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Nietzsche, Foucault, Power:
A Study of Ontology and Paradox in Nietzsche

BY

Nicholas R. Walter

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors Studies

Spring 2021

The University of South Dakota
Department of Philosophy

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my professor and advisor, Joseph Tinguely, for teaching me Nietzsche and the other Titans of philosophy.

“*The Thinker*: He is a thinker: that is to say, he knows how to make things simpler than they are” *The Gay Science*, Section 189.

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Text Abbreviations

Nietzsche:

-AC: *The Antichrist*

-BGE: *Beyond Good and Evil*

-BOT: *The Birth of Tragedy*

-HATH: *Human, All Too Human*

-GM: *The Genealogy of Morals*

-TGS: *The Gay Science*

-TOI: *Twilight of the Idols*

-TSZ: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

-WTP: *The Will to Power*

Foucault:

-MAC: *Madness and Civilization*

-NGH: “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History”

-SMBD: *Society Must Be Defended*

-S&P: “The Subject and Power”

-P&S: “Power and Strategies”

Introduction:

The Legacy of The Will to Power

In the Summer of 1888, Friedrich Nietzsche was working on his philosophical magnum opus, *The Will to Power*. Just a year before his fatal mental breakdown, Nietzsche tasked himself with compiling a clear and unmistakable rendition of his philosophy; a task seemingly antithetical, and perhaps irreconcilable, with his established philosophical body of work, which sought to philosophize poetically and romantically, aphoristically dancing around the truth rather than theoretically stabbing at it. The English translator for *The Will to Power*, Anthony M. Ludovici, notes in his preface to the text that his early, unconventional, and playful approach to philosophy ultimately motivated Nietzsche to write *The Will to Power*: “The reception given to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* had been so unsatisfactory, and misunderstandings relative to its teaching had become so general that Nietzsche was already beginning to see the necessity of bringing his doctrines to the public in a more definite and unmistakable form” (WTP 5). Unfortunately, Nietzsche’s ambitious final project was tragically cut short and all that remains is his journals, notes, and loose sketches compiled in one large volume.

This large volume, *The Will to Power*, sees Nietzsche working towards erecting a grand, all-encapsulating “theory of everything” grounded in his doctrine of the will to power. The will to power—which will be further expounded upon in great detail in chapter one of this thesis—can most simply and pragmatically be defined as a monistic, reductive theoretical force which Nietzsche narrowly associates with human psychology and broadly associates with the essential nature of existence. To define the doctrine of the will to power as a reductive theoretical force is to define it as a concept which Nietzsche employs not only to describe but also to *explain*, the

operations of the universe as a whole; it is to identify *the thrust of everything* under one singular and coherent concept. This amounts to Nietzsche's attempt to *transcend* the human, all too human, correspondence with the manifold of being and therefore arrive at a purer notion of Truth.¹

Unfortunately for the spirit of Nietzsche, a survey of the academic reception of *The Will to Power* reveals that Nietzsche's later theoretical renditions of his philosophy have only served to muddy the waters of his grand philosophical goals and ambitions. For instance, Alexander Nehamas, a highly noted Nietzsche scholar, declared in his book *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* that the doctrine of the will to power as articulated in *The Will to Power* is "a barely plausible and quite horrible theory of behavior, according to which ruthless individuals, or worse, races and even species constantly overpower equally ruthless but weaker opponents" (Nehamas 75). In Nehamas's criticism, we are greeted with a common approach shared among those who quickly reject the will to power: that the moral implications of the doctrine are, in their view, unacceptable and therefore a rejection of the doctrine is justified. As I will demonstrate in the following chapter, another—much more thought out—form of criticism towards the will to power exists among Nietzsche scholars, one which points out that there is a fundamental contradiction and paradox between Nietzsche's explicit anti-ontological approach to philosophy and the seemingly ontological form the doctrine the will to power assumes in *The Will to Power*².

¹ To spell "Truth" with a capital T is intentional: I am not referring to truth in the sense of being veridical; rather "Truth" refers to an ultimate realization of the "Truth of everything" (i.e., the truth of a final framework which accounts for each thing in particular) rather than "the truth of something".

² Due to the broadness of the term, it is important to clarify that when I use the word "ontological" I am referring to a philosophical system which claims to bear the Truth of Being and the universe according to a single, omni-explanatory systematic construction of ideas.

To write off the will to power as immoral and or not essential to the heart of Nietzsche's philosophy is to neglect the simple fact that Nietzsche himself explicitly told us *it is*: "*This world is the Will to Power—and nothing else!* And even ye yourselves are this all to power—and nothing besides!" (WTP 481). These were the final words published under Nietzsche's name, and to identify his final project as unessential to his earlier works is to study an incomplete rendition of Nietzsche. It is to survey some trees rather than the whole forest. It is also a mistake to assume that Nietzsche's ideas in *The Will to Power* shouldn't be taken seriously because of the project's incomplete nature. Regardless of what Nietzsche left us, the philosophical goal of this final project was to articulate the world as will to power in a more theoretical and unmistakable fashion than he ever had before. It was Nietzsche who told us the truth is terrible, and as Nietzsche scholars, we ought not to bar a proper examination of the doctrine of the will to power and its relation to the whole of his philosophy for any alleged moral atrocities. To denounce the will to power as a morally problematic doctrine is to suppose one has fully grasped, examined, and understood the doctrine in connection with the rest of Nietzsche's philosophy; however, as I will demonstrate in chapter one, the majority of criticism on the will to power de facto rejects the doctrine as, the critics claim, it *must* be a priori inconsistent with Nietzsche's doctrine of perspectivism and denial of metaphysical truths, and therefore the will to power should be set aside or apologetically revised to understand Nietzsche.

In this thesis I will demonstrate that *the paradoxical clash* between Nietzsche's systematic articulation of the will to power and his anti-ontological stance is not sufficient grounds for the denouncement of the doctrine of the will to power *in relation to the rest of Nietzsche's philosophy* but is, rather, an illustration which pierces further to the heart of

Nietzsche's philosophy more than any surface-level reading neglecting the will to power ever could. To synthesize the doctrine of the will to power—as Nietzsche put it—with the rest of Nietzsche's philosophy, and to examine the paradox and irony which necessarily arises will reveal a deeply buried interpretive layer of Nietzsche's philosophy neglected by many Nietzsche scholars. If Nietzsche is right and there are no facts, only interpretations, and we—along with our systems of thought—are necessarily trapped beneath the ice of our subjectivity, what are we to do with philosophy as an intellectually productive enterprise? Indeed, Nietzsche employed his philosophy as a destructive force upon countless ideologies, yet when he tried to posit *his* philosophy in a more direct and systematic manner, he exposed himself to the same criticisms he used to topple the monuments of other philosophies.

Michel Foucault, an astute reader of Nietzsche, undoubtedly recognized this paradox, and this thesis will utilize Foucault's writings on Nietzsche and his understanding of power (as opposed to *the* will to power) as a guide to assist in dissecting, examining, and understanding what exactly is happening within the deeply knotted roots of Nietzsche's thought, the paradoxical object which he wished to articulate but never did (*never could?*). By examining Nietzsche and Foucault's philosophical methodologies of *genealogy*, I will illustrate the inherent paradoxes which arise when Nietzsche's philosophy as a whole is considered. A consequence of using Foucault to illuminate the more obscure portions of Nietzsche's philosophy is that the refined Nietzschean lens will clarify the otherwise unwieldy question of Foucauldian power. However, the primary outcome for the purposes of this project of placing Nietzsche's and Foucault's similar yet differing approaches to philosophy side by side, is to establish a more grounded

understanding of how the will to power relates to the rest of Nietzsche's philosophy will be reached.

This thesis ultimately argues that Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power is not only inseparable from the rest of his philosophy but actually lies within the heart of his philosophy despite the apparent paradoxical consequences this entails. In that case, Michel Foucault's differential approach to understanding power represents an attempt to arrive at a completion and refinement of Nietzsche's final project while simultaneously removing its paradoxical quality. As should be expected, this discussion will raise additional issues and questions. However, the excruciating tasks of understanding and of *accepting* the paradoxes which arise in Nietzsche will not only provide very deep insight into his philosophy but also into the task of the philosopher and her or his ability to emancipate Truth from being.

Chapter One of this thesis will be dedicated to a thorough examination of Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power and its relation with the rest of his philosophy. I will show that once Nietzsche's philosophy as a whole is considered, the will to power emerges as a central concept, fermenting through the course of his career as it developed into its systematized form in *The Will to Power*.

Next, Chapter Two will elaborate on Foucault's differential understanding of power, which will be illustrated by examining how the two different philosophers approach the methodology of *genealogy* and ontology in general. This examination will demonstrate that Foucault developed his philosophy through a strict adherence to a rejection of ontological construction. Marking Foucault's departure from Nietzsche will be an essential instrument for understanding the paradox of Nietzsche, the anti-systematizer, forming his own system.

Chapter Three will build off the genealogical focus of the previous chapter and will broadly introduce Nietzsche's philosophical work, *The Genealogy of Morals*. This contextual introduction will serve as a stepping stone into a case study in the following chapter concerning the relationship between ontology and paradox within Nietzsche's philosophy while relying on Foucault's contrasting philosophical methodology to better understand the meaning of the inherent contradictions which arise in Nietzsche's philosophy.

Chapter Four will cover the major themes of the "First Essay" of *The Genealogy of Morals* as a medium to demonstrate: 1) the doctrine of the will to power is an assumption inherent to Nietzsche's philosophical works, even if he does not explicitly state it as such; 2) the presence of this ontological device renders Nietzsche's philosophy knotted in paradox; and 3) Foucault's approach helps understand why this paradox arises and what *it* really is.

This essay will conclude with a chapter dedicated to reflecting upon these ontologically induced Nietzschean paradoxes and how this impacts what we can *gain* from reading Nietzsche. Ultimately, this concluding chapter will broadly meditate over what it means *to be* a philosopher, what limitations are inherently placed upon the philosopher, and how the philosopher *must* paradoxically overcome these limitations if she or he wishes to make positive philosophical claims.

Chapter 1

Nietzsche and The Will to Power

In this chapter I will discuss Nietzsche's notion of the will to power and its relation to the rest of his philosophy. To start, I will demonstrate that Nietzsche's systematic rendition of the will to power is not simply an anomaly that appeared near the end of his life, but is rather the result of a conceptual fermentation which developed over time throughout the course of his writing career. Following this conceptual grounding, a discussion of the paradox of Nietzsche's rendition of the will to power as a naturalist ontology will be conducted.³ This discussion of paradox lurking in the depths of Nietzsche's philosophy will lead to a survey of the scholarly reception of the paradox of the will to power and how different academics have tried to revise, negate, or account for the doctrine in relation to the rest of his philosophy. The chapter will then close by introducing a parallel moral dilemma which arises with Nietzsche's usage of the will to power and will further illustrate just how deep this paradox runs through Nietzsche's philosophy.

Broadly speaking, the notion of the will to power is an ontological force underlying human psychology and behavior. The will to power is the force that propels humans to act towards specific ends, all of which are predicated upon a person or group expressing or garnering *power*. Consequently, the will to power is the engine that fuels the ebbs and flows of culture and morality. This brief introductory explanation in no way captures all the complexity and gravity of the will to power, however, it will serve as a practical starting point for our investigation.

To understand the problem of Nietzsche's ontological conception of the will to power is to understand that it is intrinsically linked to the development of the concept through the course

³ Naturalist in the sense that Nietzsche employs the doctrine of the will to power to explain *all* phenomenon in the natural world.

of his philosophical career. In one of his earliest works, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), Nietzsche identifies two universal human impulses, “The Dionysian” and “The Apollonian.” Nietzsche described the Dionysian as “The liberation of unbounded instinct, the breaking loose of the unbridled dynamism of animal and divine nature” (BOT 227). The Dionysian impulse is characterized by intoxication, madness, and enthusiasm while the Apollonian is contrastingly characterized by rationality, appearance, and a calm demeanor. Nietzsche argued these two psychological forces intermingled in a dialectical struggle which created ancient Greek art and its characteristic traits. While it cannot be said the will to power is directly comparable to these two early Nietzschean concepts, the differing conceptions are yet intrinsically related in the development of Nietzsche’s thought, as the will to power, the Dionysian, and the Apollonian are all a priori and universal psychological drives which underlies all human discourse and activity. Nietzsche’s early conception of the Dionysian and Apollonian can be viewed as the embryo of the ontological articulation of will to power, a concept further elaborated upon as Nietzsche shifted his study from Greek antiquity to morality and human psychology.

Nietzsche first explicitly points to the will to power in *The Gay Science* (1882). This essential text was characteristic of Nietzsche’s early style. He wrote in aphorism, essay, poem, and song. Never being too clear, always seeming just out of the reader’s grasp. He intentionally styled his writing so as to necessitate interpretation, and much of what Nietzsche is “really getting at” is buried deep beneath layers of context and literary playfulness. He did not write in a logical argumentative structure, rather he whimsically sprang from topic to topic as he pleased, refusing to systematize his thought. In this book we see Nietzsche nodding towards the will to

power, but not demarcating it, not encapsulating it, but instead hinting to the reader that it is present. In aphorism thirteen “On the Theory of the Sense of Power” he writes:

In doing others well or ill, we want no more than to exert power over them! In *doing* ill, we hurt those to whom we need to make our power palpable... In *doing well* and wishing well, we help those who somehow or other already depend on us; we want to increase their power, because in doing so we increase our own (TGS 46).

Notice that Nietzsche does not explicitly refer to the will to power anywhere in this section, rather he tacitly assumes that a psychological mechanism in line with the will to power dictates human interaction. If Nietzsche did not already hold the assumption of the universality of the will to power, the statement above has zero ground and loses all meaning. How can one claim that all our social interactions are predicated upon garnering power without holding a very specific view of how the world operates? While Nietzsche does not explicitly elaborate on his theory of the will to power in *The Gay Science*, this passage nonetheless demonstrates he already *assumed* the will to power as an explanation for human psychology.

Nonetheless, before Nietzsche points out in *The Gay Science* that there is a will towards power underlying moral affairs, he does not first sketch out and systematize an ontological subject which is *causing* these things to happen, rather he is making what he sees as self-evident observations and allowing the reader to interpret what lurks beneath these seemingly spontaneous and scattered observations. It is important to note that, early in his career, Nietzsche only refers to the will to power to explain human psychology and it is not necessarily related to an ontological framework.

As Nietzsche continued to write, the importance of the will to power began to expand and centralize itself at the heart of his work. In *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), Nietzsche most explicitly wrote about the will to power than in any other of his previously published works. He vividly describes the will to power in very small and scattered yet precise chunks throughout the book. This elaboration of the will to power is directly related to the purpose of the book, which is to transcend to a place beyond the constraints of a moral understanding of the world, a place beyond good and evil. In section 259 Nietzsche writes:

[Anything which] is a living and not a dying body... 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...'Exploitation'... 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 to life. (BGE 84).

In this passage it takes little interpretation to see that Nietzsche believes there is a universal drive within all humanity—all *life*—which is unconscious, directional, and omnipresent. As Nietzsche puts it, to live is to *will* oneself towards power. This will to power is the byproduct after stripping morality away from our inquiries into the nature of existence. Indeed, Nietzsche is clearly staking explicitly ontological claims in this section. The will to power is a driving force underlying all individuals, which makes us strive towards the exertion of power over others. This inevitably leads to reality being conceptualized as a large network of individual bodies perpetually struggling against one another (towards “power”) for eternity, all operating under the singular and universal doctrine of the will to power.

Beyond Good and Evil is written in a similar style to most of his earlier works. However, his more explicit elaborations on the will to power specifically mark a change in direction from his initial aphoristic philosophic trajectory. An unavoidable paradox arises when Nietzsche gives positive accounts of the will to power. Because Nietzsche's philosophy adheres to the doctrine of perspectivism and is therefore fundamentally anti-ontological, he did not believe the ontological cogs moving the world could ever be fully grasped and articulated through rational systematization, as the world is inherently not rational. As he states in his polemic against religions and philosophies of old, *The Twilight of the Idols* (1889) "I mistrust all systematizers and avoid them. The will to a system is a lack of integrity" (TOI 35). He viewed ontological constructions such as God, the atom, morality, and the soul, as to be necessarily fictitious as they treat existence as a static and mechanistic *theory* rather than a robust and dynamic *activity*. The idea that the universe is composed of individual bodies adhering to specific, morally grounded, and calculable laws is something we would *like* to believe because belief systems as such (religion, secularism, political ideology) endow life with meaning when at bottom, for Nietzsche, there is none.

As a result of this anti-ontological Nietzschean philosophic attitude, Nietzsche's integrity is called into question when the will to power is brought under examination. If the will to power is universally embedded throughout all life, and if the origin of the will to power is embedded within individual subjects operating under a priori principles, it would appear as though Nietzsche's conception of the will to power itself is an ontological one *he* ought to criticize from an anti-ontological standpoint.

How are we to reconcile the whole of Nietzsche's philosophy with this deeply embedded ontological paradox? On the one hand, there is the critical Nietzsche, he who philosophizes with a hammer. This version of Nietzsche does not *create* but rather polemically annihilates and deconstructs others' positive philosophical creations. On the other hand, there is Nietzsche the creator, he who wills his own vision of "Truth" to parchment as a positive philosophical creation.⁴ I argue that this paradoxical crossroads in Nietzsche is not simply a case of cognitive dissonance or arrogance on Nietzsche's behalf, but is rather an illustration of the tragic fate of the philosopher and her or his craft.

Due to the restraints of subjectivity and the impenetrable nature of the noumenal world, any positive conceptual construct must necessarily be grounded in thin *conceptual* air (a non-ground). For this reason, any philosophical articulation of the world as a system is necessarily doomed to collapse in on itself and crumble downwards into the abyss indefinitely. I suspect Nietzsche was keenly aware of this fact, yet he nonetheless endeavored himself to create his own conceptual castle on a groundless ground. If Nietzsche lacked this ambition to create his own philosophical system, (despite the paradoxical implications of doing so) he would have never been remembered for anything more than being a very talented philologist at Leipzig University. Gaze into Nietzsche's dark and solemn eyes in Edvard Munch's painting "Portrait of Friedrich Nietzsche," to grasp a visual representation of the tragic fate the philosopher must necessarily be met with. Have we as philosophers simply thought ourselves into a strange loop we cannot possibly escape? For now, this discussion of paradox in Nietzsche and its relation to the

⁴ By a positive system of truth I mean a system of truth which is directly posited as true. Not positive in an affirmative sense (although this countervailing definition of positive does hold weight in Nietzsche's philosophy).

philosopher will be bracketed; however these ideas must be kept in mind as this thesis progresses.

This tragic fate the philosopher finds itself in will be made more evident by an examination of Nietzsche's latest work, *The Will to Power*, a posthumous collection of sketches, notes, and essays surrounding the project before the expiration of life cut it short. In *The Will to Power* we see Nietzsche trying to soberly and systematically flesh out the amorphous concept of will to power, his positive philosophical construction. For instance:

My idea is that every specific body strives to become master over all space and to extend its force (—its will to power:) and to thrust back all that resists its extension. But it continually encounters similar efforts on the part of other bodies and ends by coming to an arrangement ("union") with those of them that are sufficiently related to it: thus they then conspire together for power. And the process goes on (WTP 636).

It is not difficult to see how a student of Nietzsche would find it difficult to reconcile this later iteration of the will to power with other perspectivist aspects of his philosophy. Such a clear, systematic, and ontological description of the will to power is surely helpful to understand the idea, but a close reader of Nietzsche will notice once this idea is crystalized (necessarily mummified) it becomes contrary to his perspectivist, anti-ontological approach to philosophy. This systematic construction renders a conception of power in which a vast network of opposing forces are constantly stuck in a dominance-repression dichotomy. To offer an analogy, this ontological articulation of the will to power harkens to an early atomist view of the world.

Particles (wills to power) are simply colliding and interacting with one another and that is the nature of everything at bottom.

As alluded to in my introduction, much scholastic controversy has erupted over this paradoxical issue. Many Nietzsche scholars have tried to reconcile this later doctrine with the rest of his philosophy, and many have also pushed back on this doctrine, identifying it as a source of error and contradiction in Nietzsche's philosophy. Richard Schacht, a prominent expert on Nietzsche, argues that Nietzsche's denunciation of metaphysics is concerned with ontological claims which denies "this" world for "True or other worlds," and therefore Nietzsche is simply presenting his views on "this" world, and thus the will to power is compatible (Clark 206).

Alexander Nehamas, the scholar referred to in the introduction, argues that the conception of the will to power is not an ontology but rather amounts to a denial of the thing-in-itself and therefore is a denial of ontological claims (207). Walter Kauffman, a revered Nietzsche translator and scholar, argued that the will to power is not an a priori metaphysical claim about the world, but is instead a concept arrived at by empirical induction which provides us a helpful framework for understanding many psychological phenomena (208).

Maudemarie Clark, in her book *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, after briefly surveying the aforementioned Nietzsche scholars, wholly denounces the will to power as incoherent with Nietzsche's body of work as a whole.

I have argued that Nietzsche's doctrine of will to power is not a doctrine at all.

Although Nietzsche says that life is will to power, he also gives us clues that he does not regard this as a truth or a matter of knowledge, but a construction of the world from the viewpoint of his values. However this is only half the story, for it

is not plausible to interpret everything Nietzsche says about power in this way. He clearly claims all sorts of knowledge of the human desire for power, for example, and this is the other side of the story (227).

For Clark, if the will to power is accepted as a doctrine, and Nietzsche appears to do so, the rest of Nietzsche's work becomes consequently knotted in paradox and contradiction. The problem arises when Nietzsche centralizes the thrust of the will to power within individual bodies—fundamentally ontological units (like “the soul”) which are a priori imbued with an ethereal *force* which directs and *explains* behavior. For Clark, the will to power also conflicts with Nietzsche's doctrine of subjectivism; that there are no facts only interpretations highly constrains what Nietzsche can say about the world and to what degree we can take him seriously. Nietzsche articulates his vision of the will to power as though it is a matter of fact, and proceeds to use this as the starting point for his ontology in *The Will to Power*. This clearly calls into question Nietzsche's integrity regarding philosophical matters.

Before proceeding, I would like to point out that Clark is wrong to the extent that the doctrine of the will to power is not entirely inconsistent with Nietzsche's notion of perspectivism. While a paradox necessarily arises depending on how explicitly Nietzsche articulates the doctrine of the will to power, the will to power is fundamentally a subjective drive. It is not unidirectional despite the grammar of “the will to power is the exertion of one's power.” The way one understands the exertion of *one's own power* is completely subject to the circumstances of the individual. A fundamental Christian will view “power” differently than a world-class bodybuilder. That much is plain. Our subjective interaction with the world informs how and what ideal of power to strive towards, and these understandings take the form of

ideological systems which purportedly reveal the “Truth” of the happenings around us. The fundamental Christian’s individual understanding of power can therefore be prodded and uncovered by exploring their personal understanding of how the world works. It is no mistake that the one who believes in an omnipotent God views this God as the main source of power to strive towards in *their* life.

The fact humans subjectively interpret and therefore systematize the world as “objective” is a result of a will to exert power over the world in order for our primordial desires to be satiated. For Nietzsche, it is necessitated within our very being that we *forge* (as opposed to *discover*) *meaning* (as opposed to *The Meaning*) in our lives. This is because there is no “True” meaning to be found at the bottom of our inquiries into the world. As Nietzsche puts it, “The will would rather will nothingness than not will” (GOM 97). God did not exist as a concept until humanity forged the concept itself. This clearly alludes to the ontological paradox I have identified. While it may be the case that the philosopher is trapped within a tragic and strange loop of subjectivity, at the end of the day we are human and humans are predisposed to create. Therefore, Nietzsche’s doctrine of subjectivism is not entirely incoherent with the will to power because it is the will to power itself which generates and reinforces subjective interpretations of the world.⁵ This is, of course, Nietzsche’s own interpretation, and to take Nietzsche seriously one must grasp and understand this paradoxical nature of the will to power, as it is a quintessential concept in his philosophy.

⁵ The problem arises, however, when Nietzsche universalizes the will to power as ontology and articulates it as the ultimate “Truth” for everybody and everything indefinitely. Despite the will to power being a subjective drive, Nietzsche nonetheless crosses the line by articulating it as ontology *as a matter of fact*.

Perhaps the younger Nietzsche anticipated this issue while writing *The Gay Science*. In aphorism 121, “Life No Argument,” Nietzsche writes:

We have arranged for ourselves a world in which we can live—by the postulating of bodies, lines, surfaces, causes and effects, motion and rest, form and content: without these articles of faith no one could manage to live at present! But for all that they are still unproved. Life is no argument; error might be among the conditions of life. (TGS 131)

Perhaps Nietzsche recognized the contradictory nature of his philosophy as a positive enterprise, and perhaps this was an intended error, left for future philosophers to pick up. Perhaps Nietzsche employed paradox and contradiction in an attempt to mirror the paradox and contradiction of existence as a whole. We can only speculate as to what Nietzsche would have published in his final project, *The Will to Power*, but it is clear that his work was ultimately left incomplete. The paradoxical problem for the interpreter of locating the origin for the exertion of power—namely identifying individual “wills” to power—and its ontological implications are unavoidable when evaluating Nietzsche as a whole.

This ontological paradox which arises when evaluating Nietzsche’s work also gives rise to a moral paradox within his later period polemical works condemning systems of morality. As Nietzsche grew older and his work became more systematic, he also became more polemic, more morally charged, and more vocal in his attacks on religious faiths. Nietzsche profusely pronounced Christian morality to be a symptom of decadence, infesting and degrading mankind due to its inhibitions placed on the will to power. He viewed it a perversion of the “noble morality,” one more in line with a purer expression of the will to power, as exemplified by Greek

society. By holding such a stance, Nietzsche does to the Christian faith what the Christian faith did to noble societies. Much in the same way that he also becomes a crafter of ontology by systematizing the will to power, he becomes a moral realist by attacking Christian morality and calling for a return to morality's "noble" roots.

This, taken as a whole in Nietzsche's texts, raise certain paradoxical questions and pose a task for the reader, namely, how to render consistency between Nietzsche's perspectivism on the one hand and his doctrine of the will to power in the other. It is within these paradoxical issues Michel Foucault bored out the whole of his work on power. Picking up where Nietzsche left off, Foucault was determined to deliver a view of power which avoided ontological construction and morally ridden rhetoric. To understand this contrasting approach to understanding power, in the following chapter I will analyze how Foucault responds to the problems that arise within Nietzsche's will to power, and by doing so I will sketch out an illuminating analytical structure which *The Genealogy of Morals* will be read into which I will then explore in detail in Chapter Four following an introduction to *The Genealogy* in Chapter three. This textual analysis will advance my hypothesis that the will to power is *the* central concept within Nietzsche's philosophy, and it will also provide me a potent avenue to clarify two of the most inaccessible philosophers of all time.

Chapter 2

Foucault: Power as Analytics

In the previous chapter I demonstrated that Nietzsche's philosophy may not be divorced from his ontological conception of the will to power. Whether tacitly assumed or explicitly laid out, the will to power is the central concept informing Nietzsche's philosophical claims and projects. I have also demonstrated that this fact necessarily renders Nietzsche's philosophy paradoxical and contradictory when his doctrine of perspectivism is considered.

In this chapter, I will call upon the work of Foucault to help understand this paradoxical quality of Nietzsche's philosophy. First, I will layout the contrasting Foucauldian notion of power (as opposed to the will to power) and thereby sketch an accessible and applicable analytical framework to further grasp Nietzsche's ontological paradox by analyzing the "First Essay" of his work, *The Genealogy of Morals*. I undertake this Foucault-inspired interpretation of the *Genealogy* in subsequent chapters. In this chapter I focus on how this Foucauldian cross-examination will lead to a more complete understanding of Nietzsche's philosophy, specifically its inherent paradoxes, where they come from, and how (or *if*) they could have been avoided.

If Nietzsche's conception of how power operates is analogous to a simplistic materialist view of physics (individual particles simply and endlessly "colliding"), Foucault's conception of power is analogous to a quantum mechanical view of physics; a view which denies that the fundamental building blocks of existence are reducible to quantifiable individual particles. Quantum mechanics denies the existence of clearly localizable and singular location for the atom, making mathematical matters much, much more tricky. Nietzsche believed that clearly distinguishable "wills" conflict and operate under cynical laws which renders power as a

commodity. For Foucault, asserting that the essence of power lies within individualized localities operating under ontological pretenses crosses the line of what we can say as consistent philosophers, and it should therefore be avoided. This ontological denial in turn makes philosophical matters much more tricky.

As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, Nietzsche views the doctrine of the will to power to be the principle operating law in the universe. The whole of existence is the embodiment of an eternal struggle of reducibly localizable “wills” which strive towards the extension and exertion of *their* power over the rest of existence. This conglomeration of opposing forces, always operating under a dominance-repression dichotomy, is the proper way to understand power. Power is a commodity to be possessed, a source of wealth to be strived towards; it is a status reflecting growth, influence, domination, and exploitation. Nietzsche’s philosophy commoditized power. For Foucault, power is a completely different concept all together.

Nietzsche’s conception of power presupposes individual subjects which must necessarily behave under the ontological constraints of the will to power. Foucault denies the ontological assumption underlying Nietzsche’s late conceptualization of the will to power, not necessarily because of the truth value of the doctrine, but because it extends beyond the intrinsic limitations placed upon the philosopher. This Foucauldian denial of ontology results in a view of power that is not defined and therefore not restricted by an ontological will. Power is not exclusively the product of subjects, rather it is a force which *shapes* subjects and their behavior. Instead of staking ontological claims regarding the nature of power, Foucault focuses on studying the *expressions* of power throughout society. By studying institutions (such as hospitals, prisons,

schools, military) and discourses, (including science, morality, government, religion) Foucault believes we can gain insight into the nature of power and how it operates within society. As Foucault writes regarding his methodology, “Rather than analyzing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists of analyzing power relations through the antagonisms of strategies” (S&P 129). This quote can be read as a direct response to Nietzsche’s ontological elaborations in *The Will to Power*. For Foucault, the doctrine of perspectivism and its accompanying philosophical restraints takes priority over the will to erect an ontological theory. This strict adherence to the doctrine of perspectivism prevents Foucault from tackling power head on as Nietzsche frequently did throughout his later work.

For Foucault, “Power” is not to be understood in the Nietzschean sense of being a commodity which an endless conglomerate of individual “wills” strive towards. When Foucault refers to power he is referring to the broad ability to have influence over another’s actions. He writes, “The term “power” designates relationships between “partners” (and by that I am not thinking of a game with fixed rules but simply, and for the moment staying in the most general terms, of an ensemble of actions that induce others and follow from one another)” (S&P 135). This relational property, however, does not have any *necessary* specific essence which “makes the engines turn,” so to speak. Power *is*, rather, what can be drawn from examining the social network of subjects within society.

Because Foucault avoids tracing and centralizing the origin and property of power within the ontological creation of the will, he does not trap himself in an a priori mode of systematization. Any specifically structured system of concepts which seeks to mechanize existence in order to completely grasp existence must be chiefly concerned with determining the

elementary conditions for existence. This attempt to reduce reality to its most elementary conditions is the primary motivation underpinning all ontological construction. The whole is to be understood in relation to its elementary parts and its elementary parts in relation to the whole.

It is no mistake that the most renowned builders of ontology throughout the history of philosophy were deeply entrenched with religion, as Foucault points out this conceptual *origin*—the preconditions for existence—“comes before the body, before the world and time; it is associated with the gods, and its story is always sung in theogony” (143). This quote illustrates the primary cause of academic controversy regarding Nietzsche’s work on the will to power. At times Nietzsche actively denies the religious task of constructing an ontological origin, yet it is undeniable that in *The Will to Power* he is making an attempt to formulate an origin for his ontological claims on the world (so as to be able to “come from” a conceptual ground). Foucault delivers a Nietzschean critique of Nietzsche and correctly points out that his later work goes against his early commandments.

To understand this Nietzschean inconsistency, Foucault makes the observation that throughout the course of Nietzsche’s writings, he uses differing German words to denote the English word “origin.” When Nietzsche refers to the task of ontological construction—the creation of a philosophical starting premise—he uses *Ursprung* (*Ur* meaning “primordial” and *sprung* meaning “leap”) which is to be understood as “coming forth” *from* the origin. The etymology of *Ursprung* indicates that it was originally a synonym of the word *Quelle*, which means “water spring.” According to Foucault, Nietzsche invokes *Ursprung* in an abstract sense, cultivating an image of a water stream “springing” up from the ground as an analogy for how ontological premises behave philosophically. On the other hand, when referring to an “origin” a

genealogical method *arrives at*, he uses *Herkunft*. The prefix *Her* indicates “from” and *Kunft* indicates a “coming.” However, the term *Kunft* is a derivation of the verb *kommen* and therefore the term *Herkunft* origin will be something necessarily on the horizon which is to be understood as “coming to” us or coming to be. (NGH 141). While *Ursprung* is a type of origin which “springs” from a single source, *Herkunft* is a type of origin which is “excavated” by a genealogical methodology. This distinction will become extremely important to distinguish Foucault’s methodology from Nietzsche’s. Foucault avoids this quest for *Ursprung*, a Cartesian starting point for understanding power, and instead focuses on what can be drawn from our phenomenological and historical investigations of the relationship between power, ourselves, and society.

The result of Foucault’s approach to analyze rather than to define power is the acquisition of “oblique” knowledge through a genealogical mode of analysis. This form of knowledge is oblique in the sense that Foucault’s analysis utilizes institutions and cultural discourses as mediums to *view* power. It is as if Foucault sees himself in a room with an object but separated from the object by a conceptual wall. Yet there is a mirror—a very foggy and distorted mirror—on the opposite side of the room which renders movements of the object on the other side of the wall visible. Unlike Nietzsche, Foucault is not directly studying power in and of itself.⁶ When Nietzsche theoretically elaborates upon the logic and inner workings of the will to power he is analyzing power “in and of itself”. This direct treatment of the *Ursprung* of power amounts to the ontological task which directly contradicts Nietzsche’s notion of perspectivism. Foucault

⁶ When Nietzsche theoretically elaborates upon the logic and inner workings of the will to power he is analyzing power “in and of itself.” This direct treatment of power amounts to the ontological task which contradicts Nietzsche’s notion of perspectivism.

avoids this direct treatment of power to circumvent the same philosophical and paradoxical trap Nietzsche tragically fell into. For Foucault, we can see that power is and *must be* operating, however we can never articulate the essence of power divorced from the active and subjective relationships between human beings. Foucault's methodology maintains a methodological *distance* from positive conceptual systems understood as original from an *Ursprung*.

From the vantage point of an absolute distance, free from the restraints of positive knowledge, the origin [*Herkunft*] 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 (NGH 143).

The German linguistic distinction between *Henkunft* and *Ursprung* here strikingly illustrates the contrast between Nietzsche's and Foucault's understanding of power. Nietzsche's articulation of the will to power as a universal law, *the* universal law, is an origin which is *come from* [*Ursprung*]. Foucault's eagerness to avoid staking ontological claims regarding power in and of itself is a view of the origin which is genealogically *arrived at* [*Herkunft*]. While Foucault can see movements in the foggy mirror reflecting the walled off other side of the room, he is nonetheless restricted from being able to objectify, to conceptually crystalize, what the movement on the opposite side of the wall really is.

The Foucauldian methodology of power analysis, while attempting to arrive at an understanding of power, is intrinsically limited in what it can *posit* regarding the nature of power due to the necessity of rigidly denying ontological origins. Therefore, Foucault does not provide

a theory of power, but instead gives us power as an analytical tool. Nietzsche seemed to have adequately evaded the conviction of utilizing an ontological launching pad early in his work, however it is undeniable he frequently committed this sin as his philosophy—or perhaps simply his age—matured.

While the grammar of “analyzing power” suggests power to be a tangible “thing” which is being analyzed, Foucault asserts that power in and of itself is a *non-thing*. Foucault explains in The Lectures at the College de France later published as *Society Must be Defended*.

[Power] is never appropriated in the way that wealth or a commodity can be appropriated. Power functions. Power is exercised through networks, and individuals do not simply circulate in those networks; they are in a position to both submit to and exercise this power. They are never the inert or consenting targets of power; they are always its relays. In other words, power passes through individuals. It is not applied to them (SMBD 29).

This passage articulates Foucault’s notion of power to be much more amorphous than Nietzsche’s view of power as a commodity. For Foucault, it is not as though there is a field of individuals striving towards power, rather there is a field of socially interrelated individuals, and the relational property which renders individuals into a social unity is what defines power. Due to Foucault’s anti-definitional and indirect approach to studying power, it is difficult to say much more about what exactly Foucault is referring to when he speaks of “power.” Contra Nietzsche, Foucault is not interested where power comes from, but instead asks who wields power and how it is exercised.

Foucault sets out to answer these questions through a strict genealogical excavation and analysis of history and modern discourse. The differences between Foucault's and Nietzsche's genealogical methodology emerge in their respective genealogical works (illuminating this will be the chief concern of Chapter Four below). For Foucault, it is essential to distinguish between history in the broad sense and a genealogy. Foucault identifies that in western culture, the concept of "History" is inseparable from a grand meta-narrative predicated upon linear progression of a particular group of people. This predisposition to fit the events of history along an upward and one-dimensional trajectory leaves no room for discontinuities, retractions, or outside perspective. Foucault's genealogical method of analyzing history, on the other hand, "rejects the meta-historical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies. It opposes itself to the search for 'origins'." (NGH 140) This rejection of a meta-historical narrative forces the genealogist to direct his or her studies towards the differing perspectives throughout time. This allows for a more broad and more complete recognition of the make-up of the capillaries of power which flow throughout social formations.

The genealogist studies the hushed voices, the forgotten groups, the documents lost in the shadows of the grand march of history. As Foucault notes, "It operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times" (NGH 139). By obtaining such a broad, obscure, and conflicting mass of information, the genealogist is able to peer into the vast and relative network of power relationships embedded within any social arrangement. By immersing oneself within the multiplicity of perspectives which constitute a social body, the genealogist observes a vast number of perspectives all directly related to an individual's position within the social body. It is at this point the

genealogist reaches a limit. To travel further is to plunge oneself into the abyss and paradox of ontological systematizations of the world. This philosophical barrier is a result of the fact that the manner in which a society is arranged—a direct expression of power—must necessarily be relative to its unique circumstances. It is relative not only to respective individual societies, but also relative to respective individuals and groups of individuals within that society. Therefore, an attempt to universalize how power must fundamentally behave is flawed *ipso facto* because power does not have a universal focal point, “an essence,” which can be understood divorced of social formations and subjective experience within society. After all, as Foucault points out, there could be no “power” divorced from social formations because social formations are what fundamentally constitute “power.” “Power” just is how social groups coordinate and exercise actions. There is no metaphysically independent thing called “power” existing outside of those social actions no more than there would be an object called a “dance” outside of the actions of set of dancers.

The result of a strictly oblique genealogical approach to surveying history puts the genealogist in a position to peer into the shadowy realm of power operations. The nuances, contradictions, and reality of humanity's social make up cannot be fully grasped if one is caught up in the “Grand Western Narrative of History,” a circular and self-serving history power itself has produced. Without the illumination of a teleological historical light, the genealogist is intrinsically limited to what can be said regarding the shadowy nature of power in and of itself; however, an analysis of history from a genealogical perspective indirectly reveals how power operates throughout society and history.

Foucault's work *Madness and Civilization* genealogically traces the history of madness and its relation to society and reason. He conducts this examination by studying European clinical documents and records, governmental institutions, and other anthropological artifacts spanning a large time period. He analyzes the entangled, non-linear "development" of how European culture understood and treated those to be considered "mad." For example, in the Renaissance those considered "mad" were viewed to be endowed with a glorified perspective, they were to be considered closer to God. Thus sensuality, romanticism, and poetry prospered during the Renaissance epoch: "In the Renaissance, madness was present everywhere and misled with every experience by its images or its dangers" (MAC 70). However, the dawn of the Enlightenment brought about a view that madness was something unfavorable, something that justified exile, exiled in the same manner lepers were in the 12th century. This excavation of madness's and reason's relationship with civilization obliquely uncovers aspects of how power operated within European society over time. By using the history of madness as a medium of study, information regarding power (who wielded it, how it is imprinted through language, how power is enforced) is revealed. The way certain societies perceived and dealt with "madness" invariably (and indirectly) reveals information about the structure and ideals propagating those societies. For Foucault, these findings indicated that madness is the shadow of the development of the discourse of "reason." In periods of time where "reason" was championed as the guiding light of society, madness became an object of classification, institutionalization, and prescription.

Because Foucault does not first postulate the nature of power and then make claims regarding its behavior [*Herkunft*], he sidesteps the paradoxical issues which Nietzsche fell victim to in his later works. Foucault's framework may be broadly applied to conducting an inquiry into

any discourse or cultural artifact so as to arrive [*Herkunft*] at an understanding of the power based relations underlying any given social formation. From about the 17th to 18th century, America's cultural ethos was largely centered around a very strong Puritan faith. For this reason, the dominant form of literary discourse was almost solely defined by adhering to Puritan ideological tropes. Authors such as John Bunyan, Thomas Watson, and Johnathan Edwards all dominated the cultivation and circulation of literature in America during this time period, and all of their writings featured Puritan themes such as hilltop sermons, the judgement of God, predestination, and the protective grace of God (Baxter). The reason the dominant literary discourse of early colonial America took its particular form is because the literature itself was simply an expression of the power structure running throughout society.⁷ With the genealogical methodology in mind, early colonial America may be examined and understood by evaluating the overarching themes, structures, and archetypes present in its literature. This is the precise limit of the Foucauldian power analysis, however. It can tell us what the structure of a society *must* entail by deducing what *must* be in place for a discourse to take a particular form in the first place. Any claims beyond what cannot be drawn genealogically are not accessible by way Foucault's methodology and begin to fall in the realm of *Ursprung*.

Conducting an analytics of power by using institutions and discourse as an object of study obliquely elucidates aspects of how power must be operating within a society, how it informs our passions, how it leaves its mark on linguistics, and how it is able to change over time. By avoiding a historical meta-narrative, Foucault is free from the teleological restraints of a

⁷ It is important to recognize this loop: What a culture's values are inform what a culture's discourse entails. The discourse a culture consumes informs a culture's beliefs and values in an effect like that of an echo chamber. This paradoxical feedback loop raises many questions regarding axiomatic paradigms, where they receive their meaning, and how they come and go over time.

traditional Western approach to history. This also creates a difficulty of understanding exactly what Foucault means when he refers to power, as it is something which can never be captured through straightforward positive knowledge.

To summarize, Foucault views power not as a commodity or as a wealth endowing object; he views power as a necessarily existing social relational property which ebbs and flows through the capillary system of social relations within any given society. Power is something which can be indirectly analyzed by genealogically excavating and investigating discourses and institutions. By understanding how power operates within and throughout society, we may come to a better understanding of how we as individuals are molded and formed by the external operations of power.

With this Foucauldian notion of an analytics of power as secured in this chapter, I will proceed in the next chapter by applying it to Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*. The goal of this analytical cross-examination is not only to further make clear both Nietzsche and Foucault's philosophies, but to advance my overarching claim that the will to power is inseparable from the whole *and heart* of Nietzsche's philosophy. This analysis will also serve to further examine the inevitable paradoxes riddled throughout Nietzsche's work, why they arose, what they mean, and what can be gained by considering them. In the next chapter, I will begin by giving a brief introduction to *The Genealogy of Morals*, and then in the following Chapter Four I will march through the "First Essay" of *The Genealogy of Morals* and demonstrate that an ontological notion of Nietzsche's will to power *must* be operating as *Ursprung*. The groundwork of this chapter will then be used to analyze and critique this view of Nietzsche. This will provide an

ideal pathway to work towards understanding the value of the paradox of Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power and perspectivism.

Chapter 3

Nietzsche's *Genealogy*: An Introduction

In the first chapter of this thesis, I laid out Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power and demonstrated that not only is it inseparable from the heart of Nietzsche's philosophy but that it simultaneously renders his philosophy knotted in contradiction and paradox. In the previous chapter, I detailed Foucault's differing approach to power as a means to illuminate the differences between Nietzsche's and Foucault's methodologies. Throughout the rest of this thesis, I will hold the Foucauldian notion of power as a critical lens to Nietzsche's ontological doctrine of the will to power. In the following chapter, I will utilize the "First Essay" of Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* as a medium to demonstrate that the will to power is the most reductive and universal concept within Nietzsche's philosophy: reductive and universal because the will to power is the singular reductive essence Nietzsche explicitly attributes to everything in the universe. For Nietzsche, the will to power is the unmoved mover, the engine which churns his thought and motivates his projects. Chapter four will illustrate this fact even further by demonstrating the presence of Nietzsche's ontological assumption of the will to power in the "First Essay" of *The Genealogy of Morals*.

Before this demonstration, however, a brief introduction to Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* is necessary. *The Genealogy of Morals* is a collection of three essays, each of which are able to stand on their own but all of which are linked by a common thread: a genealogical inquiry into the origin of moral valuations. The book is explicitly intended to be an extension and expansion on the ideas in Nietzsche's earlier work, *Beyond Good and Evil*. Much insight into the nature of these two works can be gained by simply evaluating their titles. In *Beyond Good and*

Evil, Nietzsche provides a sprawling collection of aphorisms which attempt to evaluate the nature of moral phenomena separated from any sense or form of morality. Put differently, he analyzes morality from a perspective external to moral valuation. Contra to philosophers such as Kant, who were primarily concerned with determining what was “right” in a moral sense, Nietzsche was interested in determining where the cultural and linguistic conception of “right” came from in the first place. To reach an understanding of the origin of moral valuations, one must remove any lens of moral discourse and analyze it as an object of examination, rather than to wield it as the tool of examination.

This amoral position was carried over and explicitly fleshed out in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*. In this work, Nietzsche traces the histories of morality in all of its ebbs and flows, in order to arrive at an understanding of the origin and meaning of moral valuations. Imagine the world in which the earliest hominids who could be considered “human beings” emerged. This state of nature, barren of any linguistically bound mode of communication and knowledge, was also barren of systems of thought and therefore systems of ideology and morality. What is “good and evil” to the lion stalking gazelle in the Serengeti? Nietzsche formulated his personal questions accordingly in the preface for *The Genealogy*:

Under what conditions did man devise these value judgments good and evil? *And what value do themselves possess?* Have they hitherto hindered or furthered human prosperity? Are they a sign of distress, of impoverishment, of the degeneration of life? Or is there in them, on the contrary, the plenitude, force, and will of life, its courage, certainty, future? (GOM 17)

Nietzsche believed that insight into these questions may be reached by conducting a genealogical inquiry into *the origins* of moral valuations. While his procedural approach to genealogy is grounded in historicity (yet contains Nietzsche's characteristic literary playfulness), it is important to emphasize the detachment of a Nietzschean view of history from any notion of an "evolutionary" approach to history. Put differently, like Foucault, Nietzsche does not treat the history of morality as a linear, unidirectional progression which is logically or teleologically progressing for the better *per se*. On the contrary, Nietzsche sees the actuality of events in history to be spontaneous, petty, counter-intuitive, and ultimately unable to be shoe horned into any sort of intelligible narrative of progress. The history of morality is rather to be understood as an expression and development of a quintessential first order drive embedded in all humanity: the will to power.⁸

The importance of this anti-ontological, historical approach will be further articulated in the subsequent chapter of this thesis. For now, however, it is important to associate Nietzsche's notion of history as opposed to a grand narrative with his attempt to "jump out" of the system of moral valuations in order to more clearly grasp it as an object of critique (rather than a tool *for* critique).

The Genealogy of Morals is grounded in philology, historicity, anti-religious sentiment, and an acute understanding of ancient Greek culture, and it paints an intricate picture of morality as a symptom of the inherent will to power within humanity. Nietzsche believes this truth

⁸ Notice the contradiction between denouncing meta-narratives then positing the will to power as a meta-narrative. If Nietzsche is right and meta-narratives cannot be accepted, what are we to do with *his* meta-narrative? Moreover, is the assertion of the impossibility of meta-narratives on the grounds of the limits of our perspectives not also tacitly employing a meta-narrative (meta-narratives fail because *this* is how the world works) to bolster its claim? These are the very paradoxical questions motivating my investigations within this thesis.

becomes self-evident following a distanced and thorough examination not only of human history writ large, but also introspectively of ourselves. Nietzsche's "Preface" to the *Genealogy* begins as such:

We are unknown to ourselves, we men of knowledge—and with good reason. We have never sought ourselves—how could it happen that we should ever *find* ourselves? [...] So we are necessarily strangers to ourselves, we do not comprehend ourselves, we *have* to misunderstand ourselves, for us the law "Each is furthest from himself" applies to all eternity—we are not 'men of knowledge' with respect to ourselves. (GOM 15).

From this passage it is clear that Nietzsche views the general public—especially those in academic circles—to be out of touch with their true essence. Buried beneath and distorted by discourses such as morality and religion, Nietzsche seeks to uncover this essential truth "we men of knowledge" have misunderstood for so long by inquiring into the origin of moral valuations. A thorough examination of the "First Essay" of *The Genealogy of Morals* will illustrate that Nietzsche views this essential truth to be the will to power.

The Genealogy is not exclusively grounded in historical analysis. It is also heavily grounded in psychological consideration of the motivations for morality, and it takes a sort of myth building to tell the story. For Nietzsche, morality is a conceptual system which is grafted *over* the field of phenomenological reality, a falsified understanding of reality, which *must* have sprung from the minds of human beings. Nietzsche's refusal to view morality as a religiously ordained and objective discourse leads his investigation into trying to understand what human motivation may have led to the emergence and nature of moral systems of thought. The

juxtaposition of the morality of Nietzsche's time and the morality of ancient Greek society posed a puzzling predicament for Nietzsche: ancient Greek morality, and the morality of all early civilizations (closer to the *origin* of morality), fundamentally are *conversely* related to contemporary Judeo-Christian values.

This problem of the moral *inversion* of valuations and its societal implications are thoroughly explored and fleshed out in *The Genealogy of Morals*. Throughout the remainder of this paper, the "First Essay" of *The Genealogy of Morals* will be carefully summarized and analyzed. More specifically, to show that the will to power is the conceptual heart pumping life to ancillary topics in Nietzsche's philosophy, the "First Essay" of *The Genealogy of Morals* will be utilized to *deduce* that the will to power as an ontological mechanism *must* have been assumed and utilized by Nietzsche. This ontological and moral position Nietzsche assumes will necessarily be ridden with strange paradoxes. Foucault's methodology of pure genealogy will be adopted to understand the origin, meaning, and significance of these paradoxes within the context of Nietzsche's philosophy as a whole. When this analysis is complete, a truly ironic and potent—both tragic and comedic—elucidation of Nietzsche's philosophy will be rendered. This rendition of Nietzsche will ultimately pose existential and pressing questions for our roles and abilities as philosophers in this strange phenomenon we have come to title "being".

Chapter 4

Genealogy of Morals Essay One: “Good and Evil,” “Good and Bad”

This chapter comprises my dissection and discussion of the “First Essay” of Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*. Keeping Nietzsche’s doctrine of the will to power in mind, I will walk through the major themes of the “First Essay” and strive to show that, implicit or explicit, the conceptual engine churning the gears of Nietzsche’s thought is an ontological assumption that there is an inherent will to power inherent to humanity. As I pointed out earlier, this essentialist rendition of Nietzsche necessarily knots his work in unmistakable irony and paradox. After extracting this paradox through a textual analysis of the “First Essay” of *The Genealogy of Morals*, Foucault’s work on power and genealogy will be utilized to help us understand the meaning of this ontological Nietzschean conundrum.

The “First Essay” of *The Genealogy of Morals* begins by referring to individuals who believed the origin of morality was to be explained through a Darwinian framework, as Nietzsche calls them “These English psychologists, whom one has also to thank for the only attempts hitherto to arrive at a history of the origin of morality” (GOM 24). Nietzsche immediately calls into question the English psychologists’ Darwinian attempts to arrive at the origin of morality and categorizes them as futile and bereft of any nuanced historical spirit. These English psychologists—Herbert Spencer, for instance—utilized a Darwinian theoretical framework to explain the historical development of altruistic systems of morality as an expression of the maximization of evolutionary benefit to human societies. This evolutionary utility (“survival of the ethical”) is what, for these English psychologists, gives the word “Good” its moral power and pragmatic stakes in society. According to such a view, that humanity

developed robust moral systems and has become increasingly domesticated over time is a direct result of our psychological impulses being predicated upon doing the “right” thing for our survival. It is the “invisible hand of evolution” which has molded humanity as such and its moral values.

For these English psychologists like Herbert Spencer, morality is purely a development of human evolution. Nietzsche uses this Darwinian meta-view of history as his incision point for illuminating his own view of the origin of morality:

The source of the concept “good” has been sought and established in the wrong place: the judgement “good” did *not* originate with those to whom “goodness” was shown! Rather it was “the good” themselves, that is to say, the noble, powerful, high-stationed and high-minded, who felt themselves and their actions as good, that is, of the first rank, in contradistinction to all the low, low-minded, common and plebeian (GOM 26).

Notice Nietzsche’s radical departure from the Darwinian view of the origin of morality. For Nietzsche, Darwinist evolution (survival of the fittest = survival of the ethical) is not antecedent for the rise of moral valuations. It was not the selfless who initially developed systems of valuation and defined valuative terms such as “good” and “bad,” rather it was those who were *powerful* enough to rise to a position to have the authority make valuations.

The “First Essay” of the *Genealogy* progresses by creating a distinction between “good and bad” and “good and evil” as two separate developments of morality. Originally, noble societies used “good and bad” to designate valuative terms defining themselves (the nobles) as “good,” and the weak as “bad.” Nietzsche finds that sometime along the history of mankind,

“good and bad” inverted in meaning to the terms “good and evil.” What was originally “bad” became “good” and what was “good” became “evil.” This shift in morality was brought upon by a cultural *struggle* Nietzsche characterizes as a sort of master-slave dialectic. On one end of the dialectic, there are the slaves. The slaves (as illustrated by the initial valuation of “bad”) feel *ressentiment* towards those who are exerting dominance over them, as their state of being oppressed bars them from expressing their own power. Out of a thirst to express their own dominance, their own *power*, the slaves, the repressed, are compelled by the psychological force of *ressentiment* to overcome their downtrodden state and to invent ways to express their own power. This led to an inversion of values, a “slave revolt” as Nietzsche calls it—the result of a cultural struggle between master and slave class.

Nietzsche continues his refutation of the Darwinian view of morality by directing our attention to the etymology of the word “good” across different languages. Nietzsche says that the various uses of the concept “good”:

all led back to the *same conceptual transformation*—that everywhere “noble,” “aristocratic” in the social sense, is the basic concept from which “good” in the sense of “with an aristocratic soul,” “noble,” “with a soul of high order,” “with a privileged soul” necessarily developed: a development which always runs parallel with that other in which “common, “plebeian,” “low” are finally transformed into the concept “bad.” (28).

It is very important to see here that Nietzsche does not just identify that this moral inversion happened, but that it happened *everywhere*. Whether Nietzsche’s conclusion was arrived at

through *purely* historical analysis [*Herkunft*] or mythical construction [*Ursprung*] cannot be resolved at this point in *The Genealogy*. Regardless, it becomes clear that Nietzsche views this matter through a universal scope. It also becomes clear that he views humanity to be universally placed upon the same cultural trajectory in that, in all early societies—when man was pitted against nature—the strong, the noble, and the heroic were the ones determining the content of moral valutive words. A slave was in no position to declare the meaning of things. As man became more and more civilized the crowd, the plebeian, and the lowly grew in numbers and therefore power.

The idea that the origin of morality is explained by the evolutionary utility of altruism is decisively called into question when the original usage of these valutive terms currently utilized by altruistic systems of morality is discovered to have a prior meaning expressing quite the opposite sentiment. This linguistic difference and conceptual incompatibility of the two developments of morality demonstrates that the origins of moral valuations must be contrary to the view of Nietzsche's English contemporaries.

Based on his etymological investigation, Nietzsche concludes that any given moral "concept denoting political superiority always revolves itself into a concept denoting superiority of soul" (31). This rule of self-servility can clearly be seen when examining early forms of "noble" morality. In these early societies—especially the Greeks, Vikings, and Samurai—those who rose to power were the strong, the proud, the vengeful, and because these individuals were in positions of power, they had the self-perceived right to determine the proper way to evaluate the world.

So how did this noble conception of morality—good and bad—give way to the altruistic egalitarian conception of good and evil? Nietzsche believes the solution is to be found in the same psychological faculty in which the erection of Noble morality was formulated: the inherent drive within individuals to express their power, or put more simply, the will to power. The inversion of moral valuations Nietzsche identifies was the result of a master-slave dialectical system which is predicated upon the notion that there is an inherent will to power present in the subjects within the system. Remember, Nietzsche identified the inversion of morality as a global and universal phenomenon. The movement of the master-slave dialectic is only realized if the slaves—those who cannot express power—feel *ressentiment* towards their oppressors.

If a notion of will to power was not assumed by Nietzsche, there would have been no grounds to declare the change of morality as an “inversion” or “revolution,” there simply would have been a historically observable change. But Nietzsche went further than that. He went on to claim to know *why* morality shifted as thus, and this assertion of *knowing why* contains the precipice of paradox within this text. If we hold Nietzsche’s doctrine of perspectivism to be true, Nietzsche is crossing the proverbial “line drawn in the sand” for the philosopher by making such rudimentary and universal claims about human nature.

Nietzsche’s explicit usage of *ressentiment* as an explanatory mechanism for the master slave dialectic illustrates that, while Nietzsche did not explicitly lay out the ontological assumption of the will to power in *The Genealogy*, he was undeniably implicitly making an assumption of the idea’s universality. In what follows of my analysis of “Essay One” of *The Genealogy of Morals*, I will provide further evidence to corroborate this claim and further flesh out its philosophical implications.

When the noble class—conquering nature and establishing society—procured the earliest systems of moral valuations, they did so to further garnish their feeling of power and control over nature and consequently society. This inert disposition to create circular systems of values led to the categorical term “good” to be used for self affirmation and “bad,” (or later, “evil”) to vindicate those who were considered on the other side of this ideological duality. This moral affair gave rise to a psychological state of dissonance which occurs when one’s ability to express power is reproached. This hateful, jealous, and petty state of mind is what Nietzsche called *ressentiment* (GOM 7).

It was through *ressentiment* the slave class was compelled to create the means to usurp the privilege to define moral valuations and therefore express their own power over the world.

When *ressentiment* itself becomes creative and gives birth to values: the *ressentiment* of natures that are denied the true reaction, that of deeds, and compensate themselves with an imaginary revenge. While every noble morality develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself, slave morality from the outset says No to what is “outside,” what is “different” what is “not itself”; and *this* No is its creative deed (36).

Because the slave is by definition unable to exert her or his power upon the physical world, and because for Nietzsche every human is driven by a desire for power, the slave does not simply “give up” when her or his will to power is repressed, rather her or his will to power is transposed *inwards* to the world of ideas. In this strange, shadowy, and unknown to the master psychical realm, the slave is compelled by a will to power to plot a revenge upon the master and consequently find a way to affirm their own existence.

To make this point more concrete in a crude manner, consider the stereotypical high school duality of “jock” and “nerd.” The jocks think they are good because they can beat up anyone who messes with them. The nerds, unable to prevent their endless beatdowns and wedgies at the hands of the jocks, declare The jocks to be evil and themselves to be good, as they are “smart” (but weak) while the Jocks are “dumb” (but strong). This analogy highlights the basic points and psychological mechanisms in the master-slave dialectic of morality. When two or more distinct groups of people are positioned in a dominance-repression dichotomy, the group that is dominated generates *ressentiment* towards their oppressors and seek alternative methods to shift the state of affairs in their favor.

But why does the dominated group necessarily generate this psychological residue Nietzsche calls *ressentiment*? Because the slaves’ state of being dominated represses a natural and universal human drive—the will to power. Nietzsche writes: “This *need* to direct one’s view outward instead of back to oneself—is of the essence of *ressentiment*: in order to exist, slave morality always first needs a hostile external world; it needs, physiologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act at all—its action is fundamentally reaction” (GOM 37). Notice how Nietzsche emphasizes the necessity—the *need*—for the slave to direct his or her *ressentiment* outwards. The high school nerd does not want to simply be known as “weak” and inherently oppressed. It is this self-awareness of the externality of the slave’s position which motivates moral action—the condemnation of jocks as “dumb brutes.” While Nietzsche characterizes the slaves’ action as fundamentally reactionary, it nonetheless is predicated upon the same goal of the master: the expression and extension of power. Recall Nietzsche’s later formulation of the will to power:

My idea is that every specific body strives to become master over all space and to extend its force (—its will to power:) and to thrust back all that resists its extension. But it continually encounters similar efforts on the part of other bodies and ends by coming to an arrangement ("union") with those of them that are sufficiently related to it: thus they then conspire together for power. And the process goes on— (WTP 636).

This illustration makes it vividly clear why the slave generates *ressentiment* (because every body strives to extend its will to power) and why slave morality was conjured. Again, if Nietzsche did not already assume the existence of a universal will to power while writing *The Genealogy of Morals*, he would be in no position to make any positive claims regarding an explanation for origin of morality and the inversion of morality. Doing so *necessitates* some starting premise, some preliminary conceptual ground which further claims may be built upon.

For Nietzsche, the origin of systems of morality cannot be attributed to the assumption that humans will universally act in accords to evolutionary utility, rather the true origin of moral valuations is found to be inseparably linked to *power*. It is unclear, however, if Nietzsche is making an assumption or arriving at this conclusion through a pure genealogical excavation. Again, a genealogy is a historical method which does not assume any necessary linear development. It lacks any ontological starting point. The English psychologists' grave error was reading *into* history a contemporary moral theoretical framework. Nietzsche, on the other hand, seems to be drawing *from* history [*Herkunft*] by studying a robust array of historical forms of knowledge and culture. At the same time, Nietzsche also seems to be reading into history a

universal ontology [*Ursprung*] with regards to the psychological mechanism of *ressentiment*.

This is yet another illustration of the paradoxes within Nietzsche's philosophy.

While the two opposing value systems of "Good and Bad" and "Good and Evil" come from the same psychological drive—a will to express power—the manner in which they were constructed are fundamentally antithetical. The noble conceived the basic concept of good by spontaneously affirming the characteristic traits that led them to a position of power: strength, bravery, and a great threat of violence. The slaves⁹, in a flurry of *ressentiment* towards the noble, generated their own conception of "good," not through self affirmation, but through a concession that they are *different* than their oppressors, and that difference is precisely what defines "good." Because the rise of slave morality happened later in history, as *it must*, Nietzsche fundamentally views the slave's egalitarian morality of altruism as a symptom of decadence; an ailment which torments and self-depreciates the host. "To dominate barbarians Christianity had need of *barbarous* concepts and values...Christianity desires to dominate *beasts of prey*; its means for doing so is to make them *sick*" (AC 144). In this characterization we can see the seeds of Nietzsche's grounds for his relentless moral attacks on Christianity. Moral attacks grounded in an ontological assumption of the will to power, one which sees the Christian restriction and denial of the will to power as alienating and contrary to our true nature as humans. Because he holds this assumption, he sees the tactics of the Christians—the exemplars of slave morality—to be a mischievously disguised *plot* conjured in order to express power.

⁹ To be clear, when Nietzsche refers to "Slaves" in this sense he is not referring to literal slaves in the legal sense, instead it is a placeholder term for individuals who become repressed by greater forms of power ("Master's") and therefore possess *ressentiment* towards their oppressors

By identifying the development of these two systems of morality to have *sprung* from the same seed, the same desire, Nietzsche is aggressively calling into question the value of systems of altruistic morality. Contra to what Darwinian scholars of Nietzsche's time believed, morality is not the product of some unidirectional evolutionary instinct towards altruism. Rather altruistic moral systems were born from hate, jealousy, and a lust for revenge and power. They were born from *ressentiment*. Because "the bad" could not solve their restriction of power by lashing outwards towards their oppressors, they were forced to turn inwards, into the realm of ideas, to plot revenge on those who called themselves "good." The slave labeled the master "not good" but "evil" and deduced (as an afterthought) that they—the meek, the lowly, the pitiful—were the good. The slaves consequently deferred their power to a raging all powerful deity, a deity who commanded their values and enforced them too. By obeying their God—who demanded them to be what they already were, e.g., weak, obedient, servile—they gained *power* over the natural world as their distinctive moral valuations became culturally dominant.

The slaves' real victory, therefore, was getting the proponents of noble morality to believe their side of the tale. By making the strong think being strong was bad, the slave revolt was complete. By convincing the noble man he had a *soul*, the slave infiltrated the noble's mind and arranged the ideas in a self-depreciating manner, the slaves became the masters of morality by wielding the monotheistic God to whom *all* are subservient, the strong included. The mechanism by which the slave revolted managed to infiltrate the self-understanding of the masters raises another important notion in "Essay One" of *The Genealogy*: the construction of the subject.

Assimilation into moral systems produces variable performative affects depending on the nature of the system. For example, an orthodox Christian and Muslim fundamentally view the

world in differing manners as the construction of and assimilation into their belief system reflects this differentiation. This implies that there is a part of our being that is inherently malleable in nature. This directly contradicts the Platonic view that “The Soul” is some single and everlasting object, indeed it contradicts the notion of a Platonic soul all together. If the way we think, don’t think, act, and don’t act is dependent upon the systems of morality externally impressed upon us from outside sources, this raises a serious ontological dilemma regarding the status of our “soul,” our “inner self.” Indeed, this assumption of a singular soul is necessary for moral discourse to be conducted in the first place. If there was not a “soul” present that possessed the strength “to do otherwise” all moral discourse would never get off the ground in the first place. Moreover, if this soul is not immortal and singular, the systems of punishments and rewards Christianity hangs over believers’ heads would be null and invalid. Nevertheless, Nietzsche denies the existence of this metaphysical entity, stating:

There is no “being” behind doing, effecting, becoming; “the doer” is merely a fiction added to the deed—the deed is everything. The popular mind in fact doubles the deeds when it sees the lightning flash, it is the deed of a deed: it posits the same event first as cause and then a second time as its effect. Scientists do no better when they say “force moves,” “force causes”, and the like— (45).

The invention of the soul, therefore, while being a fundamental falsehood, allowed for moral forms of knowledge to be able to operate in the first place. This passage should immediately raise eyebrows when Nietzsche’s doctrine of will to power is considered. Is not reducing all of existence to be “will to power” not doing the same exact thing he is calling a falsehood in this passage? I posit that it is, and it is also a conceptual necessity in the same vein the creation of the

soul was a conceptual necessity for the slave. The slave's morality simply could have never gotten off the ground if it was not for the essential premise of the enduring nature of the soul. Similarly, Nietzsche's philosophy could have never gotten off the ground if it was not for the essential premise of the universality of the will to power as the essence of being.

At the end of essay one, Nietzsche makes it abundantly clear that his discovery of the master-slave dialectic does not imply that he is interested in *how* the dialectic ought to play out. Rather he is interested in questioning "What light does linguistics, and especially the study of etymology, throw on the history of the evolution of moral concepts?" (55) Throughout the "First Essay," Nietzsche etymologically traced the development of morally categorical terms and learned that, the further you go back in history, the more various terms for "good" appear to designate the modern Judeo-Christian view of "evil." His etymological studies also reveal that the more ancient usage of terms associated with "bad" designate the contemporary moral usage of "good." A complete inversion.

Nietzsche attributes this inversion to the phenomenon of *ressentiment*, a psychological mechanism which *assumes* that humans, at bottom, all have the same inherent drive towards exerting and perceiving power, even when one's ability to do so is hindered. Through this lust for retribution, the slaves (embodied by Judaeo-Christianity) defeated their noble masters by convincing them that they have a soul and they must not be evil, or their soul will suffer the consequences for eternity.

While Nietzsche's moral claims against specific religious institutions are generally subdued in *The Genealogy*, his later writings increase in zeal for his hatred of Christianity *on the*

grounds of his understanding of the world as will to power. In his polemic work *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche wrote:

Wherever the will to power declines in any form there is every time also a physiological regression, a *décadence*. The divinity of *décadence*, pruned of all its manliest drives and virtues, from now on necessarily become the God of the physiological retarded, the weak. They do *not* Call themselves the weak, they call themselves ‘the good.’(AC 139).

This physiological and psychological affects brought about by religion and morality—the repression of the will to power—have on us can be very harmful, and for Nietzsche it is grounds for moral condemnation and judgement. The issue at large here is not necessarily if Nietzsche’s formulation is a plausible or helpful one, rather the concern is if we can allow him to assert his own meta-narrative and moral postulations while also allowing him to assert that all ontological and moral tasks are fundamentally flawed.

Strangely enough, Nietzsche spoke fervently in his ontologically ridden *Will to Power* about the fictitious manner in which the discourse of science creates false subjects like “a soul” with its use of a physical atom: “In order to understand the world, we must be able to reckon it up; in order to be able to reckon it up, we must be aware of constant causes; but since we find no such constant causes in reality, we *invent* them for ourselves and call them atoms. This is the origin of the atomic theory” (WTP 297). If then, Nietzsche wants to claim that the makeup of existence is a conflict between reducible wills to powers, we must subject that claim to criticism by his own doctrine that the creation of any “doer” (a *will* to power) is necessarily a falsehood.

The fact is Nietzsche needs the will to power to be an unquestionable truth, for it is the main explanatory “force” underlying the whole of his philosophy. If he did not make this ontological assumption, Nietzsche would have just been accredited with identifying two separate epochs of moral systems, and that’s all. The master-slave dialectic would have no *mover* and would have never been able to be conceived. While Nietzsche’s illustration of the master-slave dialectic is very compelling and potently explanatory, Foucault would tell us that he overstepped his bounds as a genealogist. Nietzsche constructed the light of an ontological understanding of the will to power in order to explain the happenings of the shadowy realm he found himself in while extracting the etymological history of moral terms and the cultures surrounding them.

It is at this juncture Foucault’s notion of *power as analytics* will serve useful for addressing this paradoxical irony. At times in *The Genealogy*, Nietzsche exhibits exquisite genealogical restraint in not positing the essence of the subject understood in the sense of a single source or origin [*Ursprung*], but rather illustrating that two different modes of valuation have been in a *cyclical* struggle throughout history so that subjects comprise various and even competing values [*Herkunft*]. When, however, he *explains* this dialectic is moved by *ressentiment*, he is creating and tacitly assuming his own conceptual subject, his own metaphysical instrument, *his own physical atom* and is therefore straying from the genealogist’s project and contradicting his own notion of perspectivism. The Foucauldian point here being that when Nietzsche alludes to the will to power as an explanatory force, he is muddying his own writings with the ontological sentiments he so vociferously combatted. Nietzsche seems to have changed his mind regarding the capabilities of himself as an inductive agent sometime later in his life. He seems to have been so caught up in *his* will to power that he stepped over everyone

and everything, even himself, to be rewarded with a grandiose and systematic vision of the truth. A vision which was never completed.

Foucault finds more problems with Nietzsche's approach to genealogy as Nietzsche makes it explicit that, as a genealogist, he is interested in investigating the origins of moral valuations. Foucault, however, asserts that:

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 (NGH 144).

Because Nietzsche neglects this genealogical patience and distance and rather posits the origin of altruistic morality in *ressentiment*, he is in effect using his genealogical analysis as material to craft a grand mythology regarding the origins of morality. This mythology, like any meta-narrative imposed upon history, assumes an ontological essence within subjectivity which eventually translates into an attempt to create a universal geometry for the totality of reality.

While Foucault doesn't believe we could deduce the existence of the universality of slave *ressentiment* through genealogical investigation, he does recognize that there is an inherent possibility of *resistance* within networks of power. "It seems to me that power *is* 'always already there', that one is never 'outside' it.... [But] to say that one can never be 'outside' power does not mean that one is trapped and condemned to defeat no matter what.... [Resistances] are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are

exercised” (P&S 141). It seems, therefore, that inherent to this relational property Foucault titles *power* is not a definite form of unilateral domination but a *possibility* of domination and repression. It is not that the repressed must feel *ressentiment*, however the possibility either way is always open under the Foucauldian lens. Despite the fact Foucault never appealed to the will to power or *ressentiment* to explain the dialectic of power relationships, he did recognize it was observable.

Foucault’s methodology not only demonstrates that are there ironic paradoxes present in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy*, but also that they arise due to an overstepping of the genealogical boundary. While Nietzsche uses thorough and nuanced historical analysis in his *Genealogy*, he takes it a step further and implicitly created an explanatory mythology and employed an ontological assumption [*Ursprung*] as a starting point for this mythology. This is clearly demonstrated within the master-slave dialectic, *ressentiment*, as well as his propensity to use his own mythology as a grounds for moral argumentation.

The master-slave dialectic undisputedly operates *if* the principles regarding a universal will to power Nietzsche assumes are in fact in line with reality. This generalization, however, is necessarily out of the genealogist’s grasp: a genealogy can reveal information about how cultures came to be, however it can never logically deduce the ontological preconditions, the explanatory *why*, for this coming to being. A Foucauldian genealogist will be able to note that two systems of morality have been engaged in a historical struggle, however she or he will not be able to posit that any specific psychological mechanism is propping up this state of affairs. To do so is to contradict the law of perspectivism. According to Foucault, the philosopher may exit the

proverbial “cave,” however everything she or he sees will be necessarily be mis-recognized and unable to be articulated due to the limits of human concepts.

Nietzsche is therefore misunderstanding the true essence (*non-essence*) of power by articulating it as an “all-out war” performance between countless individual wills to power. For the genealogist, power is not given meaning through ontological assumptions and metaphysical scaffolding, rather its nature is *revealed* by examining the circular relationships inherent to the construction of the specific field of power relations being analyzed. We can look backwards in history and observe how things have come to be and observe power’s role in this coming to being, however we cannot extend our power as philosophers past this and posit universal principles delineating how things *must* operate—we can only see that they *have* operated.

Conclusion

Nietzsche's Paradox: The Plight of the Philosopher

So far in my thesis I have elaborated upon a paradoxical element of Nietzsche's philosophy, invoked and utilized helpful aspects of Foucault's philosophy to shine light upon this paradox, surveyed the "First Essay" of Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* and utilized it to illustrate the presence of this Nietzschean paradox. Secondly, I have also reflected on the value of this Nietzschean paradox and what it implies for the task of philosophy. This inquiry of the meaning of Nietzsche's paradox will now be explicitly fleshed out to conclude this thesis. On the one hand, Nietzsche principally believes that there are no facts, only interpretations, and thus any attempt to erect an all-encompassing system of thought will inevitably collapse in on itself and is therefore philosophically mistaken *ipso facto*. On the other hand, Nietzsche also principally believes that the rudimentary logic of the unfolding of being is to be demarcated as the will to power. Consider this passage from *Beyond Good and Evil*:

Suppose, finally, we succeeded in explaining our entire instinctive life as the development and ramification of *one* basic form of the will—namely, of the will to power, as *my* proposition has it... then one would have gained the right to determine *all* efficient force univocally as--*will to power*. The world viewed from inside... it would be "will to power" and nothing else (BGE 18).

It would be difficult for Nietzsche to make a more explicit articulation that the will to power is a central and ontological doctrine in relation to the whole of his philosophy. As *his* proposition has it. The italic emphasis on "*my*" in the passage suggests Nietzsche was at least partially self-aware of the absurdity for *him* to be staking ontological claims regarding the world.

At this juncture, Nietzsche is trying to “have his cake eat it too” by acknowledging the intrinsic limitations of his discourse, yet nevertheless *willing* facts—*the fact*—about the universal principle underlying existence? Did Nietzsche just believe his theory was the *right* one? In one of his earlier works, *Human, All Too Human* (1878), Nietzsche aphoristically remarked, “The so-called paradoxes of an author to which a reader objects are often not in the author’s book at all, but in the reader’s head” (HATH 179). Does this imply that it is *us*, the reader, who is the source of the “author’s paradox,” not Nietzsche’s inconsistency? The ambiguous nature of this early Nietzsche aphorism renders it fully irresolvable; nevertheless I will offer *my* interpretation of its meaning.

To place the source of “the author’s paradox” on the *reader* is to imply that to read an author’s work is to necessarily distort *the meaning* of the author’s work.¹⁰ Because individuals derive *the meaning of values* from their own unique subjective interaction with the world, no two individuals may possess identical valiative palettes, for nobody’s valiative palettes are formed the same. While individuals may think they share a common ideology with others, this is merely a superficial belief, as a perfect symmetrical valiative alignment is impossible due to the infinite amount of nuances separating individuals’ lived experiences from one another.

Nietzsche is not blaming the reader for not possessing identical valuations and understandings as him; rather, he is pointing out that everyone’s stone, so to speak, is not only brought into the world shaped differently, but is also weathered by the sands of fate differently. Thus, Nietzsche is presenting *his* truth, *his* vision, and if anyone misunderstands *his* articulation

¹⁰ To be frank, it isn’t even clear what “author’s paradox” Nietzsche is referring to, however with the rest of this thesis in mind, I find it highly plausible to be in line with my thought.

of reality it is not his fault, as no-one will ever be able to experience, *to know*, Nietzsche's "Truth."

What then, are we to do with Nietzsche's notion of the will to power? What are we to do with his philosophy as a whole with the "reader's paradox" in mind? Is Nietzsche dead, and have we killed him? To answer these questions, I once again recall the passage in *The Gay Science* titled "Life No Argument:"

We have arranged for ourselves a world in which we can live—by the postulating of bodies, lines, surfaces, causes and effects, motion and rest, form and content: without these articles of faith no one could manage to live at present! But for all that they are still unproved. Life is no argument; error might be among the conditions of life (TGS 131).

I believe this passage makes it abundantly clear that Nietzsche anticipated these paradoxical qualities of his philosophy early on in his career, however these paradoxical qualities did not stop Nietzsche from singing *his* song—from *creating* his art. Nietzsche did not allow the philosophical restrictions of perspectivism to keep his musings silent, and while he may have strayed too close to systematic formulations near the end of his career, he nonetheless willed *his* truth to the world, despite the seeming impossibility of the task.

So I ask again, what are we to do with Nietzsche, that paradoxical poet? I assert that we absolutely ought not toss him to the flames; but rather we should listen to *Nietzsche's* truth, hold it to our own, and synthesize the wisdom of our differing perspectives. We are not wrong to point out a paradoxical and inconsistent aspect of his philosophy, yet this nevertheless does not render Nietzsche bereft of meaning and value—quite the opposite. We did not throw out Euclid's

mathematical principles because perfectly straight lines are impossible; no, instead we applied his principles to the world and have become much more knowledgeable because of it. While Euclid's premises of straight lines and perfect angles are inherently impossible, it was necessary for him to start *somewhere*.

Much in the same way, it was necessary for Nietzsche to start somewhere with the will to power—otherwise there would simply be no “Nietzsche” spoken of today. Indeed, Foucault is not free from this very *philosophical necessity*. While he tries to maintain total negative distance from his object of study, he invariably makes ontological assumptions himself when he tries to clarify his work in his auxiliary interviews and essays. For instance, consider this passage: “Power is relations; power is not a thing, it is a relationship between two individuals... such that one can direct the behavior of another or determine the behavior of another” (WOPI 410). While this Foucauldian passage is quite illuminating in clarifying his position on power, it nonetheless tacitly assumes that individuals are universally bound by some ethereal relational property titled: power. While Foucault would hate to admit it, this is his *Ursprung*, his ground floating in thin air supporting his philosophical constructions.

I close this thesis by offering Zarathustra's final words to his disciples before disappearing back into the mountains from where he first descended. It is to be read as though Nietzsche is speaking directly to the reader with the “author's paradox” in mind.

Now I go alone, my disciples, You too, go now, alone. Thus I want it. Go away from me and resist Zarathustra! And even better: be ashamed of him! Perhaps he deceived you... One repays a teacher badly if one always remains nothing but a student... You say that you believe in Zarathustra? But what matters Zarathustra?

You are my believers—but what matter all believers? You have not yet sought yourselves; and you found me. Thus do all believers; therefore all faith amounts to so little. Now I bid you lose me and find yourselves; and only when you have all denied me will I return to you. (TSZ 59)

Nietzsche knows his philosophy holds no value if someone simply takes his word for it. “Truth” cannot be simply received, rather it must be individually *earned*. Of course Nietzsche’s philosophy, when taken universally, is rendered obscure with perspectivism in mind—but that’s the point.

Philosophy—while conjured within dark the caves of individual’s perspectives—is understood (by me) for sharing and *illuminating*. A philosophy never expressed is no philosophy at all—everyone has their own worldview and own particular thoughts—but articulation is what makes the philosopher special. The *true philosopher* (and *not* the purely “academic philosopher”) is the individual whose purpose is to investigate *their* being’s relationship with the whole of existence, and to express their findings with others in the hope of refining their understanding and helping others with their personal quest. The true philosopher does not restrain her or himself to academic pomp, never singing *their own song* due to the fear of failure or acceptance of their intellectual insignificance. No, the true philosopher strives to accomplish the ambitious task of understanding and becoming who *they really are* despite the absurdity and impossibility of this quest. While “The” grand universal articulation of “Truth,” the ideal object of ontology, is surely unattainable, *our* “Truths” as *individuals* is, in fact, attainable. But don’t take my—or Nietzsche’s—word for it, we must find it all for ourselves *by* ourselves.

(Is it not right before our very eyes?)

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