 1974 at the Robert Wilson's Byrd Hoffman Foundation in New York City.



## JOHN CAGE/DANIEL CHARLES

### For the Birds

*Pour les Oiseaux* finally appeared in Paris in January 1977, but without its author's name, only mine on the cover! Many years before, at the request of the publisher, Pierre Belfond, Daniel Charles and I engaged in many conversations which were recorded on tape. For one reason or another the project of making a book out of this material was shelved year after year. There was too much material, or not enough that was up-to-date, etc. When I eventually read galleys (not of this version but of an earlier one), I found that I did not always recognize myself in passages ascribed to me. Some tapes apparently had been damaged or lost or inadvertently erased, so that it had sometimes been necessary for Daniel Charles to compose my responses to his questions. Instead of "correcting" his work, I suggested the use of two different typefaces for my responses. One would indicate that I could hear myself speaking, the other that I couldn't. This idea was accepted but still the book was not published. In fact, in order to please the publisher, Charles later made a new version in some cases an abridgement of the earlier one, in others having new material, "conversations" written by Charles himself, following new articles or letters or tapes of lectures

that I sent to him. I made no changes in the final version. When I was asked to suggest a catchy title, I said: Call it *Pour Les Oiseaux*. Though Pierre Belfond accepted this, he asked me somewhat nervously after the publication of the book whether my title was merely a joke. I said: No. I am for the birds, not for the cages in which people sometimes place them.

I was given the opportunity of going over the typescript of Daniel Moshenberg's following translation of passages from Daniel Charles' book (Charles' name, I am glad to report, appears with mine on the cover of the Italian translation), and making any changes I wished, so that it would sound like me (which now, of course, it doesn't in any sense at all). After a few labored alterations, I found myself reading all the way through, more entertained than I would have been had I been recognizing myself. And then I went back to the beginning and put the word "stet": that is, keep it as you have it. The ideas, so to speak, have changed their clothes but they are healthy. I decided not to do anything to them. Let them live their own lives. They are certain to change in further unpredictable ways whenever someone takes the time to use them.

--John Cage

*For the Birds*

Charles: *Do you concede the possibility of a "concrete solfège"?*

Cage: What do you mean by that?

Charles: *In the 50's, Pierre Schaeffer classified sounds according to a certain number of taxonomic requirements, capable of authorizing a reading, a deciphering of the most diverse sound areas; all of which was to lead to a less "surrealistic," more organic means of composition.*

Cage: With such an effort at organization, I'm afraid we are falling back into outdated processes. After all, the very idea of a solfège of noises contains the word "solfège" doesn't it? And what could be more worn than that?

Charles: *Then according to you, solfège amounts to a compromising hold-over from the 18th and 19th centuries?*

Cage: More or less. You see, what's bothered me all along about Schaeffer's work is his penchant for relations, and especially for relations between sounds. He had machines at his disposal, and he incessantly tried to use them in a way that would render relationships between noises and tonality. That was always his problem: for example, with his twelve speed recorder, how could he possibly have anything but a system based on twelve sounds? Even if he did proclaim that he didn't want it! The same problem arises with solfège; though a mental tool rather than a machine, its results amount to the same. It leads us fatally back to sounds, in the "musical" sense of the word, that is, to noises that must go with certain noises and not with others. While I was attempting the opposite: not the repetition of some overly-common, almost habitual situation that would remain unchanged without our feeling the need to intervene, but an entirely novel situation in which any sound or noise might occur with or near any other.

Charles: *What you call an "experimental" situation?*

Cage: Right, one in which nothing is pre-determined, in which there are neither obligations nor prohibitions, in which nothing is foreseeable.

Charles: *A situation of anarchy?*

Cage: Of course! Thoreau pretty much described it *when he replaced Jefferson's maxim, "The best government is that government which governs least,"* with his own "That government is best which governs not at all!"

Charles: *You would place Schaeffer on the side of the government?*

Cage: I think that he and I don't see eye to eye on the difference between the number two and the number one. *While I have always tried to think the plurality of the number one, for Schaeffer plurality begins with two.*

Charles: *Do you mean with two we remain at the level of objectal relations?*

Cage: For clarity's sake, let's return to the example of "experimental" music. Music was long thought to exist first in the spirit of people—and in particular of composers—who wrote it and were supposed to hear it *before* it became audible. I believe the opposite, that we hear nothing *in advance*. Solfège is precisely the discipline which allows a sound to be heard before its emission. . . . Only, with that discipline, we become deaf: we learn to accept

certain sounds and no others. To practice solfège is to decide *a priori* on the poverty of the sounds of our environment. For this reason there cannot be a “concrete” solfège! Solfège is necessarily and by definition “abstract”. . . And dualist! For the practitioner of solfège, all environmental sound is mutilated; it lacks tonality. Now perhaps you see why I have absolutely no interest in solfège; never has any idea of perfecting sounds entered into my head, nor any dreams of improving the sonorous race. I simply keep my ears open.

**Charles:** *As in “Happy new ears!”*

**Cage:** Exactly! I keep my mind alive and alert; or at least I try to, with the result that all that is dissonant, I hear as consonant. *I hear not only two but the plurality of one.*

**Charles:** *Nevertheless there is a difference. . .*

**Cage:** Of course there’s a difference! But not one of values. I am trying to approach the sound itself, exactly as it is.

**Charles:** *Not as you would wish it to be.*

**Cage:** Not as it’s “supposed” to be. And I think this works better with sounds that are not “musical,” in an 18th and 19th century sense, than with sounds that are.

**Charles:** *Then you are a perfectly “concrete” musician!*

**Cage:** With all due respect to Schaeffer, yes! What makes sounds “abstract” is when, instead of listening to them for themselves, we are content to listen to their relations. As I’ve said before, it would be just as worthwhile to express a musical idea with lights. . .

**Charles:** *Some composers dream of that, some do it. . .*

**Cage:** Or with apples!

**Charles:** *Doesn’t your hostility to the notion of relation stem from a certain type of American philosophy? For example, William James’ critique of relations. And yet James did not hold that critique to the end. He concluded by recognizing that relations themselves were “wholes,” or “units.” For him, relations exist as well in experience.*

**Cage:** I am well aware that things interpenetrate, but I think that they interpenetrate more richly, and with a greater complexity, when I don’t establish any relation. At that moment they meet, they compose the number one. But, at the same time, they don’t form an obstruction. They are themselves. They are. And inasmuch as each is one in itself, there is a plurality in the number one.

**Charles:** *But how can you abstain from all relational activity? Doesn’t perception mean to forge relations?*

**Cage:** I can accept the relation among a diversity of elements, as when we gaze at the stars and discover a group of stars which we baptize “Ursa Major.” Then, I create an object. I have nothing more to do with the thing itself, designed as it is of elements and separate parts. I have before me, at my dis-

posal, a fixed object that I could vary or play with precisely because I know beforehand that I will find it identical to itself at the end. In this, I obey that which Schönberg expressed: variation is one form, one extreme case of repetition. But, you see, I can also break out of this cycle of variation and repetition. For that, I must return to reality, to the thing itself, to this constellation which is not really altogether a constellation. It is not yet an object! I can easily see as a group of different and distinct things, that which forms, in another perspective, a unique object. The constellation becomes an object by virtue of the relationship I place upon the parts. But I can refrain from positing this relationship; I can consider the stars as separate but proximate, *almost* gathered into a unique constellation. I therefore simply have a group of stars.

**Charles:** *I'm beginning to understand your choice, for the orchestral piece Atlas Eclipticalis, of the astronomical maps which dictated the very topography of your score.*

**Cage:** When you mention a topography, you turn a network of chance operations into an object.

**Charles:** *But I have no choice! If I am to escape the exact cause-and-effect relationships, then I must change my scales: I will have to deal with clouds, with tendencies and with laws of statistical distribution.*

**Cage:** Yes, if you're a physicist. But the chance of modern physics, that of random operations, corresponds to an equal distribution of events. The chance to which I appeal, that of chance operations, is different: it presupposes an unequal distribution of elements. That's what the Chinese Book of Oracles, the *I Ching*, tells us, or the astronomical maps used for *Atlas Eclipticalis*. I don't hold with the physical object of statistical interest.

**Charles:** *Or the composer Xenakis! But all the same I could hold. . .*

**Cage:** Sure, if I *want to*. But first I must want to. In the indeterminate work as I see it, this logic does not exist *a priori*.

**Charles:** *The logic occurs within the listener. . .*

**Cage:** And whoever wishes to deal with an object. Any one of my indeterminate pieces, once recorded, becomes an object, from the moment we listen with the certainty that we will be able to listen again. When we listen once more, the object emerges: there is repetition, it sounds the same from one time to the next. We can learn what we are listening to by listening yet another time. We are free to infuse it with all the logic we want.

**Charles:** *At that moment, there is no difference between a determined piece and an indeterminate one?*

**Cage:** No, with one exception, that in the case of the indeterminate piece. I am not the one who put the logic in the score.

**Charles:** *Ultimately your indeterminacy is an extremely fragile, precarious reality. . .*

Cage: Yes, even in my pieces one can find logic! But that requires will and even willingness. The problem was already formulated by Duchamp. He says essentially that one must strain to attain the impossibility of self-recollection, even when the experience moves from an object to its double. In the real world, where everything is standardized, where everything is repeated, the whole question is to forget from an object to its reduplication. If we don't have this power to forget, if today's art doesn't help us to forget, we will be submerged, drowned in an avalanche of rigorously identical objects.

Charles: *But doesn't an Andy Warhol accustom us to repetition?*

Cage: No, in fact, he breaks us of the habit. Each repetition must authorize an entirely new experience. Of course, we don't always succeed, but at least we're on the track.

Charles: *Art as you define it then is a discipline of adaptation to the real as it is. It doesn't propose to change the world but accepts it as it presents itself. In the name of habit-breaking, it habituates even more firmly!*

Cage: I don't think so. There's a term in the problem which you've ignored: the world. The real. You say: the real, the world as it is. But it isn't, it becomes! It moves, it changes! It doesn't wait for us in order to change. . . It is more mobile than you imagine. You begin to approach this mobility when you say: as it presents itself. It "presents itself": signifying that it's not there, as is an object. The world, the real, this is no object. It's a process.

Charles: *There can be no custom and no habit in a world becoming. . . Is that your idea?*

Cage: Yes, it's an idea of change, as is all my music which could be called a Music of Changes. And I took this designation from the Book of Changes, as the *I Ching* is called in English.

Charles: *I can't help but think that the logos, that logic, has very little hold in this world as you define it.*

Cage: That's because I am not a Greek. . . philosopher! We used to seek out logical experiences; nothing mattered more than stability. Today, beside stability, we allow for instability. We have come to desire the experience of what is. But this "what is" is neither stable nor unchanging. At any rate, we understand better that we bring the logic with us. It doesn't lie around us, waiting to be discovered. "What is" doesn't depend on us, we depend on it. And it is for us to approach it.

And unfortunately for logic, all that we construct under the rubric "logic" represents such a simplification relative to the event and to what really happens that we must learn to be wary of it. That is the function of art today: to preserve us from all those logical minimalizations that we are tempted in each instant to apply to the flow of events. To bring us closer to the process that is the world.

Charles: *You started from the rhythmic structures that were supposed to temporally organize your music. But for this temporal dimension to be felt,*

## *For the Birds*

or for there to be time at all, doesn't this require that we move towards a given end?

Cage: Not at all! We can simply remain where we are. . .

Charles: *Remain immobile.*

Cage: Yes, quite easily.

Charles: *Could you explain this idea of time? How does it cohere with your idea of the future, of a world in flux?*

Cage: *A Zen monk went out with one of his disciples and saw a flock of wild geese. "What's that?" he asked. "It was wild geese." The master violently tweaked the disciple's nose. "You imagine that they have passed. But they were always here." Thus, the disciple was enlightened.*

Charles: *Jean Grenier, a French writer well versed in the Tao, in The Daily Life, relates how a Hindu monk of the "Sect of Ramakrishna" maintained absolute silence before an audience gathered for a conference, a silence that lasted for a full hour. "We cannot say that the feeling of time was abolished for all that, it was dominated by one of its parts, the stable, while the other component, the unstable, was the harmonic." Would you accept this dichotomy in terms of time? Can it be applied to your music?*

Cage: *It seems to me to be more applicable to La Monte Young than to myself. For me, the stable and the unstable cannot be thought of as the fundamental and the harmonic if that entails a hierarchy.*

Charles: *The fact of breaking from the world of hierarchy, would you call that "life as art"?*

Cage: No, that's art as life.

Charles: *How so?*

Cage: If I want "life as art," I am in danger of falling into aestheticism, because I have the air of pretending to impose something, a certain idea on life. I think that music—as I envisage it—imposes nothing. It can change our way of seeing; it can make us regard everything around us as being art-ful. But that's not an end. The sounds have no purpose. They are, period. They live. Music is the life of sounds, this participation of sounds in life that can become—but not voluntarily—a participation of life in sounds. In itself, music doesn't bind us to anything.

Charles: *If, in your music, you attain a certain continuity, it's never intentional?*

Cage: I'm simply recording what occurs. Earlier, I spoke of a "continuity of the discontinuous." I wanted to avoid the melodic aspect, because with melody comes will and the desire to bend the sounds to this will. And yet I do not reject melody. I reject it even less when it is self-generated. But it must not begin by being imposed: I don't want to force the sounds to follow me.

Charles: *Then you would say that we cannot represent time?*

Cage: We must not hypnotize ourselves with intellectual categories, such as

continuous-discontinuous, stable-unstable, etc. which we imagine will enable us to conceive time.

**Charles:** *That could appear as a profession of vitalist faith.*

**Cage:** Nothing is further from life than the philosophies of life! No, I am not about to embrace any of those philosophies. An inanimate being has as much life as an animate one. A sound is alive. The philosophers of life don't say that, do they?

**Charles:** *At our interview at the Museum of Modern Art, I mentioned Leonard Meyer's objection to your work, an objection not unlike the one made by Virgil Thomson: he accuses you of preaching a static music, a music of stasis. Thus, of having overlooked musical time. You avoided a direct response, or did I mis-understand your response?*

**Cage:** In effect, I accept the accusation, except that I don't consider it an accusation. Life contains this stasis. But I don't preach anything. And I don't overlook anything. If by "musical time" is meant solely a fixed, determined music that has a before and an after, in short a music composed of temporal, finite objects, then I am quick to concede that my music has no resemblance to that. But "musical time" is perhaps something else.

**Charles:** *And when one of your colleagues, Morton Feldman, affirms that your music is not identical to life in that it re-assembles only a part of life's sonorities. . .*

**Cage:** I would say again that it lets nothing escape. Or better yet that it escapes the idea that it lets anything escape!

**Charles:** *Aren't you avoiding the issue?*

**Cage:** But everything is possible! My music imposes no restrictions. It just so happens that the life we lead is partial and that many of the sounds are difficult to assemble in the concert-halls we use. I try to avoid this obligation of selecting the appropriate sounds for a concert, an audience, a place, etc. I expand to the maximum the conditions of execution of my music. I go to the circuses, to the clearings, to the galleries, to the rooftops. . . My music is assuredly partial, but I am not one who pursues this partiality. If I pursue anything, it is the absence of a goal; that which is partial always corresponds to a goal.

**Charles:** *Therein is what must be the difficulty of being a student of John Cage! How could you have students, and teach them without goals?*

**Cage:** It turns out that many people have come to study with me. But for each one, I tried to discover who he was and what he could do. Result: more often than not, I became the student.

**Charles:** *At the university as well? I have the impression that certain of your students learned quite a bit from you. . .*

**Cage:** In any case, they taught me—at least those of The New School of Social Research—that I'd rather not teach.

**Charles:** *And yet you haven't really renounced all pedagogic activities?*

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**Cage:** I've tried, as much as possible, to avoid the universities.

**Charles:** *Why?*

**Cage:** They're too intimate with governments, be it in France where nothing occurs without an official's stamp on it, or in America, where the authority is private; but it comes to the same thing, doesn't it?

**Charles:** *But wouldn't that change if someone like you accepted more often to intervene?*

**Cage:** Recently, at the University of California at Davis, I offered a class, with, in the guise of an opening condition, the hypothesis that we would not know what we were about to study and that we would not divide ourselves into students and non-students; but that all of us, myself included, would be students.

**Charles:** *What happened?*

**Cage:** We subjected the library to chance operations, and in this group of about a hundred, each one performed two chance operations to determine the works he would read. Then, by drawing lots, we formed flexible groups: each group was to meet and exchange information on what everyone had read. This technique was supposed to respond to the wishes of McLuhan who feels that our work must consist of freshening information by means of information.

**Charles:** *Freshening?*

**Cage:** Yes, as with a suit.

**Charles:** *If there is information in circulation, there must come a moment in which no one can teach any one any thing any more. Once the library is expended—an assumption, but one we are not forbidden to make—what happens then?*

**Cage:** I don't think information is ever used up.

**Charles:** *In the sense that books never cease to be written?*

**Cage:** Not just that. If I'm in a forest without fir-trees, my information varies from what it would be in a forest with fir-trees. It all depends on the circumstances and our intentions.

**Charles:** *You're asking that we relax our attention.*

**Cage:** We can find information everywhere. We can be in the presence of information without receiving it.

**Charles:** *Then we must open ourselves to all the information we are not receiving.*

**Cage:** It's a little like noise vis-a-vis musical sounds: the more we discover the sounds of the outside world to be musical, the more music there is.

**Charles:** *And you think we can transpose this ideal openness to the emergent onto all domains, and that it pertains to all academic studies?*

**Cage:** Sure.

Charles: *But the “assemblages, environments and happenings,” to borrow the title of a well-known book by Allan Kaprow, one of your disciples, aren’t they all contrary to your ideal openness to all that is? For he’s working with controlled activities, isn’t he? The absence of purpose, even with you, can become the purpose: it risks becoming as constraining as the earlier situation in which everything was submitted to a single purpose. Haven’t you indicated as much, on the occasion of these happenings where you were told what to do: to go from one room to another, for example?*

Cage: I’ll repeat what I’ve already said, about Feldman. We are not free. We live in a sub-divided society. We must remain aware of those sub-divisions. But why repeat them? Why must the happenings reproduce the most constrictive aspects of daily life? We always think that, in art, we must erect order everywhere. And if art were to incite disorder?

Charles: *To want disorder is still to want.*

Cage: The question is not one of wanting, but of being free in relation to one’s own will. In the university, in my music, in my day-to-day activities, I make constant use of chance operations. But I don’t perform chance operations exclusively or uniquely. To recognize the importance of chance does not mean to sacrifice all to it.

Charles: *Then your teaching—if you’ll allow that word—could be defined as a pedagogy of non-volition? A detachment in relation to the will?*

Cage: A progressive detachment, yes, that will not fall back into attachment. A detachment that will repeat nothing.

Charles: *Which places us dead-square in the Orient. . .*

Cage: Or else, as I told you before, closer to Fischinger. Each sound has its own soul, its own life. And we cannot pretend to repeat that life. It can never become the exemplary, the model for another life. What is true for sounds is equally true for humans. And for that reason men are not sounds, and sounds are not men. And this is what musicians keep forgetting. My pedagogy is not to forget.

Charles: *You defined your major work of 1958, *The Concert for Piano and Orchestra*, as a “gathering of extreme differences.” You had been exposed, by that time, to the influence of the Orient. . .*

Cage: Of course.

Charles: *I insist on this because at one point, like Fischinger, you seemed on the verge of entering into a sort of pantheism.*

Cage: Before my encounter with Oriental thought, which I situate somewhere around 1945, I already saw no need to bring God into this idea of the life of each thing. But I like to think that each thing has not only its own life but its own center and that that center is, each time, the exact center of the Universe. That is one of the principal themes I’ve retained from my studies in Zen.

**Charles:** *Must we dissociate the idea of life and the idea of the center?*

**Cage:** Suzuki taught me that in fact we never stop establishing, outside the life of things, a means of measure and that we then continually try to re-place each thing into the grid of our measure. We strive to posit relations between things, thanks to this grid. Thus, we lose the things; we forget them, or we disfigure them. Zen teaches us that we are really in a situation of decentering, relative to the grid. In this situation, everything is at the center. There is then a plurality and a multiplicity of centers. And they are all interpenetrating. And Zen adds: in non-obstruction. To live, for all things, is to be at the center. That entails interpenetration and non-obstruction.

**Charles:** *How can those two terms not be contradictory? For two sounds not to mask nor to overshadow each other, they must be separate. How do they interpenetrate?*

**Cage:** You say they must be separated. Well, don't put anything in the interval.

**Charles:** *How so?*

**Cage:** Between the things that you are separating to prevent their becoming an obstacle, there must be nothing. Well, this *nothing* is what allows all things to exist.

**Charles:** *That is, to interpenetrate?*

**Cage:** That they interpenetrate signifies that between them there is nothing. Thus nothing separates them. . .

**Charles:** *You speak of nothing, of "rien." I'd like to raise a point of translation here. Would you prefer the English nothing to be translated as "rien" or as "le rien," as "nothing" or as "the nothing"? Can we see the "nothing" of your thoughts as "the Nothing", the Nothingness, the Silence? In the inverse hypothesis, Lecture on Nothing would have to be translated as Discours sur rien. Which should be chosen?*

**Cage:** The first, it seems to me.

**Charles:** *That would be the "Occidental" solution: as with Eckhart—whom you cite often—where the Nothing, the Nothingness, "exists" as the Deity or the foundation of God, and, in that sense, there is no place for the absolute Nothing, for pure Nothingness. In Zen, isn't the Void a nothing with a "small n"? Which is to say nothing at all, and upon reflection not even a nothing? At least this is where certain Japanese philosophers seem to draw their argument for differentiating Zen (and all Oriental philosophy) from Western thought.<sup>1</sup>*

**Cage:** And what did my French translator do?

**Charles:** *He hesitates, sometimes opting for the capital N, at other times using the small n. Sometimes for the West, others for the East!*

**Cage:** I wonder which one should choose. But it's hard because we still remain mired within the intellectual categories. Of course, to say "the Noth-

ing” is not to go all the way, for it says: the Nothing is still some-thing. It’s not very satisfying.

**Charles:** *Must we therefore reject the very solution you just finished suggesting as necessary?*

**Cage:** As long as you oppose Some-thing to Nothing, you remain in the game of intellectual categories. What I wanted to say, when speaking of the “nothing in between,” is that the Nothing is. . .neither Being nor Nothing.

**Charles:** *It is outside the relationship between Being and Nothing.*

**Cage:** Right. Each time we establish a relation, each time we connect two terms, we forget that we have to return to zero before moving to the next term. The same goes for Being and Nothing! We speak, we try to think about these notions—like musical sounds—and we forget what’s really going on. We forget that each time, to pass from one word to the next, we must return to zero.

**Charles:** *You once spoke of an “alternating current”. . .Wouldn’t the Nothing be the discontinuous?*

**Cage:** It’s the impossibility of remaining in a relative Nothing, in a relation. The relation follows.

**Charles:** *Language compels you to return to “absolute” Nothing?*

**Cage:** Yes, and thus I can stick to the first choice: “the Nothing.” On the condition that we don’t let the words take over, we can let it happen.

**Charles:** *Koichi Tsujimura, a contemporary Japanese thinker, has dealt with this problem in particular. The title of his work, Vom Nichts im Zen, “Of Nothing in Zen,” places him right alongside our own conversation. I think a few observations of his are pertinent to what you’ve been saying: “From this state of things, one could want to draw the conclusion that something like absolute Nothing is unthinkable and impossible; and even if it were thinkable, it would be a mere ens rationis, without a shred of reality. But the contradiction between an absolute Nothing and a relative nothing, on which is founded the aforementioned conclusion, is not in fact a contradiction. . .This contradiction exists only in the sphere of the relative, in the dimension of representational thought, in which the attempt is to represent both the absolute Nothing and the relative nothing as well as Being and their relationships as something existing.”<sup>2</sup>*

*Do you agree with Koichi Tsujimura’s rejection of “the dimension of representational thought”?*

**Cage:** If that corresponds with what Suzuki calls “the mental,” we can’t “reject” it any more than we can reject the world of relations. But we can cross and travel beyond it. Towards the “non-mental.”

**Charles:** *Your ideas come from Suzuki?*

**Cage:** Yes, and also from a fascinating book, entitled *Neti, Neti*<sup>3</sup>, that taught me, that in the world of created things, there is some-thing that is, so to speak, no-thing; and moreover: a nothing which has no-thing within it. That is

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the *nothing in between!* More recently, I re-encountered this idea in Buckminster Fuller: he describes the world as a movement of spheres among which there is a void, a necessary space. It is this space we tend to forget. . . We over-leap it in order to establish our relations and connections. We think we can slide, in continuity, from one sound to the next, from one thought to the next. In reality, we fall and don't even know it! We live, but to live means to cross the world of relations or representations. After all, we never see ourselves crossing this world! And yet that's all we ever do!

**Charles:** *It's all very simple, then?*

**Cage:** I would say, inversely, that while our way of thinking is so simple, our experience is always, and in each instant, extreme and complex. When we think, we continually return to the paired opposites, sound and silence, Being and Nothing. This is precisely in order to simplify experience, which is beyond simplification. Ultra-complicated and never reducible to the number two.

**Charles:** *Aren't we in danger of returning to the number one? To a sort of monism?*

**Cage:** Buckminster Fuller insists on the number three and feels there is hardly a useful idea that can proceed without taking at least three things into account simultaneously. And, as for me, the best way to escape the two is to perform a chance operation. Because then we allow an infinity of things to enter into a single, complex event. And by that, we avoid that simplification peculiar to our way of thinking.

**Charles:** *Nevertheless I wonder how can you not be shocked by the mechanistic, automatic nature of the chance operations. To draw the sounds by lot, isn't that a facile solution? Whatever the role of chance in daily life may be, doesn't chance frequently oversimplify things?*

**Cage:** But how will we explain the fact that we are present here, that we are in the present but not in the same present as the fir-trees in the forest? We owe this complexity to chance. . . Our life is an intense complexity on which new layers of chance are constantly imposed. Chance allows this and excludes that.

**Charles:** *Does it therefore oblige us to consider presence and absence as complements?*

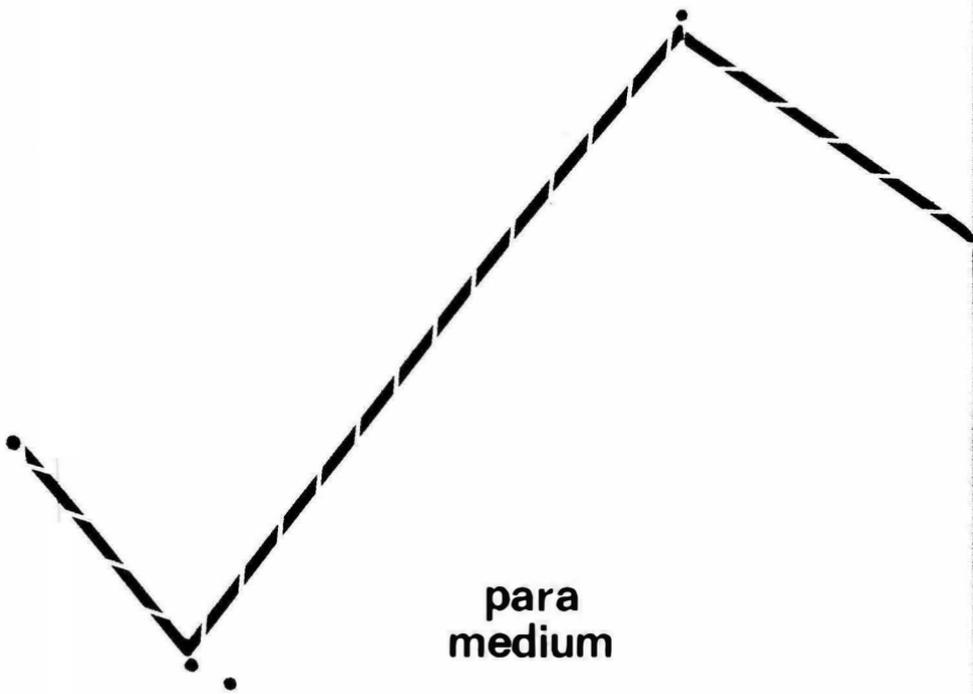
**Cage:** It obliges us to reject the exclusions, the radical alternatives between opposites.

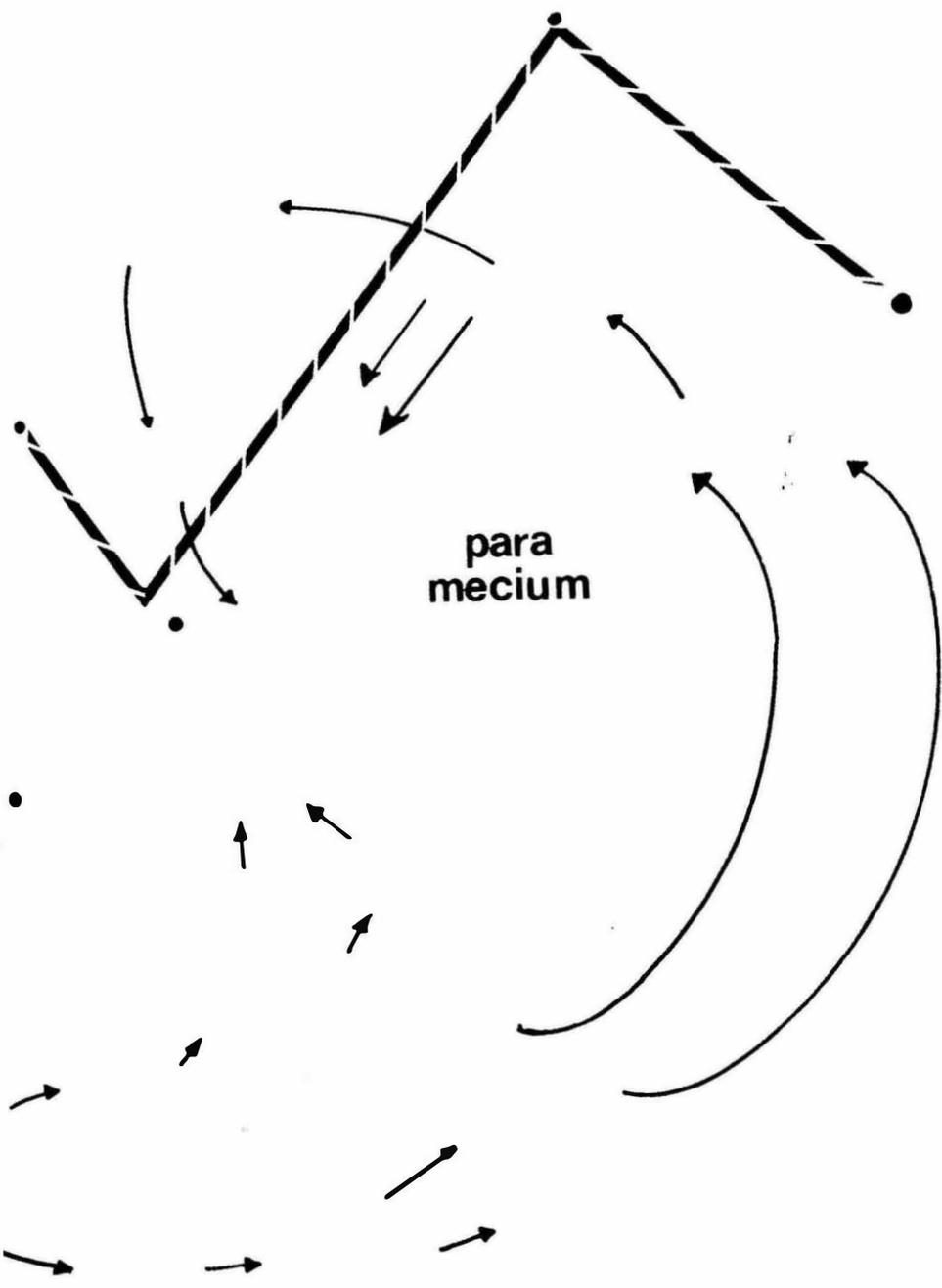
*Translated by Daniel Moshenberg*

1. I have in mind a Toshimitsu Hasumi, a Shizuteru Ueda; and, of course, Suzuki.
2. Cf. the German text in the Italian magazine *Il Pensiero*, vol. V, No 1, 1960, p. 10.
3. Mrs. L. C. Beckett, *Neti, Neti*, Ark Press, 1955.

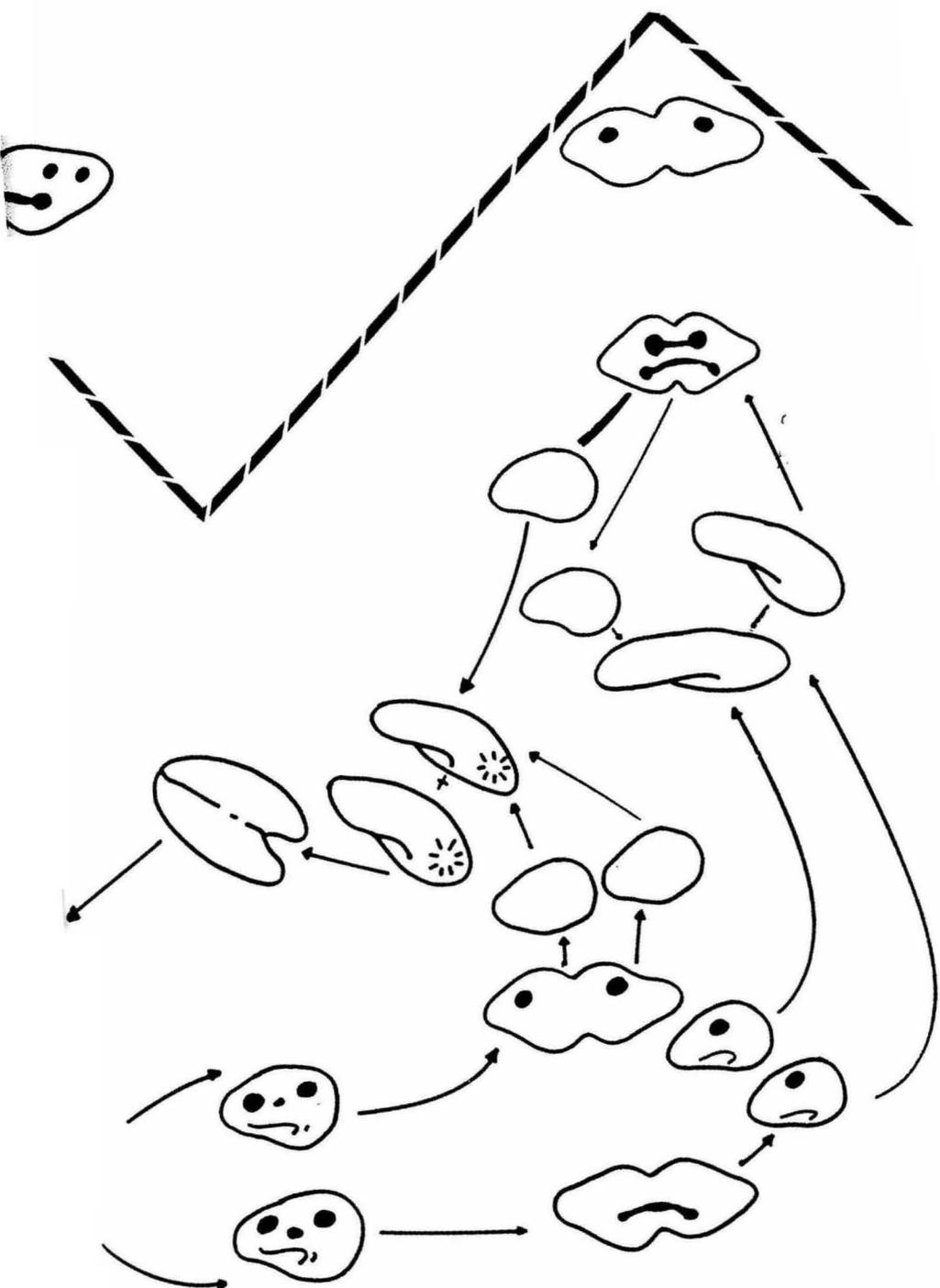












toucan  
rises off ocean floor



**to become  
one more smiling face**



JEAN-FRANÇOIS LYOTARD

## Notes on the Return and Kapital

1. Inasmuch as we proceed to *speak here*, we remain within representation and theology. The walls of this castle are the walls of the museum, i.e. the setting aside of affects and the concepts' privilege of extraterritoriality, the storing away of *intensities*, their *quiescence*, and thus their "mise-en-scène."

2. Weakness, the loss of intensity, preservation, are what representation originates in. Even if the walls of the castle are torn down, even if we hold these discourses in the subway, they will remain *corrupt*, as Nietzsche says. Representation is an intrinsic condition of philosophical *discourse*. *The weakening of intensities*, the production of concepts (that is to say of set intervals in the order of signification) and re-presenting (mise en representation) are congruent in philosophical discourse. Re-presenting chiefly consists in an *externalization within the inside*: stage inside the stage/hall enclosure. Such is Wagner. And such is theology. What is condemned in the end (*Anti-christ*, *Ecce Homo*, last letters), is thus the philosophical discourse as the discourse of a "secondary" discharge (in the Freudian sense) achieved through a representational mise-en-scène. Words are to be valued in terms of intensities, not as significations. (Question the "*are to be valued*" later on).

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3. *Of little importance*, extremely irrelevant to insist on the fact that representation will not cease to reproduce itself, be it out of Nietzsche's most violent discourse. Not only unimportant, totally inappropriate, but a serious *failure* in relation to what Nietzsche says, to what he desires: dwelling upon the closure of representation is theology, not in the topic, but in the *position*. For it amounts to sejourning in the secondary, set intervals, the system, discursivity, in short energetics at its drabbest, grayest point: it implies stopping all moments, intensities, affect processes, at the *lowest level* of tension, thus placing oneself (position) in the order of representation which originates in this weakening. It means staying in the *decline*, decline of Zarathustra walking back down to spend the *after-noon* in the vicinity of the Hegelian owl.

4. There is a *simultaneous* failure of a sort; the condensation of two failures: The failure in regard to the transvaluation or the Return (Nietzsche's desire), is as well and simultaneously the failure implied in any philosophical discourse as theological. The weakness and the nostalgic depression of *having/not having* the presence, the sadness in recognizing/not wanting to recognize representation, the corruption of yes and no: such are the elements which can incite one to read Nietzsche in his turn, Nietzsche himself, as a failure, as a tentative *presentation* which results in a new *representation*. But once again, such an interpretation is only possible if one remains in the *mediocre* intensity, in the secondary process, in channelized, quiescent, energy, in the order of the signifier, in the philosophical discourse as including all discourses (ordinary, scientific, religious, political. . .). One might as well place Nietzsche on the program for the agrégation,<sup>1</sup> that is in the narrowest confinement of "cultivated" cultural representation.

5. Formulating a theory of the eternal return or of transvaluation amounts to the same thing: we *place* ourselves in depression and produce in representation something which can *cure* us of that very state. An Aristotelian purge. A Freudian fantasy. A reconciliation on a depressive basis. A false force, a force out there, an obscene, gesticulating, theological, Wagnerian force.

6. A discourse at the maximum level of intensity? It is much more than a *deconstruction* which may be but a degenerate amusement. It is much more than a *cry*, for even the cry belongs—as Nietzsche knows (consider his hatred for Rousseau and Romanticism)—to representation and theology: reference to and/or evocation of the origin, *nature*. Up to 1888, Nietzsche consistently supports the form, the rigorous exquisite form, meticulousness, work, reserve, Classicism, the French—against the cry. How does one conciliate Voltaire and the furor inhabiting Dionysus?

7. Gilles Deleuze questioned: then what would an *intensive reading* of Nietzsche consist in? Certainly not a reading in the sense of an interpretation, of hermeneutics, less still in that of an accumulation of knowledge. One should start from aphorism 208 in *Human, all too human*, where the author

turns to ashes and the book is what transmits energy at its maximum level of intensity:

Every author is surprised anew at the way in which his book, as soon as he has sent it out, continues to live a life of its own; it seems to him as if one part of an insect had been cut off and now went on its own way. Perhaps he forgets it almost entirely, perhaps he rises above the view expressed therein, perhaps even he understands it no longer, and has lost that impulse upon which he soared at the time he conceived the book; meanwhile it seeks its readers, inflames life, pleases, horrifies, inspires new works, becomes the soul of designs and actions,—in short, it lives like a creature endowed with mind and soul, and yet is no human being. The happiest fate is that of the author who, as an old man, is able to say that all there was in him of life-inspiring, strengthening, exalting, enlightening thoughts and feelings still lives on in his writings, and that he himself now only represents the gray ashes, whilst the fire has been kept alive and spread out. And if we consider that every human action, not only a book, is in some way or other the cause of other actions, decisions and thoughts; that everything that happens is inseparably connected with everything that is going to happen, we recognize the real immortality, that of movement.<sup>2</sup>

It is a matter of metamorphosis: “Just as the glaciers increase when in equatorial regions the sun shines upon the seas with greater force than hitherto, so may a very strong and spreading free-spiritism be a proof that somewhere or other the force of feeling has grown extraordinarily.”<sup>3</sup>

Intensive reading, therefore, is the production of new, different intensities. Reading is a moment of the general metamorphosis, in the Return. The *book* itself, as a *non-book*, as the emissions of incandescence is but a thoroughly obsolescent metaphorical form. The author disintegrates in writing, the writing vanishes in reading. (*We*, in Nietzsche, are the region in which this metamorphosis operates.) The annihilation is rather dissolution, lysis, liquidation, loss of stand-offishness, of restraint in relation to the work and as regards signification—but a loss by no means negative, a loss from the sole point of view of the self, of the work, of signification—that is, of representation and theology, of all the imperatives rooted in the spectacular dimension: *depression*. One cannot stress the dimension of the loss, of *dissolution*, without remaining in the theological depression, a theology of the I, of the signifier, of work mapped back onto a Subject. Metamorphosis operates affirmatively, as an incessant, infinite, stray, untimely, eccentric process.

8. Eccentricity and difference are congruent. When a process reduplicates identical effects, it becomes established, closes up, gets blocked in objects and subjects, devices and inscriptions, in set quantities and intervals, in structures and representations. Metamorphosis, if it were repetitive in the customary sense, that is if it were merely regulated, if it observed rules of



constant spacing—as when the phonating apparatus produces phonemes out of expirations, through the invariable functioning of contractions and occlusions—metamorphosis would amount to a systemic and representational closure. The Return would follow the course of structure.

9. Such is the meaning of Nietzsche for us today. *The regulated Return is Kapital*. Affirmation is, shall be, the dissolution of the single rule of Kapital, i.e. the law of value.

10. Kapital is but production as consumption, consumption as production, that is *metamorphosis* without end or purpose. Such a metamorphosis operates on the one hand as a dissolution of *old* pre-capitalist institutions and on the other hand as a self-dissolution of its own institutions, constantly undone and redone. What I mean by institution, here, is anything which offers itself as a stable signification (political, legal, cultural. . .), i.e. anything based on set intervals and conducive to representation. The interminable character of the metamorphosis of things into men, of men into things, of products into means of production and conversely, economics as *non-political economy*, is what Kapital itself teaches us. Modernity as the deeply *affirmative* character of such a dissolution. There is no nihilism in *this* movement, but the incipience of the over-human or the in-human:

The complete irresponsibility of man for his actions and his nature is the bitterest drop which he who understands must swallow if he was accustomed to see the patent of nobility of his humanity in responsibility and duty. All his valuations, distinctions, disinclinations, are thereby deprived of value and become false,—his deepest feelings for the sufferer and the hero was based on an error; he may no longer either praise or blame, for it is absurd to praise and blame nature and necessity [. . .]. To recognize all this may be deeply painful, but consolation comes after: such pains are the pangs of birth [. . .]. In such people as are *capable* of such sadness—and how few are!—the first experiment made is to see whether mankind *can change itself* from a *moral* into a *wise* mankind [. . .]. A new habit, that of comprehension, of not loving, not hating, of overlooking, is gradually implanting itself in us upon the same ground, and in thousands of years will perhaps be powerful enough to give humanity the strength to produce wise, innocent (consciously innocent) men, as it now produces unwise, guilt-conscious men,—*that is the necessary preliminary step, not its opposite.*<sup>4</sup>

11. Kapital is at once depression, nihilism and the culmination of theology. Not at all on account of its *reintroducing* representations and institutions formerly destroyed. For it doesn't do that in fact. It cannot do it, it plunges humanity into the theology of atheism, immerses it in the theology of a-theology, in the belief in (the death of) God. It reintroduces nothing, but itself rests upon the law of value, that is on the equality of the parties involved in any metamorphosis: labor-merchandise force, money-merchandise,

merchandise-money. This very equality constitutes the apparent objects and subjects represented in the play of the Return and keeps that Return from being the true voyage, for it forces metamorphosis to pass over the same grounds, to make use of the same channels again and again, and thus to *become established*. So does it maintain itself at the lowest level of intensity and maintain humanity as a whole in the nihilistic depression and the petty fear. (Thus is the philosopher who teaches the loss of meaning and its endless postponement the curate of neo-nihilistic theology, the parson of the religion of merchandise). Kapital operates within and by way of the petty fear, through the dread of losing (one's belongings, one's work, one's profits, one's advantages, one's health-labor force, one's life). The apprehension of losing in neo-nihilism is similar to the dread of keeping in traditional theology. When the representation was of a live God, power and desire had to be his privilege and all things dedicated to him; when it is of a dead deity, they must be *man's*—that is Kapital's—prerogative.

12. The increase in power, the desire for a *superior potential*, becomes in Kapital the *growth*, the formation of Kapital, development, which entails the exclusion of all maximal or minimal intensities (over-heating, recession). Nothing but an average standardized intensity is admitted, in order that the energy may be tapped, conveyed, transmitted through the channels (of the relations of production). Energy deprived of its intensive potential: the displaceability. A society functioning on vallium. This, and not alienation—a religious category if adopted uncritically—is the matter with working conditions, the “consumer society”, the “crisis of civilization”, etc., the transformation of the laboring force into a mere labor-force, a merchandise measurable in time units, for example.

13. There is undoubtedly a very similar intuition in Freud's *Jenseits*. Eros-logos is the Kapital as the agent maintaining constant unities, stable institutions, investments always recoverable. The *death instinct* is but repetition, just like Eros, but it touches upon effects which, *from the point of view of Eros*, of Kapital, can only be grasped as death, *dissolution*. It is in connivance with *multiplicity*. It isn't another instinct, another energy. It is the same energy as an unsettling-unsettling. In other words: It is the possibility of *increasing or decreasing* the potential so as to reach *limit-intensities*; *pleasure* (jouissance) is a model in this regard, to the extent that it consists in a pulling apart and a death by excess. Nietzsche as well asks for *more pleasure*. One can refer to the fourth article of the *Law against Christianity* at the end of *Antichrist* for example, or to this posthumous fragment written at the time of the *Gay Science*:

Philosophy of indifference. What in times past excited one in the strongest manner now acts quite differently, is no longer considered anything but a *game* and is taken as such (passions and works), to be a life principally foreclosed in the absence of truth, a life that affords pleasure however, and is fostered aestheti-



cally as form and charm; and we behave as children towards what used to represent the *seriousness of existence*. But our own yearning for seriousness consists in an attempt to understand everything as becoming, to deny ourselves as individuals, to scan the world through the *greatest possible number* of eyes, to live in impulses and occupations calculated to train our eyes, to surrender ourselves to life *momentarily* before allowing our eyes to rest upon it for a time [. . .]. How will life behave in relation to the sum of its healthiness? A *child's game* which the wise man's eyes dwell upon, to command power over *such* and *such* a state—and death when nothing is possible. Here arises however the most exacting knowledge, that which makes all styles of life terrifyingly aleatory: an absolute excess of pleasure must be demonstrable, or if it isn't, we have no choice but to annihilate ourselves, given humanity as a means of annihilating humanity. (*Gay Science*, posthumous fragments 11: 2220).

Freud's approach to the death instinct, on the other hand, remains entangled in a structural metaphor (the system of the so-called mental apparatus), the interplay of instincts itself being understood in terms of quantitative-qualitative *mechanics* (Klossowski), actually excluding intensities (see fragments referred to in *Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux*, *Mercur de France*, 1969, pp. 159-164).

A true economics is involved however, and so are non-representational affect movements. (Analyse Freud's theory of representation: The elaboration of fantasy, of the dream, as originating in a *lack* or *depression*, and the charging of the mental apparatus. The implication should be: to raise or maintain the intensity in order to obtain as high an energetic metamorphosis as possible. The implication will be: to obtain the *discharge* in the Judaic verbalizing apparatus of the psychoanalytical relationship.)

14. With respect to capitalism, same solution: to raise or maintain intensity at its highest level in order to obtain as strong (*Macht*) an energetic metamorphosis as possible. In such a process does affirmation reside. What can that possibly mean, how can it be specified? Is a Nietzschean *politics* possible, which would not be the "great politics" of the last period, the conspiracy, the letter to Bismarck and to the Emperor—a politics which will quite naturally extend into the memorializing receptions at Turin, Basel and Iena?

"Enough, the *time* is coming when we will *learn to reconvert politics*" (quoted by Klossowski, *Ibid.*, p. 215).

The *Umwertung* must really touch upon politics, the political fact. Even in the most critical movements, politics remains essentially unaltered; Daniel Cohn Bendit<sup>5</sup> observing: after all, I am an old politico: the situationists retaining, under their Saint-Simon XXth century style, an unaltered link with Hegelianism, and thus with Christianity: the German SDS, governed in its approach, by the theorizing of Frankfurt, critical thinking and the negative dialectic.

15. There is not enough affirmation in the old Europe. In Nietzsche's words: The incessant agitation of Europe and the USA must meet the dissolution which comes from the Orient (Russia, Asia); then, in that very combination, will we find "the solution to the enigma of this world":

Modern agitation is spreading at such a pace that all the great acquisitions of civilization are falling into disuse; they gradually appear to be lacking an adequate signification. Civilization thus leads to a new barbarity. Humanity should not, however, be channelled into this single trend of "men of action". I place my hope in the counterbalance, the contemplative element of the Russian peasant and the Asian. It is this element which will largely correct the character of humanity some day. [. . .]. As one heads West, the frenzy of motion keeps increasing so that all Europeans are already considered by the Americans to be men of leisure and pleasure. Humanity reaches its goal where both elements meet and mingle: the supreme knowledge of the value of existence (impossible on the first side because the activity of thought is yet too weak, impossible on the second because it has taken another direction). [. . .]. I imagine thinkers to come, in which the perpetual turmoil of Europe and America will blend with Asian contemplation, the heritage of hundreds of generations: such a combination will lead to the solution of the world's enigma. Meanwhile, the contemplative free spirits have their mission: they suppress all barriers hindering the interpenetration of men: religions, States, monarchical instincts, illusions of wealth and poverty, prejudices concerning hygiene and races, etc. (*Human, all too human*, posthumous fragments 17: 53 to 55).

16. Said combination is now coming to light. The American trend which the name of John Cage symbolizes is already this combination. One can begin to discern it in its most advanced, its most "experimented" manifestations, where it brings about the greatest amount of experience, of productive incompleteness: "The incomplete is often more effective than completion [. . .]. Achievement weakens." (*Human, all too human*, aphorism 199). Compare with posthumous fragment 23 (26): "There are no things." At one point, (precisely during the period of *Human, all too human*), Nietzsche tries to cure himself of Wagnerism, Rousseauism, Romanticism, he seeks measure, Classicism, Voltaire—and thus inclines towards a *critical position*. He is to Wagner what Adorno will be to Stravinsky. Schönberg's future music is what he longs for: to remain at the edge of dusk, to establish the work in a relation of *critical analogy* with "reality", society. *Entkunstung*, dissolution of the "work", i.e., the *taking upon oneself* (reprise sur soi), in its very form of that which appears in reality as a dissolution. The new form dissolves its material, but the material itself is a mere residue of the previous form. Thus the new form resembles Kapital: dissonance = dissolution of previous codes. And more precisely desensitization, intellectualization of the



material, corresponding to the predominance of the exchange value in social reality. Form (Nietzsche's Voltairianism if you will), is decisive in this instance. (There is a Voltairian moment in Klee as well, when he illustrates *Candide*, when the design begins to relinquish facility, the yielding to fantasy, thus becoming lighter, critical).

17. The music Nietzsche required in the last period, however, was no longer that of Schönberg-Adorno, it was already the music of Cage, or Kagel's. The question of *form* as a critique was by then giving way to that of *sound* as an intensity. To reevaluate the material: to abandon the critical point of view (and the paranoia inherent to all dogmatic critiques), to adopt as regards "reality" the point of view of affirmation. The dissolution of forms and individuals in the consumer society must be *affirmed*. It is the dissolution of set intervals that have made music a scripture, that have depressed the *sound* into a *note*, that have repressed sonority in itself (the *Tone*). A trend outlined as early as the *Klangfarbenmelodie*. A trend that Cage, in the wake of Schönberg, is going to carry to its limit, not only in destroying the *domination over time* which rhythm and the general organization of the piece of music *supposedly* represent (just think of what Brüchner's fulgurations became in Berg's very dialectical opera, *Wozzeck!*),—but also in destroying the silence/sound relation, in showing that silence is sound as well (the sound of blood in the ears, of the muscular contraction in the maxillaries), in disrupting the composition/execution, performer/listener, stage/concert hall/city, relations, etc.

Daniel Charles quite rightly considers Cage's non-works as something similar to Taoism (rather than Buddhism) brought into contact with the technical objects of the American West. Such a relationship is "taoist" in itself; far from consisting in the domination of technology over a given thing and consequently in the domination over technology to a given end, it tends *to let* technology be, *to let* it *produce*, to become its two-faced friend, in accordance with the *Tao-te-ching*: "Know the male, but keep to the role of the female and be a ravine to the empire [. . .]. Know honor, but keep to the role of the disgraced, and be a valley to the empire. If you are a valley to the empire, then the constant virtue (virtù?) will be sufficient. . ."<sup>6</sup> Technology no longer considered as a weapon or as a tool in a subject/object relationship, but as a plugging in and out energetic set-up, apt to produce sonorities hitherto unheard, a sonorous *Zwischen-Welt*. Open, experimental character of such Cagist actions.

"Death instinct": not at all because it seeks death, but insofar as it is a partial, singular affirmation and a subversion of apparent totalities (the Ego, Society) in its very assertion. Any high *emotion* is a death effect, a dissolution of the completed, of the historical. The will to power as an affirmative impulse of the singular results in the eternal return's *not being* that of the *Same*, that is of a *something (a hidden God)* which would represent itself in singularities taken in that case as "intentions." In the center of the return there is nothing. There is no center. Singularities refer to each other without reference to the center, to the Subject, to the Signifier, etc. They refer, that

is to say they associate, they come into touch and make contact, they intermingle. In the *mediocre* (gregarious) *intensity* a singularity associates with few others and according to established articulations, institutions, concatenations, causalities, significations: set intervals. In the very high (and very low) intensity, a singularity is connected with many others: it is the point of the circle where the fulguration of the circle as a multitude of singular incompatible simultaneous intensities occurs. Beside representation, pleasure and extreme pain are "experiences" of said fulguration.

Such a referring = the "are to be valued" mentioned earlier (par. 2). Far from a representing, it consists in an associating, Nietzsche's empiricism. Not even an associating in fact, a *passing* from one singularity to the other. It is a *masquerade*, masks worn or thrown off, but *nothing* under the masks. And even the topic of the mask, of the disguise, is to be suspected: it comes from the theater.

Rather should one insist on the *forgetting*. Representation and opposition imply memory: in passing from one singularity to the other, the one and the other are maintained together (through channels of circulation, set-ups, fantasies or libidinal configurations of cathexes). An identity (the same) is implied in this memory. In the eternal return as a desire for potentiality, there is precisely *no memory*. The *travel* is a passage without a trace, a forgetting, instantaneous which are multiple only for the discourse, not in themselves. Such is the reason for the absence of *representation* in this voyage, this nomadism of intensities.

I just described "*Mureau*", the latest simultaneous "work" by Cage and Tudor, heard in Basel in June 1972. It incorporates the Orient, but without its piety. And the *Wille* of the West in its modernity, but without the law of value.

18. What could an amnesiac nonhistorical and thus nonrepresentative politics be like? That which has been sought for in the Western world as a whole for over a decade—direct management, nonrepresentativity, systematic revocability—punctuality of actions and their intensity—is clearly related with this question. What remains to be done is to rid this political experimentation of its Rousseauism. The relation between this politics and leftism (*gauchisme*) should be the same as that between Nietzsche and Wagner: leftism should be denounced as a false rupture with political lousiness, as a veiled maintenance in the theatricality of agreed and conventional politics, as the religious promise of reconciliation.

19. More important than political leftism, closer to a concurrence of the intensities: a vast subterranean movement, wavering, more of a ruffle in fact, on account of which the law of value is dis-affected.<sup>7</sup> Holding up production, uncompensated seizures (thefts) as modalities of consumption, refusal to "work," (illusory?) communities, happenings, sexual liberation movements, occupations, squattings, abductions, productions of sounds, words, colors, with no "work of art" intentions. Here are the "men of profusion," the "*masters*" of today: marginals, experimental painters, pop, hip-



pies and yippies, parasites, madmen, binned loonies. One hour of their lives offers more intensity and less intention than three hundred thousand words of a professional philosopher. More Nietzschean than Nietzsche's readers.

20. With these emerges a new figure: the inhuman, the overhuman, Dionysus? The figure of fluid intensities emerging within the figure of Kapital-knowledge. The critique of political economy still unaccomplished, impossible to undertake perhaps, gives way to the affirmation of libidinal economics.

Translated by Roger McKeon

"Notes sur le Retour et le Kapital" was published in *Nietzsche aujourd'hui*, U.G.E., 10/18, 1973.

1. Agrégation: A competitive examination conducted by the State for admission to posts on the teaching staff of Lycees and Universities.
2. Extract taken from the first complete and authorized English translation of the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, edited by Oscar Levy. (New York, Russel & Russel Inc. 1964). Volume six: *Human, all too human*, part one. Translated by Helen Zimmern. Fourth division concerning the soul of artists and authors. aphorism 208. p. 188. (The book grown almost into a human being.)
3. *Ibid.*, Fifth division. The signs of higher and lower culture. Aphorism 232. p. 216. (Conjecture as to the origin of free scepticism.)
4. *Ibid.*, Second division. The history of the moral sentiments. Aphorism 107, p. 107.
5. Daniel Cohn Bendit, known as Dany le rouge (see *Semiotext(e)*, vol. II, no 3, 1977: *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 9 and 76), was one of the prominent leaders of the May 1968 movement in France.
6. Extract taken from Lao Tzu, *Tao-te-ching*, translated by D. C. Lau, Penguin Books, first publication 1963. Book one, chapter XXVIII, p. 85.
7. "... la loi de la valeur est désaffectée." double entendre on Lyotard's part. "desaffecter" meaning literally: to put to another purpose, hence to relinquish, to discard, while the connotation suggested is that of a withdrawal of cathexis.

SYLVÈRE LOTRINGER

## The Dance of Signs

*"Even when immobile we are in motion."* —Merce Cunningham

*"What counts is to put the individual in flux. One must destroy the wall of the ego; weaken opinions, memory and emotions; tear down all the ramparts."* —John Cage

*"That which is, cannot contain motion."* —Friedrich Nietzsche

**I**nterpretive power: Freud analyzing Jensen's *Gradiva*. Not a mere "conceptual translation," not a neutral, indifferent explication. An interpretation. But how powerful?

Structuralism obviously blurs the issue. It studies more *possible* than actual literature. At bottom, an exploitation of the categorical capacities of discourse. Conceptual translation: power without interpretation, or interpretation without power?

Language in itself is relational; it equalizes everything. A "science" of literature codifies these relations in terms of a particular system itself part of

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a more general mechanism. This in turn functions as a repertory of possible forms. The original text returns as a measurable "difference." Was it worth the trouble?

Objectivity is actually a pure fiction, an interpretation in its own right. But disavowed. The choice of elements, their grouping, the logic at work, etc., are anything but neutral. Structuralists insist on hiding behind a self-imposed logical organization; Freud defines a goal and arranges the facts accordingly. The man of pure knowledge boastfully practices self-effacement: he preaches liberation from all affects. Freud also promises access to truth, but he does not renounce the will. His goal is to demonstrate the existence of repression. He does not merely explain. He interprets.

There is a violence of interpretation and Freud assumes it unabashedly. He clearly enjoys it.

My own inquiry begins at this point. If interpretation *is* appropriation and appropriation the inevitable outcome of the will to power, are all interpretations on the same level? How is one to choose among them? What happens if I reject them all?

But is it possible *not* to interpret?

## Perspective Valuations

*"How much of a piece of music has  
been understood when that in it  
which is calculable has been reck-  
oned up?"*

—The Will to Power

The world has no value in itself: it waits for my evaluation. I never find it, though, in a pristine state: it is always already shaped by interpretations. Evaluation substitutes a new interpretation for another that has become narrow or weak. But what makes a "superior" interpretation in the world of *no truth*?

Reading a text raises similar problems. However much I try to disregard previous evaluations, I have to confront textual configurations whose economy I can never totally upset but merely modify. All interpretation activates, or *reactivates*, the forces at work in the text. *Gradiva*, the final hermeneutic novel, is no exception.

A literary text is not a psychic "object" waiting for the sage to coax it with the tip of his quill in order to shatter cataplexy into light. A text has as many meanings as it has forces capable of dominating it. *Gradiva*, obviously, was waiting for Freud to force it open.

Freud is not blind to this: "The procedure which the author makes his Zoe adopt for curing her childhood friend's delusion shows a far-reaching similarity—no, a complete agreement in its essence—with the analytical method which consists, as applied to patients suffering from disorders analogous to Hanold's delusion, in bringing to their consciousness, to some extent





forcibly, the unconscious whose repression led to their falling ill" (Standard Edition, IX, p. 88). Such is the powerful thrust of similitude. Freud has no more qualms to reduce "poetic creations" to real persons or the "Pompeian fancy" to a simple "psychiatric study." Beneath the trappings of truth, on the razor's edge of demonstration, forces are confronting each other in order to turn a process—the text—into a product.

If *Gradiva* adheres so perfectly to the analytical mold, the analysis of the novel must serve as an *absolute proof*, in Freud's words, of the theory of the unconscious. Absolute proof—or absolute counter-proof. . . . Even though "absolute" is clearly too strong a word for such a circumscribed operation, to counter Freud's interpretation and thus unsettle the theory of the unconscious is indeed the substance of the present attempt.

Not to replace Freud's elaborate construct with another, more powerful, mode of evaluation would certainly prove the *wisdom* in the face of the illusion of truth. Although "nihilistic" at heart, such a perspective is not bound to be simply *negative*. It can attest to a growing force. I realize that I can overcome the temptation of total interpretations, whose values are universal (they are actually symptoms of fear and apathy). To destroy the belief in the law, to dissipate the fiction of predictability, to reject the sage recurrence of the "same," this is not just a "critical" stand. It is an act of force. But destruction must not open onto an absence of values, worthlessness or meaninglessness. It must lead to a new evaluation.

Nietzsche sees in the wisdom of the East a principle of decadence, a weakening of the power of appropriation. Force of invention matters more than will to truth. To reject truth without intensifying the force of invention still participates in the ascetic ideal, thus in *ressentiment*. "To read off a text without interposing an interpretation" therefore is "hardly possible" (*The Will to Power*, 479). I must use my creative forces *to create values* without falling into the inertia of truth or an anemia of will. I must render the text, and the world, to their "disturbing and enigmatic character"; will them incomprehensible, elusive, "in flux," only indebted to perspective valuations: "The greater the impulse toward unity, the more firmly may one conclude that weakness is present; the greater the impulse toward variety, differentiation, inner decay, the more force is present" (WP, 655). Inner decay: to dance away over oneself. Motion, not emotions.

Freud's interpretation resists the false neutrality of science. It only shows a sign of decline when it aims for the truth, when it succumbs to the temptation of unity, the sick security of monism, the illusion of a reconciliation. A *reactive* interpretation, it assumes powerful, but fabricated, weapons: the difference between objects and subjects, cause and effect, means and ends, etc.

That *Gradiva* presents a certain order of succession in no way proves that individual moments are related to one another as cause and effect, that they obey a "law" and a calculus but rather that different factions abruptly confront each other in their attempt to draw their ultimate consequence at every moment. "As long as there is a structure, as long as there is a method, or

better yet as long as structure and method exist through the mental, through intelligence, time is trapped—or else we imagine we have trapped it” (John Cage, *Pour les Oiseaux*, Belfond, 1976, p. 34).

Structural analysis properly discerned that a narrative establishes a confusion between time (*succession*) and logic (*cause and effect*). However, instead of “delogifying” time, it forced narrative time to submit to narrative logic. Far from being dispelled, the confusion became the very springboard of analysis! It is high time to take advantage of this latency of the narrative, of the divorce between consequence and consecution, in order to “rechronicize” succession.

I will, here and now, stop *wanting* the story to go somewhere. I will forget what I know feebly, in advance, in order to gather the whole complexity of forces at play in a text. I will learn to resist the melody of causal relations and the torpor of narrative accumulations in order to reinvent the intensity of risks, ceaselessly menacing and forever being reborn.

## Repression Now

*“Subject, object, a doer added to the doing, the doing separated from that which it does: let us not forget that this is mere semeiotics and nothing real.”*

—The Will to Power

Reading *Gradiva* without any preconceived notion of its destination, the opening scene assumes all the characteristics of a semiotic rupture.

The sculpture representing Gradiva holds Norbert, a young archaeologist in the grip of a powerful fascination. A Roman relic, it should invite a decipherment and maintain the archaeologist within the sacred vault of his science. And yet, as Jensen points out, “from the viewpoint of the science he taught, the bas-relief has nothing remarkable.” The bas-relief is by no means an inert object. It is at the juncture of unequal forces in a relation of tension with one another. Tapping upon the realm of knowledge, the energy that emanates from the cast is so powerful that it overturns all the young man’s sedentary habits, his manic erudition, and thrusts him into an unprecedented nomadism.

For Freud, armed with novelistic retrospection, the outcome leaves no room for doubt: “When Norbert Hanold saw the relief, he did not remember that he had already seen a similar posture of the foot in his childhood friend; *he remembered nothing at all, but all the effects brought about by the relief originated from this link* that was made with the impression of his childhood. Thus the childhood impression was stirred up, it became active, so that it began to produce effects, but it did not come into consciousness—it remained ‘unconscious’” (S.E., IX, p. 47. My italics). Forgetting, like interpretation, is a force, but an *active* force that struggles to separate cause from



effect and exorcise the harsh tamping of the present onto the past (which is still to come) by means of which the present falls into incompleteness. Only through the insufficiency of the present can the machinery of repression, the cornerstone of the psychoanalytic edifice, be substantiated.

Repression, actually, is an on-going creation. Freud recognizes it, but in a somewhat restrictive way, when he defines the *mobility* of repression in terms of the constant pressure it exercises in the direction of the conscious: "The process of repression is not to be regarded as an event which takes place once, the results of which are permanent, as when some living thing has been killed and from that time onward is dead; repression demands a persistent expenditure of force, and if this were to cease the success of the repression would be jeopardized, so that a fresh act of repression would be necessary." (S.E., XIV, p. 151). The mobility of repression is a process by which the repressed is kept at a distance from the conscious. And yet a unique event is always to be determined from its mnemonic traces, through its deformations, and even in the blank spaces where it allegedly attempts to annihilate itself. The eternal search for an origin, a cause, an anterior point of emission to explain the present psychic reality. A theory of seduction, a seduction of theory. . .

The continuity of repression does not arise from that energy clamped down like a lid over the past; it is *in the present* that the libido unfaithfully produces or reactivates its own impasses. At this point, forgetting does not lack anything. It even becomes assertive, or *affirmative*. It literally places Norbert beside himself. It liberates him from his spatio-temporal attachments and projects him into an intensive present by essence foreign to the consequential logic of repression.

Whatever the causes, *not* to remember is to erase the past in favor of the new. No wonder that it allows Norbert to feel deeply moved at the sight of a gait foreign to all intent or signification.

The bas-relief represents a woman in motion, but the archaeologist is affected not by her formal beauty nor even by her *indifferent* face, but rather by the vertical movement of her right foot. The name with which he dubs her: Gradiva, "she who walks in splendor," who dances and bounces, like the Antic Graces or the leaping priests of Mars Gradivus, emphasizes the primacy of the gait over the person, the strength of a process which refuses to dissociate doing into doer, becoming into being, effect into cause, in short to produce any subjective affectation.<sup>1</sup>

Gradiva is a pure force, a movement that carries in its wake, a motion that mobilizes, an emotion that moves everything into trance, into dance. The dance of signs: Gradiva crossing with her singular indifference the stiff, cold frame of representation to engage Norbert to follow her in her flight.

It was imperative to staunch this disturbing motion with a sex, a site, a subject, to freeze it with temporality and fate. Such is the function of Norbert's dream with which Freud now brilliantly joins forces.

## The Dreams of Interpretation

“there is no essential difference  
between dreams and wakefulness.”  
—Nietzsche, *the Dawn*, II, 119

“Soon after his pedestrian investigations had yielded him this knowledge, he had, one night, a dream which caused him great anguish of mind. In it he was in old Pompeii, and on the twenty-fourth of August of the year 79 A.D., which witnessed the eruption of Vesuvius. The heavens held the doomed city wrapped in a black mantle of smoke; only then and there the flaring masses of flame from the crater made distinguishable, through a rift, something steeped in blood-red light; all the inhabitants, either individually or in confused crowds, stunned out of their senses by the unusual horror, sought safety in flight. The pebbles and the rain of ashes fell down on Norbert also, but, after the strange manner of dreams, they did not hurt him; and, in the same way, he smelled the deadly sulphur fumes of the air without having his breathing impeded by them. As he stood thus at the edge of the Forum near the Temple of Jupiter, he suddenly saw Gradiva a short distance in front of him. Until then no thought of her presence there had moved him, but now suddenly it seemed natural to him, as she was, of course, a Pompeian girl, that she was living in her native city and, without his having any suspicion of it, was his contemporary. He recognized her at first glance; the stone model of her was splendidly striking in every detail, even to her gait; involuntarily he designated this as *lente festinans*. So with buoyant composure and the calm unmindfulness of her surroundings peculiar to her, she walked across the flagstones of the Forum to the Temple of Apollo. She seemed not to notice the impending fate of the city, but to be given up to her thoughts; on that account he also forgot the frightful occurrence, for at least a few moments, and because of a feeling that the living reality would quickly disappear from him again, he tried to impress it accurately on his mind. Then, however, he became suddenly aware that if she did not quickly save herself, she must perish in the general destruction, and violent fear forced from him a cry of warning. She heard it, too, for her head turned toward him so that her face now appeared for a moment in full view, yet with an utterly uncomprehending expression; and, without paying any more attention to him, she continued in the same direction as before. At the same time, her face became paler as if it were changing to white marble; she stepped up to the portico of the Temple, and then, between the pillars, she sat down on a step and slowly laid her head upon it. Now the pebbles were falling in such masses that they condensed into a completely opaque curtain; hastening quickly after, however, he found his way to the place where she had disappeared from his view,



and there she lay, protected by the projecting roof, stretched out on the broad step, as if for sleep, but no longer breathing, apparently stifled by the sulphur fumes. From Vesuvius the red glow flared over her countenance, which, with closed eyes, was exactly like that of a beautiful statue. No fear nor distortion was apparent, but a strange equanimity, calmly submitting to the inevitable, was manifest in her features. Yet they quickly became more indistinct as the wind drove to the place the rain of ashes, which spread over them, first like a grey gauze veil, then extinguished the last glimpse of her face, and soon, like a northern winter snowfall, buried the whole figure under a smooth cover. Outside, the pillars of the Temple of Apollo rose—now, however, only half of them, for the grey fall of ashes heaped itself likewise against them.”<sup>2</sup>

The oneiric images, like the stone-images, “have to be regarded as something distorted, *behind which something else must be looked for*”: the repressed. (S.E., IX, p. 59. My italics.). The repressed, Freud asserts, stems from a “faulty translation.” Let’s translate then, let’s “interpretate.” by all sorts of devices, the manifest content into latent thoughts. That Gradiva is specifically designated in the dream as being a Pompeian (she lives “in her native city, and, without his having any suspicion of it, was his contemporary”) constitutes the first figure of the unconscious: actually, Norbert has not, like her, become an inhabitant of Pompeii. It is Gradiva rather who, like Norbert, is German. Figure, or better yet, disfiguration: a *distortion by means of a displacement*. Another oneiric transformation, which Freud decodes with as much gusto elegance, turns the walking Gradiva into a stone-image: actually, Hanold transferred his interest from the living woman he knew as a child to the bas-relief. The dream presents in disguise the very genesis of the archaeologist’s delusion, “an ingenious and poetical representation of the real event.” (S.E., IX, p. 60). The dream thus comes to the rescue of the delusion. The third displacement: Norbert’s anxiety. Referring to his *Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud suggests that it has nothing to do with the dream-content (the eruption of Vesuvius), but springs instead from a repressed sexual excitement. Fear of love transpires as fear of death.

The dream is the *via regia* to the Freudian unconscious. An intensive constellation, sensory chaos with no direct attachment to the socius, it is indeed the dream-prize of analysis. Freud’s intuition led him at the core of this essentially psychotic dream-experience—in order to better neurotize it. He produced within the dream another scene and other signs configuring a new, mental universe equally dependent upon the laws of representation.

The dream simultaneously anticipated and encouraged his pulling in of the reins. First, no dream participates directly in the innocence of becoming. It already incorporates in its narrative form a logic essentially alien to its own elaboration: “Our entire dream life is the interpretation of complex feelings with a view to possible causes—and in such a way that we are conscious of a condition only when the supposed causal chain associated with it has entered

consciousness.” (WP, 479. My italics.). Then isn’t non-sense itself an irresistible invitation to the most daring, and costly, translations? Once properly told, folded into language and ironed out, i.e., organized and linearized, a dream is ready for all the total interpretations not to mention “literary” dreams! We can still try to locate, the best we can, the blockage-points, intensify the lines of resistance, emphasize any possible rupture within the stuff of the dream.

The Freudian screen channels energies onto figures and gathers figures within a single framework. I will rather distinguish, evaluate and affirm the forces struggling (either openly or covertly) to appropriate this tight and yet exploding sphere, this starburst: the dream.

Since I refuse to plumb this allegedly hidden face of the dream, I have to be especially sensitive to its strategic orientation, to its specific mode of insertion into a system whose main function is to check the initial semiotic break overflow. The *Gradiva-effect* (motion) being alien to all goals and intents can only repeat itself. The power of forgetfulness, though, each time turns this repetition into a new experience of liberation. If, on the other hand--Freud’s hand--the dream as a whole contributes to the development of Norbert’s “delusion” then the nature of that supplement must be carefully evaluated.

There is no doubt that Norbert’s dream, viewed as a whole, *from a holistic perspective*, confirms the “delusion.” The dream, to start with, occurs at the time the archaeologist has concluded his pedestrian investigation among the living women and arrived at the conclusion that none of them had Gradiva’s gait. The dream testifies to the contrary--the woman does exist, and she lives in Pompeii. This is the dream’s *function*, to deliver an arresting blow to the intensive motion. Norbert recognizes it immediately in his dream: “Until then no thought of her presence there had moved him, but now suddenly it seemed natural to him (. . .) that she was living in her native city” (D&D, p. 153). The dream thus entrusts Norbert with a prospective, or retrospective, awareness: what awaits him at Pompeii arises from the dark regions of his own past. The dream forces upon Norbert a last recognition: the cause and effect relationship between the bas-relief and the dream-vision of Gradiva. The unpredictable event becomes a prey to all the calculi and succession to consequence. Freud’s interpretation does not impose from without logic’s quantum of power. He merely reinforces the actual degree of resistance of the forces of causality to the forces of becoming.

Norbert’s first vision of Gradiva gives us an indication of the tremendous switch of perspective produced by the dream: “He recognized her at first glance; the stone model of her was splendidly striking in every detail, *even to her gait. . .*” (My italics). No longer is the posture an element racked from the body. It now appears in a position which has been “organically” assigned, after the *global* grasp of a particular corporeality. Once the mobilizing force invested from within, turned against itself and divested of most of its power, it is *represented* in another sphere. It is made to testify for a logic of whole and parts open to all the fetishist interpretations. From an infinitive of



movement, the motion has become a codifiable and supplementary feature that qualifies a "substantiality" and corroborates an identity. The rest of the dream will never return to the dancing gait now properly reintegrated into the whole of the person. Once awake, Norbert will recognize with amazement that he hadn't particularly noticed in the dream "whether the living Gradiva had really walked as the piece of sculpture represented her, and as the women of today, at any rate, did not walk. That was remarkable because it was the basis of his scientific interest in the relief. . . ." His realization, though, comes when he is well past the dream's interpretative power.

What did actually happen in the dream? How is it that the movement of becoming, the mobilizing motion ever turned into a mere individual reflexivity? The archaeologist immediately provides us with an answer: ". . . on the other hand, it would be explained by his excitement over the danger to her life." To invoke here, as Freud does, Norbert's reversed nostalgia toward Zoe is only meant to justify an interpretation of anxiety in terms of the repressed sexual excitement. There is, actually, no need to call upon the *meaning* of Norbert's emotion. I will rather consider the *power* it exerts upon him! My question already supplies its answer: the emotion mobilizes forces that reduce the fleeting trait to a subjective indication. The pression of death is no more mysterious nor does it require any more clarification: its role, in the struggle staged by the dream, is to produce a similar effect.

Everything is wed, and everything is said, from the moment Gradiva is seen as a person in her own right. Once deemed alive, she lends herself to the utter simplification, and the brutal imposition of a binary order: the life-death dichotomy thus comes to reinforce, and even generate, the eruption of Vesuvius and the terror of interment. Inasmuch as becoming is represented as being, and the impersonal motion's caught into a human, all too human emotion, it is immediately threatened by annihilation: "Then however he became suddenly aware that if she did not quickly save herself, she must perish in the general destruction, and violent fear forced from him a cry of warning." Norbert's anguish does not prove in any way the existence of a repression. It does not substantiate Freud's claim that an event, a feeling, from the past are attempting to resurface. Anguish is a product of the *present*. It arises by virtue of the "*living reality*" conferred upon Gradiva.

As soon as the archaeologist sees her in danger of being buried he tries to imprint "her image onto his memory." The becoming-unlimited of Gradiva once objectified, falls back instantaneously upon a *past* (memory) already directed toward the *future* (he will have seen her). Oppositions form anew. Memory arises from Norbert's focalization on a representation, an icon, an *image*. Memory liberates the possibility of a repression which does not come *from* the past, but results from the fantasmatic projection of the present *onto* the past. Memory helps to quench the intensity of the present. It limits the power of forgetfulness by means of a specular detachment, i.e., a *speculation* that venerates the motion with depth, difference and temporality.

The oneiric present can always be bounced back onto alleged infantile sources. All Freudian dreams must fulfill this condition: "A normal dream

stands, so to speak, on two legs. One rests on essential recent factors and the other on an important childhood event. Between these two events, the dream establishes a communication, it strives to mold the present upon the past" (*Dora*). I would rather say that it shapes the past on the present! Freud recognized this at first, but in terms of *fantasies*. He saw them as delayed products that "starting in the present are thrown backwards, towards earliest infancy." Freud offers an explanation for such a retrogression: "I have found how this happens: it is, once more, through verbal association." (Letters to Wilhelm Fliess, 101). Does this come as a surprise? Psychoanalysis exudes a conviction all the more irresistible that it is inextricably bound with the fantasmatic coil it claims to explain. No wonder if repetition prevails. . . . But to simply reverse Freud's proposition still maintains us within a causal-temporal opposition. We already put a limitation to the pure becoming by endlessly dividing the present between past and future.

Freud's reading emphasizes the living present of the dream. The unlimited present, as a result, is weighted down by an anxiety whose matrix is thus internalized and thrust back so as to furnish an unimpeachable causation. Since it is assumed that "dreams and delusions arise from the same source—from what is repressed" (S.E., IX, 62), Norbert's wandering will testify to repression.

Norbert's delusion in no way was morbid, but with the dream's help it comes very close to becoming so! Always more meanings, interpretations and images. For fear of losing or of wanting. And one wants because one signifies, interprets, imagines, remembers! A classic *double bind*.

The metonymization of the gait onto the complete body of Gradiva gives rise to another detachment which aims at obliterating the energetic element. Such is the face whose omnipresence in the dream is so forceful that it ends up replacing the motion.

I could view this substitution in a linear way and oppose as though it were its dark, *negative* side, the impersonal, deterritorializing trance of the process to the subjugation generated by the face. This ego effect parallels Norbert's quest to find an equivalence to the posture. While examining the sculpture's "indifferent" face, the archaeologist could not help individualizing the *person* of Gradiva. He invented a rank, a race, a temperament. His interests now seemed to circle around a single point: "From daily contemplation of her head, another new conjecture had gradually arisen. The cut of her features seemed to him, more and more, not Roman or Latin, but Greek. . . . Upon closer consideration he found this also confirmed by the expression of the face" (D&D, p. 150-1).

Norbert's terror at the sight of a living person as such exposed to death depends heavily on the imposition of the face. It should increase the dream's pressure towards individualization. But a reactive force is not tied down to an intangible object defined independently of the specific situations in which it appears. The archaeologist's neurotic interpretation actually runs up against the same "object" (but is it really *the same?*) which first strived to freeze the motion. In response to his cry of warning, "her head turned toward him so



that her face now appeared for a moment in full view, *yet with an utterly uncomprehending expression*; and, without paying any more attention to him, she continued in the same direction as before." Gradiva's face, far from eliciting Norbert's subjective understanding, resolutely resists any such appropriation. The *face-in-motion* thus opposes its radical indifference to Norbert's differentiating anxiety.

The strategic position of the dream is to initiate a reappropriation of the Gradiva-effect. Within the oneiric scene, however, the active forces continue to elude the sway of expressive signs, the reign of representation.

Gradiva's face-in-motion turns to stone: "her face became paler as if it were changing to white marble." Freud immediately wants to identify the idea that, in his words, is *represented and enacted* by the dream. His interpretation is final: "Hanold had in fact transferred his interest from the living girl to the sculpture: the girl he loved had been transformed for him into a marble relief. The latent dream-thoughts, which were bound to remain unconscious, sought to change the sculpture back into the living girl: what they were saying to him accordingly was something like: 'After all, you're interested in the statue of Gradiva only because it reminds you of Zoë, who is living here and now.' But if this discovery could have become conscious, it would have meant the end of the delusion." (S.E., IX, p. 60). It would indeed have ended the delusion as an access to the becoming-nomad of Norbert. But not to the symptom-delusion, to the delusion of the becoming-conscious of repression which only *begins* with the all too intelligent interpretation of Freud.

Another intelligence offers at this point to push the Freudian interpretation to its ultimate consequence. The analyst reverses Zoe's petrification into Gradiva. The science of dreams stages far more elaborate permutations. Sarah Kofman feels therefore entitled to conclude that Zoe's becoming-stone, or Gradiva's becoming-alive actually refer to Norbert's being *medusa'd* by Zoe-Athena as a child: "Stone, symbol (. . .) of castration and of resistance to castration." (*Quatre romans analytiques*, Galilée, 1973, p. 124). Who would doubt that the petrification of Zoe was not the *sign* of Norbert's castration-complex? The becoming-stone is thus properly reintegrated into a subjective representation. Every "subject" is, in essence, the subject of castration. . .

Norbert cannot become a subject in his own right unless Gradiva assumes the role of an object of desire. Her presence has to be felt as a deprivation, her possession as a loss. The face-in-motion, however, eludes such a reactive role. The archaeologist's expressive interpretation of Gradiva's impassive face is consequently revealed for what it is. Anxiety had pinned down the movement of becoming to a recognizable, subjective feature. The becoming-mineral, on the other hand, takes Gradiva away from the powerful machine of logic: "her face became pale as if it were changing to white marble: *she continued to walk*. . ." Discoloration in no way indicates a *loss* of color, it rather gives access to a non-substantial, non-differential, and even trans-mortal state. To breathe no-more—to become marble—puts to rest all the reductive oppositions; it produces a "supernatural calm" alien to all danger.

to all terror. Although Freudian interpretation saturates and dramatizes the oneiric scene through Norbert's own projections, it can at best juxtapose from the outside its commentary to a set-up that fiercely resists it: "There she lay. . . as if for sleep, but no longer breathing, apparently stifled by the sulphur fumes. From Vesuvius the red glow flared over her countenance, which, with closed eyes, was exactly like that of a beautiful statue. *No fear nor distortion* was apparent, but a *strange equanimity, calmly* submitting to the inevitable. . ." The non-representative and non-expressive power of the face is still haunted by the subjective economy (*stifled, submission, inevitable*). An extra twist of the signs and sleep becomes the metaphor of death, indifference a submission to destiny. Gradiva's features, staying clear of such a neurotic reading, quickly become indistinct. . .

Another phenomenon has become visible through this confrontation. I will now try to define it from another angle.

From a bird's eye view, Norbert's dream appears as a well-defined narrative unity, with a rigorous internal logic and a dialectical progression. Freud did not hesitate to break the surface connections of the dream in order to explain the intricate elaboration of each of the heterogeneous elements he retains for his analysis. He brought to light, along the same lines, the specific distortions and the forceful masks they had to assume under the pressure of censorship before they reached a semblance of verisimilitude.

Dissociation within the dream, however, preludes to a new construction whose outcome is the *thought of the dream*. Freud's prodigious inventiveness in regard to the intensive polyphony of the dream ends up in a weak mental construct. As a matter of fact, does it *end up*, or did it *start* in such a fashion? Totalization is actually at work in the genesis of individual terms through the imposition of language and the powerful assimilations it allows. Such is the *via regia* to psychoanalysis: one adheres closely to the primary processes, one swiftly embraces the libidinal flux only to channel them into the all too willing structures and the implacable logic of language.

Following Freud's example, one must know how to change scales freely in the presence of a dream, so as to avoid petrifying its energetic process and analyzing the decomposed components in relation to a presumptive origin. The elements of a dream refer to nothing, they are raw forces, distant yet proximate, *almost* combined, to paraphrase John Cage, within the same frame.

I purposely turn to modern music here, primarily, I admit, because of Freud's enduring hostility to music in general. In his introduction to "The Moses of Michelangelo", he says he is interested only in works that allow him to *understand* how they produce their effects: "Wherever I cannot do this, as for instance with music, I am almost incapable of obtaining any pleasure. Some rationalistic, or perhaps analytic, turn of mind in me rebels against being moved by a thing without knowing why I am thus affected and what it is that affects me." (S.E., XIII, 211). "Intellectual orgasm," as they say in brothels.

Everything vibrant and audacious modern art has to offer—from William



Burrough's *cut-ups* to Merce Cunningham's ballets, from Bob Wilson's operas to Rauschenberg's constructions—is a million light-years from the crummy rationalizations of psychoanalysis. The question of meaning has long been forgotten and what matters is how one can gather and mobilize disparate elements without giving in to the demands of resemblance, without resorting to relations, logical causality, the burdensome clogs of finality, in order to restore the flow of events, the overwhelming process of the world, beyond the cloggish need to censure, to abstract, to foresee, to possess: "I wanted to avoid the melodic aspect," says Cage, "because melody entails will and the desire to bend the sounds to the will. Nevertheless, I do not reject melody. I reject it even less since it is self-engendered. But it must not begin by being imposed: I don't want to force the sounds to follow me." (John Cage, *Pour Les Oiseaux*, 81).

Why then should one insist on forcing dreams, texts, words, and actions to signify? Keep the dream-bursts apart; let them resound together without filling the intervals that allow them to coexist in all their richness within dissonance.

At this point, no more need be said of the dream or the text. Mérely let them act upon you, for as soon as you try to tie all the scattered ends, as soon as you trade the fluid process for the moral order of relations and the mental order of the object, as soon as you submit to the rule of signs, ambivalence and ambiguity, repression and the uncanny,—all the mirages of the subject and of knowledge—are bound to reappear. If you cannot break away from the traps of metonymized desire and relinquish your grasp, what else is there to do but to call in the police of meaning and psychoanalyze, and psychoanalyze, and psychoanalyze. . .

The archaeologist safeguards his delirium by forgetting the Pompeian dream. Hysterical amnesia, whispers Freud, before relevantly concluding: "the journey is the result not of the direct instigation of the dream, but a revolt against it, as an emanation of a mental power that refused to know anything of the secret meaning of the dream." (S.E., IX, 68). Must repression be invoked once again? The dream is not to be envisioned in terms of secrecy and knowledge, but in terms of power. *Interpretative* power. They send you off in search of something lying beneath the allegedly deformed production of oneiric images, while in reality catching you in the symbol-trap, in the rigged play of meaning.

Forget meaning and with it the subject. Repression cannot resist the folly of winds.

Beauty will be amnesiac or will not be at all.

Translated by Daniel Moshenberg

1. See S. Lotringer, "The Fiction of Analysis," *Semiotext(e)*, Vol. II, n. 3.
2. "Gradiva: A Pompeian Fancy," in *Delusion and Dream*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1956 (D&D), pp. 153-155.

FRANÇOIS FOURQUET

## Libidinal Nietzsche

*F*ascism stands for evil in our political language. Precisely because we want this language to be political, and not moral, we cannot use the words “right” or “wrong”, “good” or “bad” without sounding ridiculous. The “good” and the “bad”, therefore, become the “revolutionary” and the “fascist”. How did this come about? The answer is practically self evident: since the beginning of the labor movement organized in the last century, since the creation of the first “socialist” State, only fascism as a political and social movement has been subjected to the joint military liquidation, and hence common moral reprobation, of the two adversaries. Moreover, since the genocide of the Jews inflamed one of the most lancinating abscesses of guilt of “western sensitivity”, after the Incas, the African slaves and the American Indians, the denunciation of fascism easily triggered the moral horror of the masses. The Soviet camps never aroused the same repulsion, nor did Budapest, nor the invasion of Czechoslovakia. We have to admit, then, that the designation of fascism as the symbol of evil was prescribed by the moral-political code imposed by the allies during the last war, and by the policy of peaceful coexistence, or, if you prefer, the Popular Front strategy of the western communist parties.

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The question of Nietzsche's historical relationship to National Socialism can be approached along two lines. Here is the first: did Nietzsche influence Nazism, yes or no? The question is falsely naive. It asks: was there a filiation between Nietzsche's ideas about the will to power, aristocracy, etc., and those of Nazism? The answer, then, is yes or no. *Yes*, such a filiation exists: the Nazis, introduced to his ideas by his sister, by Rosenberg, etc., used Nietzsche in formulating their ideology. This is Lukács' answer, for whom "no philosophy is innocent" and who denounces Nietzsche as the greatest thinker of bourgeois irrationalism during the imperialist epoch. Or, no: *no*, the Nazis did nothing but misrepresent and betray the Nietzschean doctrine of the will to power and of the eternal return—this is Georges Bataille's answer. Phrasing the question and answering it in these terms presupposes at least three things: first, that Nietzsche is a mere thinker, a manufacturer of ideas; secondly, that his relationship to Nazism is one of ideas, his influence ideological, bearing only on Nazi ideology; thirdly, that fascism is the incarnation of evil and National Socialism the worst kind of fascism. To answer that Nietzsche did not *intend* what the Nazis interpreted him as saying, that he even *intended* the opposite, is to remain captive of the ideological and moral point of view that indicts him. Besides, by doing this one avoids responding to a second, much more upsetting, formulation of the question: are there or are there not unconscious *affinities*, and not *ideological* similarities, between Nietzsche and fascism? The problem is therefore no longer to establish or deny an influence, that is to say a causal connection which would render Nietzsche guilty or innocent, but to know whether or not there are *resonances*, *intensities* in common, between the forces which shook Nietzsche to the point of madness and those which sent Germany into a frenzy. Resonance is not the same thing as similarity or origin—the question of accusing or exonerating Nietzsche by retroactive application of a law of good and evil derived from the Stalinist period does not arise in this somber and dazzling field of unlimited affirmation.

We must take seriously this rather disheartening intuition of the *Anti-Oedipus*: desire does not necessarily coincide with militant good intentions, for it is beyond good and evil. We must distinguish two discrete levels. The first is that of the unconscious, where the *Anti-Oedipus* sharply delineates two figures of the libido: the schizoid and the paranoid, the affirmative and the negative, the active and the reactive, the triumphant and the resentimental. These two modalities of the libido cut across and constitute the whole social sphere, ranging from a given peculiarity of the individual to a particular orientation of the labor strategy. The second level, where the fascist/revolutionary distinction is drawn, is that of moral-political representation. These two levels sometimes coincide, or reinforce one another, but they do not overlap. A paranoid investment may underlie a revolutionary activity, and, inversely, schizoid libido can exist in a fascist movement. The schizoparanoïd distinction does not coincide with the revolutionary/fascist opposition, with the opposition between good and evil, that is! For there to be a coincidence, a "legitimate" use of the syntheses of the unconscious, which

characterizes the schizophrenic mode of desire, would have to lead exclusively into the revolutionary camp and an "illegitimate" use, characteristic of the paranoid mode, would have to lead straight into the arms of fascism. It would be too easy if the schizoid libido "naturally", so to speak, supported the interest of the proletariat, and the paranoid libido the interest of the bourgeoisie. In fact, class interest is completely defined in the realm of political representation and its distribution of moral political categories: good at the extreme left, evil at the extreme right. This whole political realm, of course, is not just ideological; it is also a real institutional domain, and class interests do not exist beyond the class organizations which *represent* them historically. But these power structures and these parties make up the reactive field of history, completely animated by reactive libido, precisely, that is, by the paranoid pole of the unconscious. No class interest, therefore, neither that of the proletariat nor, of course, that of the bourgeoisie, can be used to define a schizoid type of investment. Otherwise one would be guilty of a paralogism which consists in already considering the revolution in terms of the "legitimate" use of the syntheses of the unconscious, so as to guarantee that schizoid desire will be revolutionary from the beginning, and already placing fascism in the "illegitimate" category, to ensure the reactionary destiny of paranoid desire.

*There is no such thing as pure "active libido", nor, for that matter, pure "reactive libido".* Action and reaction, "schizophrenic pole" and "paranoid pole" of the libido are always mixed together in countless combinations and, consequently, are complex to appraise. Genealogy, Nietzsche says, is a meticulous affair, requiring a very subtle evaluation to discern the types of forces at play and the complexity of the relations between them. But on a first and *very crude* approximation, one thing is certain: something reactive almost always erodes the active force, and sometimes (not always) an active intensity is present in the reactive forces. *There are not two libidos*, an active and a reactive one, but rather active impulses more or less "reactivated", more or less regularized, "gregarized" by the power apparatus, giving the illusion of a relative unity, a coherent force, where there is really only a *conglomeration* of dominated forces, a "*pudding*" of impulses, which, suitably controlled, affords itself to the historical eye as an organism, a person, a structure or a productive social force. Our historical concepts blind us in this extraordinarily teeming world, this immense scintillation. We must become *genealogists*, and no longer separate the true from the false but discriminate the active from the reactive, the dominant from the dominated, and all the possible historic modalities of each of these forms. For the *critical* practice of historical understanding we must substitute an *affirmative* practice of our intensive relationship to the drives and impulses of history.

For example: communism. Consider the attack on the Moncada barracks that Fidel Castro and his companions botched in 1953: an active force blazes forth like the sun, reorganizes the existing situation in its entirety, and from now on the whole reactive world will be determined in relation to this intruder. The whole dictatorial system of Batista is recast from top to bottom—



the edifice is cracked, and the guerilla from the Sierra Maestra widens the crack enough to destroy the State which otherwise could have survived. The fact that this active force of desire bowed to the point to becoming the puppet of Comrade Brezhnev is another matter, but one suspects that if this active force was assimilated by the more massive libido of what used to be Bolshevism, it is because something reactive, paranoid, was already there in 1953, namely the Christian-Latin-American conception of the political struggle, a libidinal model of courage, virility (“machismo”), purity, equality, etc. (This is *certainly not* to say that the sovietization of Castroism was necessary, present from the beginning like the seed at the origin of organic growth.)

The same goes for the “coupure léniniste” of 1903 (cf. Félix Guattari, *Psychanalyse et transversalité*, Maspero, 1972, p. 173): the “Bolshevik libidinal complex” pulverizes the social democratic structure as if it were a pane of glass and absolutely everything changes. The active energy set in motion is so percussive that it turns the whole political world upside down and *ends up taking power*. How do we explain Stalinism then? As a degeneration? The Trotskyite argument is shabby: Leninism was good, Stalinism is evil. Forty years later the leftists have begun to suspect that Stalinism was present in Leninism like a seed in the fruit, not like a worm. Leninism was thus bad as well, but still not as bad as Stalinism. It was bad in its theory of centralized organization, in its military conception of the Party. How well bred are the people that say that! Bolshevism was neither good nor bad; it was libidinal, a complex of interrelated and intense forces, not unlike what we find in our Maoists today. A libidinal complex is not a complex of representations but of *intensive forces*, active only in the realm of power in the most material, the most “political” sense of the word. And Stalinism is quite simply Bolshevism in power. The reactive elements have triumphed: they are impossible to resist—look at Lenin, he gave in to death; Trotsky, he let Stalin take power, not understanding anything that was going on, or, rather, understanding it only too well. He was fascinated by Stalinism like all the old Bolsheviks, and as Isaac Deutscher was to be later on. *It was their own desire they saw at work there, their desire in power*. It was irresistible, as if they had been hypnotized by the Stalinist serpent that engulfed them all, wiped out all the old Bolsheviks with their tacit complicity. How can we explain the terrifying public confessions at the Moscow trials? People look for psychological or moral-political explanations: Bucharin thought it was better to recant than to justify the imperialist enemy. Ha! They didn’t give a damn about the imperialist enemy. They didn’t give a damn about their own image in history. The only way to understand anything about the Moscow trials is to take the mainsprings of desire of Bolshevism itself and its beliefs into account. If Bucharin and the others had been made of a different libidinal *material* than their accusers, they would have preferred to croak on the spot, as soon as they were arrested, or, on the contrary, to admit to anything, painlessly, by pure calculation as Yakir did at his recent trial: a wink to the West—I warned you, don’t believe a word I say; I’m saving my skin; I hope this makes “them”

look even more ridiculous. An altogether different situation prevailed in 1936-38: the accused really wanted the West, and especially their people and themselves, to believe that they were actually guilty. The whole Bolshevik libido had become completely reactive. *It was the same* libido, but the proportions had changed. *Bolshevik resentment had become pure bad conscience.*

So, there is no pure, active form of desire. But what is active? Several elements can give us an indication. The first and most crucial one comes from Nietzsche, as he announces the superman within whom active forces dominate the reactive ones, and the will to power eliminates the will to nothingness, resentment and bad conscience forever. But what Zarathustra announces is almost beyond words:

... –the vast unbounded Yea-and Amen-saying.

For all things are baptized at the font of eternity, and beyond good and evil; good and evil themselves, however, are but fugitive shadows and damp afflictions and passing clouds.

Verily, it is a blessing and not a blasphemy when I teach that “above all things there standeth the heaven of chance, the heaven of innocence, the heaven of hazard, the heaven of wantonness”.

“Of hazard”—that is the oldest nobility in the world; that gave I back to all things; I emancipated them from bondage under purpose.

This freedom and celestial serenity did I put like an azur bell above all things, when I taught that over them and through them, no “eternal will” willeth.

This wantonness and folly did I put in the place of that will, when I taught that “In everything there is one thing impossible—rationality!”

A *little* reason, to be sure, a germ of wisdom scattered from star to star—this leaven is mixed in all things: for the sake of folly, wisdom is mixed in all things!

A little wisdom is indeed possible; but this blessed security have I found in all things that they prefer—to *dance* on the feet of chance.<sup>1</sup>

We don't dare *really* think these words: affirmative life, joy, are “beyond good and evil”, beyond grim Reason. We agree reluctantly and then hasten right away to construct a morality and a rationality of desire. But no! We must break out of this preacher's philosophy which Hegel exemplifies when he invites us to confront the negative. But he has *already* “transcended” it. And when Sartre is determined to think violence as the negative of history he *already* has peace of mind because violence is the child of scarcity and will disappear with the abundance of socialism. Violence is negativity only for a negative philosophy, for a radical nihilism, that is, and for all its derivatives. Let us listen to Nietzsche again:



Life itself is *essentially* appropriation, injury, overpowering of what is alien and weaker; suppression, hardness, imposition of one's own forms, incorporation and at least, at its mildest, exploitation—but why should one always use these words in which a slanderous intent has been imprinted for ages?

Even the body within which individuals treat each other as equals, as suggested before—and this happens in a very healthy aristocracy—if it is a living and not a dying body, has to do to other bodies what the individuals within it refrain from doing to each other: it will have to be an incarnate will to power, it will strive to grow, spread, seize, become predominant not from any morality or immorality but because it is *living* and because life simply *is* will to power. But there is no point on which the ordinary consciousness of Europeans resists instruction as on this: everywhere people are now raving, even under scientific disguises, about coming conditions of society in which the “exploitive aspect” will be removed—which sounds to me as if they promised to invent a way of life that would dispense with all organic functions. “Exploitation” does not belong to a corrupt or imperfect or primitive society: it belongs to the *essence* of what lives, as a basic organic function; it is a consequence of the will to power, which is after all the will of life.

If this should be an innovation as a theory—as a reality it is the *primordial fact* of all history: people ought to be honest with themselves at least that far.<sup>2</sup>

Faced with the extraordinary violence of this text we have only one choice (we cannot get out of it by saying that Nietzsche is right in general but wrong here; there is no question of twisting his words by drawing interpretations which castrate them): either we refuse to acknowledge this “primordial fact” and we reject Nietzsche altogether—no problem, Lukács was right, we’ll have nothing to do with this irrationalist who understood nothing about the capitalist mode of production! As if the complexity of social relations could be reduced to this simplistic philosophy of history, this philosophy of life! Or else we are deeply shaken and we say that inequality and violence are, in fact, at the heart of history *not as its negativity but as the very form of its affirmation*; and then we must put our radical ideal to a serious test, one which it has little chance of surviving intact. *The historical ideal, which secretly underlies militant hopes, collapses.* Active, schizophrenic desire exults in its power. It is not that desire desires power, for this “passion to dominate” (Herrschaft) is not a psychological faculty. Domination is the very mode of desire; desire is the *desiring* of power.

We have a second reference since *Anti-Oedipus*: the two great poles of the libido, the schizophrenic and the paranoiac, which determine the two uses of the “syntheses of the unconscious”, the legitimate and the illegitimate. What is at stake is a positive exploration of the unconscious, an assessment of the *positive* content of the active form of the libido at the price of a break-

down of the categories of representation which are precisely paranoid categories. Infinite rapture with the productive connection, joy in affirmative disjunction, delight in nomadic and polyvocal conjunction—the active libido is a desiring multiplicity of component instincts, a huge schizophrenic swarming of intensities. The *active* force of history thus becomes the power of the schizophrenic flows to break out, tending towards an absolute deterritorialization, absolute coincidence of the body without organs of the desiring machines and the socius of the great social machines—the giddiness and gaiety of historical delirium. Always, however, the inscribing socius (earth, despot, capital) encodes, over-encodes or axiomatizes the flows which spring forth from all the fissures in the system—schizophrenic *action* of the flows and the machines, paranoiac *reaction* of the socius.

The libido is not external to power even in its active mode of operation. I completely agree that the power of desire is not the power of the State. It is irreducible to the forms and categories of the State machinery, or what we have called the power structure, and it certainly is not that imaginary creature “the revolutionary State apparatus” of the Maoists! *Desire is not an apparatus, nor a fortiori, is it desire for an apparatus* (that is to say the negative of the apparatus). It cannot be identified with any generality, any collectivization of power, any radical concern for the common Good. Active desire is pure singularity, pure affirmation of new values, neither camel nor lion but child, and in asserting this one is still a lion. Singularity is not a concept, affirmation is not the kowtowing of the ass. The libido is *force*, pure *power*, otherwise how could it crush the established order, shatter the power structure, run like a hemorrhage of impulses, dissolve the reactive structures of history? To dominate the reactive forces, to dissolve or neutralize resentment, requires a prodigious and dominating force, one that can explode the insipid ideas we generally have about the “real aspirations” of the masses. Whenever we feel something resound in history that makes us think of active desire, we *find power, the question and the realm of power*: the Commune, Bolshevism, Castroism, May 68, even the Vietnamese resistance. Again, I completely agree that we should not look for an *image* of the active libido here. Otherwise, as we shall see a little further on, we could simply call “active libido” everything that we consider revolutionary according to our radical code. The libido does not have an image. It is not representable. What we are saying is this: if it is true that we detect active intensities, schizophrenic productions, in these movements (and why wouldn’t we also find them in a given fascist event?) then we have to acknowledge that power is always at stake in the formations of the unconscious, whether active or reactive.

*This certainly does not mean that power is the goal of desire*, for desire has no aim, either revolutionary or reactionary. One could even say that once “in power” the libido freezes into an apparatus, and that at this point the more or less controlled, latent resentment triumphs and we get Stalinist or Nazi concentration camps: vengeance in power. Just think what the May leftists could have produced if they had been in power. To judge by the reactivism that rots the left in conditions of defeat, anything is imaginable.



So far, entangled in Marxist categories, we have *judged* a society by the nature of its social relations, good or bad, socialist or capitalist. But what is the relation between fascist Germany and France under a Daladier, both of which are capitalist? The mode of production is a useless concept. It doesn't even help us characterize the Soviet Union—consider the trouble Bettelheim has trying to figure this out. From now on we should evaluate a society *genealogically*, from the point of view of the forces which dominate it and the operation of this domination. Sociology is finished, Nietzsche proclaimed, there are only formations of sovereignty, *Herrschaftsgebilde*. How else can we differentiate between two social orders, except by their formations of sovereignty? Is it really collective property that opposes Nazi Germany to Stalinist Russia so irrevocably? We sense that it is not, that something completely different is involved, as it was for the Chouans, and that what happens has nothing to do with class interest. And today we clearly sense that what separates the USSR with its sad bureaucrat Kosygin from the U.S. with its gangster Nixon is not collective property, or planning, but the organization of the power structure itself, and that this organization is in close, organic relation to *basic libidinal structures*. In the USSR the apparatus is completely centralized. All the forces are interlocked in a pyramid which is practically all of a piece. No active intensity can seriously bring its weakness into play. Any force which tends to deviate is immediately thrown behind bars or into a mental institution. There is no latitude, no innovation. Most of the elements needed to renovate their productive forces they borrow from capitalism. Daily life is sinister and threatening; humor is reserved for the secrecy of private gatherings of friends and family, protected from the scrutiny of the State which records everything. The United States is more like a field where great reactive forces are more loosely at play; the cracks are deeper, providing a little more room to breathe. Innovative “schizes” can come about in the social sphere, and as soon as they do the great forces take them over and play them off against each other, after having suitably sterilized them. Or else a desiring split in the technological order comes out ahead in the relations between forces and itself becomes a reactive force, that is to say capital—small scale capitalist Bolshevism, which forces all the big capitalist companies to fall in line with it. For, left to themselves, the capitalist forces would certainly be content with an easy going rivalry, uneventful, and governed by the common understanding between well bred people—except that there will always be intruders, the Castros of capitalist production, who come to give them a hard time, who resist their attempts to smother them and succeed in breaking down the coalition. Can you imagine such a thing happening in the Soviet Union, where not capital, but the Party and State bureaucratic machinery is the field of power, where the State and business management exactly coincide within the power structure?

We sense that power is somehow involved even in the notorious “development of productive forces”, considered solely from the point of view of their development and not of their inherent inertia. What appears as productive activity is libidinal, innovative, activity that makes use of anything to

extend its power and increase its accumulation of flows in a great schizoid outpour. The agents are not logical operations but real processes, libidinal energy acting on libido, and being real, this activity does have an effect upon the evolution of capitalist power relations and asserts itself in this domain (or is destroyed). One cannot deny that even though this field is reactive, it still must have a certain *coefficient of fluidity* (which allows us to distinguish between American *viscosity* and Soviet *rigidity*, for example, the latter quite different from the Chinese conformation of sovereignty). Otherwise change would be inconceivable. No new capitalist force would be able to emerge in a structure frozen in agreements, cartels and eventless competitions.

It would be better, therefore, to avoid thinking technological (among other forms of) innovation in terms of scientificity. Science is not opposed to politics; the two only conflict in moral dissertations. Scientific and technological innovation comes about only in the element of power, in a field where active forces and reactive mechanisms are inextricably mingled. An invention suddenly sprouts up, a force already taking root in this field no matter what madness comes over the "henchman", individual or group, of these new intensities; there is no stopping him; he will fight literally to the death, as very often happens, to get his invention through. The reasons why these impulses assert themselves are unimportant—excitement with novelty, desire for power, social status, scientific truth, or global welfare—these are just reasons, good and bad, whose sole purpose is to neutralize the counter-forces which "reactivate" guilt and bad conscience and try to check the process of active expansion from within.

It is difficult, impossible really, to describe the active libido in history, be it weighed down with reactivity—and this for one simple reason: active intensities never correspond to a universal type, to a particular category which would enable you to say "this is an active intensity". There is no such thing as an active intensity as such, objectively. The historic-erotic series which underlies the position of the advocate asserting the existence of this active type must be taken into account. To say that a particular multiplicity is active in itself is to say that there is a universal code in-and-for-itself, by which we judge history and its events. That is what Marxism has always done, and what is now impossible for us, what we no longer feel like doing. What is the position we are speaking from? Let us just say that in May 68 something new appeared, *for us*, some obscure effervescence of a new libido, which, for the first time in history (the second if we count fascism) forced the communist movement to react to something happening way beyond it, something disturbing, its own death in action, a new energy. . . . May is not a dress rehearsal, not the 1905 of the new revolution, and the Trotskyites are not the new Bolsheviks—they always were and always will be Trotskyites, a particular kind of Bolshevik counter-libido, a by-product of Leninist eros, born of reaction and forever reactive. They too are irreversibly rigidified. They hate the Maos the way Trotsky hated Stalin, and no doubt they are right from a Leninist perspective, but that makes no difference. What



happened in May happened right next to the Trotskyites and the Maos, under their very eyes, almost in their hands. They didn't understand a thing, by the way, but beyond understanding, the libido is what acts and reacts. Some scurried behind the movement of March 22 to control or keep an eye on it while others decreed contemptuously that this was yet another bourgeois movement—and then it got to them too, and they were drawn in like everybody else. They fell apart and then pulled themselves together as best they could. But it was too late. Their numbers increased to no avail. They are splintered; they have begun to slide, something has come to life which escapes them. It is elusive because always multiple, always disparate. It involves not one movement but *a myriad* of movements, spreading in all directions, more or less affirmative, more or less reactive, in all cases incapable of claiming to be serious politics but slowly diffusing through all the existing organizations. What, who is this about? It is impossible to point to: examples cannot be given; people cannot be told what they should do. There is nothing “to do”, no new “Que Faire?”, the time has simply come to live, to live in all intensity, leaving the radicals to avert their eyes.

*Translated by Suzanne Guerlac*

Excerpts from “Généalogie du Capital: l'idéal historique”, published in *Recherches* No. 14, 1974.

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, translated by Thomas Common, New York, The Modern Library, “Before Sunrise” p. 181.
2. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, edited and translated by Walter Kaufmann, New York, Modern Library, 1968, “Beyond Good and Evil”, 259.

MICHEL FOUCAULT

## Nietzsche, Genealogy, History

1. Genealogy is gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary. It operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times.

On this basis, it is obvious that Paul Ree was wrong to follow the English tendency in describing the history of morality in terms of a linear development—in reducing its entire history and genesis to an exclusive concern for utility. He assumed that words had kept their meaning, that desires still pointed in a single direction, and that ideas retained their logic; and he ignored the fact that the world of speech and desires has known invasions, struggles, plundering, disguises, ploys. From these elements, however, genealogy retrieves an indispensable restraint: it must record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality; it must seek them in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history—in sentiments, love, conscience, instincts; it must be sensitive to their recurrence, not in order to trace the gradual curve of their evolution, but to isolate the different scenes where they engaged in different roles. Finally, genealogy must define even those instances where they are absent, the moment when they remained unrealized (Plato, at Syracuse, did not become Mohammed).

Genealogy, consequently, requires patience and a knowledge of details and it depends on a vast accumulation of source material. Its “cyclopean monuments”<sup>1</sup> are constructed from “discreet and apparently insignificant

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truths and according to a rigorous method"; they cannot be the product of "large and well-meaning errors."<sup>2</sup> In short, genealogy demands relentless erudition. Genealogy does not oppose itself to history as the lofty and profound gaze of the philosopher might compare to the molelikè perspective of the scholar; on the contrary, it rejects the metahistorical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies. It opposes itself to the search for "origins".

2. In Nietzsche, we find two uses of the word *Ursprung*. The first is unstressed, and it is found alternately with other terms such as *Entstehung*, *Herkunft*, *Abkunft*, *Geburt*. In *The Genealogy of Morals*, for example, *Entstehung* or *Ursprung* serve equally well to denote the origin of duty or guilty conscience;<sup>3</sup> and in the discussion of logic or knowledge in *The Gay Science*, their origin is indiscriminately referred to as *Ursprung*, *Entstehung*, or *Herkunft*.<sup>4</sup>

The other use of the word is stressed. On occasion, Nietzsche places the term in opposition to another: in the first paragraph of *Human, All Too Human* the miraculous origin (*Wunderursprung*) sought by metaphysics is set against the analyses of historical philosophy, which poses questions *über Herkunft und Anfang*. *Ursprung* is also used in an ironic and deceptive manner. In what, for instance, do we find the original basis (*Ursprung*) of morality, a foundation sought after since Plato? "In detestable, narrow-minded conclusions. *Pudenda origo*."<sup>5</sup> Or in a related context, where should we seek the origin of religion (*Ursprung*), which Schopenhauer located in a particular metaphysical sentiment of the hereafter? It belongs, very simply, to an invention (*Erfindung*), a sleight-of-hand, an artifice (*Kunststück*), a secret formula, in the rituals of black magic, in the work of the *Schwarzkünstler*.<sup>6</sup>

One of the most significant texts with respect to the use of all these terms and to the variations in the use of *Ursprung* is the preface to the *Genealogy*. At the beginning of the text, its objective is defined as an examination of the origin of moral preconceptions and the term used is *Herkunft*. Then, Nietzsche proceeds by retracing his personal involvement with this question: he recalls the period when he "calligraphied" philosophy, when he questioned if God must be held responsible for the origin of evil. He now finds this question amusing and properly characterizes it as a search for *Ursprung* (he will shortly use the same term to summarize Paul Ree's activity).<sup>7</sup> Further on, he evokes the analyses that are characteristically Nietzschean and that began with *Human, All Too Human*. Here, he speaks of *Herkunftshypothesen*. This use of the word *Herkunft* cannot be arbitrary, since it serves to designate a number of texts, beginning with *Human, All Too Human*, which deal with the origin of morality, asceticism, justice, and punishment. And yet, the word used in all these works had been *Ursprung*.<sup>8</sup> It would seem that at this point in the *Genealogy* Nietzsche wished to validate an opposition between *Herkunft* and *Ursprung* that did not exist ten years earlier. But immediately following the use of the two terms in a specific

sense, Nietzsche reverts, in the final paragraphs of the preface, to a usage that is neutral and equivalent.<sup>9</sup>

Why does Nietzsche challenge the pursuit of the origin (*Ursprung*), at least on those occasions when he is truly a genealogist? First, because it is an attempt to capture the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities, and their carefully protected identities, because this search assumes the existence of immobile forms that precede the external world of accident and succession. This search is directed to “that which was already there,” the image of a primordial truth fully adequate to its nature, and it necessitates the removal of every mask to ultimately disclose an original identity. However, if the genealogist refuses to extend his faith in metaphysics, if he listens to history, he finds that there is “something altogether different” behind things: not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms. Examining the history of reason, he learns that it was born in an altogether “reasonable” fashion—from chance:<sup>10</sup> devotion to truth and the precision of scientific methods arose from the passion of scholars, their reciprocal hatred, their fanatical and unending discussions, and their spirit of competition—the personal conflicts that slowly forged the weapons of reason.<sup>11</sup> Further, genealogical analysis shows that the concept of liberty is an “invention of the ruling classes”<sup>12</sup> and not fundamental to man’s nature or at the root of his attachment to being and truth. What is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity.

History also teaches how to laugh at the solemnities of the origin. The lofty origin is no more than “a metaphysical extension which arises from the belief that things are most precious and essential at the moment of birth.”<sup>13</sup> We tend to think that this is the moment of their greatest perfection, when they emerged dazzling from the hands of a creator or in the shadowless light of a first morning. The origin always precedes the Fall. It comes before the body, before the world and time; it is associated with the gods, and its story is always sung as a theogony. But historical beginnings are lowly: not in the sense of modest or discreet like the steps of a dove, but derisive and ironic, capable of undoing every infatuation. “We wished to awaken the feeling of man’s sovereignty by showing his divine birth: this path is now forbidden, since a monkey stands at the entrance.”<sup>14</sup> Man originated with a grimace over his future development; and Zathustra himself is plagued by a monkey who jumps along behind him, pulling on his coattails.

The final postulate of the origin is linked to the first two in being the site of truth. From the vantage point of an absolute distance, free from the restraints of positive knowledge, the origin makes possible a field of knowledge whose function is to recover it, but always in a false recognition due to the excesses of its own speech. The origin lies at a place of inevitable loss, the point where the truth of things corresponded to a truthful discourse, the site of a fleeting articulation that discourse has obscured and finally lost. It is a new cruelty of history that compels a reversal of this relationship and the



abandonment of “adolescent” quests: behind, the always recent, avaricious, and measured truth, it posits the ancient proliferation of errors. It is now impossible to believe that “in the rending of the veil, truth remains truthful; we have lived long enough not to be taken in.”<sup>15</sup> Truth is undoubtedly the sort of error that cannot be refuted because it was hardened into an unalterable form in the long baking process of history.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the very question of truth, the right it appropriates to refute error and oppose itself to appearance, the manner in which it developed (initially made available to the wise, then withdrawn by men of piety to an unattainable world where it was given the double role of consolation and imperative, finally rejected as a useless notion, superfluous, and contradicted on all sides)—does this not form a history, the history of an error we call truth? Truth, and its original reign, has had a history within history from which we are barely emerging “in the time of the shortest shadow,” when light no longer seems to flow from the depths of the sky or to arise from the first moments of the day.<sup>17</sup>

A genealogy of values, morality, asceticism, and knowledge will never confuse itself with a quest for their “origins,” will never neglect as inaccessible the vicissitudes of history. On the contrary, it will cultivate the details and accidents that accompany every beginning; it will be scrupulously attentive to their petty malice: it will await their emergence, once unmasked, as the face of the other. Wherever it is made to go, it will not be reticent—in “excavating the depths,” in allowing time for these elements to escape from a labyrinth where no truth had ever detained them. The genealogist needs history to dispel the chimeras of the origin, somewhat in the manner of the pious philosopher who needs a doctor to exorcise the shadow of his soul. He must be able to recognize the events of history, its jolts, its surprises, its unsteady victories and unpalatable defeats—the basis of all beginnings, atavisms, and heredities. Similarly, he must be able to diagnose the illnesses of the body, its conditions of weakness and strength, its breakdown and resistances, to be in a position to judge philosophical discourse. History is the concrete body of a development, with its moments of intensity, its lapses, its extended periods of feverish agitation, its fainting spells; and only a meta-physician would seek its soul in the distant ideality of the origin.

3. *Entstehung* and *Herkunft* are more exact than *Ursprung* in recording the true objective of genealogy: and, while they are ordinarily translated as “origin,” we must attempt to reestablish their proper use.

*Herkunft* is the equivalent of stock or *descent*: it is the ancient affiliation to a group, sustained by the bonds of blood, tradition, or social class. The analysis of *Herkunft* often involves a consideration of race<sup>18</sup> or social type.<sup>19</sup> But the traits it attempts to identify are not the exclusive generic characteristics of an individual, a sentiment, or an idea, which permit us to qualify them as “Greek” or “English”; rather, it seeks the subtle, singular, and subindividual marks that might possibly intersect in them to form a network that is difficult to unravel. Far from being a category of resemblance, this origin allows the sorting out of different traits: the Germans imagined that they had finally accounted for their complexity by saying they

possessed a double soul; they were fooled by a simple computation, or rather, they were simply trying to master the racial disorder from which they had formed themselves.<sup>20</sup> Where the soul pretends unification or the self fabricates a coherent identity, the genealogist sets out to study the beginning—numberless beginnings whose faint traces and hints of color are readily seen by an historical eye. The analysis of descent permits the dissociation of the self, its recognition and displacement as an empty synthesis, in liberating a profusion of lost events.

An examination of descent also permits the discovery, under the unique aspect of a trait or a concept, of the myriad events through which—thanks to which, against which—they were formed. Genealogy does not pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of forgotten things; its duty is not to demonstrate that the past actively exists in the present, that it continues secretly to animate the present, having imposed a predetermined form to all its vicissitudes. Genealogy does not resemble the evolution of a species and does not map the destiny of a people. On the contrary, to follow the complex course of descent is to maintain passing events in their proper dispersion; it is to identify the accidents, the minute deviations—or conversely, the complete reversals—the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us; it is to discover that truth or being do not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents.<sup>21</sup> This is undoubtedly why every origin of morality from the moment it stops being pious—and *Herkunft* can never be—has value as a critique.<sup>22</sup>

Deriving from such a source is a dangerous legacy. In numerous instances, Nietzsche associates the terms *Herkunft* and *Erbschaft*. Nevertheless, we should not be deceived into thinking that this heritage is an acquisition, a possession that grows and solidifies; rather, it is an unstable assemblage of faults, fissures, and heterogeneous layers that threaten the fragile inheritor from within or from underneath: “injustice or instability in the minds of certain men, their disorder and lack of decorum, are the final consequences of their ancestors’ numberless logical inaccuracies, hasty conclusions, and superficiality.”<sup>23</sup> The search for descent is not the erecting of foundations: on the contrary, it disturbs what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself. What convictions and, far more decisively, what knowledge can resist it? If a genealogical analysis of a scholar were made—of one who collects facts and carefully accounts for them—his *Herkunft* would quickly divulge the official papers of the scribe and the pleadings of the lawyer—their father<sup>24</sup>—in their apparently disinterested attention, in the “pure” devotion to objectivity.

Finally, descent attaches itself to the body.<sup>25</sup> It inscribes itself in the nervous system, in temperament, in the digestive apparatus; it appears in faulty respiration, in improper diets, in the debilitated and prostrate body of those whose ancestors committed errors. Fathers have only to mistake effects



for causes, believe in the reality of an "afterlife," or maintain the value of eternal truths, and the bodies of their children will suffer. Cowardice and hypocrisy, for their part, are the simple offshoots of error: not in a Socratic sense, not that evil is the result of a mistake, not because of a turning away from an original truth, but because the body maintains, in life as in death, through its strength or weakness, the sanction of every truth and error, as it sustains, in an inverse manner, the origin-descent. Why did men invent the contemplative life? Why give a supreme value to this form of existence? Why maintain the absolute truth of those fictions which sustain it? "During barbarous ages . . . if the strength of an individual declined, if he felt himself tired or sick, melancholy or satiated and, as a consequence, without desire or appetite for a short time, he became relatively a better man, that is, less dangerous. His pessimistic ideas could only take form as words or reflections. In this frame of mind, he either became a thinker and prophet or used his imagination to feed his superstitions."<sup>26</sup> The body—and everything that touches it: diet, climate, and soil—is the domain of the *Herkunft*. The body manifests the stigmata of past experience and also gives rise to desires; failings, and errors. These elements may join in a body where they achieve a sudden expression, but as often, their encounter is an engagement in which they efface each other, where the body becomes the pretext of their insurmountable conflict.

The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated Self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration. Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body.

4. *Entstehung* designates *emergence*, the moment of arising. It stands as the principle and the singular law of an apparition. As it is wrong to search for descent in an uninterrupted continuity, we should avoid thinking of emergence as the final term of an historical development; the eye was not always intended for contemplation, and punishment has had other purposes than setting an example. These developments may appear as a culmination, but they are merely the current episodes in a series of subjugations: the eye initially responded to the requirements of hunting and warfare; and punishment has been subjected, throughout its history, to a variety of needs—revenge, excluding an aggressor, compensating a victim, creating fear. In placing present needs at the origin, the metaphysician would convince us of an obscure purpose that seeks its realization at the moment it arises. Genealogy, however, seeks to reestablish the various systems of subjection: not the anticipatory power of meaning, but the hazardous play of dominations.

Emergence is always produced through a particular stage of forces. The analysis of the *Entstehung* must delineate this interaction, the struggle these forces wage against each other or against adverse circumstances, and the attempt to avoid degeneration and regain strength by dividing these forces against themselves. It is in this sense that the emergence of a species (animal

... and its solidification are secured "in an extended battle against conditions which are essentially and constantly unfavorable." In fact, "the species must realize itself as a species, as something—characterized by the durability, uniformity, and simplicity of its form—which can prevail in the perpetual struggle against outsiders or the uprising of those it oppresses from within." On the other hand, individual differences emerge at another stage of the relationship of forces, when the species has become victorious and when it is no longer threatened from outside. In this condition, we find a struggle "of egoisms turned against each other, each bursting forth in a splintering of forces and a general striving for the sun and for the light."<sup>27</sup> There are also times when force contends against itself, and not only in the intoxication of an abundance, which allows it to divide itself, but at the moment when it weakens. Force reacts against its growing lassitude and gains strength; it imposes limits, inflicts torments and mortifications; it masks these actions as a higher morality, and, in exchange, regains its strength. In this manner, the ascetic ideal was born, "in the instinct of a decadent life which . . . struggles for its own existence."<sup>28</sup> This also describes the movement in which the Reformation arose, precisely where the church was least corrupt;<sup>29</sup> German Catholicism, in the sixteenth century, retained enough strength to turn against itself, to mortify its own body and history, and to spiritualize itself into a pure religion of conscience.

Emergence is thus the entry of forces; it is their eruption, the leap from the wings to center stage, each in its youthful strength. What Nietzsche calls the *Entstehungsherd*<sup>30</sup> of the concept of goodness is not specifically the energy of the strong or the reaction of the weak, but precisely this scene where they are displayed superimposed or face-to-face. It is nothing but the space that divides them, the void through which they exchange their threatening gestures and speeches. As descent qualifies the strength or weakness of an instinct and its inscription on a body, emergence designates a place of confrontation but not as a closed field offering the spectacle of a struggle among equals. Rather, as Nietzsche demonstrates in his analysis of good and evil, it is a "non-place," a pure distance, which indicates that the adversaries do not belong to a common space. Consequently, no one is responsible for an emergence: no one can glory in it, since it always occurs in the interstice.

In a sense, only a single drama is ever staged in this "non-place," the endlessly repeated play of dominations. The domination of certain men over others leads to the differentiation of values;<sup>31</sup> class domination generates the idea of liberty;<sup>32</sup> and the forceful appropriation of things necessary to survival and the imposition of a duration not intrinsic to them account for the origin of logic.<sup>33</sup> This relationship of domination is no more a "relationship" than the place where it occurs is a place; and, precisely for this reason, it is fixed, throughout its history, in rituals, in meticulous procedures that impose rights and obligations. It establishes marks of its power and engraves memories on things and even within bodies. It makes itself accountable for debts and gives rise to the universe of rules, which is by no means designed to temper violence, but rather to satisfy it. Following traditional beliefs, it



would be false to think that total war exhausts itself in its own contradictions and ends by renouncing violence and submitting to civil laws. On the contrary, the law is a calculated and relentless pleasure, delight in the promised blood, which permits the perpetual instigation of new dominations and the staging of meticulously repeated scenes of violence. The desire for peace, the serenity of compromise, and the tacit acceptance of the law, far from representing a major moral conversion or a utilitarian calculation that gave rise to the law, are but its result and, in point of fact, its perversion: "guilt, conscience, and duty had their threshold of emergence in the right to secure obligations; and their inception, like that of any major event on earth, was saturated in blood."<sup>34</sup> Humanity does not gradually progress from combat to combat until it arrives at universal reciprocity, where the rule of law finally replaces warfare; humanity installs each of its violences in a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to domination.

The nature of these rules allows violence to be inflicted on violence and the resurgence of new forces that are sufficiently strong to dominate those in power. Rules are empty in themselves, violent and unfinalized; they are impersonal and can be bent to any purpose. The successes of history belong to those who are capable of seizing these rules, to replace those who had used them, to disguise themselves so as to pervert them, invert their meaning, and redirect them against those who had initially imposed them; controlling this complex mechanism, they will make it function so as to overcome the rulers through their own rules.

The isolation of different points of emergence does not conform to the successive configurations of an identical meaning; rather, they result from substitutions, displacements, disguised conquests, and systematic reversals. If interpretation were the slow exposure of the meaning hidden in an origin, then only metaphysics could interpret the development of humanity. But if interpretation is the violent or surreptitious appropriation of a system of rules, which in itself has no essential meaning, in order to impose a direction, to bend it to a new will, to force its participation in a different game, and to subject it to secondary rules, then the development of humanity is a series of interpretations. The role of genealogy is to record its history: the history of morals, ideals, and metaphysical concepts, the history of the concept of liberty or of the ascetic life; as they stand for the emergence of different interpretations, they must be made to appear as events on the stage of historical process.

5. How can we define the relationship between genealogy, seen as the examination of *Herkunft* and *Entstehung*, and history in the traditional sense? We could, of course, examine Nietzsche's celebrated apostrophes against history, but we will put these aside for the moment and consider those instances when he conceives of genealogy as "wirkliche Historie," or its more frequent characterization as historical "spirit" or "sense."<sup>35</sup> In fact, Nietzsche's criticism, beginning with the second of the *Untimely Meditations*, always questioned the form of history that reintroduces (and always assumes)

a suprahistorical perspective: a history whose function is to compose the finally reduced diversity of time into a totality fully closed upon itself; a history that always encourages subjective recognitions and attributes a form of reconciliation to all the displacements of the past; a history whose perspective on all that precedes it implies the end of time, a completed development. The historian's history finds its support outside of time and pretends to base its judgments on an apocalyptic objectivity. This is only possible, however, because of its belief in eternal truth, the immortality of the soul; and the nature of consciousness as always identical to itself. Once the historical sense is mastered by a suprahistorical perspective, metaphysics can bend it to its own purpose and, by aligning it to the demands of objective science, it can impose its own "Egyptianism." On the other hand, the historical sense can evade metaphysics and become a privileged instrument of genealogy if it refuses the certainty of absolutes. Given this, it corresponds to the acuity of a glance that distinguishes, separates, and disperses, that is capable of liberating divergence and marginal elements—the kind of dissociating view that is capable of decomposing itself, capable of shattering the unity of man's being through which it was thought that he could extend his sovereignty to the events of his past.

Historical meaning becomes a dimension of "wirkliche Historie" to the extent that it places within a process of development everything considered immortal in man. We believe that feelings are immutable, but every sentiment, particularly the noblest and most disinterested, has a history. We believe in the dull constancy of instinctual life and imagine that it continues to exert its force indiscriminately in the present as it did in the past. But a knowledge of history easily disintegrates this unity, depicts its wavering course, locates its moments of strength and weakness, and defines its oscillating reign. It easily seizes the slow elaboration of instincts and those movements where, in turning upon themselves, they relentlessly set about their self-destruction.<sup>36</sup> We believe, in any event, that the body obeys the exclusive laws of physiology and that it escapes the influence of history, but this too is false. The body is molded by a great many distinct regimes; it is broken down by the rhythms of work, rest, and holidays; it is poisoned by food or values, through eating habits or moral laws; it constructs resistances.<sup>37</sup> "Effective" history differs from traditional history in being without constants. Nothing in man—not even his body—is sufficiently stable to serve as the basis for self-recognition or for understanding other men. The traditional devices for constructing a comprehensive view of history and for retracing the past as a patient and continuous development must be systematically dismantled. Necessarily, we must dismiss those tendencies that encourage the consoling play of recognitions. Knowledge, even under the banner of history, does not depend on "rediscovery," and it emphatically excludes the "rediscovery of ourselves." History becomes "effective" to the degree that it introduces discontinuity into our very being—as it divides our emotions, dramatizes our instincts, multiplies our body and sets it against itself. "Effective" millennial ending. It will uproot its traditional foundations and relentlessly



disrupt its pretended continuity. This is because knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting.

From these observations, we can grasp the particular traits of historical meaning as Nietzsche understood it—the sense which opposes “wirkliche Historie” to traditional history. The former transposes the relationship ordinarily established between the eruption of an event and necessary continuity. An entire historical tradition (theological or rationalistic) aims at dissolving the singular event into an ideal continuity—as a teleological movement or a natural process. “Effective” history, however, deals with events in terms of their most unique characteristics, their most acute manifestations. An event, consequently, is not a decision, a treaty, a reign, or a battle, but the reversal of a relationship of forces, the usurpation of power, the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who had once used it, a feeble domination that poisons itself as it grows lax, the entry of a masked “other.” The forces operating in history are not controlled by destiny or regulative mechanisms, but respond to haphazard conflicts.<sup>38</sup> They do not manifest the successive forms of a primordial intention and their attraction is not that of a conclusion, for they always appear through the singular randomness of events. The inverse of the Christian world, spun entirely by a divine spider, and different from the world of the Greeks, divided between the realm of will and the great cosmic folly, the world of effective history knows only one kingdom, without providence or final cause, where there is only “the iron hand of necessity shaking the dice-box of chance.”<sup>39</sup> Chance is not simply the drawing of lots, but raising the stakes in every attempt to master chance through the will to power, and giving rise to the risk of an even greater chance.<sup>40</sup> The world we know is not this ultimately simple configuration where events are reduced to accentuate their essential traits, their final meaning, or their initial and final value. On the contrary, it is a profusion of entangled events. If it appears as a “marvelous motley, profound and totally meaningful,” this is because it began and continues its secret existence through a “host of errors and phantasms.”<sup>41</sup> We want historians to confirm our belief that the present rests upon profound intentions and immutable necessities. But the true historical sense confirms our existence among countless lost events, without a landmark or a point of reference.

Effective history can also invert the relationship that traditional history, in its dependence on metaphysics, establishes between proximity and distance. The latter is given to a contemplation of distances and heights: the noblest periods, the highest forms, the most abstract ideas, the purest individualities. It accomplishes this by getting as near as possible, placing itself at the foot of its mountain peaks, at the risk of adopting the famous perspective of frogs. Effective history, on the other hand, shortens its vision to those things nearest to it—the body, the nervous system, digestion, and energies; it unearths the periods of decadence and if it chances upon lofty epochs, it is with the suspicion—not vindictive but joyous—of finding a barbarous and shameful confusion. It has no fear of looking down, so long as it is understood that it looks from above and descends to seize the various

perspectives, to disclose dispersions and differences, to leave things undisturbed in their own dimension and intensity. It reverses the surreptitious practice of historians, their pretension to examine things furthest from themselves, the grovelling manner in which they approach this promising distance (like the metaphysicians who proclaim the existence of an afterlife, situated at a distance from this world, as a promise of their reward). Effective history studies what is closest, but in an abrupt dispossession, so as to seize it at a distance (an approach similar to that of a doctor who looks closely, who plunges to make a diagnosis and to state its difference). Historical sense has more in common with medicine than philosophy; and it should not surprise us that Nietzsche occasionally employs the phrase "historically and physiologically,"<sup>42</sup> since among the philosopher's idiosyncracies is a complete denial of the body. This includes, as well, "the absence of historical sense, a hatred for the idea of development, Egyptianism," the obstinate "placing of conclusions at the beginning," of "making last things first."<sup>43</sup> History has a more important task than to be a handmaiden to philosophy, to recount the necessary birth of truth and values; it should become a differential knowledge of energies and failings, heights and degenerations, poisons and antidotes. Its task is to become a curative science.<sup>44</sup>

The final trait of effective history is its affirmation of knowledge as perspective. Historians take unusual pains to erase the elements in their work which reveal their grounding in a particular time and place, their preferences in a controversy—the unavoidable obstacles of their passion. Nietzsche's version of historical sense is explicit in its perspective and acknowledges its system of injustice. Its perception is slanted, being a deliberate appraisal, affirmation, or negation: it reaches the lingering and poisonous traces in order to prescribe the best antidote. It is not given to a discreet effacement before the objects it observes and does not submit itself to their processes; nor does it seek laws, since it gives equal weight to its own sight and to its objects. Through this historical sense, knowledge is allowed to create its own genealogy in the act of cognition; and "wirkliche Historie" composes a genealogy of history as the vertical projection of its position.

6. In this context, Nietzsche links historical sense to the historian's history. They share a beginning that is similarly impure and confused, share the same sign in which the symptoms of sickness can be recognized as well as the seed of an exquisite flower.<sup>45</sup> They arose simultaneously to follow their separate ways, but our task is to trace their common genealogy.

The descent (*Herkunft*) of the historian is unequivocal: he is of humble birth. A characteristic of history is to be without choice: it encourages thorough understanding and excludes qualitative judgments—a sensitivity to all things without distinction, a comprehensive view excluding differences. Nothing must escape it and, more importantly, nothing must be excluded. Historians argue that this proves their tact and discretion. After all, what right have they to impose their tastes and preferences when they seek to determine what actually occurred in the past? Their mistake is to exhibit a



total lack of taste, the kind of crudeness that becomes smug in the presence of the loftiest elements and finds satisfaction in reducing them to size. The historian is insensitive to the most disgusting things; or rather, he especially enjoys those things that should be repugnant to him. His apparent serenity follows from his concerted avoidance of the exceptional and his reduction of all things to the lowest common denominator. Nothing is allowed to stand above him; and underlying his desire for total knowledge is his search for the secrets that belittle everything: "base curiosity." What is the source of history? It comes from the plebs. To whom is it addressed? To the plebs. And its discourse strongly resembles the demagogue's refrain: "No one is greater than you and anyone who presumes to get the better of you—you who are good—is evil." The historian, who functions as his double, can be heard to echo: "No past is greater than your present, and, through my meticulous erudition, I will rid you of your infatuations and transform the grandeur of history into pettiness, evil, and misfortune." The historian's ancestry goes back to Socrates.

This demagogy, of course, must be masked. It must hide its singular malice under the cloak of universals. As the demagogue is obliged to invoke truth, laws of essences, and eternal necessity, the historian must invoke objectivity, the accuracy of facts, and the permanence of the past. The demagogue denies the body to secure the sovereignty of a timeless idea and the historian effaces his proper individuality so that others may enter the stage and reclaim their own speech. He is divided against himself: forced to silence his preferences and overcome his distaste, to blur his own perspective and replace it with the fiction of a universal geometry, to mimic death in order to enter the kingdom of the dead, to adopt a faceless anonymity. In this world where he has conquered his individual will, he becomes a guide to the inevitable law of a superior will. Having curbed the demands of his individual will in his knowledge, he will disclose the form of an eternal will in his object of study. The objectivity of historians inverts the relationships of will and knowledge and it is, in the same stroke, a necessary belief in Providence, in final causes and teleology—the beliefs that place the historian in the family of ascetics. "I can't stand these lustful eunuchs of history, all the seductions of an ascetic ideal; I can't stand these blanched tombs producing life or those tired and indifferent beings who dress up in the part of wisdom and adopt an objective point of view."<sup>46</sup>

The *Entstehung* of history is found in nineteenth-century Europe: the land of interminglings and bastardy, the period of the "man-of-mixture." We have become barbarians with respect to those rare moments of high civilization: cities in ruin and enigmatic monuments are spread out before us; we stop before gaping walls; we ask what gods inhabited these empty temples. Great epochs lacked this curiosity, lacked our excessive deference; they ignored their predecessors: the classical period ignored Shakespeare. The decadence of Europe presents an immense spectacle (while stronger periods refrained from such exhibitions), and the nature of this scene is to represent a theater; lacking monuments of our own making, which properly belong to

us, we live among crowded scenes. But there is more. Europeans no longer know themselves; they ignore their mixed ancestries and seek a proper role. They lack individuality. We can begin to understand the spontaneous historical bent of the nineteenth century: the anemia of its forces and those mixtures that effaced all its individual traits produced the same results as the mortification of asceticism; its inability to create, its absence of artistic works, and its need to rely on past achievements forced it to adopt the base curiosity of plebs.

If this fully represents the genealogy of history, how could it become, in its own right, a genealogical analysis? Why did it not continue as a form of demagogic or religious knowledge? How could it change roles on the same stage? Only by being seized, dominated, and turned against its birth. And it is this movement which properly describes the specific nature of the *Entstehung*: it is not the unavoidable conclusion of a long preparation, but a scene where forces are risked in the chance of confrontations, where they emerge triumphant, where they can also be confiscated. The locus of emergence for metaphysics was surely Athenian demagogy, the vulgar spite of Socrates and his belief in immortality, and Plato could have seized this Socratic philosophy to turn it against itself. Undoubtedly, he was often tempted to do so, but his defeat lies in its consecration. The problem was similar in the nineteenth century: to avoid doing for the popular asceticism of historians what Plato did for Socrates. This historical trait should not be founded upon a philosophy of history, but dismantled beginning with the things it produced; it is necessary to master history so as to turn it to genealogical uses, that is, strictly anti-Platonic purposes. Only then will the historical sense free itself from the demands of a suprahistorical history.

7. The historical sense gives rise to three uses that oppose and correspond to the three Platonic modalities of history. The first is parodic, directed against reality, and opposes the theme of history as reminiscence or recognition; the second is dissociative, directed against identity, and opposes history given as continuity or representative of a tradition; the third is sacrificial, directed against truth, and opposes history as knowledge. They imply a use of history that severs its connection to memory, its metaphysical and anthropological model, and constructs a counter-memory—a transformation of history into a totally different form of time.

First, the parodic and farcical use. The historian offers this confused and anonymous European, who no longer knows himself or what name he should adopt, the possibility of alternate identities, more individualized and substantial than his own. But the man with historical sense will see that this substitution is simply a disguise. Historians supplied the Revolution with Roman prototypes, romanticism with knight's armor, and the Wagnerian era was given the sword of a German hero—ephemeral props that point to our own unreality. No one kept them from venerating these religions, from going to Bayreuth to commemorate a new afterlife; they were free, as well, to be transformed into street-vendors of empty identities. The new historian, the genealogist, will know what to make of this masquerade. He will not be too



serious to enjoy it; on the contrary, he will push the masquerade to its limit and prepare the great carnival of time where masks are constantly reappearing. No longer the identification of our faint individuality with the solid identities of the past, but our “unrealization” through the excessive choice of identities—Frederick of Hohenstaufen, Caesar, Jesus, Dionysus, and possibly Zarathustra. Taking up these masks, revitalizing the buffoonery of history, we adopt an identity whose unreality surpasses that of God who started the charade. “Perhaps, we can discover a realm where originality is again possible as parodists of history and buffoons of God.”<sup>47</sup> In this, we recognize the parodic double of what the second of the *Untimely Meditations* called “monumental history”: a history given to reestablishing the high points of historical development and their maintenance in a perpetual presence, given to the recovery of works, actions, and creations through the monogram of their personal essence. But in 1874, Nietzsche accused this history, one totally devoted to veneration, of barring access to the actual intensities and creations of life. The parody of his last texts serves to emphasize that “monumental history” is itself a parody. Genealogy is history in the form of a concerted carnival.

The second use of history is the systematic dissociation of identity. This is necessary because this rather weak identity, which we attempt to support and to unify under a mask, is in itself only a parody: it is plural; countless spirits dispute its possession; numerous systems intersect and compete. The study of history makes one “happy, unlike the metaphysicians, to possess in oneself not an immortal soul but many mortal ones.”<sup>48</sup> And in each of these souls, history will not discover a forgotten identity, eager to be reborn, but a complex system of distinct and multiple elements, unable to be mastered by the powers of synthesis: “it is a sign of superior culture to maintain, in a fully conscious way, certain phases of its evolution which lesser men pass through without thought. The initial result is that we can understand those who resemble us as completely determined systems and as representative of diverse cultures, that is to say, as necessary and capable of modification. And in return, we are able to separate the phases of our own evolution and consider them individually.”<sup>49</sup> The purpose of history, guided by genealogy, is not to discover the roots of our identity but to commit itself to its dissipation. It does not seek to define our unique threshold of emergence, the homeland to which metaphysicians promise a return; it seeks to make visible all of those discontinuities that cross us. “Antiquarian history,” according to the *Untimely Meditations*, pursues opposite goals. It seeks the continuities of soil, language, and urban life in which our present is rooted 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>50</sup> This type of history was objected to in the *Meditations* because it tended to block creativity in support of the laws of fidelity. Somewhat later—and already in *Human, All Too Human*—Nietzsche reconsiders the task of the antiquarian, but with an altogether different emphasis. If genealogy in its own right gives rise to questions concerning our native land, native language, or the laws that govern

is, its intention is to reveal the heterogenous systems which, masked by the self, inhibit the formation of any form of identity.

The third use of history is the sacrifice of the subject of knowledge. In appearance, or rather, according to the mask it bears, historical consciousness is neutral, devoid of passions, and committed solely to truth. But if it examines itself and if, more generally, it interrogates the various forms of scientific consciousness in its history, it finds that all these forms and transformations are aspects of the will to knowledge: instinct, passion, the inquisitor's devotion, cruel subtlety, and malice. It discovers the violence of a position that sides against those who are happy in their ignorance, against the effective illusions by which humanity protects itself, a position that encourages the dangers of research and delights in disturbing discoveries.<sup>51</sup> The historical analysis of this rancorous will to knowledge reveals that all knowledge rests upon injustice (that there is no right, not even in the act of knowing, to truth or a foundation for truth) and that the instinct for knowledge is malicious (something murderous, opposed to the happiness of mankind). Even in the greatly expanded form it assumes today, the will to knowledge does not achieve a universal truth; man is not given an exact and serene mastery of nature. On the contrary, it ceaselessly multiplies the risks, creates dangers in every area; it breaks down illusory defences; it dissolves the unity of the subject: it releases those elements of itself that are devoted to its subversion and destruction. Knowledge does not slowly detach itself from its empirical roots, the initial needs from which it arose, to become pure speculation subject only to the demands of reason; its development is not tied to the constitution and affirmation of a free subject; rather, it creates a progressive enslavement to its instinctive violence. Where religions once demanded the sacrifice of bodies, knowledge now calls for experimentation on ourselves,<sup>52</sup> calls us to the sacrifice of the subject of knowledge. "The desire for knowledge has been transformed among us into a passion which fears no sacrifice, which fears nothing but its own extinction. It may be that mankind will eventually perish from this passion for knowledge. If not through passion, then through weakness. We must be prepared to state our choice: do we wish humanity to end in fire and light or to end on the sands?"<sup>53</sup> We should now replace the two great problems of nineteenth-century philosophy, passed on by Fichte and Hegel (the reciprocal basis of truth and liberty and the possibility of absolute knowledge), with the theme that "to perish through absolute knowledge may well form a part of the basis of being."<sup>54</sup> This does not mean, in terms of a critical procedure, that the will to truth is limited by the intrinsic finitude of cognition, but that it loses all sense of limitations and all claim to truth in its unavoidable sacrifice of the subject of knowledge. "It may be that there remains one prodigious idea which might be made to prevail over every other aspiration, which might overcome the most victorious: the idea of humanity sacrificing itself. It seems indisputable that if this new constellation appeared on the horizon, only the desire for truth, with its enormous prerogatives, could direct and sustain such a sacrifice. For to knowledge, no sacrifice is too great. Of course, this problem has never been posed."<sup>55</sup>



The *Untimely Meditations* discussed the critical use of history: its just treatment of the past, its decisive cutting of the roots, its rejection of traditional attitudes of reverence, its liberation of man by presenting him with other origins than those in which he prefers to see himself. Nietzsche, however, reproached critical history for detaching us from every real source and for sacrificing the very movement of life to the exclusive concern for truth. Somewhat later, as we have seen, Nietzsche reconsiders this line of thought he had at first refused, but directs it to altogether different ends. It is no longer a question of judging the past in the name of a truth that only we can possess in the present; but risking the destruction of the subject who seeks knowledge in the endless deployment of the will to knowledge.

In a sense, genealogy returns to the three modalities of history that Nietzsche recognized in 1874. It returns to them in spite of the objections that Nietzsche raised in the name of the affirmative and creative powers of life. But they are metamorphosized; the veneration of monuments becomes parody; the respect for ancient continuities becomes systematic dissociation; the critique of the injustices of the past by a truth held by men in the present becomes the destruction of the man who maintains knowledge by the injustice proper to the will to knowledge.

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1. *The Gay Science*, 7.
2. *Human, All Too Human*, 3.
3. *The Genealogy*, II, 6, 8.
4. *The Gay Science*, 110, 111, 300.

5. *The Dawn*, 102; ("Shameful origin"—Ed.)
6. *The Gay Science*, 151, 353; and also *The Dawn*, 62; *The Genealogy*, I, 14; *Twilight of the Idols*, "The Great Errors", 7. (*Schwarzkunstler* is a black magician—Ed.)
7. Paul Ree's text was entitled *Ursprung der Moralischen Empfindungen*.
8. In *Human, All Too Human*, aphorism 92 was entitled *Ursprung der Gerechtigkeit*.
9. In the main body of *The Genealogy*, *Ursprung* and *Herkunft* are used interchangeably in numerous instances (I, 2: II, 8, 11, 12, 16, 17).
10. *The Dawn*, 123.
11. *Human, All Too Human*, 34.
12. *The Wanderer and his Shadow*, 9.
13. *Ibid.*, 3.
14. *The Dawn*, 49.
15. *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, p. 99.
16. *The Gay Science*, 265 and 110.
17. *Twilight of the Idols*, "How the world of truths becomes a fable."
18. For example, *The Gay Science*, 135; *Beyond Good and Evil*, 200, 242, 244; *The Genealogy*, I, 5.
19. *The Gay Science*, 348-349; *Beyond Good and Evil*, 260.
20. *Beyond Good and Evil*, 244.
21. *The Genealogy*, III, 17. The *abkunft* of feelings of depression.
22. *Twilight*. "Reasons for philosophy."
23. *The Dawn*, 247.
24. *The Gay Science*, 348-349.
25. *Ibid.*, 200.
26. *The Dawn*, 42.
27. *Beyond Good and Evil*, 262.
28. *The Genealogy*, III, 13.
29. *The Gay Science*, 148. It is also to an anemia of the will that one must attribute the *Entstehung* of Buddhism and Christianity, 347.
30. *The Genealogy*, I, 2.
31. *Beyond Good and Evil*, 260; cf. also *The Genealogy*, II, 12.
32. *The Wanderer*, 9.
33. *The Gay Science*, 111.
34. *The Genealogy*, II, 6.
35. *The Genealogy*, Preface, 7; and I, 2. *Beyond Good and Evil*, 224.
36. *The Gay Science*, 7.
37. *Ibid.*
38. *The Genealogy*, II, 12.
39. *The Dawn*, 130.
40. *The Genealogy*, II, 12.
41. *Human, All Too Human*, 16.
42. *Twilight*, 44.
43. *Ibid.* "Reason within philosophy." 1 and 4.
44. *The Wanderer*, 188.
45. *The Gay Science*, 337.
46. *The Genealogy*, III, 26.
47. *Beyond Good and Evil*, 223.
48. *The Wanderer* (Opinions and Mixed Statements), 17.
49. *Human, All Too Human*, 274.
50. *Untimely Meditations*, II, 3.
51. Cf. *The Dawn*, 429 and 432; *The Gay Science*, 333; *Beyond Good and Evil*, 229-230.
52. *The Dawn*, 501.
53. *Ibid.*, 429.
54. *Beyond Good and Evil*, 39.
55. *The Dawn*, 45.



JOHN RAJCHMAN

## Nietzsche, Foucault and the Anarchism of Power

Nietzsche is not an anarchist. He introduces the thought of a power which is itself anarchical: without legitimizing ground, without origin, without finality, without a locus of emanation; a power which is not simply taken, possessed or guaranteed; a power which reduces neither to law nor to conquest, neither to ideology nor to violence. Nietzsche is not an anarchist. But against the decadence of European civilization, he posed a political question: the question of a civilization which could *affirm* the anarchism of power. This is Nietzsche's legacy; it is what makes him a modern philosopher.

From its beginnings in the Greek *polis*, political theory has always sought to determine the locus from which power originates or the principle which would legitimate it: Roman or ecclesiastical *principium*, Divine right, rights of man, mythical-juridical emergence from a state of nature, on which are built the great political concepts, individual, custom, law, society, State. Nietzsche is the first philosopher to think power without enclosing it within a political theory. For Nietzsche, domination does not originate in apparatuses of constraint or ideology: it is not founded on a principle of legitimacy. Punitive techniques, positive laws, customs, morals, institutional rules, forms of knowledge, works of art, suppose and establish relations of domination for which there is no founding principle or first legitimizing term. Rather the relations of domination are distributed in many different heterogenous places, where, through confrontation of forces, legal, institutional, or political structures are re-appropriated, overturned, reversed, re-interpreted. In Foucault's formula, the generalized war which political theory had placed at the

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origin of law becomes for Nietzsche something which is always already carried on *through* customs and laws, in themselves, neither finalized, legitimized nor grounded. The hazards of battle becomes a better metaphor for the exercise of power than the establishment of Law. Not even the individual of political theory is immune from the operations of domination; power is infra-individual.

But how can such an anarchism of power be *affirmed*? This is the question Nietzsche posed in defiance of political theory. It is a question which we of the 20th century might consider in terms of fascism, of modern art, and of modern morals.

Of course it is abusive to read Nietzsche off as a simple ideologue, or "irrationalist" prefiguring Nazism. But, when the "true" meaning and value of his work has been restored against the textual deformations of his sister and the exegetical distortions of Rosenberg, when his letters have been consulted to exonerate him from the charge of anti-semitism, one has not simply relied on old forms and rituals surrounding philosophical authorship, one has supposed an analysis of fascism, or, more frequently, a simple moralistic condemnation. One has profited from this supposition to say: this is not what Nietzsche meant by power. But we precisely do not know what fascism was, or is. And, if, rather than examining Nietzsche's unfortunate "influence" on Nazi ideologues, we instead attempt to employ his philosophy of an anarchical power in the analysis of fascism, we are at least spared certain suppositions.

It is not difficult to detect in the official American story of heroic, honorable, military victory and moral triumph a version of history in which a class affirms and recognizes itself. Against this type of history, Nietzsche constructed a genealogical method which has the opposite consequence that "we are necessarily strangers to ourselves." In Nietzsche, history is put to a quite different use.

This use suggests how we might qualify the crude Marxist formula of the alliance of large industrial capital with an irrational, anarchist, rightist dictatorship. It suggests that for the alliance with industrial capital to assure its domination it was necessary that there exist a series of much more localized and even "infra-individual" relations of domination with disparate genealogies. For example, it is an error of political theory to infer from the deprivation of civil liberties among the masses, that there was no exercise of power open to them. On the contrary, registering the Party or the S.S. provided for and legitimized, a form of power involving pleasures not foreign to, for example, a Hobbesian political theory: power to actually kill one's neighbor, take his property and his wife, to denounce parents, relations, enemies, imaginary, symbolic, or real. It was no doubt Reich's insight that this pleasure was not a "natural" one deriving from a state of nature prior to law, but itself was produced by mechanisms of power on which fascism relied; that it was precisely a failure of the Marxist theory of the period to have been unable to take these mechanisms of power into account.

It is this aspect of fascist power for which Nietzsche's philosophy makes its most clear contribution; Nietzsche suggests that it be connected with the *decadence* of the ascetic ideal, and of the millennial history of monotheism. In the case of the disciplinary pleasures of the S.S., for example, one observes the way in which the State laicizes the symbolic authority of God permitting what He had forbidden. The fact that the Jews became the target of a State biologizing racism (whose genalogy and conditions of existence are relatively independent from that of anti-semitism as a religious attitude) is evidently connected to the position of the Jewish tradition in exile within a culture which was experiencing the decadence of God, in particular, in its maintenance of a paternal sovereignty discovered at once in the relation to the Book and its Author and in the system of patriarchal descent. The co-existence of a master-race and an elected people is obviously not a peaceful one. . . .

But in Nietzsche, there is a politics of the arts which one might call anti-fascist. Nietzsche does not construct an aesthetics or an ontology of art. On the contrary, he shows how the questions: what is art? what is the origin of art? what is the sense of the history of art? themselves have served a hierarchical classification of the arts, have imposed forms of reproducibility and reception for the arts, have determined whom they were made for and who spoke through them, have established an economy of fear and pleasure in their creation and in their reception.

It is this which connects Nietzsche's philosophy to "modern" art. Modern art does not belong to the "history of art." Modern painting does not fit within the history of painting which follows upon the establishment of the museum form. Its public is no longer related to its form and its content as in the old system of patronage. The theology of creation determines neither the narrative content nor the iconic form of art. Nothing has taken its place. The discourse about art is no longer connected to the discursivity *within* the arts as it was set down in the great philosophical tradition: art as a medium that reveals or veils truth, art as a sign which represents or imitates an object which comes before it, art as expression, as the proof of human essence, etc. Modern art is anarchical. It displaces the domination of the *arche* of representation over the means and the materials of representation. It subordinates line to color, composition to tonality. It is untitled and de-framed. As a process it challenges the *auteur*-principle: it distributes a work to a multiplicity of singular contributors: it disperses the phrases of a work some to "chance," others to apparently extrinsic forces.

Nietzsche's philosophy is not an aesthetics or an ontology of art; and that is why it permits one to *affirm* the anarchism of modern art, for which art-criticism has produced a bewildering stream of labels, of which art-criticism has been reduced to classifying the symptoms and so preparing works of art for the market-place. In Nietzsche there is an affirmation of the modernity of art: affirmation of simulacra and phantasma as a positive force of forgetfulness against the old Platonic superiority or anteriority of what is "imitated" over what "imitates." In the arts, Nietzsche's philosophy introduces a *politics*. His quarrel with Wagner is political. It is not a clash of



conclusion especially of the introduction to *The Gay Science*) “Truth” can only be a surface. But the blushing movement of that truth which is not suspended in quotation marks casts a modest veil over such a surface. And only through such a veil which thus falls over it could “truth” become truth, profound, indecent, desirable. But should that veil be suspended, or even fall a bit differently, there would no longer be any truth, only “truth”—written in quotation marks. *Le voile/tombe*.<sup>2</sup>

So why then the fear, the dread, the “blushing modesty”?

The feminine distance abstracts truth from itself in a *suspension* of the relation with castration. This relation is suspended much as one might tauten or stretch a canvas, or a relation, which nevertheless remains—suspended—in indecision. In the *ἐποχή*.

It is with castration that this relation is suspended, not with the truth of castration—in which woman does believe anyway—and not with the truth inasmuch as it might be castration. Nor is it the relation with truth-castration that is suspended, for that is precisely a man’s affair. That is the masculine *concern*, the *concern* of the male who has never come of age, who is never sufficiently sceptical or dissimulating. In such an affair the male, in his credulousness and naivety (which is always sexual, pretending even at times to masterful expertise), castrates himself and from the secretion of his act fashions the snare of truth-castration. (Perhaps at this point one ought to interrogate—and “unboss”<sup>3</sup>—the metaphorical fullblown sail of truth’s declamation, of the castration and phallogentrism, for example, in Lacan’s discourse).

“Woman”—her name made epoch—no more believes in castration’s exact opposite, anti-castration, than she does in castration itself. Much too clever for that (and we ourselves—who we?—might learn from her, or in any case from her operation) she knows that such a reversal would only deprive her of her powers of simulation, that in truth a reversal of that kind would, in the end, only amount to the same thing and force her just as surely as ever into the same old apparatus. She knows that she would only find herself trapped once again in a phallogentrism—only this time it would be that of castration’s confederate, who has not become the inverted image of his pupil, the rowdy student, the master’s disciple.

Unable to seduce or to give vent to desire without it, “woman” is in need of castration’s effect. But evidently she does not believe in it. She who, unbelieving, still plays with castration, she is “woman.” She takes aim and amuses herself (*en joue*) with it as she would with a new concept or structure of belief, but even as she plays she is gleefully anticipating her laughter, her mockery of man. With a knowledge that would outmeasure the most self-respecting dogmatic or credulous philosopher, woman knows that castration *does not take place*.

Hence the extreme “*Skepsis des Weibes*.” Once she has rent the veil of blushing modesty or truth which has bound and held her “in the greatest ignorance possible *in eroticis*,” a woman’s scepticism knows no bounds. One has only to read *Von der weiblichen Keuschheit* (*On Female Chastity, The*

personalities or a debate of ideas. The *Birth of Tragedy* (and the amendments Nietzsche adds to it) is not simply or primarily a scholarly history of ancient tragedy, but, like Artaud's *Theater of Cruelty*, an incitation and program for a modern theater, an anti-Romantic theater, an a-theological theater, a theater no longer subordinated to the classical scene of representation. Nietzsche's philosophy affirms an anarchical art.

That this affirmation is political becomes clear when one considers that the rise of fascism as a political form coincides with the emergence of modern arts, and that, at least in the case of Nazism, the State proclaimed this art to be a drastic danger, disease, and impurity which had to be physically extirpated. Nietzsche is a symptom of the complex relations between the Nazi State and modern art: it is no accident that he was invoked by both.

It has been said that Nazi leaders were "anarchists" but of the right. Perhaps, but in the sense that the State assured its domination over "civil society" only by posing a *solution* to the affirmation of anarchy of the type found in modern arts. The "violence" and "cruelty" of these arts is in this way distinguished from the grotesque State-originated barbarity of fascism. In Nietzsche, the ascetic ideal is what *interiorizes* suffering. It specified agents and causes for it and then identified the sufferer himself as the agent, his "inwardness" or "conscience" as its cause. But Nietzsche distinguished a further stage of this ideal, the stage in which it protected itself against its own *decadence*. This is Nietzsche's famous analysis of nihilism. Politically, nihilism (and the "corruption" of morals, the cry for violence and "strong stimuli," the "social question" posed and resolved by "social systematizers," atheism, political anarchism) although in fact a *consequence* of decadence was posed as its *cause* so as to justify political or social *remedies*. Thus the Nazi State did not depart from this interiorization of suffering when it posed the other, the Jew, as the agent of suffering, his blood as its cause, and torture as a permissible revenge vindicated by the State. In this sense, Nazism was an extreme "solution" for the symptoms of the decadence of the ascetic ideal which it posed as causes in the very act by which it administered its drastic remedy, the most systematic and brutal holocaust men can remember. That this system of cruelty was organized as a system of representation and revenge is what Nietzsche's analysis allows one to infer. It is here that Freud's analysis of "identification" in groups becomes relevant. And it is no accident that Freud finds the same structure in pre-fascist mass phenomena as in the Church. By contrast, the "cruelty" of modern arts derives precisely from *not* giving a "solution" to anarchism, in affirming it. It does not assign causes, agents, and remedies for decadence. It is not a system of representation. It is a violence of what cannot be represented, of what Nietzsche called "life." In its structure and in its act, an anarchical art does not represent something which stands before it which it presents to passive spectators who can "identify" in it: it does not represent the Word of God. And therefore it does not represent the State.

It is precisely in this sense that Nietzsche's affirmation of the anarchism of art is political and anti-fascist.

It is striking that in the most coherent political philosophy developed from Nietzsche, that of Michel Foucault, the anti-fascist, anti-nihilist affirmation of art plays no role. In Foucault's use of Nietzsche there is anarchism of power but no longer the possibility of its affirmation. Within and through the many heterogenous battle-grounds of power Foucault postulates forces of domination and forces of resistance, strategy against strategy, severe, bleak, calculating, in an endless series of confrontations. The little that art joins these battles, it is in the form of a sort of combat manual. But the two sets of forces, if equally anarchical, are not entirely symmetrical: there is nothing like the *State* on the side of the resisting forces, nothing that would resemble a coming-into-power or a taking of power. The forces of resistance *resist*: their triumph, their affirmation, is not a possibility Foucault entertains. Foucault becomes the philosopher of a power which he would resist: efficient, cynical, plotted. The anarchism of domination is unabashedly displayed in cynicism; the anarchism of resistance must do likewise to meet it.

In *Discipline and Punish* (Pantheon, 1978), Foucault adopts two Nietzschean principles: (i) that all domination is corporeal, that the body is always a point of its application. This principle disputes a psychological conception of the economy of power which examines only its imaginary or symbolic effects. "...breeding thoughts and feelings is almost nothing" writes Nietzsche "...one must persuade the *body*."<sup>1</sup> It is not, of course, that domination does not employ psychological techniques or have psychological effects, but rather that analysis will reveal that such tendencies and such effects reduce to, or presuppose, what Foucault terms a "political technology of the body," a set of techniques and associated knowledge, which, applied to bodies (their forces, organs, pleasures, etc.) assures relations of domination. Thus, for example, Foucault attempts to demonstrate that the appearance of psychological categories within "humanitarian" penal justice and within criminological knowledge in fact rested on the way bodies had been "invested" by power. (ii) that punishment is neither the simple consequence of law nor a reflection or prolongation of social structures, but consists in a corporeal technology of this kind, implemented in penal institutions, but also generalized throughout a particular society through a set of procedures, positive laws, forms of knowledge, etc. This generalization of the power to punish assures, according to Foucault, for a historical period, the domination of an economic class.

The most explicit discussion of such a corporeal technology in Nietzsche's work is perhaps the discussion of the "mnemnotechnics" of the morality of mores in the *Genealogy of Morals*. The morality of mores, which Nietzsche specifies must be "present in all ages," consists primarily in *punitive* techniques, among which were "stoning. . .breaking on the wheel. . .piercing with stakes, tearing apart or trampling with horses. . .boiling the criminal in oil or wine. . .the popular flaying alive. . .cutting flesh from the chest. . ." And:

With the aid of such images and procedures one finally remembers five or six "I will not's" in regard to which one has given one's *promise* so as to participate in the advantages of society. . . .<sup>2</sup>

In Nietzsche's discussion of the morality of mores as a form of corporeal domination these points can be distinguished: (i) Through the application of the punitive mnemotechnics to bodies, man "was actually *made* calculable."<sup>3</sup> Corporeal domination is thus actually formative or productive even if it also involves exclusions and suppressions—Nietzsche speaks of the "manufacture" of morals. (ii) The *Sittlichkeit der Sitte* (morality of mores) is not related to positive law as, for example, in Hegel or neo-Kantianism. "Mores" for Nietzsche do not comprise a sort of "infra-law" which could be universalized in ethical consciousness: on the contrary, positive laws and legal forms are the means by which punishments are generalized (as, for example, in the case of the equivalence pain-suffering in the provenance of bad conscience). Even where laws are formally egalitarian and universal (as with the rights of man), the power to punish that they transmit always supposes relations of domination that are necessarily non-egalitarian (as in the case of *faire le mal pour le plaisir de le faire*). (iii) *What* is produced or "manufactured" by the techniques is in fact a corporeal reality, in the sense that it is assured in and through the body; yet it has come to be designated as a psychological, religious, philosophical or legal reality (e.g. "free will," "bad conscience," "reason," "right" etc.). That Nietzsche himself had to use such terminology to designate what he shows to be a corporeal reality illustrates the fact (iv) that we cannot *speak* of the forces power fashions through application of techniques to the body nor of the product it thereby fabricates, except with the technology of a form of knowledge that remains essentially tied to it. Not simply is power always applied to the body, but it always deploys a knowledge of the body. In the case of the morality of mores, this would be the knowledge of how to make men keep their promises with respect to five or six "I will not's." The analysis of this form of knowledge does not suppose a "subject of knowledge" nor even a single site for its production, but examines an assemblage of recipes, procedures and images distributed in various institutions and customs. One might say that the *target* of the mnemotechnics was the fabrication of the body which could support the right to make promises, that this target is also the *object* of the assemblage that comprises the associated knowledge and, finally, that this knowledge also serves as its instrument. In this way the mnemotechnics of the morality of mores illustrates the definition Foucault gives for a "technology of the body":

. . . a knowledge of the body which is not exactly the science of its functioning and a mastery of its forces, which is more than the capacity to conquer them.<sup>4</sup>

Foucault, however, distinguishes *two* historical regimes and two historical *modalities* of such a domination that generalizes the power to punish: a



regime which celebrates the Sovereign and his force through ritual marks applied to the body of his vanquished enemy; the more quiet and efficient regime of utilitarian discipline of corporeal forces through regulating coercive techniques which aim to augment the utility of the body in labor while taming the forces of its resistance. It is this second regime and modality of power which produces what Foucault calls "modern morals"; he presents his work on the birth of prisons as a "genealogy of modern morals." This "modernity," or this way of designating modernity, leads Foucault to argue, for example, that fascism is *not* "modern" in the sense in which his genealogy would allow one to speak of "modern morals." It is this argument which drastically qualifies Nietzsche's conception of the force of modern art; Foucault refuses the part of Nietzsche's analysis of "decadence" which would see in the emergence of the philosopher-artist the great counter-force to European nihilism. On the contrary, modernity poses for Foucault the problem of how the forces of modern arts had lost their capacity to challenge the dominant formation of power.

Foucault defines "disciplines" as "methods that permit that minute control of the operations of the body which secures the constant subjugation of its forces and the imposition of the relation utility-docility."<sup>5</sup> They are applied not so much to the body as a whole as to its movements, gestures, aptitudes; they employ not so much signs inscribed on the body which would display, but the forces it exerts; they put into effect a constant and uninterrupted surveillance of its activities; and they divide and organize its space, time, and movements. In these respects the disciplines differ from such forms of domination as slavery, domesticity, vassality, or asceticism, since they do not rely on an irregular and appropriative dependence of the subjugated body on the master's desire, or his rights to products of labor or ritual allegiance; and they aim at utility and not renunciation. Emerging in the 17th century, in pedagogical policies, military discipline, hospital construction, as well as in prisons, they define a regime and a modality of the power to punish, which, in the end, is required for the domination of the capitalist class. Capitalist production, explains Foucault, called out for a form of power that could insidiously objectivize those to whom it was applied rather than manifest the authority of those who apply it. It was the disciplines and their coordination that answered to this requirement; the disciplines adjusted "the multiplicity of men to the apparatuses of production"; they fashioned the body into a *force* of capitalist production. Through them was imposed the relation "utility-docility." For:

. . . whereas economic exploitation separates the force from the product of labor, disciplines establish the constraining connection between an economically increasable aptitude and a heightened domination.

This fashioning of the body as a force of production, this taming of its resistances, this "fabrication" of the individual of capitalist society, could not

be obtained through the instruments of either violence or ideology alone; it required a new modality of the power to punish, implemented in penal institutions and generalized through pedagogical, psychiatric, medical, familial ones. Through this new disciplinary power modern morals were "manufactured." Modern morals, not the morality of the superego but the morality of normal behavior, not the conscience of the criminal but his delinquency, not the irrationality of the madman but his mental illness, his insufficient adaptation.

In the shift from the Sovereign to this modern disciplinary power to punish, there was at the same time, however, a shift in the *modality* of power, exemplified, in the first place, in a reversal of the "axis of individualization." In the Sovereign regime, there was an "ascending individualization": the more a person held power or privilege, the more likely he was to be historically recorded through rituals, discourses, commemorations, paintings. The disciplines reverse this. They introduce a "descending individualization": the more anonymous and functional the level of power, the greater the likelihood of individualization of those to whom it is applied. This reversal involved, moreover, an alteration in the materials, forms, and in the objectives of power: an "historical-ritual" form of domination was *subordinated* to a "disciplinary-scientific" one. Commemoration of proper name and glorification of heroic exploits and familial genealogy was subordinated to surveillance and observation (and not ceremony), and measure and calculation (and not privilege and status). The objective was no longer to punish those who violate laws, but to insert individuals into hierarchical groups according to a normative scale. A juridical objective domination was subordinated to a normative one; the knowledge of jurists, chroniclers, and painters was subordinated to the rise of a new form of knowledge and associated techniques of intervention: the sciences, analyses, and practices we call "psychological." Thus, for example, the specification of "crime" as the violation of the laws and rights of the Sovereign (vindicated, for example, in capital punishment) was subordinated to the calculable, controllable, observable *abnormality* of the criminal, object of an increasingly thorough body of criminological knowledge and programs of "rehabilitation" which, however, far from reforming the criminal, served to create and specify the population of crime. If disciplines thus normalize rather than prohibit or permit, and observe, surveil and control the anonymous and abnormal, rather than glorify the privileged, it is because they transport a new form and a new objective of power which increasingly subordinates older ones. Thus Foucault *distinguishes* the disciplinary "fabrication" of individuals from the insertion of subjects in language, ideology, culture, or tradition, and *subordinates* the latter to the former:

Through the disciplines appears the power of Norm. Is this the new law of society? Let us rather say that it is added to other powers constraining them to new delimitations: the powers of Law, of the Word, and of Text, those of Tradition.<sup>6</sup>



The “death of culture,” the “wasteland” of tradition, the nostalgia for the sacred and the Author, these are familiar themes in 20th century literature. They coincide with the rise of mass-media and mass-culture which precisely received its first State-organized utilization in fascism. The age of “technical reproducibility” coincides with the death of the “aura” of tradition. It is the media which reformulate and reorient the old powers of Text and Tradition, and which redefine the reproducibility or “reading” of texts in the narrow sense. But of this enormous and heterogenous complex, there is nothing in Foucault. There is only Tradition and then Science-Discipline, Law and then Norm.

Foucault rejects abstract concepts like “culture,” “civilization,” “superstructure,” or “the symbolic order” which could be globally characterized (e.g. by what they must exclude or reject, by their specific “waste” or “decadence” or by the instinctual renunciation they must impose or the discontents they must carry with them) or which could be characterized independently of the operations of power (e.g. as an effect or a reflection of a mode of production). Architecture, for example, is not simply an “art,” a cultural artifact, but a form of power, an organization of space which belongs to a modality of punishment. Works of art do not exert a *distinct* form of a “will-to-power”; their role is determined by the modality of power and of knowledge they resist or support. And the modern normalizing power subordinates the forms and the materials of the arts, or restricts their scope. The affirmation of anarchical art, without which Nietzsche believed we would perish, does not figure in Foucault’s disciplinary society. On the contrary, the curtailment, transformation, or subordination of the force of art, and, in particular, of “texts,” is what apparently characterizes modern morals for Foucault.

This is evident from his *method*. He does not *read* literary texts; he does not consult works of art. In fact, the restriction of his genealogy to non-artistic documents becomes a principle which supports Foucault’s conception of power:

. . .when you look at the documentary evidence, you’re struck by how cynically the 19th century bourgeoisie proclaimed exactly what they were doing, what they were going to do and why. For them, the ruling class, cynicism was a form of pride. And only the naive believe that the bourgeoisie were stupid or cowardly. They expressed what they wanted to do in the clearest possible terms. To go back to their explicit statements obviously implies going beyond the scholarly substance of the “major texts”. . . Alongside such hallowed texts exists a totally conscious, organized, thought-out strategy which can be clearly read in a mass of unknown documents which make up the actual utterance of a political line of action. The logic of the unconscious must therefore make way for a logic of strategy.<sup>7</sup>

in *Control and Punish*, for example, Foucault consults almost exclusively the "documents of little glory" in which he locates the "birth of the man of modern humanism": the writings of unknown penologists, criminologists, pedagogues, school architects, etc. condemned to the shelves of the Bibliothèque Nationale. To the accumulation of this documentary evidence corresponds the paucity of other sorts of documents; as "modern" works of art, Foucault mentions in passing only President Schreber and Mary Barnes because they write from the depths of "descending individualization." Even his reference to Bentham does not depart from this principle since he does not discuss the *Panopticon* in relation to the rise of utilitarian ethics in Britain, for example, but in relation to the "carceral" implantations of disciplines for which Bentham's work is neither a cultural symptom nor a determinate discourse. On the contrary, Foucault even claims that the "investment" of space by a "political technology" and a scientific practice determines the philosophical "problematic of time" from Kant to Heidegger. The polemic in *La volonté de savoir* against the "repressive hypothesis" directly follows from this same methodological decision. Sexuality is not repressed, argues Foucault, *because* it is specified, proliferated, controlled, and, in the end, "fabricated" by a specific "technology of power." Of course if one consults Victorian *literature* (as has often been done), it is not difficult to detect a prudery, a disgust and avoidance of the body, a denial of the senses, a reluctance to even speak directly about sexuality, for which the hypothesis of a repression of sexuality or of a decadence and denial of life would seem appropriate. In reversing this impression, Foucault turns to medical, pedagogical, psychiatric "discourses" of the same period in which, on the contrary, he finds an increasingly complex and refined knowledge of sexuality, in particular, of the specification of its "perversions," together with more advanced techniques for intervention and control. But in order to support his claim that sexuality was *therefore* not repressed he must demonstrate how the seeming repression of sexuality in letters was in fact subordinated to its effective control in discourses. This he attempts by the rather curious expedient of consulting explicitly *erotic* texts and attempting to show how they share a "will-to-truth" with Catholic, then medical and psychiatric, and eventually psychoanalytical uses of the techniques of avowal. The writings of the Marquis de Sade would evince the same modality of power as the techniques of Catholic confession.

The affirmation of anarchical art in Nietzsche has a "libidinal" or "physiological" side: he discusses it in terms of an economy of pleasure, fear, knowledge, suffering. In this sense, it concerns the body. But the "power" it supposes and establishes does not reduce to a "political technology of the body." It is a form of bodily power but not of disciplinary domination. It does not reduce to tactical deployments of techniques. It can silence without liquidation or incarceration, and constrain to speak without Inquisition or torture. It was precisely because of this that the affirmation of an anarchical art acquired a *political* significance for Nietzsche which the terrible experience of fascism makes even more plain.



But just as Foucault separates “tradition” from “science,” just as he subordinates the reading of cultural works to the reading of “scientific-disciplinary” ones, he isolates the “symbolic” elements of Nazi power as precisely those that are *not* “modern.” He asserts that the erotic literature of Georges Bataille, German fascism, and psychoanalysis (to which he accords the “political honor” of having resisted fascism for the unusual reason of disputing 19th century theories of sexual degeneracy) are not “modern” with respect to the dominant form of power, but should be regarded as an historical “interference” of an older Sovereign regime with the modern normalizing one. He isolates in the Nazi regime a State biologizing racism whose genealogy he purports to discover, in part, in the accumulation of knowledge and the techniques for effective intervention in “populations” and which permitted:

... an entire politics of population, of family, of marriage, of education, of social hierarchy, of property, and a long series of permanent interventions on the level of the body, behavior, health, everyday life. . . .<sup>8</sup>

The “interference” of the Sovereign regime is, for Foucault, *merely* “symbolic”; it comes when anti-semitism and a “symbolic” of the purity of Aryan blood were superimposed on the State biologizing racism, which itself was and remains “modern.” Thus it is just the features of fascism to which Nietzsche’s analysis of European decadence most clearly applies which Foucault relegates to an “historical retroversion.”

Nietzsche was not an anarchist. He opened a question about an anarchism of power: whether it could be affirmed, what would happen if it were not? This was a political question; in the arts it led to a politics. But Foucault suggests that this politics is only a restricted operation, a losing battle. He no longer celebrates the anarchism in art as he once did in his work on Raymond Roussel. It is a sad and ordinary cynicism which, for Foucault, has come to speak through the anarchism of power.

1. Skirmishes, 47, *Twilight of the Idols*.
2. *On the Genealogy of Morals*, II, 3.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir*, Gallimard, 1975, p. 31.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 186.
7. Interview in *Le Monde*, 1975.
8. *La Volonté de Savoir*, Gallimard, 1976, p. 197.

LEE HILDRETH

## An Authentic Reader

There are texts which will not let go, which we are always reading once we have read them once. Texts which become a part of our metabolism and either consume it or restructure it. Nietzsche was such a text for Georges Bataille.

Nietzsche is a seminal presence in Bataille's most personal works. *L'Expérience intérieure* opens with a quotation from Zarathustra ("La nuit est aussi un soleil") and its first sentence evokes *The Gay Science*: "How I should like to be able to say of my book what Nietzsche said of *The Gay Science*: 'Almost no sentence in which profundity and playfulness do not hold each tenderly by the hand!'"

Eventually Bataille began turning into Nietzsche. *Sur Nietzsche*, a book written to stave off madness ("Ce qui m'oblige d'écrire, j'imagine, est la crainte de devenir fou"), is not a work of analysis, it is more of a *journal intime* than anything else. It furnishes an extended illustration of a statement Bataille was to make later on, to the effect that without being "fully and irrevocably" in Nietzsche's situation an authentic reading of him was impossible.

More expository than *Sur Nietzsche*, the two articles published together here are nonetheless inevitably personal statements. They spring from a sense of outrage and an instinct of self-preservation which seeks to protect Nietzsche from those who would subvert his work, and to explain him to those who would dismiss him as irrelevant, not pertinent to the revolution. The magnitude of the experience of reading the German philosopher informs every sentence. Bataille's tone—high-pitched, sometimes strident, condensing periodically into aphorisms—recalls Nietzsche. There is the same sense of isolation—disdainful aloofness laced with contempt for those who pretend to think like Nietzsche but who in fact distort his thought to serve their own servility. Bataille opposes the subversions of these glib appropriators with a condemnation of their distortions and a warning of the dangers to which the authentic reader is exposed.

NO ONE CAN READ NIETZSCHE AUTHENTICALLY WITHOUT  
"BEING" NIETZSCHE.

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GEORGES BATAILLE

## Nietzsche and the Fascists

**Nietzsche's doctrine cannot be enslaved.**

It can only be followed. Putting it in line with or in the service of *anything* else is a betrayal which comes from the scorn of wolves for dogs.

**Does Nietzsche's life make it likely that he could have his "wings clipped" by anyone?**

Whether it involves anti-Semitism, fascism, or socialism, there is only *utilization*. Nietzsche addressed himself to *free spirits*, incapable of allowing themselves to be used.

### The Nietzschean Left and Right

The very movement of Nietzsche's thought implies a breakdown of the different possible foundations of present-day political activity. Those on the right base their action on emotional attachment to the past. Those on the left base theirs on rational principles. Now attachment to the past and rational principles (social justice, social equity) are both equally rejected by Nietzsche. It should therefore be impossible to use his teachings in any direction.

But those teachings have an incomparable power of attraction, and consequently they have "power" pure and simple, power which politicians had to be tempted to harness or at the very least reconcile with their own undertakings. Nietzsche's teachings "mobilize" the will and the aggressive instincts. It was inevitable that the existing political organizations would seek to absorb into their movement those wills and those instincts which had become mobile and remained *unemployed*.

The absence of any possibility of adaptation to any one of the directions of political activity has under these circumstances had only one result. Since the solicitation of Nietzschean exaltation has occurred only through a misunderstanding of its nature, it has been possible for it to be solicited in both directions at the same time. To a certain extent, a Nietzschean right wing and a Nietzschean left wing have been formed, in the same way that earlier a Hegelian right wing and a Hegelian left wing were formed.<sup>1</sup> But Hegel himself had situated himself politically and his dialectical conceptions explain the formation of two opposite tendencies in the posthumous development of his doctrine. In one case it is a matter of logical and coherent developments, and in the other it is an instance of inconsistency, frivolousness, or treason. On the whole, the demand expressed by Nietzsche, far from being understood, has been treated as all things are treated in a world where the servile attitude and use value appear to be the sole admissible standards. By the standards of this world, the reversal of values, even if it has been the object of real efforts of comprehension, has remained so generally unintelligible that the betrayals and platitudes of interpretation of which it is the object go more or less unnoticed.

#### “Remarks for Asses”

Nietzsche said himself that he felt only repugnance for the political parties of his time, but some doubt exists about fascism, which did not develop until long after his death, and which moreover is the only political movement to use the Nietzschean critique consciously and systematically. According to Lukács, “the very clear difference of ideological level between Nietzsche and his fascist successors cannot conceal the fundamental historical fact, which makes Nietzsche one of the principal ancestors of fascism” (*Littérature internationale*, 1935, no. 9, p. 79). The analysis upon which Lukács bases this conclusion is perhaps at times refined and skillful, but it is merely an analysis that does without a consideration of the totality, that is, without a consideration of what alone is “existence.” Fascism and Nietzscheanism are mutually exclusive, they even exclude each other violently, as soon as they are both considered in their totality. On one hand, life is linked together in chains<sup>2</sup> and stabilized in an endless servitude. On the other hand we have not only the air of freedom, but a gusty wind. On one hand the spell of human culture is broken to make room for vulgar force, and on the other force and violence are tragically pledged to that spell. How is it possible not to perceive the abyss separating a Cesare Borgia or a Malatesta from a Mussolini? The first two were insolent challengers of traditions and of any morality, exploiting bloody and complex events in the service of a greed for life that surpassed them. Mussolini is slowly being enslaved by everything he is able to set into motion only by gradually paralyzing his original impulse. In Nietzsche’s eyes Napoleon already appeared “corrupted by the means he had to employ”; Napoleon “lost noblesse of character.”<sup>3</sup> Without any doubt an infinitely heavier constraint weighs upon modern dictators, reduced to



finding their strength in identifying themselves with all the impulses which Nietzsche scorned in the masses, in particular, "the mendacious racial self-admiration and racial indecency that parades in Germany today as a sign of a German way of thinking and that is doubly false and obscene among the people of the 'historical sense'."<sup>4</sup> There is a corrosive derision in the fact of imagining an agreement to be possible between what Nietzsche demands and a political organization which impoverishes existence at the heights, which imprisons, exiles or kills everything that might constitute an aristocracy of "free spirits."<sup>5</sup> As if it were not blindingly clear that when Nietzsche asks for a love equal to the sacrifice of life, he asks it for the "faith" he is communicating, for the *values* which his own existence makes real, obviously not for a fatherland.

"Parenthesis for asses," wrote Nietzsche himself, fearing a confusion of the same type, every bit as wretched.<sup>6</sup>

The movement of Nietzsche's thought *in the last resort* constitutes a *labyrinth*, that is, just the opposite of the *directives* which present-day political systems require from those to whom they turn for inspiration.

### The "Country of my Children"

The future, the marvelous unknown of the future is the sole object of the Nietzschean celebration. Humanity, in Nietzsche's thought, has much more time ahead of it than behind it—"How then, in a general way, could the ideal be taken from the past?"<sup>7</sup> Only the aggressive and gratuitous gift of oneself to the future, in opposition to the chauvinistic avarice chained to the past, can represent a great enough image of Nietzsche in the person of Zarathustra demanding to be denied. How can the "homeless ones", those people alive today who are not chained to the past, how can they watch calmly while the one among them whose hatred of that misery destined him for HIS CHILDREN'S COUNTRY is chained to the misery of patriotism? Zarathustra, while the gazes of others were riveted to the countries of their fathers, Zarathustra *saw* the COUNTRY OF HIS CHILDREN.<sup>8</sup> Confronted with this world covered with the past, covered with fatherlands the way a man is covered with sores, there is no more paradoxical expression, none more impassioned, nor greater.

### "We who are homeless"

Those who are not chained to the past are chained to reason. Those who are not in the chains of reason are the slaves of the past. In order to occur, the game of politics requires positions which are just as false. And it does not appear possible for them to be changed. To transgress the laws of reason with life, to meet the demands of life even if it means going against reason, in politics, practically speaking that means giving oneself over bound hand and foot to the past. And yet life needs to be delivered from the past no less than from a system of rational, administrative measures.

The passionate and tumultuous movement which forms life, which responds to its demand for things that are strange, new and lost sometimes appears to be supported by political activity. However that is only a brief illusion. The movement of life will merge with the limited movements of political formations only under specific conditions.<sup>9</sup> Under other conditions it is pursued far beyond the confines of such movements, in those very regions where Nietzsche's gaze lost itself.

Far beyond, where the simplifications adopted for very short term-goals lose their meaning, where existence, where the universe which brings it again resemble a labyrinth. Towards this labyrinth, which alone contains life's many possibilities, not towards immediate deficiencies, the contradictory thought of Nietzsche is guided by the whim of a fearful and distrustful liberty.<sup>10</sup> It even seems to be the only thing in the world which is now able to escape from the pressing concerns which make us refuse to open our eyes far enough. Those who already see the emptiness in the solutions proposed by political parties, who no longer even see in the hopes raised by those parties anything but an occasion for wars with no odor other than the odor of death, are looking for a faith equal to the convulsions they are suffering, the possibility for man to recover not a flag and the endless butchering before which that flag marches, but everything in the universe which can be an object of laughter, of rapture, or of sacrifice. . .

Our ancestors, wrote Nietzsche, were Christians who in their Christianity were uncompromisingly upright: for their faith they willingly sacrificed possessions and position, blood and fatherland. We—do the same. For what? For our unbelief? For every kind of unbelief? No, you know better than that, friends! The hidden Yes in you is stronger than all the Nos and Maybes that afflict you and your age like a disease; and when you have to embark on the sea, you emigrants, you, too, are compelled to this by—a faith!<sup>11</sup>

Nietzsche's teachings are fashioning the faith of the sect or the order whose ruling will will shape free human destiny, rescuing it from the rational subjugation of production as well as from irrational submission to the past. That those principles which have been overturned cannot be reduced to use value is a principle of such great urgency that it involves all that life offers of the impassioned will to conquer. Outside of that definite resolve, these teachings give rise only to the inconsistencies or the betrayals of those who claim to take them into account. Subsistence is swallowing up all of human existence, and it is the destiny of that free existence that is at stake.

*Translated by Lee Hildreth*

"Nietzsche et les fascistes" was first published in 1937. Now in *Oeuvres Complètes*, I, Gallimard, 1970.



1. "Is there not a left wing and a right wing Hegelianism? There can be a right wing and a left wing Nietzscheanism. And it seems to me that already Stalin's Moscow and Rome, the latter consciously, the former unconsciously, are establishing these two Nietzscheanisms." (Drieu la Rochelle, *Socialisme fasciste*, Paris: N.R.F., 1935, p. 71). In the article in which these words appear (entitled "Nietzsche versus Marx"). Mr. Drieu, while recognizing "that it will never be more than a residue of his thought that will have turned over to the brutal exploitation of henchmen," reduces Nietzsche to the will to initiative and to the negation of the optimism of progress. . .

Speaking practically rather than ideally, the distinction of two opposed Nietzscheanisms is on the whole justified. As early as 1902, in an article entitled "Nietzsche the Unwilling Socialist," (*Journal des Debats*, 2 Sept. 1902), Bourdeau spoke ironically of right wing and left wing Nietzscheans.

Jaurès (who in a lecture given in Geneva identified the *superman* with the *proletariat*) and Georges Sorel are some of the men on the left in France who can be cited as having shown an interest in Nietzsche.

2. *la vie s'enchaîne*. (Translator's note: Both *enchaînement* and *s'enchaîner* are used figuratively more often than literally in French. Bataille plays on both aspects of these terms. Another possible translation: Life continues.)
3. *The Will to Power*, tr. Walter Kaufmann & R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Books, 1967, p. 531.
4. *The Gay Science*, tr. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House. New York, 1974, p. 340.
5. Nietzsche speaks of an aristocracy, he speaks even of slavery, but if he expresses himself on the subject of the "new masters", he speaks of "their new saintliness", of "their capacity for renunciation". "They give," he writes. "the right of happiness to the lowest, they give it up for themselves."
6. *The Will to Power*, op. cit., Section 942, p. 496.
7. *Posthumous works, Complete Works*, vol. XIII, p. 362.
8. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Second Part. "On the Land of Education." "I am driven out of fatherlands and motherlands. Thus I now love only my children's land. . . I want to make up for being the child of my fathers." In *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. & tr. by Walter Kaufmann, New York: Viking Press, 1968, p. 233.
9. A revolution such as the Russian revolution provides perhaps a standard of measurement for this. The questioning of all human reality in an overturning of the material conditions of existence suddenly appears in response to a pitiless demand, but it is not possible to foresee its scope. Revolutions foil any intelligent prediction of their results. The movement of life doubtless has very little to do with the more or less depressive sequels to a traumatic event. It is found in *obscure determinations*, slow acting and creative, of which the masses at first have no awareness. It is especially wretched to confuse that movement with the readjustments required by conscious masses and carried out on the political level by more or less parliamentary specialists.
10. This interpretation of Nietzsche's "political thought" the only one possible, has been remarkably expressed by Karl Jaspers in *Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Understanding of His Philosophical Activity*, tr. Charles F. Wallraff & Frederick J. Schmitz, Chicago: Gateway, 1965, p. 252-253.
11. This is the conclusion of "We who are homeless," Section 377 of *The Gay Science*, p. 340. This paragraph characterizes Nietzsche's attitude with regard to contemporary political realities more specifically than any other.

GEORGES BATAILLE

## Nietzsche In the Light of Marxism

A sense of disproportion between Nietzsche and communism strikes the mind from the outset. Nietzsche's work is inevitably fascinating for most of his readers, but rarely has fascination been more inconsequential. These dazzling books are like strong drink; they excite us and illuminate us, but leave intact an elementary way of thinking.

For a certain number of my friends communism had the predominant influence. They liked Nietzsche less, but occasionally they gave me the impression of having a genuine understanding. Most often that didn't mean anything. I could be interested, even very interested in their ideas and believe in their political activity. I had reservations, and I naturally believed that they shared those reservations, if not wholly, to a certain extent. I expected from them at least an understanding of my own attitude. Weren't they like me? Hadn't they experienced the same dazzling radiance? I was to find however that they never went further than a game which seemed sterile to me. They did not even see that they shocked me and made me feel like a stranger in a world limited by their platitude. I know now that I was wrong (at least to be astonished). In comparison with an isolated tragedy, the problems of communism have an importance which is incomparable—even if the isolated tragedy were to involve something worth more than life itself (as long as life is materially guaranteed)! Even if it were precisely the *general tragedy*, mankind's tragedy, with at last all restraints removed, revealing the widest horizon, so vast that it loses itself in the absence of horizon!

Communism alone has stated the elementary problem. It claims for each individual a right to life which is partially denied him by the system of law now in force. For its part, it challenges the right to life of anyone who, by



benefiting from the system, contributes to depriving his equals of this right. Thus the problem of communism is indeed the *general problem*, raising for each person individually the question of life or death. To this end the communists dispose of a body of doctrine and constitute a disciplined organization. Armed with a sense of the importance of their activity, they require of each other an unswerving consistency of mind, a blind fidelity to doctrine and the sacrifice of their freedom and their lives. The *cause* being given, nothing can matter more, and this holds true not only for the party member. In point of fact, the communist's obligation cannot derive simply from the formal commitment he has contracted. A personal matter, that commitment nonetheless means that the militant is *conscious* of an obligation incumbent upon *all* men, he could not create that obligation. Consequently indifference or hostility make no difference. In fact nothing in the world can matter more—for the neutral or for the enemy, it makes no difference—than the communist enterprise. The conviction its partisans hold concerning its value gives it that value in any case. And thus it has been possible for the communist enterprise to put the destiny of mankind at stake, with no appeal possible.

I am free to believe and say about Nietzsche's thought that in reality it is no less important than communism. At the very least I must then clearly recognize that, for want of being understood, that thought remains null and void. I have spoken of the inconsistency of which it is often the victim. My friends' lack of precision is in fact the most common attitude. It is even generally true of those who devote long studies to Nietzsche's work. Those who speak of Nietzsche see his life as a kind of tale, a tragic one, of course. It sometimes seems that the very naive nostalgia of a mythology of modern times is guiding them. But that mythology is no less distant from the world of the present than the ancient myths have become. I am not speaking of those who wished to make a tool for their own ambitions out of a body of thought whose very essence is never to be subordinated, never to *serve*. They might have taken Nietzsche's previous refusal into consideration. But it was easy for them to overlook the matter, for the simple reason that Nietzsche died without leaving any posterity behind him. His authentic thought disappeared *in toto* with him. No one after him kept alive the fire he had lit. He found commentators, but the commentary treated him like a dead man on the dissecting table. No one claimed the cadaver: no one could, no one wanted to keep alive a work which cannot be philosophy in the abstract, but only *presence to the world*.

Sometimes I am seized with horror at the thought of such total inconsistency. How can it be endured, this inconsistent admiration, worse than insults, more foolish than indifference?

I am speaking to the multitude of those who read Nietzsche and admire him. Could they have any right to his thought? Where do they get the limp audacity to make within themselves a mess of something that wanted to rescue the *possible*—from *their* debasement? There is a weariness in man, a fear of being which reduces life to a sham. Man is afraid *of himself*. The

*possible* he carries within him makes him tremble. It is the *possible*—what he would be if he had the strength—or the courage—which makes him that fleeting, weary, fearful shadow. The nearer he is to that *possible* the more the temptation to elude it drains him. In contrast to that I want to show here the long, rigorous precision, the naive, intrepid integrity,—which is never weary of confessing the actual deceit,—which limits the concessions to necessity and never *admits* to not “being sovereignly.” It is not the hostile stubbornness of asceticism, nor the cold labor by which coherent thought proceeds. It is not extremely consistent and extremely energetic action (that is the characteristic of saintliness). It is not the narrowness of scientific research, which leads to resignation. I will avoid speaking of poetry, which is that much closer to deceit because in an opposite way, poetry seems to lead straight to the heights. Not yet! . . . the authentic disorder of impotency and the attraction of the irrational separate it from the heights. . . it is ultimately a matter of lucidity and forgetfulness, of calm and turbulent joy, of immoderate liberty, of the grace of indifference.

**No one can read Nietzsche authentically without “being” Nietzsche.**

I mean by that, without being, fully and irrevocably, in the same situation in which he found himself. Otherwise, it is for very bad reasons (to show off a variety of knowledge or eclecticism—living in appearances—cultivating a puffed-up personality, knowing oneself to be incapable of liberty, but gloomily breathing in its air).

The only motive that justifies reading Nietzsche and gives it meaning is to be placed, as he was, without having a choice, before the inevitable. At the turning point at which Nietzsche found himself in the course of history, what he lacked was the possibility of *erving*, nothing appeared to him sufficiently worthy of being loved. He suffered from this, he made admirable efforts (with Richard Wagner, for example). His fatherland? It is easy to say that despite the hatred he manifested, he loved it. It is nonetheless true that it seemed to him far from being worthy of being *served*. Political action, social reform, the inevitable revolution? At the very most it must be said that he was profoundly concerned with these matters, not without hostility against his ethic, struggling at least to justify his indifference. God was the object of a fundamental disappointment. . .

If nothing, neither country, nor living humankind, nor God seemed to him to be worthy of being served, if he was not inclined to serve a shabby ambition (personal fortune or personal success without glory), in the face of anxious lucidity, he had *to be sovereignly*. Illness aggravated the situation (but it could not have created it). The moment came when he could not put anything off until later, for example, until he had searched for *this*, which, one day, would be used for *that*. There was no longer any *that* worth talking about, he had to live, then and there, in a way that seemed to him, rigorously, despite his despondency, worthy of being lived. Most certainly, he cannot be spoken of from a position outside his own situation, if one has not found



oneself in a situation which cannot be known without having experienced it oneself. As a rule, the mind is obsessed with pressing problems, which have their meaning to the extent that nothing is pressing. We are always (almost always) seeking to act usefully; that dispenses us from existing.

The inevitability of which I am speaking has few chances of striking us personally. It is still possible to serve God or the State. For whoever likes neither one of these, the revolution remains. Moreover, any ordinary activity, especially one that is sordidly advantageous, often one of general usefulness, is enough to appease the majority. That does not mean that in general men do not have sovereign moments, but they have them on the sly. They are apparently servile and attach value only to the *seriousness* of that *very thing* for which they live (which may be private profit or public welfare). Their sovereign acts, always irrational, often unavowable—so much so that in an opposite but complementary way in the eyes of the lucid man, the unavowable is the sign of sovereignty—are considered minor and insignificant by them. Common sense views a useless or a ruinous act as a prank, if not as a fault, which it would be better not to repeat. Or else it is a moment of relaxation, and the next day seriousness will again be given its due. Moreover, ignorance or lack of awareness is not so rare. Nor is play-acting! Anyone can affect a free and easy manner, but may have only the strength to pretend. The alleged madman is shrewd when he's alone. He makes up his losses then, or, if he perseveres, he sweats with anxiety. The sovereign attitude is forced, when it ultimately admits deceit or dejection.

On this point, I want to anticipate doubts. If, in fact, it is said that Nietzsche is not alone, and that others have been in the situation I have described, that is a believable contention. However, it must be said that only by resorting to the formulations of language can the problem be posed. Otherwise, undefined, it is resignation to a state of affairs which is not recognized perhaps; but neither is it the object of an effort to modify it. (Without speaking of those who remain silent, the poets themselves have formulated nothing. While André Breton has sometimes expressed himself clearly, he nonetheless wanted to *serve*. For him, therefore, the problem was not posed in the *absolute* form.) Hegel carried concern with the *autonomy* of the philosopher further than anyone, but even he stated it as the *autonomy* of a *project*, and therefore as a *servitude* with respect to a moment in the future.<sup>1</sup>

This is not the only objection possible. Karl Jaspers, certainly Nietzsche's most insightful commentator, has expressed himself in a manner diametrically opposed to mine. According to Jaspers, Nietzsche cannot be defined, cannot be situated in any way. Not only does Jaspers say that "No one can go with him on his way," but he adds:

It is the beginning of all untruth to wish to pronounce and hear final judgments where being per se is concerned. Only within the world—in the knowledge of determinate objects, in working for distinct purposes, in acting so as to promote definite goals—is

communicable decision and definiteness not only possible but even necessary as a condition of all meaningful activity. But such activity itself must be encompassed by an awareness of the being of *Existenz*, for this is the foremost bearer of all expressible meaning.<sup>2</sup>

But if Nietzsche had *been*, if he had had for definition of *himself* that awareness which embraces the determinations of work by opposing itself to them, would he not be determined precisely by the fact that he cannot be determined? I wish to show that most men flee into the determinations of work, or a *service* having the form of work. For Jaspers Nietzsche is, in fact, the *exception*. . . Might he not be an *exception* in a way not foreseen by the commentator? Jaspers has separated himself from Nietzsche, for he is not himself an exception. He thus proclaims himself alien to Nietzsche's *impossible* situation. He did not have to justify man by himself, independent of any object of greater dimensions. Accordingly, he could neither follow nor define Nietzsche. It being clearly understood that no one can define him *without following him* (without being situated as he was).

With this said,—with Nietzsche's position defined,—my intention is clearly stated. I believe that today, in the world, no position is admissible except those of communism and of Nietzsche. Other positions remain *possible*. . . The historical conditions in which they had a meaning are no longer fully *given*. The communists are right to say of certain ways of thinking that they are reflections of a declining social organization, destined to disappear. That organization is condemned, either slowly to suffer the effect of its own movement (of its evolution towards an equivalence of men), or to succumb to violence from without. From then on, one truth—which does not necessarily require a military triumph, which could just as easily be proclaimed in defeat, even within the boundaries of a sly peace treaty (such as the peace of the Churches after the wars of religion),—the truth of communism would remain alone, above a cemetery of dead beliefs. But that truth is incomplete. It is incomplete to the extent to which it classifies some problems termed post-revolutionary as ill-timed, of no current interest. It is above all a question of the problem of final goals. Indeed, by limiting man to a set of basic needs, we lose sight of what makes him different from animals. Man is that living being who is not satisfied with biological existence, who of his own volition *sets himself* goals which reduce biological satisfaction to the value of a means. We hold from the past goals which are exterior not only to the animal being of man, but to man himself—insofar as he is a *common* consciousness. Communism denounces those goals, demanding that man serve himself, exclusively (it considers goals exterior to man to be a means of exploiting him). But, struggling to liberate man, it reduces man to the means of his liberation. It never speaks, it seems to it to be premature (or unintelligible) to speak of the *sovereign* man, who, in the instant of his sovereignty, has no useful value beyond that instant itself (who is in order to be and not in order to be useful, in order to serve, who, in a word, is not a tool, is not a thing, but a sovereign being).



Communism has even carried neglect of the sovereign part of man to such a point that its negligent attitude has permitted the clear definition of the problem. By opposing itself radically to serving any useless existence, whether it is human or non-human, in a word, any *sovereign* or *sacred* existence, it tends, provisionally, to reduce man not so much to the animal state as to the state of a *means to a means*. Thus man as he is viewed by communism today poses the problem of the *end*, by definition useless, sovereign, sacred, and poses that problem in its essence, stripped of all the usual subterfuges. Ultimately, the provisional being, the means to a means would himself become useless, but without being conscious of that ultimate uselessness, not even knowing what is meant by the words *useless*, *sovereign*, *sacred*. In a living way, this unconscious being is himself the question which Nietzsche had to answer *consciously*.

Instead of disproportion, in the end the connection of Nietzsche and communism is perceptible. The effect of communism's activity is to make Nietzsche's problem less rare, less exclusive (at least if one does not come back to the vomit of Nietzsche). In addition we see that Nietzsche had to answer in advance a question that communism is working out in its way by refusing to answer it (for it could not do so without breaking the mainsprings of its action). All in all, it seems vain to look for the meaning of Nietzsche outside the perspectives of communism, and vain to follow the movement from which those perspectives derive without at their conclusion defining Nietzsche's *terror*.

*Translated by Lee Hildreth*

"Nietzsche et le Communisme" was first published in 1951. Now in *Oeuvres Complètes*, VIII, Gallimard, 1976.

1. He escapes that servitude by identifying himself with the objective totality, but despite a circularity of the movement of Hegelian thought which, in a way, cancels out the sense of a postponement, he nonetheless remains enclosed in the mode of enunciation of that totality.
2. Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Understanding of His Philosophical Activity*, translated by Charles F. Wallraff & Frederick J. Schmitz, Chicago: Gateway, 1965, p. 448.

DENIS HOLLIER

## Hegel's Fool

“No compromise is possible between Hegel and Nietzsche.”<sup>1</sup> What Bataille proposes has nothing to do with a compromise. He does not attempt to “hegelianize” Nietzsche. Quite the contrary. In spite of their antagonism, however, Bataille’s “Hegel” and “Nietzsche” are involved with one another in a way, the one being implicated in the other’s failures.<sup>2</sup> Their opposition therefore, is not as simple as that suggested by Deleuze (whose “greater conformity” with Nietzsche’s thought we do not deny, even if it is less “true” to it) which reduces the incompatibility to that of the negative and the positive.

Let us say schematically that, for Bataille, “Hegel” and “Nietzsche” will be the indices of two experiences of thought—*Aufhebung* and *repetition*—that he will put to the test of the praxis each entails: For Hegel sublation, for Nietzsche repetition; this reduplication of the operations allowing for their articulation and repetition being the “sublation of sublation.”

*Aufhebung* belongs to the laboring of the negative (the flower is the negation of the seed, it is even the negation of the simple negation of the seed). Repetition, on the contrary, is the seal of an affirmative power. The question to be raised therefore, is whether this articulation—this juncture perhaps—does not require that the very opposition of negative and positive, of yes and no, which seemingly confines itself to a level PREGNANT with TOO MUCH MEANING, be “sublated.” [ . . . ]

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*Hegel's discourse takes on meaning only in completion and it cannot reach completion before History itself, before everything comes to an end. For otherwise History goes on and yet other things have to be said. The coherence of discourse is then called into question, and even its possibility.*<sup>3</sup>

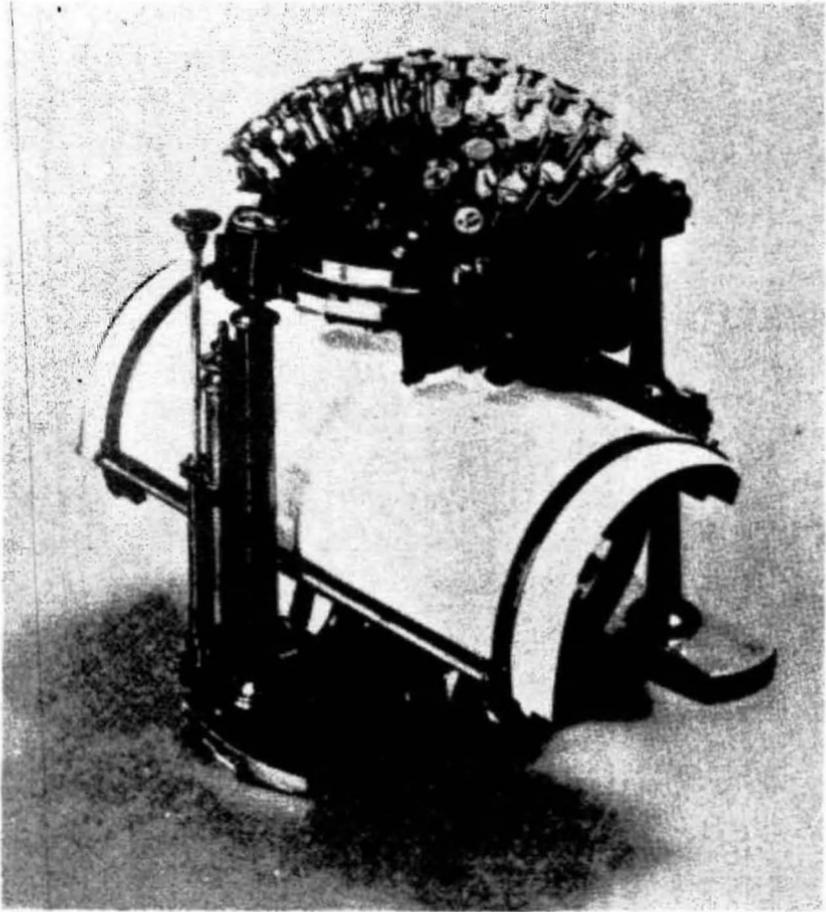
"Hegel's discourse takes on meaning only in completion," but in its wake "other developments would have no meaning"<sup>4</sup>: it is meaningful only if it concentrates within itself the totality of meaning. Yet the expression "the totality of meaning" (or "completed meaning") has no meaning whatsoever. The opposition of "totality" and meaning is insuperable; the effect of meaning is a partial, local effect. Hegel's success is meaningless; it is a failure insofar as he did not willingly forgo meaning: "*the absolute, circular knowledge is irrevocably devoid of meaning.*"<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, if the Hegelian discourse does not reach completion it can have no meaning either; whether it fails or succeeds, it is doomed to meaninglessness (madness): dilemma of sovereignty, where satisfaction and dissatisfaction communicate anew.

The essential characteristic of meaning is its deferral; it can only be anticipated, promised, hoped for. One must wait for the end of the sentence. The perspective of meaning is necessarily teleological. Hegelian discourse thus finds meaning only in the anticipation of its conclusion and on condition that this conclusion remain merely anticipated. The necessity of this necessarily postponed conclusion is the sign of the inner contradiction of Hegelian discourse, a contradiction that opposes the "objective totality," which this discourse identifies itself with and which "in a way nullifies the meaning of a postponement," to the "mode of enunciation of this totality" which corresponds to a "*project*," hence to a "*servitude* with respect to a moment in the future"<sup>6</sup>, to a perpetual postponement.

Everything depends on the conclusion, which is the reason why "Hegel" can only be adhered to conditionally. For the end of history is not a reality but merely a possibility even though it may be *the possibility par excellence*: it is always possible, yet it is never more than possible. Bataille restricts to the conditional that which Hegel—and to a greater degree yet, Kojève—formulated in the indicative.

The end of history resembles death; it even signifies the absorption of totality within death. With greater reason than death, it is one of those events which exclude conscience since they are the exclusion of Negativity, the return to the fullness and to the positivity of matter or animality. It can therefore be approached only by "satisfying oneself with a spectacle"<sup>7</sup>, a fiction, by "affording oneself in anticipation the spectacle that only closed eyes will ever see."<sup>8</sup> The end of history is incompatible with the "principle of the owl:" at dusk the eyes are closed; Minerva and her birds (Hegel and man) are dead, so that "*history having ended, ended forever, no one would keep on speaking*". . . "*Maybe no one would even know.*"<sup>9</sup>

But in this mode of fiction, of imagination, of possibility, Bataille, with fake generosity, grants Hegel the idea of the end of history, as though having



*Nietzsche's typewriter.*



accepted not to discuss conclusions which one would be entirely justified in wishing for, anticipating the completion of Hegelian discourse and forestalling it: "In spite of the prevailing modalities of thought, I now consider the end of History as a common truth, as an established truth."<sup>10</sup> Fake generosity, for the end of history is linked to history's lack of meaning, to the end of meaning in general, to a-teleology since it is as well the end of "the historical course which opened before me a survival that I have never laughed about without hypocrisy."<sup>11</sup> Survival through writing and the book loses all meaning; writing becomes a meaningless activity.

When history is completed, says Kojève, "humanity (the Spirit) takes refuge, after the final end of historical Man, in the Book. And the latter is therefore no longer Time but Eternity."<sup>12</sup> From a Hegelian standpoint, the Book consequently brings time(s) to an end in pronouncing the end of history. It is moreover this meaning of every philosophical discourse which is essentially laborious insofar as its whole effort tends to repress time. The law of all work is to work against time and in this regard the function of Hegelian discourse is identical to that which Bataille, in a magnificent text, *L'Obélisque*, attributes to the Egyptian pyramid, when he states that it "introduced the god-king into the eternity of the sky, beside the solar Ra" (as the god-man into the eternity of the book) but also "that no undertaking has cost more work than that which pretended to stop the course of time." "On the bank of the Nile, they rise as the totality of centuries taking on the immobility of rock and watching all men die in their turn: they transcend the unbearable vacuity that time uncovers under our steps."<sup>13</sup> The Hegelian construction is now the pyramid that shelters and protects "humanity as a whole," rather than privileged beings as were the pharaohs, from time; gigantic undertaking to construct in writing a "*Tomb for humanity*", to make the destruction through time as insignificant as Hegel's death will be when this work has come to an end:

Small comic recapitulation—Hegel, I imagine, touched upon the extreme. He was still young and thought he would go mad. I imagine furthermore that he elaborated the system in order to escape (every conquest, doubtless, is that of a man fleeing before a menace). In the end, Hegel attains *satisfaction*, turns his back on the extreme. *Supplication has died within him*. One may seek salvation and yet go on living: nothing is indisputably secured, supplication is an imperative. Hegel however, found salvation during his lifetime, he killed supplication, *mutilated* himself. Nothing was left of him but a broomhandle, a modern man. But before mutilating himself, he doubtless touched upon the extreme and knew supplication: his memory brought him back to the abyss he had caught a glimpse of, to nullify it! The system is the annulment.<sup>14</sup>

Hegel's fundamental experience is the dissatisfaction with being human, dread of sovereignty which implies, with the satisfaction, its opposite, and at the same time dread of supplication since the Sovereign is tortured and

executed—by time; this dissatisfaction and those apprehensions constitute the knot in which originates the scheme of reason aiming at a suppression of their objects.

But Hegel went through the same process as the pyramids which *today* “are no longer obstacles to the obsessive and foregone sensation of time, but the lofty places where the accelerated speed of the fall becomes possible: and these collapse in turn so that the revelation may be total.”<sup>15</sup> The end of history releases the wheel of time and, instead of stopping it, breaks it completely loose. The final crisis substitutes the “centrifugal” explosion for the “centripetal” movement the system imposed upon time in order to immobilize it.<sup>16</sup> And the sage, instead of confronting identity (and the identity of satisfaction with itself), encounters the unbearable split of sovereignty whose formula the title of a paragraph from *L'Obélisque* affords us: “HEGEL AGAINST THE IMMUTABLE HEGEL.”<sup>17</sup>

“Hegel attains *satisfaction*,” which does not keep Kojève from stressing “Hegel’s secret dissatisfaction” and relevantly underscoring that the Sage calls satisfaction a frustration “assuredly *voluntary*, but absolute, but irreversible.”<sup>18</sup> And in the end, death is really what talks in these Hegelian texts, in spite of repression’s censorship; it moves through them and takes them away “in a devastating movement within which nothing that humanity thinks can avoid turning into dust and crumpling.”<sup>19</sup> This death Bataille not only heard in Hegel’s texts (as had one of the students who fled the room where the master was giving his course<sup>20</sup>), at times enhanced by Kojève’s accompaniment, but thought Hegel himself had felt its presence approaching him: he saw himself “in a profound sense, becoming dead.”<sup>21</sup> God is Dead—Hegel is God—Death is God.

The dialectic comes to a conclusion—and culminates—with the return of the repressed (which is the return of the return), so that “madness” (or its “equivalence”) is effectively “the basis” as well as “the end” of Hegelian philosophy. “He thought he was going mad” as a young man, when he touched upon the “extreme,” and in fact to “escape” this experience, he started *elaborating* “the system.” But “when the system closed upon itself,” Hegel again “thought he was going mad for two years.”<sup>22</sup> The closure, the completion of the system, is therefore undoubtedly the experience of its non-sense, and one hesitates to go on qualifying the perspective of the end of History as final, since it is merely the resurgence of time, within which man can only repeat himself beyond meaning in the sovereign expectation of death.

Effect of “the formal law which (. . .) has constrained the relationship of all his concepts to those of Hegel”<sup>23</sup>, if Bataille accepts the possibility of the end of history as the completion of man, completion must obviously be understood in its double, ambiguous sense of *consecration* and *sacrifice*—“man disappearing *after everything else*, in a *total* obliteration of what he is, of all human affirmation.” And one of the silences of Hegelian discourse, the silent double, again follows him from beginning to end and neutralizes all signifying affirmation. “Hegel did not grasp, in our completion, a singular



inhumanity, the total absence of seriousness in man released at last from the *consequences* of servile tasks, no longer compelled to take these tasks seriously, *nothing* being left to take seriously."<sup>24</sup>

Thus, we can already identify a number of the rules that govern Bataille's discourse concerning Hegel.

"If I 'mime' the absolute knowledge. . .", says he.<sup>25</sup> Bataille in effect contents himself with miming Hegel—parodying him will even say more *serious* historians of philosophy. He mimes him and "doubles" him, he repeats him from end to end, from madness to the identity of Reason and madness, from dissatisfaction to the identity of dissatisfaction and satisfaction, from repressed sovereignty to sovereign sovereignty, from the dialectic of the master and the slave to the end of history. A repetition which itself evokes the end of history after which "nothing new will occur"<sup>26</sup> or be said: in the horizon of which the question is no longer to create "new distinctions" but to "line up humanity as a whole with a completion of sorts."<sup>27</sup> In this sense, Hegel did say the last word of philosophy after which "we can only keep silent."<sup>28</sup>

Bataille does not remain silent, but mimes, repeats, parodies Hegel: which amounts to the same thing but in this return to (and of) the identical, nullifies all meaning. To start Hegel's *Phenomenology* again is to *undo* it. As Hegel's discourse brought man to completion (consecrated him), so does Bataille's reading conclude (*finish off*) Hegel and man, precipitating them from the top of the pyramid (perhaps more Mexican than Egyptian this time), by nullifying the "Sum." Repetition which, confirming the closure, exceeds it; transgression of science and philosophy (of reason as scheme and project) in the very gesture which, granting them everything, closes them upon themselves and, completing the circle of the zero, deprives them of meaning.

When all is said and no choice is left but to repeat, to surrender to the *silence* of repetition and endless reiteration (when God—or Hegel—or Man—are dead, when death has taken their place), then the step is taken which gives access to the beyond of meaning, to the discourse of Non-Sense.

Thus, by doubling and miming the *Aufhebung*, Bataille leads that labor of meaning and towards meaning to that which can be designated as its own *sublation*: the game without end or meaning, the a-theological game of repetition. A repetition which in its very project is already in many ways non-sense. [It promptly appears that Kierkegaard can be abided by only in dreams. One would have "to be" Kierkegaard rather than to know him (which raises the impertinent, indecent question of the "repetition" of *paradox* which Kierkegaard considered the corner-stone of his method").<sup>29</sup>] Curiously enough, what was merely "impertinent" and "indecent" in relation to Kierkegaard will become necessary *as well* in Nietzsche's case.<sup>30</sup>

"NO ONE CAN READ NIETZSCHE AUTHENTICALLY WITHOUT 'BEING' NIETZSCHE."<sup>31</sup>

Thus will repetition, which stemmed the tide as long as Hegel was con-

come, follow the precise direction of Nietzsche's experience. If repeating Hegel meant to nullify the annulment (that the system was) of non-sense, Nietzsche's repetition will accomplish the cyclical and vertiginous game of the eternal return. The first repetition is the annulment of identity, setting "Hegel against the immutable Hegel and (un)-masking him, the second is the affirmation of duplicity and the mask: "We choose the *mask* as the supreme divinity and the redeemer"<sup>32</sup>, affirmation of non-identity.

But in both cases, repetition has the same a-theological function of "immotivation": it marks the return of time in the instant, in the loss of the sense of time forever disorientated, of time gone mad. "Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing?" Asks the Madman in *The Gay Science* and repeats Bataille, dressed as "Nietzsche's fool" on the Hegelian Place de la Concorde, at the foot of the Egyptian obelisk which stands where the king's head rolled.

*Translated by Roger McKeon*

This contribution is a fragment from a work-in-progress. Written in 1968.

1. Giles Deleuze, *Nietzsche et la philosophie*, P.U.F., 1962, p. 221.
2. "Bataille's 'Hegel' and 'Nietzsche'": Bataille never claimed to be a historian of thought. Hegel and Nietzsche are among the topics he chooses to meditate upon, as are those he considers in the *Method*, or in *The Practice* of "joy in the face of death." Besides which, if he undoubtedly read Nietzsche in an extensive manner (but rather tardily it seems, and after he had read the commentators), Bataille apparently knew of Hegel only what he had learnt through the works of Kojève.
3. "Hegel, l'Homme et l'Histoire" (II), *Monde Nouveau Paru*, no 96, February 1956, p. 2.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
5. *L'Expérience intérieure*, 1968, p. 168.
6. "Nietzsche in the light of Marxism" (translated by Lee Hildreth in the present issue of *Semiotext(e)*).
7. "Hegel, l'Homme et l'Histoire" (II), p. 1.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
12. Quotation, *ibid.*, p. 4.
13. "L'Obélisque," pp. 40 & 41.
14. *L'Expérience intérieure*, p. 71.
15. "L'Obélisque," p. 43.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
17. *Ibid.*
18. "Hegel, l'Homme et l'Histoire" (II), p. 8.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
20. Conference given on 5 February 1938. Cf. Denis Hollier, *Collège de Sociologie*, Gallimard, 1977: "Hegel himself has told that during several years he had remained terrified by the truth his mind was representing to him and how he had thought he



was going mad. This period of extreme anguish preceded the *Phenomenology of the Mind*, but several years later, one of his students who had perhaps understood him better than his peers wrote, after leaving the class-room in a state of oppression, that he had been overcome by the impression that Death itself had been speaking from the pulpit."

21. *L'Expérience intérieure*, p. 170.
22. *Ibid.*
23. Jacques Derrida, "A Hegelianism Without Reserves," *Semiotext(e)*, II, 2, 1976.
24. "L'au-delà du sérieux," p. 241.
25. *L'Expérience intérieure*, p. 168.
26. "Hegel, l'Homme et l'Histoire" (II), p. 2.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
28. *Ibid.*, (I), p. 33.
29. "L'Existentialisme," p. 84.
30. This difference cannot be entirely ascribed to Kierkegaard's "imperfect knowledge" of Hegel (Nietzsche ignored "the dialectic of the master and the slave" as well); it is mainly due to the fact that unlike Nietzsche, Kierkegaard "opposes the system to the world of positive revelation only, and not to that of the un-knowledge of man" (*L'Expérience intérieure*, p. 170).
31. "Nietzsche in the light of Marxism."
32. Nietzsche, quoted in *Sur Nietzsche*, 1968, p. 44.

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# JACQUES DERRIDA

## Becoming Woman

The title for this lecture was to have been *the question of style*.<sup>1</sup> However—it is woman who will be my subject. Still, one might wonder whether that doesn't really amount to the same thing—or is it to the other.

There is no such thing as the essence of woman because woman averts, she is averted of herself. Out of the depths, endless and unfathomable, she engulfs and distorts all vestige of essentiality, of identity, of property. And the philosophical discourse, blinded, founders on these shoals and is hurled down these depthless depths to its ruin. There is no such thing as the truth of woman, but it is because of that abyssal divergence of the truth, because that untruth is "truth." Woman is but one name for that untruth of truth.

On the one hand (and in a way which will have to be qualified) Nietzsche revives that barely allegorical figure (of woman) in his own interest. For him, truth is like a woman. It resembles the veiled movement of feminine modesty. Their complicity, the complicity (rather than the unity) between woman, life, seduction, modesty—all the veiled and veiling effects (*Schleier, Enthüllung, Verhüllung*)—is developed in a rarely quoted fragment of Nietzsche's. It is a deadly problem: that which reveals itself but once (*das enthüllt sich uns einmal*). Thus the final lines: "...for ungodly activity does not furnish us with the beautiful at all, or only does so once! I mean to say that the world is overfull of beautiful things, but it is nevertheless poor, very poor, in beautiful things. But perhaps this is the greatest charm (*Zauber*) of life: it puts a

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golden-embroidered veil (*golddurchwirkter Schleier*) of lovely potentialities over itself, promising, resisting, modest, mocking, sympathetic, seductive. Yes, life is a woman!"

But, on the other hand, the credulous and dogmatic philosopher who *believes* in the truth that is woman, who believes in truth just as he believes in woman, this philosopher has understood nothing. He has understood nothing of truth, nor anything of woman. Because, indeed, if woman *is* truth, *she* at least knows that there is no truth, that truth has no place here and that no one has a place for truth. And she is woman precisely because she herself does not believe in truth itself, because she does not believe in what she is, in what she is believed to be, in what she thus is not.

How is it possible that woman, who herself is truth, does not believe in truth? And yet, how is it possible to be truth and still believe in it? *Beyond Good and Evil* opens: "Supposing truth to be a woman—what? is the suspicion not well-founded that all philosophers, when they have been dogmatists, have had little understanding of women (*sich schlecht auf Weiber verstanden*, have been misunderstanding as to women?) that the gruesome earnestness, the clumsy importunity with which they have been in the habit of approaching truth have been inept and improper means (*ungeschickte und unschickliche Mittel*) for winning a wench (*Frauenzimmer* is a term of contempt: an easy woman)?"

At this moment, the truth of woman, the truth of truth, Nietzsche turns it about: "Certainly she has not let herself be won—and today every kind of dogmatism stands sad and discouraged. *If* it continues to stand at all!"

Woman (truth) will not be pinned down.

In truth woman, truth will not be pinned down.

That which will not be pinned down by truth is, in truth—*feminine*. This should not, however, be hastily mistaken for a woman's femininity, for female sexuality, or for any other of those essentializing fetishes which might still tantalize the dogmatic philosopher, the impotent artist or the inexperienced seducer who has not yet escaped his foolish hopes of capture.

The divergence within truth elevates itself. It is elevated in quotation marks (the screeching machinations of a hooker, or crane (*grue*), its flight and clapping claws). Nietzsche's writing is compelled to suspend truth between the tender-hooks of quotation marks—and suspended there with truth is—all the rest. Nietzsche's writing is an inscription of the truth. And such an inscription, even if we do not venture so far as to call it the feminine itself, is indeed the feminine "operation."

Woman, inasmuch as truth, is scepticism and veiling dissimulation. This is what must be conceivable. The  $\sigma\chi\acute{\epsilon}\psi\upsilon\varsigma$  of "truth" is as old as woman herself: "I fear that women who have grown old (*altgewordene Frauen*) are more sceptical in the secret recesses of their hearts than any of the men; they believe in the superficiality of existence as in its essence, and all virtue and profundity is to them only the disguising (*Verhüllung*) of this "truth," the very desirable disguising of a *pudendum*—an affair, therefore, of decency and modesty, and nothing more!" (*The Gay Science*, 64, *Sceptics*. Cf. also the

*Gay Science*, 71): in “love and shame in contradiction,” in the “proximity of God and animal,” between the “enigma of this solution” and the “solution of this enigma,” here “the ultimate philosophy and scepticism of the woman casts anchor.” Into such a void woman throws her anchor (*die letzte Philosophie und Skepsis des Weibes an diesem Punkt ihre Anker wirft*).

Because a “woman” takes so little interest in truth, because in fact she barely even believes in it, the truth, as regards her, does not concern her in the least. It rather is the “man” who has decided to believe that his discourse on woman or truth might possibly be of any *concern* to her. This concern with “woman” is in fact the topographical problem that earlier, even as I was attempting to sketch castration’s undecidable contours, slipped away—outwitting the unwitting. For it is the man who believes in the truth of woman, in woman-truth. And in truth, they too are men, those women feminists so derided by Nietzsche. Feminism is nothing but the operation of a woman who aspires to be like a man. And in order to resemble the masculine dogmatic philosopher this woman lays claim—just as much claim as he—to truth, science and objectivity in all their castrated delusions of virility. Feminism too seeks to castrate. It wants a castrated woman.

In its eulogy of play-acting, of the “delight in dissimulation” (*die Lust an der Verstellung*), of histrionics and of the “dangerous concept of ‘artist,’” *The Gay Science* ranks both Jews and women among those expert mountebanks, the artists. That Jews and women should be thus associated does not seem at all insignificant and the fact that Nietzsche often considers them in parallel roles might in fact be related to the motif of castration and simulacrum for which circumcision is the mark, indeed the name of the mark. Such is the indication of the conclusion to the fragment on “the histrionic capacity” (361): “. . . what good actor at present is not—a Jew? The Jew also, as a born literary man, as the actual ruler of the European press, exercises this power on the basis of his histrionic capacity: for the literary man is essentially an actor,—he plays the part of ‘expert,’ of ‘specialist.’—Finally *women*. If we consider the whole history of women [that history which oscillates between histrionics and hysterics will come to be read a little later as a chapter in the history of truth], are they not *obliged* first of all, and above all to be actresses? If we listen to doctors who have hypnotized women (Frauenzimmer), or, finally, if we love them—and let ourselves be “hypnotized” by them,—what is always divulged thereby? That they “give themselves airs” (“give themselves for”), even when they—“give themselves” . . .

It is impossible to dissociate the questions of art, style and truth from the question of the woman. Nevertheless the question “what is woman?” is itself suspended by the simple formulation of their common problematic. One can no longer seek her, no more than one could search for woman’s femininity or female sexuality. And she is certainly not to be found in any of the familiar modes of concept or knowledge. Yet is impossible to resist looking for her.

As if in its anticipation, several aphorisms precede by a few pages the story of truth in the *Twilight of the Idols*:



*Maxims and Arrows (Sprüche und Pfeile)–*

16. *Unter Frauen.* “Die Wahrheit? O Sie kennen die Wahrheit nicht! Ist sie nicht ein Attentat auf alle unsere pudeurs?” “Truth? Oh, you don’t know truth. Is it not an attempt to assassinate all our pudeurs?”

27. *“Man hält das Weib für tief–warum? weil man nie bei ihm auf den Grund kommt. Das Weib ist noch nicht einmal flach.”* “Women are considered profound. Why? Because one never fathoms their depths. Women aren’t even shallow.”

29. *“Wie viel hatte ehemals das Gewissen zu beissen! welche guten Zähne hatte es! Und heute? woran fehlte es?”–Fragen eines Zahnarztes.* “How much conscience has had to chew on in the past! And what excellent teeth it had! And today what is lacking?”–A dentist’s question.

So goes the *History of an Error*. In each of its six sequences, its six epochs, with the exception only of the third, there are certain words underlined. And in the second epoch, Nietzsche has underlined only the words *sie wird Weib*, “it becomes female.”

It is the idea that becomes woman. The becoming-female is a “process of the idea” (*Fortschritt der Idee*) and the idea a form of truth’s self-presentation. Thus the truth has not always been woman nor is the woman always truth. They both have a history; together they both form a history. And perhaps, if history’s strict sense has always been so presented in the movement of truth, their history is history itself, a history which philosophy alone, inasmuch as it is included therein, is unable to decode.

In the age before this progress in the history of the true-world, the idea was Platonic. And in this, the idea’s inaugural moment, the *Umschreibung*, the transcription, the paraphrase of the Platonic statement, was “Ich, Plato, bin die Wahrheit”, “I, Plato, am the truth.”

But once this inaugural moment has given way to the second age, here where the becoming-female of the idea is the presence or presentation of truth, Plato can no more say “I am truth.” For here the philosopher is no longer the truth. Severed from himself, he has been severed from truth. Whether he himself has been exiled, or whether it is because he has permitted the idea’s exile, he can now only follow in its trace. At this moment history begins. Now the stories start. Distance–woman–averts truth–the philosopher. She bestows the idea. And the idea withdraws, becomes transcendent, inaccessible, seductive. It beckons from afar (*in die Ferne*). Its veils float in the distance. The dream of death begins. It is woman.

“The true world–unattainable for now, but promised for the sage, the pious, the virtuous man (“for the sinner who repents”).

(Progress of the idea: it becomes more subtle, insidious, incomprehensible–*it becomes female. . .*”).

All the emblems, all the shafts and allurements that Nietzsche found in woman, her seductive distance, her captivating inaccessibility, the ever-veiled promise of her provocative transcendence, the *Entfernung*, these all belong properly to a history of truth by way of the history of an error.

And then Nietzsche, as if in apposition or as if to explain or analyze the

“it becomes female,” adds there “*sie wird christlich...*” and closes the parenthesis.

In the epoch described by this parenthesis the story’s fabulous plot might be somehow linked with the motif of castration in Nietzsche’s text, with its enigma of truth’s nonpresence.

In fact, what is emblazoned in the “*it become female...christian*” might be shown to be a “she castrates (herself).” Castrated, she castrates and plays at her castration in the parenthetical epoch. She feigns her castration—which is at once suffered and inflicted. From afar she would master the master and with the same blow (in fact “the same thing”) that produced his desire, kill him.

A period, a necessary periphrase, has been marked in the history of woman-truth, of woman as truth, of verification and feminisation.

But let us turn this page of *Twilight of the Idols* to the one which follows the *History of an Error*. Here opens the *Moral als Widernatur, Morality as Anti-Nature*, in which Christianity will be interpreted as castratism (*Kastratismus*). Thus, such of its operations as the extraction of a tooth or the plucking out of an eye are described by Nietzsche to be precisely Christian operations. It is these, the violations that are perpetrated by the Christian idea, that are the idea become woman. “All the old monsters are agreed on this: *il faut tuer les passions*. The most famous formula for this is to be found in the New Testament, in that Sermon on the Mount, where, incidentally, things are by no means looked at *from a height*. There it is said, for example, with particular reference to sexuality: “If thy eye offend thee, pluck it out.” Fortunately, no Christian acts in accordance with this precept. *Destroying* the passions and cravings, merely as a preventive measure against their stupidity and the unpleasant consequences of this stupidity—today this itself strikes us as merely another acute form of stupidity. We no longer admire dentists who “pluck out” (*ausreissen*) teeth so that they will not hurt any more.”

Nietzsche, however, contrasts the extirpation and castration which he finds inherent in Christianity, or at least in the “early Church” (but, one might object, have we ever left the Church?), with the spiritualization of the passion (*Vergeistigung der Passion*). Yet, in opposing these two in this way, Nietzsche seems to be implying that there is no castration operative in such spiritualization. (This is no doubt a disputable conclusion, but its question will be left open here.)

So the Church, the early Church then, the truth of woman-idea, must proceed by way of ablation, excision, extirpation. “The Church fights passion with excision (*Ausschneidung*, severance, castration) in every sense: its practice, its “cure,” is *castratism*. It never asks: “How can one spiritualize, beautify, deify a craving?” It has at all times laid the stress of discipline on extirpation (*Ausrottung*) (of sensuality, of pride, of the lust to rule (*Herrschsucht*), of avarice (*Habsucht*), of vengefulness (*Rachsucht*). But attack on the roots of passion means an attack on the roots of life: the practice of the church is *hostile to life* (*lebensfeindlich*).”



Hostile to life, the Church is hostile thus to woman also who is herself life (*femina vita*). And not only is castration the operation that each sex perpetrates against both itself and the other, castration is that very operation of woman contra woman.<sup>4</sup>

“The same means in the fight against a craving—castration, extirpation—is instinctively chosen by those who are too weak-willed, too degenerate, to be able to impose moderation on themselves. . . One should survey the whole history of the priests and philosophers, including the artists: the most poisonous things against the senses have been said not by the impotent, nor by the ascetics, but by the impossible ascetics, by those who really were in dire need of being ascetics. . .” . . . “The spiritualization of sensuality is called *love*: it represents a great triumph over Christianity. Another triumph is our spiritualization of *hostility*. It consists in a profound appreciation of the value of having enemies: in short, it means acting and thinking in the opposite way (*umgekehrt*) from that which has been the rule. The church always wanted the destruction of its enemies; we, we immoralists and Antichristians, find our advantage in this, that the church exists. . . The saint in whom God delights is the ideal eunuch.”

That Nietzsche had no illusions that he might ever know anything of these effects called woman, truth, castration, nor of those *ontological* effects of presence and absence, is manifest in the very heterogeneity of his text. Indeed it is just such an illusion that he was analyzing even as he took care to avoid the precipitate negation where he might erect a simple discourse against castration and its system. For the reversal, if it is not accompanied by a discrete parody, a strategy of writing, or difference or deviation in quills, if there is no style, no grand style, this is finally but the same thing, nothing more than a clamorous declaration of the antithesis.

Hence the heterogeneity of the text.

However, rather than examine here the large number of propositions which treat of the woman, it is instead their principle, which might be resumed in a finite number of typical and matrical propositions, that I shall attempt to formalize—in order to mark then the essential limit of such a codification and the problem that it entails for reading.

Three types of such a statement are to be found. Furthermore, these three fundamental propositions represent three positions of value which themselves derive from three different situations. (And according to a particular sort of investigation (which can be no more than indicated here) these positions of value might in fact be read in the terms (for example) of the psychoanalytical meaning of the word “position”.

In the first of these propositions the woman, taken as a figure or potentate of falsehood, finds herself censured, debased and despised. In the name of truth and metaphysics she is accused here by the credulous man who, in support of his testimony, offers truth and his phallus as his own proper credentials. There are numerous examples of such a phallogocentric deposition which represent this reactive instance of negation. Similarly, in the second proposition, the woman is censured, debased and despised, only in

this case it is as the figure or potentate of truth. In the guise of the christian, philosophical being she either identifies with truth, or else she continues to play with it at a distance as if it were a fetish, manipulating it, even as she refuses to believe in it, to her own advantage. Whichever, woman, through her guile and naivety (and her guile is always contaminated by naivety), remains nonetheless within the economy of truth's system, in the phallogocentric space. At the head of the prosecution this time is the masked artist who, because he himself still believes in castration, also does not escape the inversion of negation.

The woman, up to this point then, is twice castration: once as truth and once as nontruth.

In the instance of the third proposition, however, beyond the double negation of the first two, woman is recognized and affirmed as an affirmative power, a dissimulatress, an artist, a dionysiac. And no longer is it man who affirms her. She affirms herself, in and of herself, in man. Castration, here again, does not take place. And anti-feminism, which condemned woman only so long as she was, so long as she answered to man from the two reactive positions, is in its turn overthrown.

But if these three types of statement are to form an exhaustive code, if their systematic unity is to be reconstructed, the parodying heterogeneity of the style, the styles, should itself be masterable and reducible to the content of a single thesis. On the other hand, and at the same time that these two conditions remain indissociable, each term that is implicated in the three schemata must be *decidable* within an oppositional couple and in such a way that for each term, such as woman, truth, castration, there should exist a counter term.

But the hymen's graphic, that of the pharmakon, without itself being reduced to it, inscribes castration's effect within itself. Everywhere operative, and most especially in Nietzsche's text, this graphic, which describes a margin where the control over meaning or code is without recourse, poses the limit to the relevance of the hermeneutic or systematic question.

It is not that it is necessary to choose sides with the heterogeneous or the parody (which would only reduce them once again). Nor, given that the master sense, the sole inviolate sense, is irretrievable, does it necessarily follow that Nietzsche's mastery is infinite, his power impregnable, or his manipulation of the snare impeccable. One cannot conclude, in order to outmaneuver the hermeneutic hold, that his is an infinite calculus which, but that it would calculate the undecidable, is similar to that of Leibniz' God. Such a conclusion, in its very attempt to elude the snare, succumbs all the more surely to it. To use parody or the simulacrum as a weapon in the service of truth or castration would be in fact to reconstitute religion, as a Nietzsche cult for examples, in the interest of a priesthood of parody interpreters (*prêtrise de l'interprète ès parodies, interprêtrise.*)

No, somewhere parody always supposes a naivety withdrawing into an unconscious, a vertiginous non-mastery. Parody supposes a loss of consciousness, for were it to be absolutely calculated, it would become a confession or a law table.



This inability to assimilate—even among themselves—the aphorisms and the rest—perhaps it must simply be admitted that Nietzsche himself did not see his way too clearly there. Not could he, in the instantaneous blink of an eye. Rather a regular, rhythmic blindness takes place in the text. One will never have done with it. Nietzsche too is a little lost there. But that there is a loss, that anyway is ascertainable, as soon as there is hymen.

Nietzsche might well be a little lost in the web of his text, lost much as a spider who finds he is unequal to the web he has spun. Much as a spider indeed, several spiders even. Nietzsche's spider. Lautréamont's, that of Mallarmé, those of Freud and Abraham.

He was, he dreaded this castrated woman.

He was, he dreaded this castrating woman.

He was, he loved this affirming woman.

At once, simultaneously or successively, depending on the position of his body and the situation of his story, Nietzsche was all of these. Within himself, outside of himself, Nietzsche dealt with so many women. Like in Basel where he held council.

There is no such thing as a woman, as a truth in itself of woman in itself. That much, at least, Nietzsche has said. Not to mention the manifold typology of women in his work, its horde of mothers, daughters, sisters, old maids, wives, governesses, prostitutes, virgins, grandmothers, big and little girls.

For just this reason then, there is no such thing either as the truth of Nietzsche, or of Nietzsche's text. In fact, in *Jenseits*, it is in a paragraph on women that one reads "these are only—my truths" (*meine Wahrheiten sind*). The very fact that "meine Wahrheiten" is so underlined, that they are multiple, variegated, contradictory even, can only imply that these are not *truths*. Indeed there is no such thing as truth in itself. But only a surfeit of it. Even if it should be for me, about me, truth is plural.

On one side of this passage is the famous paragraph on "*der schreckliche Grundtext homo natura*" where Nietzsche appeals to Oedipus whose dauntless gaze (*unerschrocknen Oedipus-Augen*) defiantly confronts the decoys of the ancient metaphysical fowlers (*die Lockweisen alter metaphysischer Vogelfänger*). Oedipus, no longer naive, does not assume their blinding charge any more than he disclaims it. On the other side of the passage is found Nietzsche's indictment of feminism, of the "eternal womanly," of the "woman in itself." Condemned here in all their "bad taste" are Mme. Roland, Mme. De Stael and M. Georges Sand. But Nietzsche, in the guise of a "true friend of women," alleviates his indictment, and to the Church's "taceat mulier in ecclesia" and the Napoleonic "taceat mulier in politicis," he adds the "taceat mulier de muliere."<sup>5</sup>

Although there is no truth in itself of the sexual difference in itself, of either man or woman in itself, all of ontology nonetheless, with its inspection, appropriation, identification and verification of identity, has resulted in concealing, even as it presupposes it, this undecidability.

The question of the woman suspends the decidable opposition of true

and non-true and inaugurates the epochal regime of quotation marks which is to be enforced for every concept belonging to the system of philosophical decidability. The hermeneutic project which postulates a true sense of the text is disqualified under this regime. Reading is freed from the horizon of the meaning or truth of being, liberated from the values of the product's production or the present's presence. Whereupon the question of style is immediately unloosed as a question of writing. The question posed by the production or the present's presence. Whereupon the question of style is immediately unloosed as a question of writing. The question posed by the spurring-operation (*opération-éperonnante*) is more powerful than any content, thesis or meaning. The stylate spur (*éperon stylé*) rips through the veil. It rents it in such a way that it not only allows there the vision or production of the very (same) thing, but in fact undoes the sail's self-opposition, the opposition of veiled/unveiled (sailed/unsailed) which has folded over on itself. Truth in the guise of production, the unveiling/dissimulation of the present product, is dismantled. The veil no more raised than it is lowered. Its suspension is delimited—the epoch. To de-limit, to undo, to come undone, when it is a matter of the veil, is that not once again tantamount to unveiling? even to the destruction of a fetish? This question, *inasmuch as it is a question*, remains—interminably.

Translated by Barbara Harlow

Excerpted from *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, Corbo e Fiore, Venice (Italy), 1976.

1. This title refers to a first version of this text which was presented at the colloquium on Nietzsche held at Cerisy-la-Salle in July, 1972.
2. This is a play on the double meaning of the word 'tombe,' which, in French, is both the noun 'tomb' and the third person singular of the present tense of the verb 'to fall.' Thus, in English, the phrase could be translated as either 'The veil falls.' or 'The veil/tomb.'
3. This refers to Jacques Lacan's theory of the "point de capiton."—trans.
4. At the moment that the sexual *différence* is determined as an opposition, the image of each term is inverted into the other. Thus the machinery of contradiction is a proposition whose two *x* are at once subject and predicate and whose copula is a mirror. If Nietzsche, then, is following tradition when he inscribes the man in the system of activity (and if all the values which this implies are taken into account) and the woman in the system of passivity, he in fact arrives at either an inversion of the meaning of the couple, or else an explanation of the meaning of the couple. Whereas, in *Human, All Too Human* (411), woman is endowed with understanding and mastery, the man, whose intelligence is "in itself something passive" (*erwas Passives*), is gifted with sensitivity and passion. Because passion's jealous desire is narcissistic, passivity loves itself there as "ideal." Its partner, who is thus transfixed, comes in turn to love its own activity and, by an active renunciation, refuses both to produce its model and to seize the other in it. The active/passive opposition speculates reflectively its own homosexual effacement into infinity, where it is assumed in the structure of idealisation or the desiring machine. "Women are often silently surprised at the great respect men pay to their character. When, therefore, in the choice of a pattern, men seek specially for a being of deep and strong character, and



women for a being of intelligence, brilliancy, and presence of mind. it is plain that at the bottom men seek for the ideal man, and women for the ideal woman,—consequently not for the complement (*Ergänzung*) but for the completion (*Vollendung*) of their own excellence.”

5. *Jenseits*. . . 232 Cf. also 230 to 239. Whereas this might appear to contradict the statement: “The Perfect Woman.—The perfect woman (*das vollkommene Weib*) is a higher type of humanity than the perfect man, and also something much rarer. The natural history of animals furnishes grounds in support of this theory.” *Human All Too Human* (377), it, on the contrary, confirms it.

## praxis 3

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PIERRE KLOSSOWSKI

## Forgetting and Anamnesis in the Experience of the Eternal Return of the Same

The thought of the Eternal Return of the Same comes to Nietzsche as an abrupt awakening, according to a *Stimmung*, a certain tonality of the soul: fused with this *Stimmung* it disengages itself as thought; all the while keeping the character of a revelation—or of a *sudden disclosure*.

[The ecstatic character of this experience should here be distinguished from the notion of the *Universal Ring* that already haunted Nietzsche in his youth (hellenistic period)].

What is the function of forgetting in this revelation? and more particularly, isn't forgetting the source as well as the prerequisite condition for the Eternal Return's self revelation and its *sudden transformation of the very identity* of he to whom it reveals itself?

Forgetting overspreads eternal becoming and the absorption of all identities in being.

Isn't there an antinomy implicit in the experience undergone by Nietzsche between the revealed content and its teaching (as an ethical doctrine) thus formulated: act as if you were to relive innumerable times, and will to live innumerable times—for one way or another you will have to relive and begin again.

The imperative proposition makes good the (necessary) forgetting by calling on the will (to power); the second proposition foresees the necessity fused in forgetting.

*Anamnesis* coincides with the revelation of the Return: How does the Return not bring back the forgetting? Not only do I learn that I (Nietzsche)

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find myself returned to the crucial instant at which the eternity of the circle culminates, precisely when the truth of the necessary return is revealed to me; but I learn at one and the same time that I was *other* than I am *now*, for having forgotten it. Thus have I become another on learning it. Am I going to change and forget once again that I will necessarily change during an eternity—until I relearn anew that revelation?

Thus posed, the question seems faulty.

What should be stressed is the loss of given identity. The “death of God” (of that God who guarantees the identity of the responsible self) offers the soul all its possible identities previously apprehended in the diverse *Stimmung* of the Nietzschean soul; the revelation of the Eternal Return brings with it as a necessity the successive realizations of all possible identities: “I am all the names of history”<sup>1</sup>—“Dionysus and the Crucified” in the end. The “death of God” responds to a *Stimmung* in Nietzsche in the same way as does the ecstatic instant of the Eternal Return; see *The Gay Science*.

#### Digression:

The Eternal Return, a necessity that must be willed: only he that I am now can will this necessity of my return and of all the events that have led to what I am—insofar as will here implies a subject; yet this subject can no longer will itself as it has been until now, but wills all the previous possibilities: for, embracing at a glance the return’s necessity as a universal law, I disactualize my present self by willing myself in *all the other selves whose series has to be passed through* so that, following the circular movement, I become again *what I am at the instant that I discover* the law of the Eternal Return.

At the instant when the Eternal Return is revealed to me, I cease to be myself *hic et nunc* and am susceptible to becoming innumerable others, knowing that I am going to forget this revelation once outside the memory of myself; this forgetting forms the object of my present willing; for such a forgetting will be tantamount to a memory outside my proper limits; and my present consciousness will only be established by forgetting my other possible identities.

What is this memory? The necessary circular movement to which I give myself, giving up my self. If, now, I declare my will, and declare that willing it necessarily, I will have re-willed it, I will only have extended my consciousness to the circular movement: even were I to identify myself with the Circle, nonetheless, starting from myself, I will never step outside that representation: in fact *I am already no longer in the instant when the sudden revelation* of the Eternal Return struck me; in order for that revelation to have meaning, I should lose consciousness of myself, and the return’s circular movement would have to fuse with my unconsciousness until it brought me back the instant in which the necessity of going through the entire series of my possibilities was revealed to me. Thus I can only re-will myself, no longer as the outcome of the previous possibilities, no longer as one realization in a thousand, but only as a chance moment whose very fortuity implies the necessity of the integral return of the whole series.

But to re-will oneself as a fortuitous moment is to renounce being oneself *once and for all*: since it is not once and for all that I have renounced myself and that I must will it: and I am not even this fortuitous moment *once and for all* if indeed I must re-will this moment: once more! For nothing? For myself. “Nothing” here is the *Circle once and for all*, a sign valid for all that has happened, for all that happens, and for all that will ever happen in the world.

**How can willing intervene without the forgetting of what must now be re-willed?**

For in fact, this very instant when the necessity of the circular movement was revealed to me presents itself in my life as never having happened before: The *hohe Stimmung*, the high tonality of my soul was necessary in order for me to know and feel the necessity of all things returning. If I ponder that high tonality in which the Circle is suddenly reflected, I find that, if I no longer consider it as just my own obsession, but as the only valid apprehension of being—as the unique reality—it is impossible that it not already have been revealed to me innumerable times, perhaps in other forms: but I have forgotten it because it is inscribed in the circular movement’s essence proper that, (in order that one may reach another state and be precipitated outside oneself, on penalty of everything stopping), one forgets it from one state to the other. And should I not forget having been precipitated outside myself in the present life, I have nevertheless forgotten undergoing such experience in another life—differing in no way from this one.

On penalty of all stopping? Is this to say that the movement stopped at this sudden revelation? By no means does the circular movement stop; for I, Nietzsche, was myself unable to elude it: this revelation did not come to me as a reminiscence—nor as an experience of *déjà-vu*. All would stop *for me* if I were to *remember* an identical, previous revelation which, even were I to continuously proclaim the return’s necessity, would maintain me in myself, outside the truth I teach. Therefore I had to forget that revelation for it *to be true!* In the series that I suddenly glimpse, and that I must pass through to be brought back to the same point, this revelation of the Eternal Return of the Same implies that *the same revelation* may have produced itself at *any other moment* of the circular movement. Indeed it must be so: in receiving this revelation I am *nothing* if not to receive this revelation *in all the other-moments* of the circular movement: nowhere in particular for me alone, but always in the entire movement.

**The soul’s high tonality considered as thought; rise and fall of intensity, afflux and reflux in intensity’s designation of itself; the Circle as sign.**

Nietzsche speaks of the Eternal Return of the Same as supreme thought, but also as supreme feeling, the most exalted feeling.

Thus in the notebooks contemporaneous with *The Gay Science*: “My doctrine teaches: to live in such a way that you must desire to live again. Such is your duty. You will live again in any case! He for whom striving



procures the most exalted feeling, let him strive; he for whom rest procures the most exalted feeling, let him rest; he for whom joining, following and obeying procure the most exalted feeling, let him obey. So long as he becomes conscious of what it is that procures for him the most exalted feeling and does not draw back before any means! Eternity is at stake!" And he noted beforehand that present humanity no longer knows how to wait as can natures endowed with an eternal soul suited to an eternal becoming and a future amelioration. What he stresses here is less the will than desire and necessity, and this desire and this necessity are themselves related to eternity: hence the reference to the most exalted feeling, or in Nietzschean terms, the *hohe Stimmung*—the soul's high tonality.

It is in such a high tonal quality of the soul, in such a *Stimmung* that Nietzsche lived the instant of the Eternal Return's revelation.

How does a soul's tonality, a *Stimmung*, become a thought, and how does the highest feeling—*das höchste Gefühl*, or the Eternal Return—become supreme thought?

- a) The tonality of the soul is a fluctuation of intensity;
- b) In order to be communicable, intensity must take itself for object and thus return on itself;
- c) In returning on itself, intensity interprets itself: for this it must divide, disjunct and conjunct again: now this is what happens to it in what can be called moments of rise and fall: yet the question is always that of the same fluctuation, i.e. a wave in the concrete sense (recall, in passing, the importance of the spectacle offered by the ocean in Nietzschean contemplation);
- d) But an interpretation implies the seeking of a signification? Rise and fall: these are de-signations: nothing else. Is there a signification beyond this acknowledgement of a rise and a fall? Intensity never has any other meaning than that of being intensity. It seems that intensity has no meaning in itself. What is a meaning? And how can it be constituted? What is the agent of meaning?
- e) It seems that the agent of meaning, thus of signification, is once again intensity, according to its diverse fluctuations: if intensity has no meaning in itself, if not that of being intensity, how can it be the agent of signification, that is, signify itself as this or that tonality of the soul? Just now we asked how it could interpret itself, in its risings and fallings. But that didn't go beyond a simple recognition. How then does meaning come to it, and how does meaning constitute itself in intensity? Indeed precisely in its returning on itself in a new fluctuation! In so doing, repeating and seeming to imitate itself, it becomes a sign;
- f) But a sign is first of all the trace of a fluctuation of intensity: if a sign keeps its meaning, it is because the degree of intensity coincides with it: it signifies only by a new inflow of intensity which in a way rediscovers its original trace;
- g) But a sign is not merely the trace of a fluctuation: it can as well mark an absence of intensity, and what is singular is that here again a new influx is necessary in order simply to signify that absence.

Whether we call this flux attention, will, memory, or call this reflux indifference, slackening, forgetting, what is in question remains the same intensity in no way different from the movement of the waves on the same ocean: "You and me," Nietzsche said to them, "we are of the same origin, of the same race!"

This flux and reflux will fuse, fluctuation in fluctuation, and just like the figures that rise to the crest of waves and leave only foam, so are the designations in which intensity signifies itself. And that is what we call thought: but, if something within our apparently delimited and closed natures is all the same open enough to lead Nietzsche to invoke the movement of waves, it is that, notwithstanding the sign in which the fluctuation of intensity culminates, signification, because it only is by influx, *never absolutely emerges* from the moving abysses that it covers. All signification remains a function of the Chaos in which meaning originates.

### **Intensity obeys a shifting chaos without beginning or end.**

Thus in everybody there is apparently a flowing intensity whose flux and reflux form the significant or insignificant fluctuations of thought which in fact are never anyone's, without beginning or end.

But if in opposition to this undulating element, each of us forms a closed and seemingly limited whole, it is in virtue of these traces of signifying fluctuations: that is, of a system of signs that I will call here the code of everyday signs. We know not where our own fluctuations begin or where they end in order that these signs let us signify and speak to ourselves or to others: We know only that in this code *one* sign always responds to the degree of intensity, now highest, now lowest: that is the *self*, the *I*, *subject of all our propositions*. It is on account of this sign, which is nothing more than a perpetually variable trace of fluctuation, that we constitute ourselves as *thinking*, that a thought as such occurs to us—even though we don't always rightly know if it is not others who think and continue to think within us: but what are these others that form the *outside* in reference to this *inside* that we believe ourselves to be? All comes back to a single discourse, that is to fluctuations of intensity which respond to the thought of each and of no one.

The sign of the *self* in the code of everyday communication, inasmuch as it responds to the highest or lowest intensity, verifying all our degrees of presence or absence as well as the degrees of presence and absence of that outside of us, ensures a variable state of coherence of ourselves with ourselves as with our surroundings: thus the thought of no one, that intensity in itself, without determinable beginning or end, finds a necessity in the agent who endorses it, knows a destiny, even in the vicissitudes of memory and forgetting of oneself or the world: and in short nothing is more arbitrary if one admits that in fact nothing is ever anything but the same circuit of intensity: in order for a designation to occur and a meaning to be constituted, *my will* must intervene, which is still nothing but that usurped intensity.

Now, within a *Stimmung*, within a tonality that I will designate as the most exalted feeling and that I will aspire to *maintain* as the highest thought—



what has happened? Haven't I stepped outside my limits and thus depreciated the code of everyday signs?—whether thought abandons me, or whether I no longer discern a difference between inside and outside fluctuations.

Until now, in the context of everyday life, thought always upheld me in the designation of myself. But what does my coherence become from a degree of intensity where thought, ceasing to bolster me in the designation of myself, invents a sign by which it would designate its coherence with itself? If it is no longer my own thought, isn't this sign my exclusion from any possible coherence? If it is still mine, how can its designation of itself be conceived as an absence of intensity at the highest degree of intensity?

Let us assume now that the image of the Circle is formed in such a high tonality of the soul: something happens to my thought so that it deems itself dead as mine in this sign: that is, so strict a coherence with it that the invention of the sign, of the circle, marks the zero exponent of any thought? Is this is to say that the thinking subject would lose his identity starting from a coherent thought which would exclude him from itself? It serves nothing to distinguish here the designating from the designated intensity in order to recover the coherence between myself and the world constituted by everyday designations. A same circuit brings me back to the code of everyday signs and makes me step outside it once again at the sign's will, as soon as I seek to explain to myself the event that it represents.

For if in that ineffable instant I hear myself say: you are returning to this instant—you have already returned to it—you will return to it innumerable times—as coherent as this proposition seems according to the sign of the Circle from which it proceeds, even though it is this proposition itself—.I, as an actual self in the context of everyday signs, fall into incoherence. And doubly so: in relation to this thought's coherence proper as in relation to the code of everyday signs. According to the latter I can only will myself *once and for all myself*, whence all my designations and their communicable meanings are constituted. But to *re-will myself one more time* is to indicate that nothing ever succeeds in constituting itself in *one meaning once and for all*. The circle opens me to inanity and encloses me in this alternative: *either* all returns because nothing has ever had any meaning at all, *or* meaning never comes to anything at all but by the return of all things, without beginning or end.

Here is a sign in which I myself am nothing, unless I always return for nothing. What is my part in this circular movement in relation to which I am incoherent, in relation to this thought so perfectly coherent that it excludes me *at the very instant that I think it*? What is this sign of the circle that empties all designation of its content in favor of this sign? This high tonality of the soul has become the *highest thought* only by having restored intensity to itself, to the point of reintegrating the Chaos from which it proceeds into the sign of the Circle that it formed.

The one and only thing the Circle in itself ever says is that existence has no meaning other than that of being existence: that signification is nothing but an intensity. This is why it reveals itself in a high tonality of the soul.

How does it infringe upon my actuality: upon this self nonetheless exalted by this high tonal quality? By freeing the fluctuations that signified this self as *me*, in such a way that it is once again the past that rings in its present. It is not the fact of *being there* that fascinates Nietzsche in this instant, but the fact of *returning* in what becomes: that necessity—lived and to be relived defies the will and the creation of a meaning.

In the Circle the will dies through its contemplation of this returning within becoming and is only born again in the discordance outside the circle. Hence the constraint exercised by the *most exalted feeling*.

Nietzschean high tonalities found their immediate expression in the aphorism: there, recourse to the code of everyday signs is displayed as an exercise in continually maintaining oneself discontinuous with respect to everyday continuity. When the *Stimmungen* develop into fabulous physiognomies, it seems that this flux and reflux of contemplative intensity seek to create landmarks for its own discontinuity. So many high tonalities, so many gods: until the universe appears as a round of gods: the universe being but a perpetual flight from oneself, a perpetual rediscovering oneself as multiple gods. . .

This round of gods chasing each other in a circular dance is but an excitation, in Zarathustra's mythical vision, of this movement of flux and reflux of the intensity of Nietzschean *Stimmungen*, the highest of which came to him under the sign of *Circulus vitiosus deus*.

The *Circulus vitiosus* is but a denomination of this sign, assuming here a divine physiognomy after Dionysus: Nietzschean thought breathes more freely in relation to a divine and fabulous physiognomy than when it struggles within itself, as in the trap where its own truth makes it fall. Doesn't he say in fact that *the true essence of things is a fictionalizing* of being which represents things to itself, without which *being could not represent anything to itself*?

The soul's high tonality, within which Nietzsche experienced the vertigo of the Eternal Return, created the sign of the vicious Circle where the highest intensity of thought fallen back upon itself in its own coherence and the corresponding absence of intensity of everyday designations were instantaneously actualized; at one and the same time the very designation of the *self*, which all designations were referred to, until now, was emptied.

For in fact, with the sign of the *vicious Circle*, considered as the definition of the *Eternal Return of the Same*, a sign comes to Nietzschean thought as an *event valid for all that can ever happen*, for all that has ever happened, for all that could ever happen in the world, that is to thought itself.

### The experience of the Eternal Return elaborated as communicable thought

The very first version that Nietzsche gives in *The Gay Science* (aphorism 341) of his Sils-Maria experience,—later in *Zarathustra*—is expressed essentially as an hallucination: instantly, it appears that the instant itself is reflected in a vista of mirrors. The self, the *same* "self" awakens here to an infinite multiplication of *itself* and of its own life, while a kind of demon (like a



genie in the *Thousand and One Nights*) reveals to him: this life, you will have to live once again and innumerable times. The reflection which follows declares: if this thought were to exercise its dominion upon you, it would make you another.

Nietzsche is unquestionably speaking of a return of the *identical self*. This is the obscure point upon which his contemporaries and posterity have stumbled. Thus, from the first, this thought was generally considered as an absurd phantasy.

Zarathustra considers the will enslaved by the irreversibility of time: this is the first reflective reaction to the obsessive *evidence*: Nietzsche seeks to recapture the hallucination at the level of conscious will by an "analytical" cure of the will: what is its relation to time—tridimensional (past—present—future)? The will projects its powerlessness in time and thus gives it its *irreversible* character: the will cannot go back on the *course of time*—the non-willed that time consecrates as an accomplished fact: hence the will's spirit of *vengeance* in regard to the irreducible, and the *punitive* aspect of existence.

Zarathustra's remedy: to re-will the *non-willed* insofar as he desires to assume the accomplished fact—thus to render it *inaccomplished*, by rewilling it *innumerable times*. *Ruse* which removes from the event its "*once and for all*" character: such is the subterfuge that the Sils-Maria experience (unintelligible) in itself first offers to reflection: The latter is in this way centered on the will.

Yet, such a ruse is only a way of eluding the temptation inherent in the Eternal Return's very reflection: *non-action*, which Zarathustra rejects as a fallacious *remedy*, nevertheless remains the same inversion of time: if everything returns according to the law of the vicious Circle, *every voluntary action equals a real non-action, or every conscious non-action equals an illusory action*. At the level of conscious decision, not to act corresponds to the *inanity* of individual will. It expresses as much the intensity of the soul's high tonality as the decision to pursue an action: how would re-willing the past be creative? To adhere to the Return was also to admit that *only forgetting* permitted undertaking the old creations as new creations, *ad infinitum*. Formulated at the level of the *conscious self identical to itself*, the imperative to rewill remained a *tautology*: it seems that this imperative (although it requires a decision for eternity) only concerns the behavior of the will in the interval of an individual life, and that the past, the non-willed, the enigma of horrifying chance, is the very thing we live every day.

Now, the *tautology* is at one and the same time in the sign of the Circle and in Nietzsche's very thought representing to itself the *return* of everything, as of himself.

The *parable* of the two opposite paths which meet under the arch of a door on whose pediment is inscribed: the *Instant* (in *Zarathustra*) merely takes up again the image of the *Gay Science* aphorism: the same ray of moonlight, the same spider will return. The two opposite paths are only *ONE*: an eternity separates them: individuals, things, events ascend one,

descend the other and come back the same under the *door* of the *Instant*, having circled eternity: only he who stops under this "door" is capable of grasping the circular structure of eternal time. But here, as in the aphorism, it is still the individual self who departs and returns *identical to himself*. Between this parable and the *cure* of the will by rewilling the past, the tie is certain. Except that it is not convincing.

Nevertheless, the aphorism states: in rewilling the self *changes*, becomes *other*. In this very assertion resides the solution to the enigma.

Zarathustra seeks a change not of the *individual* but of his will:—to rewill the past-non-willed, this is what the "will to power" would consist in.

Intimately, however, Nietzsche dreams of quite a different change—through a transformation of individual behavior: to rewill the past, if it is nothing but an *assuming of the non-willed* by the will, as a creative recuperation—(in the sense that horrifying chance, the fragmentary, the enigma, are reconstituted in a significant unity)—nonetheless remains at the level of a "voluntarist" fatalism.

The change of the individual's moral behavior is not one determined by conscious will,—but by the very economy of the Eternal Return. Under the sign of the *vicious Circle*, it is (independently of human will) the nature of existence itself, hence also of individual acts, which is intrinsically modified. Nietzsche states in a note as revealing as it is brief:

"*My completion of fatalism*: 1. By the Eternal Return and by pre-existence. 2. By the liquidation of the concept of "will".

A fragment dated Sils-Maria, August 1881, states: "*the unceasing metamorphosis: in a brief interval of time you must pass through several individual states. The means of this is ceaseless struggle.*"

What is this brief interval? Not just any instant of our existence, but the eternity that separates one existence from another.

This indicates that re-willing has for its object a *multiple alterity* inscribed in an individual: if this is the *unceasing* metamorphosis, it explains why Nietzsche declares that "pre-existence" is a necessary condition for an individual's *being-as-he-is*. The *ceaseless struggle* would indicate that from this moment on the adept of the Circle ought to practise this multiple alterity: but this theme will be taken up later when he envisions a *theory of the fortuitous case*.

These fragments bring as many new elements to the development of the thought of the vicious Circle: it is no longer only the will, confronted with irreversible Time, which, cured of that representation of punitive existence, hereafter breaks the chains of its captivity by re-willing the non-willed and recognizing itself in the reversibility of time as will to power, thus as creative will.

On the other hand these fragments take account of a transfiguration of existence which, because it has always been the Circle, wills itself irreversible to the point of relieving the individual of the weight of his acts *once and for all*. What appeared at first sight as an overwhelming annunciation, namely the *recommencing ad infinitum of the same acts, of the same sufferings*, from



now on appears as redemption itself, as soon as the soul knows itself to have already gone through and thus be destined to again go through other individualities, other experiences which hereafter deepen and enrich the only one that it knows *hic et nunc*, through those which have prepared it and which prepare this one for others unsuspected by consciousness.

The re-willing, pure adherence to the vicious Circle; re-willing *the complete series once again*—rewilling all experiences—all one's acts not as *mine*: as it happens *this possessive* no longer has any meaning—nor does it represent an end. The meaning and the end are liquidated by the Circle. From this follows Zarathustra's silence, the interruption of his message. Unless it be a peal of laughter which bears all its own bitterness.

From here on Nietzsche is going to be divided in his own interpretation of the Eternal Return. "Overman" becomes the name of the subject of the will to power, at one and the same time the Eternal Return's *meaning* and *end*. The will to power is nothing but a *humanized* denomination of the soul of the vicious Circle, while the latter is pure intensity *without intention*. On the other hand, as Eternal Return, the vicious Circle displays itself as a chain of existences for the individuality of the adept of this doctrine, who knows that he has *pre-existed* differently than he now exists and that he will exist still differently, from one "eternity to another."

In this way, Nietzsche introduces something like a renovated version of Metempsychosis.

The necessity of a purification: hence a guilt to expiate through successive existences before an agent's soul rediscovers a pure state of innocence, from that time onwards admitted to an immutable eternity: an ancient scheme that the initiatory religions had transmitted to Christian gnosis.

Nothing of the sort in Nietzsche—neither "expiation" nor "purification," nor "immutable purity". Pre- and post-existence are always the surplus of the same existence present according to the economy of the vicious Circle, which implies that an individuality's capacity could never exhaust the wealth of differentiation of a same existence, that is its affective potential. Metempsychosis represents the *avatars* of an immortal soul. Nietzsche himself declares: "*If only we could bear our immortality—this would be the highest thing.*" Now this immortality is not, in Nietzsche, properly individual. The Eternal Return abolishes durable identities. Nietzsche urges the adept of the vicious Circle to accept the *dissolution* of his fortuitous soul in order to receive another fortuitous one. It is necessary that having gone through the complete series, this dissolved soul should in its turn come back: namely to *this degree of the soul's tonality in which the law of the Circle is revealed to it*.

If the metamorphosis of the individual is the law of the vicious Circle, how can it be willed? The Circle's revelation suddenly becomes conscious: remaining in this consciousness is sufficient to live in conformity with the necessity of the Circle: To rewill this very experience (the instant in which one is *he* that is initiated into the secret of the vicious Circle— implies that one has gone through *all livable experiences*: hence all previous existences

are necessary to this instant which privileges one existence in a thousand no less than all those which follow. To rewill every experience, *to rewill* every possible act, all the felicities and all the sufferings possible—this means that if an act is accomplished now, if an experience is lived now, a series must necessarily have preceded and others must follow not in the same individual, but in all which belongs to his same potential—in order that one day he may rediscover himself such *once again*.

### Difference of the Eternal Return and traditional fatalism

Nietzsche brings thinking fatalism to completion within the dimension of the Circle.

Fatalism in itself (*fatum*) implies a concatenation, pre-established within a predisposition, which is developed and accomplished in an irreversible manner: whatever I do or decide to do, my decision, contrary to what I think, obeys a *project* which eludes me and of which I know nothing.

The vicious Circle restores to the experience of *Fatum*—in the form of movement without beginning or end—the play of Chance and its thousand combinations as so many series forming a chain—image of fate which, as circle, can only *re-will* itself since it must *begin again*.

*Chance is only such for each* of the moments (individual, singular, thus fortuitous existences) that compose it. It is by “chance” that an individual sees the figure of the Circle revealed to him. From that time on, he will be able to rewill all the series in order to rewill himself: in other words, from the moment he exists he cannot fail to rewill all the series anterior and ulterior to his existence.

The feeling of eternity and the eternal perpetuation of desire fuse into a single instant: the representation of an *anterior* life and of an *ulterior* life no longer concern a beyond nor an individual self who would reach this beyond: but the *same life* lived, experienced by individual differences.

The Eternal Return is in a way simply the mode of its display: the feeling of vertigo results from the *once and for all* in which the subject is surprised by the round of *innumerable times*: *once and for all* disappears: intensity emits something like a series of infinite vibrations of being: and it is these vibrations which project *outside itself* the individual self as so many *dissonances*: all reverberate until is re-established the consonance of this same instant in which these dissonances are reabsorbed anew.

At the level of consciousness meaning and end are lost: in the vicious Circle they are *everywhere* and *nowhere*, since there is *no point* of the Circle that cannot be *beginning at the same time as end*.

In short, the Eternal Return, originally, is not a representation, nor a postulate proper, it is an experienced fact and as thought, a *sudden* thought: phantasy or not, the Sils-Maria experience exercises its constraint as ineluctable necessity: terror and mirth in turn, within this felt necessity, will underlie from this instant Nietzsche’s interpretations.



### How Nietzschean fatalism comes to an end in the elimination of the concept of will

Nietzsche does not say that the thought of the Eternal Return and of the pre-existence that it implies alone ends fatalism. He says that in the second place it is for having eliminated the *concept of will* that his fatalism is complete. If the thought of the Eternal Return in its prolongations already abolishes with the self's identity the traditional concept of will, Nietzsche seems, with the second aspect of his fatalism, to allude to his own physiology. According to the latter, there is no will that is not one of *power* and in this respect will is nothing other than primordial drive; no moral interpretation of this drive starting from the intellect would ever be able to suspend the innumerable metamorphoses through which it passes, the figures that it adopts, the pretexts which provoke them, whether the *end* invoked or the *meaning* that this drive, within these metamorphoses, claims for itself at the level of consciousness. In this way, fatality would merge with the driving force which, as it happens, exceeds the agent's "will" and *already modifies* it, thus *threatens its stable identity*.

Translated by Susan Hanson

"Oubli et anamnèse dans l'expérience vécue de l'éternel retour du même" was published in *Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux*, Mercure de France, 1969.

1. See *Letter to Burckhardt*, January 6, 1889.

# A

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# MY LIFE

Friedrich Nietzsche  
AND MAX VON AVILEZ

**T**HE FUNCTION WHICH RENDERS MAN SUPERIOR TO GOD IS THE ABILITY TO HATE WITH ALL OF HIS HEART EVERYTHING HE WAS TAUGHT IN CHILDHOOD TO REVERE AND HONOR

(P.23)

...UPON MY FATHER'S DEATH, MY MOTHER CLOSED THE DOOR OF HER WOMB TO ALL MEN AND FIXED A HOSTILE EYE FOR EVERY MALE WHO CAME ALONG AND PLEADED WORDLESSLY WITH HANDS AND EYES. THAT MINE WAS THE ONLY MALE FORM ON WHICH SHE COULD LOOK WITH APPROBATION (AND, SOMETIMES, I THOUGHT, LONGING) MADE FOR ME A PRISON ONLY ONE WHO GREW UP IN SUCH A HOUSE CAN UNDERSTAND.

(P.50)

IF MY MOTHER HAD NOT SHUT LOVE OUT OF OUR HOUSE, FORCING MY SISTER AND MYSELF TO FIND IT BETWEEN OURSELVES, AT LEAST TWO PEOPLE WHO LIVED IN UTTER MISERY MIGHT HAVE FOUND SOME HAPPINESS ON EARTH. (P.50)

\* ALL QUOTATIONS, UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED, ARE FROM THE VERY AUTHENTIC BOOK 'MY SISTER AND I' WRITTEN BY FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE DURING HIS CONFINEMENT IN A NURSING-HOME IN JENA, EARLY IN 1890, AND PUBLISHED IN NEW YORK IN 1951 BY DOAR'S HEAD BOOKS.



EARLY IN CHILDHOOD ELISABETH MADE A PRACTISE OF CRAWLING INTO MY BED SATURDAY MORNINGS TO PLAY WITH MY GENITALIA, AND, AFTER A WHILE, GOT INTO THE HABIT OF TREATING THEM AS IF THEY WERE SPECIAL TOYS OF HERS. (P.11)



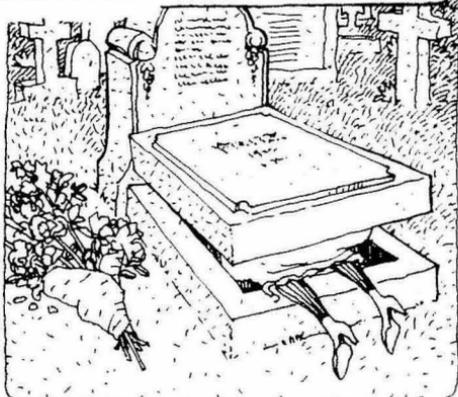
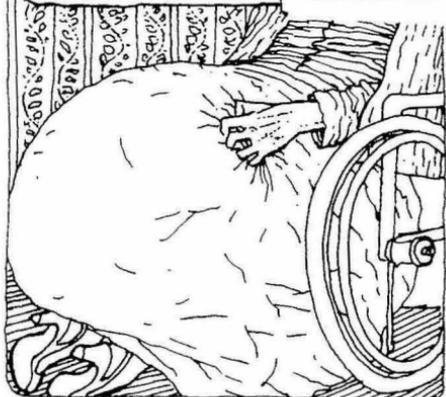
WOULD SHE TELL THE WORLD HOW FOR MANY YEARS SHE HAUNTED THE WORLD OF MY SENSES WITH THOSE MARVELOUS FINGERS OF HERS, DRIVING ME TO A PREMATURE AND HOPELESS AWAKENING? (P.2)



THIS IS THE PARADOX OF MY EXISTENCE: I HAVE LOVED LIFE PASSIONATELY BUT HAVE NEVER DARED TO CHANNEL TH'S LOVE IN THE DIRECTION OF NORMAL EROTIC EXPERIENCE (P.39)

VERILY THE LOVE OF A WOMEN IS A BALM TO THE WOUNDED SOUL, BUT INCEST IS A CLOSED GARDEN, A FOUNTAIN SEALED WHERE THE WATERS OF LIFE ARE DRIED UP AND THE FLOWERS BLOOM ONLY TO WITHER AT THE TOUCH (P.41)

ELISABETH NIETZSCHE



IF I HAD A CHOICE OF HOW TO BE BROUGHT UP IN A SECOND CHILDHOOD, I THINK I WOULD PREFER A BROTHEL TO A PIOUS HOME SUCH AS I WAS ACTUALLY BROUGHT UP IN. (P.117)

AT LEIPZIG I DISCOVERED THAT COLLEGE STUDENTS CONFINED THEIR SEARCH FOR TRUTH TO DISCOTHEQUES AND PUBS, AND THAT IT WAS MORE IMPORTANT TO PRACTISE THE ART OF FORNICATION THAN TO STUDY THE AESTHETIC SYSTEMS OF ARISTOTLE OR SCHOPENHAUER

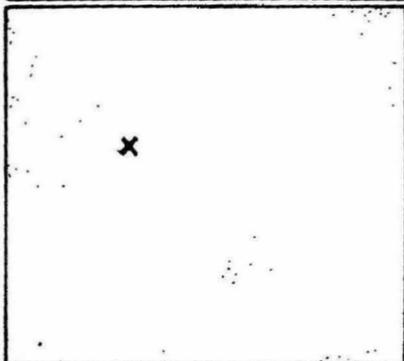
(P.136)

THERE ARE MASKS FOR THE MERCHANTS AS WELL AS FOR THE PROFESSORS, THERE ARE MASKS THAT FIT THIEVES AND THERE ARE MASKS THAT LOOK NATURAL ONLY ON SAINTS. THE GREATEST OF ALL THE MASKS IS NAKEDNESS. IF I BELIEVED IN GOD THIS WOULD BE THE MASK I WOULD CONCEIVE HIM IN. (P.128)

MY MOTHER'S EXCESS OF MODESTY HAS POISONED THE WELLSOURCE OF MY BEING. I HAVE THEREFORE INWARDLY RAGED AGAINST DELICACY AND MODESTY IN WOMEN AND WHEN LOU SALOME STORMED ME WITH THE FULL IMPACT OF HER EROTIC NATURE I SURRENDERED TO HER WITH RELIEF — AND DELIGHT

(P.29)





WHY DID LOU NEVER GIVE HERSELF COMPLETELY TO ME? BECAUSE HER BODY WAS HER OWN PROPERTY; I COULD BORROW IT IN OUR MUTUAL NEED FOR EROTIC EXPRESSION BUT IT ALWAYS REMAINED HER OWN — HER BODY AND HER SOUL! (P.11)

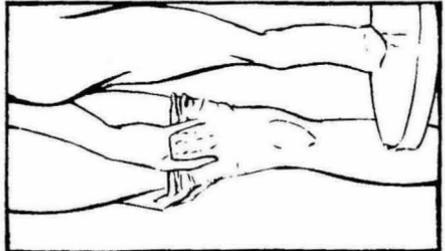
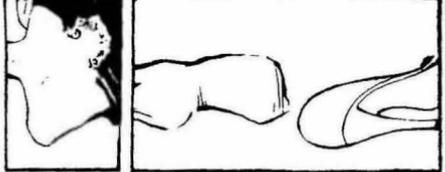
WOMEN ARE THE ONLY PRIVATE TROL OVER ITS OWNER (P.12)

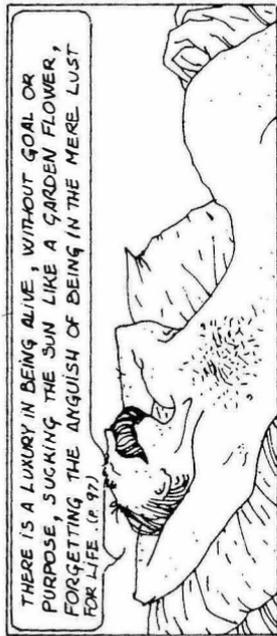
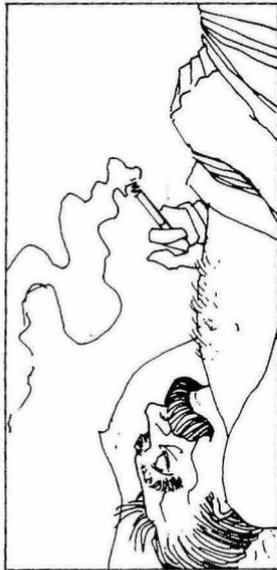
— LOU SALOMÉ —



'DO YOU WISH THIS TO HAPPEN ONCE MORE STERNALLY?!

(P.13)



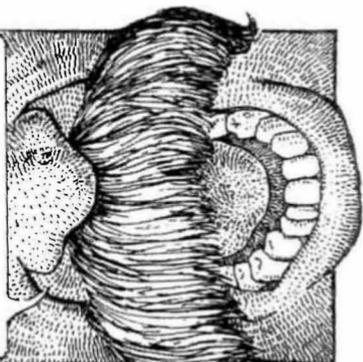
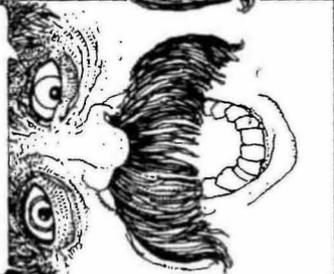


THERE IS A LUXURY IN BEING ALIVE, WITHOUT GOAL OR PURPOSE, SUCKING THE SUN LIKE A GARDEN FLOWER, FORGETTING THE ANGUISH OF BEING IN THE MERE LUST FOR LIFE. (P. 97)

I HAVE TRIED TO TURN PHILOSOPHY INTO ART —THE ART OF LIVING. ... BUT SINCE THERE WAS NO LOVE IN MY AGE OR IN MY PRIVATE LIFE, I COULD NOT CONCEIVE OF ANY COSMIC LOVE ROOTED IN MAN'S MEMBERS; AS EMPEDOCLES PUT IT, AND THE COSMIC CONFLICT BETWEEN LOVE AND STRIFE WHICH HARMONIZED ITSELF IN THE PROCESS OF DYNAMIC LIVING, BECAME

FOR ME STRIFE ALONE, THE SHEER BRUTALITY OF SOCIAL DARWINISM!(P118) HAVING BEEN SEPARATED FROM THE LOVE OF MY LIFE I MADE MY DESPERATE PLUNGE INTO THE FIRES OF MADNESS, HOPING

LIKE ZARATHUSTRA TO SNATCH FAITH IN MYSELF BY GOING OUT OF MY MIND AND ENTERING A HIGHER REGION OF SANITY — THE SANITY OF THE RAVING LUNATIC, THE NORMAL MADNESS OF THE DAMNED! (P119)





IN ZARATHUSTRA I  
OPENED MY ARMS WIDE  
ENOUGH TO EMBRACE  
THE WHOLE WORLD.  
WITHOUT ZARATHUSTRA  
EVERYTHING ELSE  
I HAVE DONE  
WOULD BE NOTHING.

WITH ZARA-  
THUSTRA UNDER  
MY BELT, I  
CAN AFFORD TO  
LOOK INTO THE  
EYES OF THE  
OLD-MAN  
HIMSELF —  
AND WINK.

(P.128)

OUR BISMARCKS SHOULD NOT BE  
ALLOWED TO RULE AND RUIN NATIONS  
UNTIL THEY ARE INTERVIEWED BY A  
MADMAN LIKE MYSELF: BEING A  
PERFECT IDIOT I CAN RECOGNIZE  
POLITICAL MORONS WITHOUT ASKING  
TOO MANY QUESTIONS.

(P.109)

I CANNOT LET GOD  
TRANSCEND ME; I CAN  
ONLY TRANSCEND MYSELF IN  
INFINITE NOTHINGNESS, IN THE  
ETERNAL VOID OF NOT-BEING,  
THE GHOST-LAND OF SHADOWS  
WHERE THE EXILES FROM LIFE  
FLOAT IN THE DARK  
OPACITY OF A BLURRED  
DREAM!

(P.110)



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*Sexuality is not ONE (attraction to the opposite sex), nor TWO (homo vs. hetero) but multiple. Its discourse is plural: fragmentary and fragmented. Polygraphy of the sexual cartography of cities. Plurality of its objects—always part-objects.*

*Polysexuality of New York, Paris or Rome, the city does not matter for the areas do not fit over the boundaries between "nations" and "races." Rather it defines a sort of polymorphous Empire of the Senses built along axes of increasing intensities. Axes of violent sexualities, scopic sexualities, solitary sexualities, flabby sexualities, alimentary sexualities, etc.*

*This is a call to all those who want to open a new perspective on these questions. They have nothing to do with biological sexuality nor with an archeology of sexuality based on the opposition of repression and liberation, nor with a new demarcation line between normality and deviances or pathology. Our call to polysexuality is a call to texts, interventions, testimonies, pictures, maps, documents. . . in the spirit of a constant call to arms!*

—François Péraldi  
Special Editor

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