

# POWER, HISTORY AND GENEALOGY: FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE AND MICHEL FOUCAULT

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*The essay explores Friedrich Nietzsche's and Michel Foucault's accounts of genealogy. It argues that genealogy sees human history not in terms of events, battles and wars (i.e. through empirical facts), but in terms of discursive regimes and practices which form our subjectivity. The link between knowledge/truth and power plays crucial role in both Nietzsche's and Foucault's accounts of genealogy. Foucault's notion of dispositive (the regime of intelligibility) serves as a key concept in his approach to history. The Nietzschean idea of the will to power is transformed into the idea of strategies of relations of forces supporting and supported by types of knowledge. The essay concludes that Foucault's genealogy reduces meaning to power relations. It argues that in Foucault's thought human history is intelligible not because of its inner meaning, but because knowledge and discourses, which play a key role in human history, are understood in terms of tactics and strategies.*

**Keywords:** genealogy, philosophy of history, power, discourse.

## Introduction

The essay aims to address a genealogical approach to history originated by Friedrich Nietzsche and further advanced by Michel Foucault. At the core of their conception there is a specific genealogical notion of power. Michel Foucault has once claimed that power is a sort of generalized war which takes the forms of peace and the state and that “[p]eace would then be a form of war, and the state a means of waging it” (Foucault 2002: 124). To conceptualise peace in terms of war and the state as a means to wage war points to a radical break in the way we see social and political relationships. Even Thomas Hobbes, who argued that life in the state of nature was “nasty, brutish, and short”, did not consider

peace to be another form of war. The state of nature and “war of all against all” argument for Hobbes was an excuse to propose the necessity of the strong sovereign state to guarantee peace and order. Nietzsche's and Foucault's genealogical projects transform and go beyond the modern understanding of power as embodied in the sovereign state. Foucault, for example, claimed that in political theory the king's head should still be cut off (Foucault 2002). Thus the issue I want to explore are, first of all, some of the reasons for this transformation, and then what Nietzsche's and Foucault's projects of genealogy are about as well as how their accounts of power influenced the specific genealogical understanding of history. Thus Nietzsche's thought in the *On the Genealogy of Morality* will be set

up as the philosophical background against which Foucault's conception of history will be explored. The underlying idea of the essay is that Foucault's approach to history and social reality is mediated through the Nietzschean conception of power. This conception of power as intimately linked to discourse, so I will argue, determines Foucault's specific non-foundational approach to history.

### **Modernity and Power**

It would be almost a truism to say that the way we approach history depends on what questions we pose. These underlying questions can be seen as our premises – they determine not only our approach to a specific historical event but also, at least to a certain extent, the content of our historical narrative. R. G. Collingwood in his celebrated *An Autobiography* argued that it is impossible to understand historical texts without posing right questions – we have to find a question that an author was trying to answer him/herself. It is important to note, however, that the questions we pose to historical texts are not simply determined by our particular arbitrary views (even though it often happens); rather these views are inherited from and are linked to our worldview and traditions (Collingwood 1978). Our views of the past are always mediated through our cultural background. Of course, this does not mean that our ways of analysing history are narrowly limited by our culture. For one thing – culture is never homogenous. Rather cultural values, traditions and practices are linked to and dependent on different theories, narratives and dominant discourses. This is certainly the case

with Nietzsche and Foucault. At the end of nineteenth century, and certainly in the second part of twentieth century, a relatively new philosophical concept of power occurs, first in Nietzsche's thought and then it reoccurs in the thought of Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault. Power starts to play a significant role in understanding ourselves as well as our history (Bielskis 2005). However, it was Nietzsche who so explicitly constructed his philosophical arguments upon the concept of power. I want to argue that the notion of power in Nietzsche's thought could be seen as the first principle (or *premise*) which structured his philosophical approach to the past.

Commenting on Nietzsche's dictum "God is dead", Heidegger argues that it does not express either Nietzsche's pre-philosophical opinion or his personal disbelief in God. Rather than being only the reflection of Nietzsche's atheism or an attack on the ordinary Christian believers, God is understood as a supra-sensory and universal world of ideas (Heidegger 1977: 61). When Nietzsche writes about the death of God he has in mind the entire tradition of Western metaphysics which starts with Plato's postulation of the supra-sensory being. "God" here means the postulation of the Supreme Being and absolute Truth, i.e. everything which transcends the immanent world of becoming. Heidegger argues that this theocentric worldview, which had dominated at least up until the seventeenth century, starts to change with the beginning of modern philosophy. With Pico della Mirandola, Rene Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, the modern notion of man's emancipation gradually takes place. Since the Cartesian

*cogito ergo sum*, man detaches from the world by self-determining reason; he puts himself in front of everything that is: “Man becomes that being upon which all that is, is grounded as regards the manner of its Being and its truth. Man becomes the relational centre of that which is as such” (*ibid.*, 128).

Algis Mickunas argued that this modern setup meant at least two things. First of all, humans cease to have a fixed nature given in advanced; second, man becomes the source of all values and laws and is now free to reshape the world in accordance to one’s desires (Mickunas 1986: 2–5). These modern ideas reach their culmination in Karl Marx’s philosophy when in the 11<sup>th</sup> thesis on Feuerbach Marx, feeling the weight of the unjust concentration of social, economic and political power claims that the purpose of philosophy is not merely to understand the world but to change it. Thus Nietzsche’s “God is dead” refers to the modern notion of power as well – only the will to power as the essential characteristic of modernity is the murder of God. “God is dead” means the inevitable exhaustion of the transcendent world and the certainty of metaphysical principles and absolute moral values. This also indicated the end of our belief in the objective truth. Power, from the very start an intrinsic feature of modernity, can no longer be hidden under the disguise of progress, truth and reason. Therefore power, at least the way it is conceptualised in European philosophical tradition, goes hand in hand with the gradual loss of transcendence. Nothing outside man can any longer be valid. Even the values created by the modern man will be overcome in future.

Nietzsche expresses this in saying: “the highest values are devaluing themselves” (Nietzsche 1968: §1). All that is left today is our willingness to embrace growth and empowerment for its own sake.

### **Nietzsche’s genealogy**

It is against this background that Nietzsche’s genealogy is to be understood. In *On the Genealogy of Morality* Nietzsche starts his genealogical project with his claim that we have to refuse the search for the foundation of morality. All previous philosophers were trying rationally to prove morality while the very value of morality as such was never questioned (Nietzsche 1966: 97). Instead, genealogy has to question the very value of morality by asking what purpose it serves. In order to do this it is necessary to look back at history. Indeed, the idea of questioning morality itself is already historical. Through studying history we can gain a comparative perspective which allowing us to understand the development of morality, and thus uncover its “true” face. Thus genealogy has to collect and study different cases, conceptualize different human feelings and our perceptions of different values, and then give an account of the dominant forms of the reoccurring values. Nietzsche calls it a typology of morality. At first glance it may seem that genealogy is a descriptive practice which presupposes a “scientific” approach toward history. However, Nietzsche emphatically states that genealogy is not a science of morality – only the term “would offend good taste” (*ibid.*). Furthermore, genealogy is not a traditional historical enquiry as it requires a certain amount of philosophical education and the innate

faculty of psychology (Nietzsche 1910: 4). In a moment of openness Nietzsche claims that since he was a child, he was very sceptical about traditional explanations of good and evil, and he therefore created his own interpretation: “I gave quite properly the honour to God, and made him the father of evil” (*ibid.*). It would not be an exaggeration to claim that this early answer, which he himself called “my *a priori*”, guided Nietzsche throughout all his creative life. This was also the case as far as Nietzsche’s mature work, especially *On the Genealogy of Morality*, is concerned: genealogy is a description of the past led by his *a priori* – a disbelief of the very value of morality.

The main question that genealogy raises is: Under what condition did people invent judgement and values about “good” and “evil”? It is important to note that when Nietzsche poses the question, he already knows what he wants to find out. His *a priori* forms Nietzsche’s questions which in turn lead his specific genealogical inquiry into the past – history has to be seen through the notion of power.

Through questioning the value and origin of morality Nietzsche provides two distinctions: good *vs.* evil and good *vs.* bad. The first one is a metaphysical distinction of traditional morality, and refers to absolute categories such as God, divine benevolence, love, pity *versus* evil, egoism, greed, gluttony, cruelty, etc. He attempts to show that these distinctions have no universal validity. Nietzsche argues that traditional Jewish-Christian morality (1) was born out of *ressentiment* – a secret spiritual revenge against the world – and (2) the subjugation of the strong serves for the

preservation of the herd. Nietzsche claims that the latter has been useful for biological purposes – it has enabled the survival of the many rather than a few noble, creative and mentally strong individuals. The spirit of *ressentiment* was first institutionalised with Jewish-Christian morality which gradually reversed aristocratic values upside down. While the aristocratic morality of good *vs.* bad was the morality of the strong and the noble, i.e. those who were masters and warriors, people who had enough courage to prefer war to peace, Jewish-Christian morality proclaimed pity, humility, love and obedience to God. Instead of aiming at being masters and those who dominate they condemned the morality of the noble: “the poor, the weak, the lowly, are alone the good; the suffering, the needy, the sick, the loathsome, are the only ones who are pious, the only ones who are blessed, for them alone is salvation” (Nietzsche 1910: 30). Nietzsche argues that *ressentiment* is pure jealousy and a secret counterattack against the strong, those who were noble as well as powerful. The spirit of jealousy and anguish, according to Nietzsche, creates the values of benevolence, pity and fear of God. This is the essence of *ressentiment* – it is a reactive power which starts to create values, values of the spiteful weak. Christian morality transforms hate into love, noble and good into evil and shameful; the morality of love, humility and equality oppresses the strong and their will to power.

My aim here is not to assess Nietzsche’s claims on *ressentiment* and the origin of Christian morality, the claims which are neither philosophically convincing nor historically accurate. Rather I want to draw

our attention to the fact that Nietzsche's genealogical analysis, as a specific mode of historical enquiry, later became so influential to Michel Foucault. What they disclose us is not so much the idea that morality is historical and that a variety of its transformations is inevitable, but the genealogical notion that morality is like an empty shell which can be filled with different substances. Genealogy looks at social phenomena not in terms of their content (values, principles, beliefs), although it is certainly important, but in terms of different functions it serves within a given institutional power network.

This is precisely how Nietzsche interprets Christian morality as well. In the preface of *Beyond Good and Evil* he claims that Christian morality – “Platonism for the people” – has created “a magnificent tension of the spirit” which resulted in what is now European civilization which now should serve as a threshold for our creativity and further development (Nietzsche 1966: 3). Without it, Europe probably would still live relatively primitive lives. Nietzsche's genealogy seeks not merely to criticize the “old” morality, but also to show that it served a set of functions which were necessary for the development of humankind. Morality through “the narrowing of our perspective” structures and disciplines people's behaviour in order to guarantee “biological” needs of humans; it also structures and fosters their development (*ibid.*, 102). That is why genealogy has to document and describe this process and in so doing enable us to see what we have become and where we are. Furthermore, Nietzsche claims that only because of this tension, created by

the oppressiveness of Christian morality, a progress of some sort is possible. Thus the announcement “God is dead” is deeply historical as well: it refers to the past and stands as a threshold for the future – to overcome the horizon of traditional morality, become open to spontaneity embracing desire for life. It teaches us how to embrace the active will to power as the only principle of life.

Although the eternal return can be interpreted in terms of Nietzsche's historicism, i.e. as referring to the circular conception of history, a more convincing interpretation seems to be a moral-ontological one<sup>1</sup>. That is to say, in order to make an unbearable being lighter we have to imagine that all things and events in our life will return again and again. Our ability to imagine so would enable us to look at our lives from outside and, hopefully, encourage us to overcome the difficulties in our lives. If my life is going to repeat again and again, then either I make sure that I am able to take delight in every moment of my life, especially the most unbearable ones, or else my life is not worth living. It is in this sense that Gilles Deleuze claimed that reactive-life – the life of the weak – has no being and thus eternal return applies only to the strong: “[t]he eternal return teaches us that becoming-reactive has no being” (Deleuze 1983: 72). Nietzsche's claims are far more ambitious than they may seem at first. War and conflict are welcomed not for their own sake but as a means to strengthen us and encourage further development. The literary figure of the *Übermensch* is a person who welcomes conflict and tragedy and is able freely to

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<sup>1</sup> I follow Gilles Deleuze's interpretation of the eternal return in his *Nietzsche et la philosophie* (1962).

create his/her life without any metaphysical limitation and pre-given morality. In *Gay Science*, paragraph 290, Nietzsche argues that humans have to retrieve their pride and courage to form themselves as artists. Humanity is a project which always has to be in a process of constant creation. Nietzsche writes about those exceptional humans – “free spirits” – who are able to face the truth and uncover the erroneousness of the world (Nietzsche 1966: 45). Genealogy then has to question the very foundations of the traditional understanding of knowledge – our belief in truth, for “it is no more than a moral prejudice that truth is worth more than appearance” (*ibid.*, 46). Furthermore, even the world which surrounds us why, asks Nietzsche, could not it be a fiction? (*ibid.*, 47).

Here the following question arises: How can Nietzsche claim to uncover the “deepest” *truth* about the “erroneousness” of the world, if our knowledge of the world consists only of a set of different perspectives of the will to power? Is not his claim self-refuting? I would like to bear these questions in mind for they are equally important vis-à-vis Foucault’s genealogical project as well. At the same time it will help us to understand the relations between truth and power.

### **Foucault’s genealogy**

It is at this point that our discussion on Foucault’s historical enquiry and, more specifically, genealogy, can be set. From his early carrier Foucault’s preoccupation with history was untraditional. First of all, he did not consider the traditional historical analysis of political and social events

interesting. Ever since his early intellectual engagements in his doctoral thesis *Madness and Insanity* (1961) he was interested in the history of thought rather than history of political events (the title of his position at Collège de France was Professor of History of Systems of Thought). Nevertheless, the history of thought for Foucault was not the same as the history of ideas. According to Foucault, the history of ideas aims at finding genesis and continuity, and thus always appears as a totalizing quasi-historical discipline. It is too interpretative, too elusive and it tries to grasp the very essence of author’s thought by providing an interpretation of the meaning of a text (Foucault 1972: 135–140). Thus Foucault criticized the history of ideas for at three reasons. First of all, it seeks to “return to innermost secret of origin” by uncovering the meaning of past discourse; second, it has a totalizing character; third, it is interpretative, unsystematic and far too “allegorical” (*ibid.*, 140). For the similar reasons Foucault criticized and distanced himself from hermeneutics as well. In *Truth and Method* H. G. Gadamer argues that in order to understand an historical text some continuity between the past and the present is unavoidable; hence the importance of tradition for hermeneutics (Bielskis 2008). A text without tradition enabling “sharing in a common meaning” would be completely alien to us, and thus an understanding of it would not be possible. Common meanings, according to Gadamer, are not given, but are created through our participation in the reinterpretation of tradition. Tradition is the active fusion of horizons, present and past, and thus history appears as a process of interconnected traditions and meanings

(Gadamer 1989). This, however, is exactly what Foucault does not wish to accept. He disagrees that history is a continuous flow of meaning. What interests him is not the meaning of discourse, but rather the fact that discourses can be studied in terms of practices which are structured by certain rules as well as how structural changes in these discursive practices are possible (Foucault 1972: 138). Following Nietzsche, Foucault claims that meaning and truth, Truth with capital “T”, is but a fiction based on the metaphysical assumption about sovereign, autonomous reason. It is precisely this metaphysical conception of truth which a genealogist should aim to deconstruct.

It is at this point that the Collingwoodian issue raised above becomes important. Similarly to Nietzsche, Foucault “*a priori*” question seems not to be “What are the conditions for a given discourse to be true or false?” Rather the question is “What are the functions, tactics and strategies which the internal structure and content of a given (historical) discourse serves within a given institutional power network?” Thus the distinction between power and meaning becomes important in this context. That is to say, it is within this distinction between power and meaning that I read Nietzsche’s and Foucault’s genealogical enquiries<sup>2</sup>. Instead of trying to grasp the meaning of an historical discourse (text), Foucault approaches it through power, strategies, rules, and tactics which in themselves, as he claimed, have no meaning. It seems that both Nietzsche and Foucault shared the underlying belief that it is through the

phenomenon of power, rather than anything else, that the world and our history should be approached. It is plausible to suggest that Foucault’s detailed empirical analysis – the meticulous description of historical manuscripts, empirical facts, *petty malice* – was also guided by this belief. That is, there is no “deep” or “lofty” meaning behind historical discourses/texts, thus we should approach them through the concept of power.

How does power enable Foucault to see history? Furthermore, how does it differ from Nietzsche’s views? “What is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity” (Foucault 1986: 79). If in late modernity all fixed meanings and absolute identities lose their credibility, then it is no longer possible to think, according to Foucault, that things at their moment of birth appear in their greater perfection (*ibid.*). An example of this is Foucault’s argument that Nietzsche with his genealogy does not search for the origins of morality. Even if, for example, *ressentiment* could be understood as the true origin of Christian morality, genealogy aims to show that there is no stable “shadowless” origin as from their beginning “things are lowly” (*ibid.*). History has no meaning, and its development is due to a play of power, forces and chance. But if it so, then our analysis, so Foucault argues, has to concentrate on real bodily things. If the origin of these things is not meaning, determined by “higher” and “noble” reasons, genealogy has to analyze accidental purposeless events, weaknesses, errors, that is, every small thing, which contributes to determining events and discourses. Here

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<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed discussion on the distinction between power and meaning see Bielskis 2005, chapter 4.

Foucault follows Nietzsche who believed that our moral codes and principles originated from our weakness (i.e. the weakness of the many). On the other hand, there is a fundamental difference between Nietzsche's and Foucault's conceptions of power. For Foucault power is decentralized and exercised in a multiplicity of institutional power networks (asylums, hospitals, prisons, schools, universities, etc.), whereas Nietzsche sees power more from an individual will's point of view. For Foucault history is the development of competing power structures, whereas for Nietzsche it is the play of conflicting wills. Nonetheless, for both of them history means the realm of power struggles and the different institutional structures of subjugation. But if Foucault does not accept Nietzschean voluntarism, how does he understand power?

During Foucault's intellectual journey his views on power had changed significantly. The main change was that in his later work Foucault refused to see power in purely negative terms, that is, power as the source of oppression and subjugation. Foucault claimed that this change came through the process of rereading Nietzsche. Foucault did not conceptualized power in terms of individual/collective will or in terms of (individual, group or class) interests (Foucault 1980: 188). Rather, he saw power as a multiform phenomenon which reveals itself through a variety of strategies and tactics. Foucault refused to see power only dialectically, i.e. in terms of the conflict between those who dominate and those who are dominated. Instead power spreads and extends throughout the entire social body – family life, sexuality, production,

etc. On the other hand, power as a multiform phenomenon should also be understood beyond juridical-political discourse. The sovereign state and its legal system is not the only embodiment of power, thus Foucault urged political theorists to “conceive <...> power without the king” (Foucault 1978: 90). Power for Foucault was not just about battles, revolutions, wars waged by, against or in the name of the state; it was also linked to discourse, knowledge and a variety of “regimes of truth”.

In *The History of Sexuality* Foucault shows how sex in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for the first time becomes entwined with a set of discursive practices. In the early twentieth century people start to discuss, conceptualize and problematize sex and so for the first time it became a part of science, medicine and psychology. Through this a new type of normalizing practices and technologies occur: now everything which concerns sex and sexuality have to be included into scientific and pseudoscientific discourse (Foucault 1978). A number of classifications of different perversions, the separation of boys from girls at schools, the application of hygienic norms, etc. were the result of these changes. The point Foucault makes is that the exponential growth of discourse on sex constructs rather than oppresses our sexuality. Power reveals itself through the normalizing process; it creates discourse of sexuality which controls and forms sexual behaviour. It is in this sense that Foucault can claim that even the sexual liberation of 1970s is one of modern creative strategies through which the phenomenon of power reveals itself. The form of this power is best summarized in Foucault's

accurate sound-bite – “get undressed, but be slim, good-looking, tanned!” (Foucault 1980: 57).

If Foucault’s genealogy is based on the link between power and discourse/knowledge, how should we interpret the status of discourse? If there is no deeper meaning (Foucault quotes Nietzsche: “since a monkey stands at the entrance”) and if we take for granted that power is all that matters, we have to approach a discourse (text) as a regime (Foucault 1986: 79). Foucault’s invents a terms for that – “the regime of intelligibility” (*dispositive*) – and claims that it aims to conceptualize “strategies of relations of forces supporting, and supported by, types of knowledge” (Foucault 1980: 196). This, however, does not mean that a text is the discursive regime. Rather it refers to a wider understanding of relations between power and dominant discourse. Discourse is always linked to power, because it structures people’s relations, attitudes, identities and thinking. The notion of regime of intelligibility allows Foucault to argue that discourses and their meanings are transparent. This is so because power, which reveals itself through strategies and tactics, is intelligible and rational. At the same time this is the reason why we can and indeed do understand history. If there is no a deeply concealed meaning of the history of human existence it does not mean that history is absurd. Even if it is meaningless, it is coherent and intelligible precisely because struggles and tactics are intelligible (Foucault 1986: 56). It is impossible to understand history through the interpretation of its inner meaning which for a genealogist consists of strategies and tactics. Genealogy explores

the history of these strategies and tactics through the historical analysis of discursive regimes and practices which constitute our cultural. We study history in order to see what forms, constructs and controls us. Only then, so Foucault argues, is it possible to speak about human freedom.

In the essay *What is Enlightenment?* Foucault reinterprets Kant’s understanding of the Enlightenment. Foucault argues that it is necessary to step beyond the “blackmail of Enlightenment”, i.e. to be for or against it (Foucault 1986: 42). That is to say, Foucault neither denies the Enlightenment’s rationalism nor uncritically approves it. Kant understood the Enlightenment as intellectual and moral maturity, on the one hand, and a break with “immature” tradition, on the other hand. From here Foucault concludes that the Enlightenment, as a critical reason calling for autonomy, was an historical enquiry, that is, our maturity is possible through the rigorous critique of the past. However, Kant understood autonomy in absolute terms and it was certainly not historical. This is exactly what Foucault does not accept. Rationality and autonomy are always historically determined. However, Foucault takes for granted Kant’s conception of critique without, however, accepting the universal conditions of our knowledge postulated by Kant. History cannot and should not be criticised from outside; rather the aim is to push its frontiers down (*ibid.*, 45). But if there is no autonomous disembodied reason (reason as the transcendental consciousness), it does not mean that rationality is not possible. Genealogy is rational in its attempt to see the constitution of our knowledge and discourses without

stepping outside the transcendental subject (*ibid.*, 59). It is a modest historical enquiry (“philosophical ethos”) which aims at understanding our limitations. It is an historical self-understanding of what we have become and what we are: it is the historical *ontology* of ourselves (*ibid.*, 351). What is being for Foucault if, following Heidegger, we agree that ontology is thinking of being? Here he is in agreement with Nietzsche – being is power. Hence genealogy is an historical enquiry into the relationships of power networks and their discourses. It is also a critical enquiry as there are no power relations without resistance (Foucault 1980: 142). Not being part of power, resistance is not something entirely outside power relations either as it is impossible to abandon all power relations. Hence as long as discourse and power are closely linked, genealogy appears as a micro resistance to the current power structures and discursive regimes. It aims at grasping “the point where change is possible and desirable” (Foucault 1986: 46). Genealogy enables freedom which, for Foucault, is possible through a constant micro resistance as it opens a space for new, desirable, power relations.

Where does “truth” come in this equation? Truth is possible only due to power relations for without power it would be merely a fiction. Truth cannot exist in vacuum, outside all power relationships. All truth claims, so a genealogist would claim, are always embedded within a set of power networks and it is partly because of this that those truth claims are important for us. However, truth as a cognitive faculty of critical reasoning is linked to micro-resistance as well. Truth then appears as

a creative tension between resistance and creation of new power relations. Truth and freedom encourage and bring change. It is the process of going forward. Here Foucault follows Nietzsche: truth for Nietzsche is a faculty which strengthens power. Therefore neither Nietzsche nor Foucault is self-refuting. Nietzsche can claim “the truth” about the erroneousness of the world because truth has to serve power, and the world was “erroneous” precisely because it oppressed the active will to power. For Nietzsche truth then is the cognitive faculty due to which the will to power expresses itself. Genealogy then is an historical enquiry which documents all those discursive practices and power structures which oppress the will to power. Genealogy is also rational – it enables a critical and historical interrogation of ourselves (i.e. what we have been made) which has a twofold structure: to realize what forms and controls us and to resist the power relations hoping for a desirable change.

## Conclusion

Disenchantment of the world, as Max Weber called it, has gradually led to the loss of meaning in modern times. Nature and things lose fixed intrinsic meaning. Things are worthy because they are useful and are open to our manipulation. Nietzsche and Foucault portray this situation: power is the only tangible and desirable thing in the twilight of traditional meaning.

Genealogy for both Nietzsche and Foucault is the historical philosophy of power. Not only does it analyze power relations and networks but it also serves them. One of the differences between Nietzsche’s and Foucault’s

genealogical projects stems partly from their different socio-cultural contexts. Within the context of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanticism Nietzsche's conception of power is rather elitist. Foucault context is different: democracy and the expansion of bureaucracy lead Foucault to conceptualize power in terms of decentred power networks, strategies and tactics. For Nietzsche the death of God is the result of the active will to power, in Foucault's case the discontinuities of discursive regimes and power strategies enable him to conclude the death of subject.

If we agree that humanity, as Nietzsche claims, is a project, and if truth and meaning are perspectival and take form of different interpretations, then what really matters is intellectual honesty – our ability

to question our premises and beliefs. Such intellectual ethos can be sustained only through an open Socratic dialogue when everyone makes an effort to understand the arguments of the other. This willingness to communicate seems to be the only way to preserve meaning. Meaning is neither given nor is it a tradition. To see meaning only as a tradition will hardly lead to communication between different traditions. Meaning is the will – not to power – but to empathy. In this sense both Nietzsche and Foucault are wrong – the social world is not only about power relations, it is also about human solidarity and empathy. Indeed, to transcend the post-modern obsession with power should be a new horizon of critical philosophical enquiry.

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## GALIA, ISTORIJA IR GENEALOGIJA: FRIEDRICHAS NIETZSCHE IR MICHELIS FOUCAULT

**Andrius Bielskis**

### S a n t r a u k a

Straipsnyje aptariamos Friedricho Nietzsche's ir Michelio Foucault genealogijos sampratos. Teigiama, kad genealogija gilinasi į istoriją ne dėl įvykių, mūšių ir karų aprašymo, bet dėl diskursyvių režimų ir praktikų, kurios formuoja mūsų tapatybę. Glaudus pažinimo/tiesos bei galios saitas yra esminis tiek Nietzsche's, tiek Foucault genealogijai. Foucault *dispositive* (suprantamumo režimas) yra viena iš esminių sąvokų tiek istoriškumo sampratai, tiek studijuojant pačią istoriją. Nyčiška valios galiai idėja transformuo-

jama į pažinimo tipais grindžiamą ir besiremiančią galios santykių strategijų idėją. Daroma išvada, jog Foucault genealogija redukuoja prasmę į galios santykius. Taip pat teigiama, kad Foucault sampratoje istorija yra pažini ne dėl jos vidinio prasmingumo, bet dėl to, jog žinios ir diskursyvosios praktikos, būdamos esminės istorijos vyksmo procesui, yra suvokiamos kaip taktikos ir strategijos.

**Pagrindiniai žodžiai:** genealogija, istorijos filosofija, galia, diskursas.

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