Five Modalities of Michel Foucault's Use of Nietzsche's Writings (1959–73): Critical, Epistemological, Linguistic, Alethurgic and Political

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Abstract
In a series of essays, conferences, and lectures over the period 1959–73, Michel Foucault directly engaged the writings of Nietzsche. This article demonstrates the five different modalities of Foucault's use of Nietzsche's writings: namely, critical, epistemological, linguistic, alethurgic, and political. Each of these modalities is tied to a particular intellectual turning point in Foucault's philosophical investigations and can be located chronologically in five important texts from that period.

Keywords
critical theory, Foucault, knowledge, Nietzsche, power, subjectivity

> For myself, I prefer to utilise the writers I like. The only valid tribute to thought such as Nietzsche's is precisely to use it, to deform it, to make it groan and protest. And if then the commentators say that I am being faithful or unfaithful to Nietzsche, that is of absolutely no interest. (Foucault, 1980: 53)

Introduction

In interviews at various points in his life, Michel Foucault placed Friedrich Nietzsche among a small set of thinkers – including Georges

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Bataille, Maurice Blanchot, and Martin Heidegger – whose writings, he said, had allowed him to find his own philosophical voice (e.g. Foucault, 1994a: 48; 1994g: 437; 1994e: 703). Foucault at times recounted that he was introduced to Nietzsche's writings through those of Bataille, and to Bataille's through those of Blanchot (Foucault, 1994g: 437; 1994a: 48); at other times, Foucault said he came to Nietzsche via Heidegger (Foucault, 1994e: 703; 1996b: 470). The archives at the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris indicate that Foucault first encountered Nietzsche's writings in the early 1950s, probably in 1951, while he was a student at the École Normale Supérieure (BnF, NAF 28730, box 33 A and 33B; see also Elden, 2017: 32). A few years later, in August 1953, Foucault delved into Nietzsche's writings on history, especially his untimely meditations (Defert, 2015: xxxix, xli). Foucault delivered lectures on Nietzsche in 1953–4 when he was a tutor at the École Normale Supérieure, and it was at about that time he started writing still unpublished manuscripts on Nietzsche. The earliest manuscripts date to about 1953; other correspondence suggests that Foucault began writing a text on Nietzsche in November 1954 (Defert, 2015: xlii). Foucault wrote two major essays on Nietzsche the following decade (1994c/1998; 1994d/1984) and then delivered lectures on Nietzsche at the experimental university center at Vincennes in 1969 and 1970, at SUNY Buffalo in March 1970, at McGill University in April 1971, and at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio) in May 1973 (BnF, NAF 28730, box 65; Defert, 2011: 264; Elden, 2017: 12, 31; Foucault, 1994h/2000). Foucault's interest in Nietzsche would extend throughout his lifetime, in different degrees of intensity, all the way to his very last lesson of his last yearly lectures at the Collège de France, *The Courage of Truth*, on 28 March 1984, only a few months before his death (Foucault, 2009: 294).

Philosophers and scholars have long puzzled over Foucault's exact relationship to Nietzsche's thought (e.g. Allen, 2017; Defert, 2011: 258–75; Deleuze, 1988: 70–93, 124–32; Elden, 2017: 31–40; Koopman, 2013; Mahon, 1992; Milchman and Rosenberg, 2007; Owen, 1994; Patton, 2004; Rosenberg and Westfall, 2018; Saar, 2007; Schrift, 2010; Shapiro, 2003; Sluga, 2005, 2018; Tiisala, 2018). Foucault's provocative statements in interviews, the one in the epigraph and others (e.g. Foucault, 1996a: 356; 1996b: 471), have led many of his readers to ask more precisely, in the words of philosopher Hans Sluga (2018), 'What in Nietzsche's texts had [Foucault] made his own?' and 'how his take on Nietzsche had changed along the wide arc of his intellectual journey'. Despite the many erudite responses to date, as Alan Rosenberg and Joseph Westfall write in the introduction to the most recent English-language collection of critical essays on the relationship between Foucault and Nietzsche, 'the precise nature of the relationship between the two' is not 'a matter on which their readers agree' (2018: 3). The Rosenberg and Westfall collection (2018) – with important contributions

by Keith Ansell-Pearson, Brian Lightbody, Paul Patton, Alan Schrift, Michael Ure, and others – is a testament to the variety of views on the matter.

Much of the debate has focused on Sluga's first question and, correspondingly, on the comparative uses of the concept and method of 'genealogy' at work in Foucault's works from the early 1970s, especially *Discipline and Punish* (1975), and in Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1993) and *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1989) (e.g. Lightbody, 2010/11; Lorenzini, 2017; Mahon, 1992; Rosenberg and Westfall, 2018: 8–10; Saar, 2002, 2007; Sluga, 2005, 2018). This body of scholarship has produced important insights. Amy Allen (2017: 256) and Colin Koopman (2013: 60; 2016: 100–8) have identified in Foucault's writings a unique form of genealogy they call 'problematizing genealogy', which they contrast with the debunking or unmasking genealogical approach of Nietzsche, as well as with the vindication-of-values approach to genealogy of philosophers such as Bernard Williams, notably in *Truth and Truthfulness* (2002). Daniele Lorenzini (2019) recently argues for still another notion of genealogy in Foucault's writings that he calls 'possibilising genealogies', possibilizing because they open up alternative ways of being in the world; Lorenzini associates this form of genealogy with the notions of counter-conduct and of the critical attitude Foucault (1997) discussed in relation to Kant.

This article, by contrast, focuses on the second of Sluga's questions: namely, how Foucault's use of Nietzsche changed over the arc of his own philosophical investigations. To address the question, this article focuses on a series of Foucault's essays, conferences, and lectures – some of which were published during his lifetime, others posthumously – in which Foucault directly engaged Nietzsche's writings and discussed his own use of them. In the monographs published during his lifetime, Foucault rarely offered exegeses or interpretations of Nietzsche's texts; he instead used them, most often *sotto voce*, to motivate and push his own philosophical investigations. By contrast, in the shorter essays and lectures discussed here, Foucault explicitly presented exegesis and interpretation, and it is here, in these writings and lectures, that readers can more clearly identify the different and changing ways in which Foucault used Nietzsche's texts, or in his own words, made them 'groan and protest' (1980: 53).

The thesis of this article is that Foucault engaged in five different modalities of use of Nietzsche's writings: critical, epistemological, linguistic, alethurgic, and political. Each of these modalities is tied to a particular intellectual and practical turning point in Foucault's philosophical investigations, and can be located chronologically in five important texts. To prefigure the argument here:

1. In his 'Introduction' to his translation of Kant's *Anthropology* (written in the period 1959–60; published in 2008), Foucault uses Nietzsche's discourse as a

device to open a critical space beyond the recurring anthropological illusions that plagued phenomenology, especially existential phenomenology. Foucault uses Nietzsche's writings, first, in a critical modality.

2. In his essay 'Nietzsche, Freud, Marx' (delivered at Royaumont in July 1964; published in 1967 (1994c/1998)), Foucault treats Nietzsche's writings as an epistemic layer in his archaeology of knowledge – in essence, as representing an *epistème* of suspicion dating to the 19th century. Foucault uses Nietzsche's writings, here, in an epistemological modality.

3. From an *epistème*, Nietzsche's texts become a linguistic object of study for Foucault in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as illustrated in Foucault's essay 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History' (written between 1967 and 1970; published in 1971 (1994d/1984)). Nietzsche's use of origin words – *Ursprung*, *Entstehung*, *Herkunft*, *Erfindung* – is a laboratory for Foucault to develop his theory of 'vouloir-savoir', of the will to know. Here, Foucault deploys Nietzsche's writings in a linguistic modality.

4. Foucault's 'Lecture on Nietzsche' delivered at McGill University in April 1971 (published as part of the *Lectures on the Will to Know* in 2011) represents a transition from the will to know to a history of truth. Reworking the language of invention in Nietzsche's writings, Foucault develops the idea of a history of truth and truth-telling that he will then unfold in his Collège de France lectures. In this work, Foucault plies Nietzsche's discourse, as object of study, using an alethurgic modality.

5. Finally, in his conferences on 'Truth and Juridical Form' delivered at PUC-Rio in May 1973 (1994h/2000), Foucault treats Nietzsche's writings politically. Foucault demonstrates how Nietzsche's writings can be used as the model for a critique of power and of the subject. Foucault deploys Nietzsche's work in a political modality.

Drawing on these texts and lectures, this article will demonstrate the five different ways Foucault used Nietzsche's writings from the late 1950s to the early 1970s. The article will begin in the late 1950s with Foucault's now-published introduction to Kant's *Anthropology*.[1] For clarity, it will proceed chronologically.

'Introduction' to Kant's *Anthropology* (1959–60)

In a 10-part introduction to his translation of Kant's *Anthropology* – written in the period 1959–60 and accepted as his secondary doctoral thesis, but not published until 2008, long after his death[2] – Foucault explores the relationship between Kant's lectures on anthropology and the notion of critique. Foucault's introduction takes aim at phenomenology, which was the dominant mode of philosophical discourse on the Continent at the time (Foucault, 1994a: 48–9; 1994g: 437). Foucault argues that the transcendental illusion that Kant tried to resolve by means of his *Critique of Pure Reason* is itself replicated by the anthropological illusion in Kant's work and, more generally, in post-Kantian

phenomenological thought. Phenomenology and existential phenomen-ology (Heidegger, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre) simply replicate the illusion. Phenomenologists claimed to analyze a human subject who con-structs himself and his environment, but they fell back into the trap of naturalizing the subject. Not that they believed in human nature, but they placed the human subject once again at the very heart of their analyses.

Late in the introduction, Foucault's text turns to Nietzsche's writings, first ironically, but then experimentally, trying to test and probe Nietzsche's discourse as a potential can-opener – a device to open a space for reflection. The introduction first turns to Nietzsche at the end of the ninth section, immediately after it begins to critique phenomen-ology (Foucault, 2008: 68). Almost ironically, Foucault deploys the notion of 'eternal return' to describe the way in which post-Kantian philosophers always return to reflections on the a priori, the originary, and the concept of finitude – in other words, how they return to the illusions from which philosophers have tried for centuries to emancipate themselves. Foucault plays with Nietzsche's language of the eternal return, of philosophizing with a hammer, of the dawn, as a way to emphasize the recurring problem of existential and psychological phe-nomenology. The allusion, of course, is to Nietzsche's *Twilight of the Idols or How to Philosophize with a Hammer* (1990; written in 1888). Foucault writes, pointing to Nietzsche's words and expressions, 'it is here, in this thought that envisaged the end of philosophy, that there resides the possibility of still philosophizing more, and the injunction of a new austerity' (Foucault, 2008: 68). That 'new austerity' represents the quest for an end to illusions.

Then, in the final, tenth section of the introduction, Foucault 'returns to the initial problem' of the relationship between critique and anthro-pology, in order to highlight again the problem of illusions – the tran-scendental and, then, anthropological illusions (2008: 76–8). Foucault decries the practical impossibility of mounting a 'real' critique of these anthropological illusions. There is nothing but a constant and permanent circulation of the illusion in all of social science and philosophy, such that, in the end, philosophers are incapable of exercising what he calls 'a real *critique*' (2008: 78).

It is here, at the bitter end, that Foucault deploys Nietzsche to open a possible door. Here, Nietzsche's writings stand not only for the death of God but, with it, for the death of man. 'Nietzsche's enterprise', Foucault writes, 'could be understood as the end point to the proliferation of interrogations on man' (Foucault, 2008: 78). With Nietzsche's words, Foucault suggests, we might finally see how the critique of finitude could circle back to the beginning of time. 'The trajectory of the question: *Was ist der Mensch?* in the philosophical field comes to an end with the response that recuses and disarms it: *der Übermensch*' (2008: 79).

Nietzsche's discourse of the over-man allows philosophy to get past man and the anthropological illusion. By killing God and, with God, man, by getting beyond man, not to a super-man but to some place beyond mankind, it may be possible to get past the naturalized idea of man that always lurks in the background. Foucault's introduction experiments with Nietzsche's words to create a space, an opening. It treats Nietzsche's writings as a *critical* object of study. On reflection, it is not entirely surprising that Foucault apparently did not want his introduction published as is (Foucault, 2008: 8–9); it was an experiment with Nietzsche's writings – very much like Foucault's earlier unpublished manuscripts from 1953. It was an experiment in the *critical* deployment of Nietzsche's writings. It functioned along a *critical* modality.

'Nietzsche, Marx, Freud' (1964)

Several years later, in July 1964, Foucault delivered a paper titled 'Nietzsche, Marx, Freud' at a colloquium on Nietzsche which Gilles Deleuze organized at Royaumont.[3] At the time Foucault drafted the essay, he was immersed in writing *The Order of Things*, which was published 19 months later in April 1966. Foucault finished a first version of the book manuscript by December 1964, and thus was at the tail end of the composition of that first version when he delivered his paper at Royaumont. Shortly after the conference, in April 1965, Foucault rewrote another 300-page version of *The Order of Things* (Defert, 2015: xlix). So, in effect, when the Royaumont colloquium took place, Foucault was smack in the middle of writing his 'book on signs', as he referred to it, and, while fully immersed in that project, he tackled Nietzsche's writings as an object of study but of a different kind.

If his introduction to Kant took aim at phenomenology (and Jean-Paul Sartre among others), Foucault's 1964 essay takes aim at semiology and semiotics (and Roland Barthes among others). In this project, Nietzsche's writings, as well as those of Freud and Marx, become the specimen of an *epistème*. The three corpuses of work – Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud – become representatives of a hermeneutics of suspicion. They become an archaeological layer in the historical way of knowing. Nietzsche's texts in particular are the premier illustration of an *epistème* characteristic of the 19th century and the key to understanding our way of thinking in the modern age.

Nietzsche's writings become, then, an *epistemological* object of study: an exemplary, paradigmatic discourse, representing a certain mindset and logic associated with the 19th century. They are a specimen, an archaeological layer. The 1964 essay uses a slightly different terminology than *The Order of Things*. It describes the layers of knowledge in terms of a 'system of interpretation' (1994c: 565; 1998: 270). Along these lines, Nietzsche's writings represent a system of techniques, methods, modes of

interpretation, the purpose of which is to resolve age-old suspicions about language and the effects of language. These suspicions, Foucault suggests, had always existed – two great suspicions, in fact: first, the suspicion that language does not work, does not say exactly what it is supposed to say, and, second, that there are things in the world which speak in ways we had not previously suspected (1998: 269).

Systems of interpretation, Foucault argues, had always targeted these suspicions. The *epistème* of the Renaissance, based on resemblance and similitude, took aim at the same suspicions. Foucault's discussion in his 1964 essay, of convention, of sympathy, of emulation, of the signature, of analogy, of techniques of identity and resemblance, is immersed in the second chapter of *The Order of Things*, 'The Prose of the World'. All the terms, all the techniques of interpretation that Foucault summarizes in his 1964 essay – *convenientia*, 'emulation' and 'analogy', and, of course, the 'signature' – are there too in *The Order of Things* (1966: 33, 34, 36; 1970: 18, 19, 21–2). The following layer, in both the 1964 essay and the third chapter of the book, is 'representation', the system of interpretation from the age of Reason (*l'âge classique*) – the relationship between identity and difference, the application of a certain order, the categorizations and taxonomies that are characteristic of the age of Reason. So, the reader is clearly immersed in the different *epistèmes* articulated in *The Order of Things*.

Then comes the modern age, and it is precisely in this third period that Foucault attempts to decipher, in the 1964 essay, what he calls a 'new possibility of interpretation'. The writings of Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud found anew, so Foucault claims in 1964, the possibility of a hermeneutics, of a system of interpretation, of techniques of interpretation. What was so new in the writings of Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud, you may ask? Foucault offers several responses. First, their writings modified the space of distribution within which signs are signs. They changed the spatial relations inherent in the interpretations of signs. There is in fact a certain aporia of depth in their writings, Foucault emphasizes. There is a movement of interpretation that goes into the depths – for example, in Nietzsche's work, in which we find a verticality of metaphors and analogies. But at the same time, all depth leads us to the conclusion that what exists deep down is simply another game, another interpretation; that, in fact, depth is but a game, no more than a fold in the surface, 'a surface fold' (1994c: 569; 1998: 275). We are always attempting to go deeper in our search – as a technique of interpretation – but we find ourselves always at the surface.

Second, their writings reveal that interpretation is an infinite task, that everything is interpretation. Every sign is but an interpretation of another sign. Foucault writes: 'There is absolutely nothing primary to interpret, because ultimately, everything is already interpretation. Every sign is in itself, not the thing that offers itself up to interpretation, but the

interpretation of other signs' (1994c: 571; 1998: 275). In other words, there is no originary source, there is no original signified to which one can return. There are only acts of interpretation.

'There is never, if you like, an *interpretandum* that is not already *interpretans*', Foucault writes in 1964, 'so that it is as much a relationship of violence as of elucidation that is established in interpretation' (1994c: 571; 1998: 275). This violence arises from the obligation to reinterpret everything, to test everything: There is only interpretation, and every interpretation 'must overthrow, inverse, shatter with the blow of a hammer' (1994c: 571; 1998: 275). The violence comes from the fact that interpretations do not lead back to an original sign, but only forward to a reinterpretation. And those reinterpretations are not themselves reliable. Nietzsche's *Twilight* attacks Rousseau, Sand, Zola – so many respectable figures – and by contrast, it praises Caesar, Napoleon, Dostoyevsky, Goethe, as men of stronger, healthier character. The violence consists in attacking interpretations, in imposing interpretations, but also in posing the question: does this interpretation hold? And in that sense, one must test these interpretations, as Nietzsche suggests, with a hammer, in the sense of the physician's hammer used to sound the abdomen, to listen to and to diagnose abdominal tympanism. The percussion hammer is used to hit against an interpretation, to hear if it is void or if there is a void behind it. The notion of verifying the tenability of an interpretation had been taken up by Gilles Deleuze as well, in his *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (2006: 1) in 1962, in which he declares: 'The philosophy of values as envisaged and established by [Nietzsche] is the true realization of critique and the only way in which a total critique may be realized, the only way to "philosophize with a hammer".' For Foucault, in his 1964 essay, 'philosophizing with a hammer' consists in ceaselessly posing the question of interpretation. In this sense, Foucault uses Nietzsche's writings here as an *epistemological* object of study.

The last paragraph of Foucault's 1964 essay ends with a comparison between semiology and Nietzsche, and in this last paragraph one can begin to discern another modality, one which will become clearer a decade later: it prefigures a *political* modality. Whereas the 1964 essay focused throughout on the particular epistemology of the 19th century – the hermeneutics of suspicion – at the conclusion of the essay, all of a sudden, the reader is plunged into the contemporary world. Foucault there emphasizes that contemporary semiology is completely different from 19th-century hermeneutics: 'It seems to me necessary to understand what too many of our contemporaries forget, that hermeneutics and semiology are two fierce enemies', Foucault declares (1994c: 574; 1998: 278). We are now, here, in the present, and, in speaking of semiology, Foucault implicitly takes aim at Barthes. He argues that semiologists (and academic Marxists as well) retain too much stock in the signification that they themselves apply. They have stopped applying percussion to

their own theories of semiology (or dialectical materialism, for the Marxists). They are too confident that their method of interpretation, their theory of interpretation, can operate in all contexts – that theirs is a new originary that works. So Foucault marshals the hermeneutics of Nietzsche to contest those who have not fully understood or appreciated the infinity of interpretation: 'On the contrary, a hermeneutic that wraps itself in itself enters the domain of languages which do not cease to implicate themselves, that intermediate region of madness and pure language. It is there that we recognize Nietzsche' (1994c: 574; 1998: 278).

The final word of the 1964 essay is 'Nietzsche', and so it is 'Nietzsche', or, to be more precise, Nietzsche's texts, that, here, open a critical space for contemporary thought. It is Nietzsche's writing that 'marks the threshold beyond which contemporary philosophy can begin thinking again' (1966: 353; 1970: 342). This is the Nietzsche of the death of God, but through the death of God, of the death of man. And as you know well, that is where *The Order of Things* will end. There too, in *The Order of Things*, Nietzsche's writings will serve as an opening to the contemporary age: with Nietzsche, Foucault writes in 1966, 'we see the emergence of what may perhaps be the space of contemporary thought. It was Nietzsche, in any case, who burned for us, even before we were born, the intermingled promises of the dialectic and anthropology' (1966: 275; 1970: 263).

Nietzsche's writings, for Foucault, push us to the furthest limits of the imagination – where the infinite task of interpretation may produce a point of rupture, or even drive us mad. It is the space that comes closest to the experience of madness – or, in Foucault's words, that 'could well be something like the experience of madness, (1994c: 571; 1998: 275).[4] With this gesture, Foucault returns, in the 1964 essay, to a fragment from §39 of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*, a fragment that Foucault had labored on as early as 1953 and to which he would return to reinterpret again and again: 'To perish by absolute knowledge could well be part of the foundation of being' (1994c: 570; 1998: 275).[5]

'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History' (1971)

If it is productive to read 'Nietzsche, Marx, Freud' in conversation with *The Order of Things* to see how Foucault works Nietzsche, or plies him to his own philosophical investigations, then the next published text, in 1971, titled 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', should be read in the run-up to Foucault's first course at the Collège de France, originally named *The Will to Know* and published in 2011 under the title *Lectures on the Will to Know* (in order to differentiate it from the first volume of the *History of Sexuality*). Whereas Foucault's earlier texts took aim at phenomenology and semiotics, this one points forward to Foucault's theory of '*vouloir-savoir*', of the will to know, that leads, a few years later, to his

theory of '*savoir-pouvoir*', knowledge/power. In this 1971 essay, Nietzsche's words become a *linguistic* object of study in furtherance of the idea of the invention of knowledge.

The essay 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History' was published in a *festschrift* to Jean Hyppolite in 1971, a volume titled *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite*, published by the Presses Universitaires de France, and later reprinted in *Dits & Écrits* in 1994. According to notes by Daniel Defert now archived at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the essay arose from a rereading of Nietzsche that Foucault began to undertake in the summer of 1967, and which he then elaborated in his two courses on Nietzsche at Vincennes in 1969 and 1970 (BnF, NAF 28730, box 65; see also Elden, 2017: 10, 31). In the files containing the draft manuscript, Defert notes: 'Nietzsche 1967–1970: rereading of Nietzsche, Summer 1967', and in his chronology Defert adds: 'July 1967: return to Vendeuvre [from Tunis]', followed by the following entry from a letter Foucault wrote to Defert on 16 July 1967:

> *Je lizard Nietzsche; je crois commencer à m'apercevoir pourquoi ça m'a toujours fasciné. Une morphologie de la volonté de savoir dans la civilization européenne qu'on a laissée de côté en faveur d'une analyse de la volonté de puissance.*

> I am perusing/lizarding/cracking Nietzsche; I think I am beginning to see why his work always fascinated me. A morphology of the will to knowledge in European civilization that we left to the side in favor of an analysis of the will to power. (Defert, 2015: liii)

So, in the summer of 1967, Foucault returns to Nietzsche's writings, but this time Foucault will work Nietzsche's texts in another modality: a *linguistic* modality.

'A morphology of the will to knowledge': Morphology is a study of forms. In biology, morphology is the study of the external forms and structures of living beings. In linguistics, morphology is the study of different categories of words and of the forms that are present in a language. Here, then, morphology would be the study of the forms that the will to knowledge might take. As Foucault writes to Defert, it is in fact this approach that was left aside in reading Nietzsche, in favor of the will to power. The notion of the will to knowledge, Foucault suggests, is perhaps more important. This theme will guide both Foucault's lectures of 1970–1 at the Collège de France (2011) and the first volume of his *History of Sexuality, The Will to Know,* published in 1976.

In July 1967, then, after the completion of *The Order of Things*, while he is drafting *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault writes to Defert that he is 'cracking' Nietzsche. A month later, in late August, he finishes writing *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Defert, 2015: liii). Immersed in

the final stages of drafting that book, Foucault now seems to have found, in Nietzsche's writings, what had fascinated him most in Nietzsche's work: the words 'origin', 'birth', 'beginning'. Foucault's 1971 essay plays with those words from Nietzsche's vocabulary to develop the argument that knowledge is invented. This naturally calls for a study of the will to know.

Foucault's published books had already and would again use those terms, especially the word 'birth'. *The Birth of the Clinic* in 1963. *The Birth of the Prison* in 1975. But those words, birth or origin, raised more questions than they resolved. There was a glimpse of this already in the 1964 essay, in which Foucault was careful to note the distinction between 'beginning' and 'origin' (1994c: 569; 1998: 274). It turns out, though, that language here is only partly helpful; there are so many words to reference 'origin' in French, in German, in English. In French: *origine, provenance, commencement, souche, cause, naissance*. There is an entire word-cloud in linguistics, a large cluster that can be used to designate the word 'origin' and that might be of interest in French and in German. So Foucault goes back to the German words used in Nietzsche's writings: *Ursprung*, in a sense closest to the word origin, but which must be distinguished from the word *Herkunft*, signifying provenance; *Entstehung*, as in creation, emergence, birth, apparition; *Herkunft*, as in origin, provenance, filiation, stem; *Abkunft,* as in familial origin; *Geburt*, signifying birth, childbirth; *Erfindung* or invention, a word to which Foucault's writings return at length in this 1971 essay, as well as in his 1971 McGill lecture on Nietzsche, discussed next; *Kunststück,* as in artifice; and *Erbschaft*, for heritage, succession, legacy.

Nietzsche's language is Foucault's laboratory. Nietzsche's discourse, once again, is Foucault's object of study – but this time to analyze, *linguistically*, the origin of knowledge. The words are legion, but what Foucault attempts to show in his 1971 essay is that Nietzsche's texts sometimes use the notion of origin, *Ursprung*, in an unmarked sense, without trying to distinguish one usage from the other – but not always. (Not surprisingly, one could say the same of Foucault's texts – especially, for instance, 'Truth and Juridical Forms' (1994h/2000), which we will come to shortly, that opens with Foucault alternatively deploying the terms appearance, invention, birth, origin, formation, emergence, and stabilization.)

For Foucault, in 1971, the distinction between *Ursprung* (origin) and *Herkunft* (provenance) ultimately favors the notion of invention, *Erfindung*, which is best illustrated in the opening paragraph of Nietzsche's 'On Truth and Lie in a Nonmoral Sense' (2010: 17–18). It is this notion of invention that predominates in Foucault's text.

In Foucault's 1971 essay then – an essay imagined and composed over the period 1967 to 1970 – Foucault has shifted from treating Nietzsche as an *epistemological* object to treating him as a *linguistic* object. The goal,

ultimately, is to locate the imposition of meanings through language: 'to identify the accidents, the minute deviations – or conversely, the complete reversals – the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us; it is to discover that truth or being does not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents', Foucault writes. 'This is undoubtedly why every origin of morality from the moment it stops being pious – and *Herkunft* can never be pious – has value as a critique' (1994d: 141; 1984: 81).

Nietzsche's writings, as a linguistic object of study, clarify the vocabulary. In the 1971 essay, Foucault uses the notion of *provenance*, of descent, the word *Herkunft*, because the idea of *provenance*, of descent, comprises and contains, in part, elements of race, social type, and social effects. By using this concept rather than others, Foucault pushes the reader to reflect more on the context of social and racial struggle. It is here that Foucault begins using the words 'heritage', 'succession', and, in German, *Erbschaft*. Once again, the notion of heritage is something that comes with a sense of contestation, of distribution of wealth, of familial disputes over succession. A third term used frequently is 'emergence', 'apparition', or, in German, *Entstehung*. This notion of emergence, irruption even, appears in the 1971 text: 'Emergence is thus the entry of forces; it is their eruption, the leap from the wings to center stage, each in its youthful strength' (1994d: 144; 1984: 84).[6] At this point we are listing toward political combat, but we have not yet reached the question of knowledge-power that emerges still later. Here, we are still immersed in the concept of a will to knowledge – 'The analysis of this great *vouloir-savoir* that runs throughout humanity' (1994d: 155; 1984: 95).

It is particularly interesting to note that Foucault ends the 1971 text, once more, on these dual themes: first, the notion of the dangerousness of this will to knowledge, and of its companion, the will to truth (which will emerge in the next stage of development of Foucault's writings). This is the danger, the peril of absolute knowledge – the idea that the infiniteness of interpretation may lead to madness. And second, the notion of critique, so central to Foucault's writings on Kant and so important in Deleuze's writings on Nietzsche.

Foucault's 'Lesson on Nietzsche', McGill University (April 1971)

In April 1971, Foucault delivers three conferences on Nietzsche at McGill University, the first of which, 'Lesson on Nietzsche', was published posthumously as part of the first lecture series at the Collège de France, *Lectures on the Will to Know* (2011).[7] In these conferences, Foucault uses Nietzsche's texts to push his previously developed theory of the will to know toward a larger thesis on the will to truth and toward

the writing of a history of truth-telling (Elden, 2017: 33). At the University of McGill, in effect, we begin to witness the transformation of *vouloir-savoir* into a history of truth. Once again, it is Nietzsche's writings that serve as the key of this rearticulation.

A year earlier, in the winter of 1969–70, Foucault had delivered a second series of lectures on Nietzsche at the experimental university center at Vincennes (BnF, NAF 28730, box 65).[8] He subsequently reworked those manuscripts for other lectures, notably his three conferences at McGill (including the 'Lesson on Nietzsche'), his later lectures on 'Truth and Juridical Form' at PUC-Rio in 1973, as well as portions of his Collège de France lectures on *Penal Theories and Institutions* (2015) in 1972.

From the outset of the first lecture at McGill, there is continuity. It is almost as if the conversation flows seamlessly from 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History'. It begins precisely with the passage from Nietzsche's 'On Truth and Lie in a Nonmoral Sense' from 1873 (2010: 17–18). It begins with the language of *Erfindung*, invention. This time, though, Foucault reworks the passage. In his lecture at McGill, the idea of the invention of knowledge morphs into that of the invention of truth. 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History' is, in effect, the preparatory text that leads to Foucault's 'Lesson on Nietzsche'. The earlier enterprise, which consisted in understanding the right word to use, is now completed, and the earlier *linguistic* exercise now gives place to what might be called an *alethurgy* – a term Foucault coins from the ancient Greek root *alēthes*, namely, that which is true (Foucault, 2014: 39).

Foucault opens his lecture as follows: 'This term *Erfindung*, invention, harks back to many other texts. Everywhere this term is opposed to the origin. But it is not synonymous with the beginning. That knowledge is an invention signifies:... ' (2011: 195). The lecture begins then with a chosen term, one that will guide much of Foucault's writings from this moment on: the idea of invention. Foucault proceeds to offer a summary of the elements contained in the concept of invention – what knowledge is, and what it is not: knowledge is 'the result of a complex operation'; it is akin to malice, to despising and detesting, to laughter and mean-spiritedness (2011: 196–8). The lecture takes up, once again – as Foucault had earlier in the 1964 essay – the idea of the lowliness of knowledge, gesturing also to the murderous and relentless aspects of knowing. Here the reader finds, once again, the idea that knowledge is perilous, dangerous.

But what is new in the 1971 lecture is the relationship between knowledge and truth. In a section of four to five pages, approximately a third of the way into the 'Lesson on Nietzsche', Foucault begins to work the difference between the invention of knowledge, the emergence of knowledge, and the invention of truth. He develops a new, double movement: 'Knowledge was invented, but truth was invented later still' (2011: 199).

This idea of the invention of truth will become the key, not only to Foucault's epistemological writings on the will to know and his alethurgical writings on the will to truth, but also to his later writings on subjectivity and the care of self – what used to be referred to as Foucault's third period, or his ethical writings, in which Nietzsche is much less present. It also serves as a guiding thread to read Foucault's entire lecture series at the Collège de France. Those 13 years of lectures at the Collège can be understood as a 13-year study of the different ways in which truth is invented and made: first, through juridical forms, such as the ordeal or judicial inquiry; second, through historical forms, such as realism; third, through political-economic forms, such as the market; and finally, through forms of subjectivity. The entire sequence of lectures at the Collège de France emerges from this moment and amounts to a remarkable and novel history of how truth is produced: the techniques, the devices, the measures, the models of truth.

The notion of invention is also tied here to that of *peripeteia*, which is central to Foucault's interpretations of *Oedipus Rex* and of the different ways in which truth is said and produced. With this notion of *peripeteia*, we can locate, in the context of Foucault's 1971 lectures, the seeds of his thought on the way in which avowal can produce truth, or at least produce what we think might be truthful. In the 'Lesson on Nietzsche', the concepts of *peripeteia* and reversal are the basis for an invention and a rerouting of knowledge. This entails that, at the heart of the notion of truth, there is not a historical unfolding that would emerge through knowledge, but rather a will, a will to truth. Foucault then develops this line of reasoning in his lectures at the Catholic University of Louvain in 1981 on the relationship between jurisdiction and veridiction, *Wrong-Doing, Truth-Telling* (2014), and in the final courses at the Collège de France on *parrhesia* and the courage of truth (2009). The same type of *peripeteia* can be found, for instance, in Foucault's discussion of the chariot race between Antilochus and Menelaus from Book 23 of Homer's *Iliad* (Foucault, 2014: 27–55).

The invention of truth represents a radical and violent break with philosophical tradition, since the will to truth is not the will to follow knowledge wherever it leads us, but rather the will to fight in a struggle for the production of truth. Even if the will to truth had always been important in the philosophical tradition, its character changes completely here. Foucault delivers his 'Lesson on Nietzsche' almost at the same time as he gives his first set of lectures at the Collège de France, and the whole project of those lectures at the Collège is already audible here: 'From there, we see the Nietzschean task: to think the history of truth without relying on truth. In a context in which truth does not exist: the context of appearance' (2011: 208).

'Truth and Juridical Form', Rio de Janeiro (May 1973)

This brings us to May 1973. Foucault had just completed his lectures on *The Punitive Society* (2013) at the Collège de France – his third lecture series, after *Lectures on the Will to Know* (2011) and *Penal Theories and Institutions* (2015). Foucault then travels to Rio de Janeiro to deliver conferences at the Pontifical Catholic University (PUC-Rio) to which he gives the name 'Truth and Juridical Form' (1994h/2000). The first opens with a treatment of Nietzsche's writings.

From the very start, it becomes clear that Foucault's thought has evolved from the thesis of *vouloir-savoir*, of the will to know, to the theory of *savoir-pouvoir*, of knowledge-power. This is, of course, the intellectual framework that will ground Foucault's intervention in *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and that represents the culmination of his genealogical critique of the early 1970s. The audience in Rio distinctly witnessed this at the end of Foucault's first conference, which encapsulates his principal theoretical intervention: namely, a critique of knowledge and of truth in which Foucault shows that the human subject – which we tend to think is at the foundation of knowledge, which we tend to think is stabilized, and which purportedly receives and gives form to knowledge – is in fact itself invented. It is not only, then, that knowledge is an invention, nor that truth is invented, but also that the human subject is an invention. And it is in this invention of the subject that we can locate the relations of power and the forces that produce the prevailing social conception of a subject.

'In Nietzsche, one finds a type of discourse', Foucault writes, 'that undertakes a historical analysis of the formation of the subject itself, a historical analysis of the birth of a certain type of knowledge – without ever granting the preexistence of a subject of knowledge' (2000: 5–6). Notice, and this is key: '*a type of discourse*'. Nietzsche's writings, his texts, his discourse – these are the object of study for Foucault. And now, in 1973, Foucault is addressing them directly in *a political modality*. Nietzsche's texts are the object of study that reveal to the reader that our own subjectivity is shaped by the interpretations we embrace and impose – in a vertiginous cycle of meaning-making, one in which there is no preexisting subject. This, Foucault says, referring to Nietzsche's writings, 'can serve as a model for us in our analyses' (2000: 6).

The conferences at PUC-Rio set out to do two things: first, to articulate a history of the subject, and second, to present a history of truth. Both are linked. One produces the other or, to be more precise, the two merge around the same political intervention. The history of the subject is fundamental and constitutes the most radical part of this work (see also Foucault, 1994g: 436–7). It undoes the idea of a definitively given subject and shows how the subject of knowledge is historically constructed and constituted: it reveals, on the one hand, the historical

constitution of the subject, and, on the other hand, a history of truth-making. This represents the culmination of writings that began at least with Foucault's introduction to Kant's *Anthropology*.

The Rio conferences make five points. The first is that knowledge is invented. This point follows directly from the linguistic use of Nietzsche's writings and the idea of the invention of knowledge developed in 1971. Once again, there is no origin; knowledge is not part of human nature; it is not about instincts either; it is rather a struggle. This leads to the second point, namely the philosophically radical conclusion that, as a result, knowledge possesses no relation of similitude, representation, affinity: it has no resemblance to things. There is a complete rupture between knowledge and things. Foucault states in Rio: 'Knowledge has no relation of affinity with the world to be known' (2000: 9). So, we are in a world in which our knowledge is invented and completely separated from things in the world – a radical vision of our human condition that constitutes a sharp break with philosophical tradition. Foucault explains why in a third point: because this philosophical tradition has always needed a conception of the divine, an idea of God, to make the connection between knowledge and the world that we perceive. If one returns to Descartes, or even to Kant, one sees the need for a conception of the divine in order for there to be such an affinity between knowledge and the perceived world. But given this rupture between knowledge and the world, we no longer need God. Hence, the death of God. And not only the death of God – and this is the fourth point – but also the death of the subject, at least the possible death of the subject. The subject can thus disappear (or at least we are faced with a situation in which it could well be that the subject no longer exists). This leads to the final, fifth, point: we are left in a situation in which 'at the root of knowledge, Nietzsche places something like hatred, struggle, power relations' (2000: 12).

The reader is thus brought back to relations of power and to Nietzsche's writings from 1888. We are much closer to politics than to philosophy. We are immersed in relations of struggle and relations of power. And what this calls for is not a return to the philosophers who think the production of knowledge can be harmonious, pacific or something of the sort; but rather to politicians who understand full well the need for civil war (2000: 12). Foucault draws on Nietzsche's writings, on his discourse, as a *political* object of analysis. In fact, in 1973, at PUC-Rio, the political modality of using Nietzsche's discourse is at its apex: 'It would have been possible, and perhaps more honest, to cite only one name, that of Nietzsche, because what I say here won't mean anything if it isn't connected to Nietzsche's work, which seems to me to be the best, the most effective, the most pertinent of the models that one can draw upon' (2000: 5–6)

At the conclusion of his conferences at PUC-Rio in 1973, Foucault declares that he is studying certain texts of Nietzsche, but not

Nietzscheanism (1994h: 550–1).[9] This is important. Foucault's method stays focused on the language, on the words, on the written texts of Nietzsche, and not on the abstract ideas of Nietzscheanism that they have generated. In this way, Foucault's approach to Nietzsche differs from that of other readers who take Nietzsche's work as an *oeuvre*. Foucault himself rejected the notion of an *oeuvre*. As François Ewald underscores, Foucault was oriented not toward the production of an *oeuvre*, but rather toward the production of acts in relation to political actuality (Ewald, 1997: 203; see also Foucault, 1994f: 703; Foucault, 1969: 34–5; Olivesi, 2003). This extended to Foucault's relationship to Nietzsche's writings. Foucault made this clear in his comments in response to his critics at PUC-Rio – those who might have accused him of picking and choosing, of cherry-picking passages related to power simply because he wanted to find relations of power everywhere. Foucault explains: 'First, I took up this text in function of my interests, not to show that this was the Nietzschean conception of knowledge' – not because Foucault wanted to say this or that is a systematic and coherent conception of Nietzsche – 'since there are innumerable and often mutually contradictory texts on this topic' (1994h: 550).[10] Foucault was not interested so much in the contradictions between Nietzsche's writings. Among mutually contradictory texts, Foucault set aside those of no interest to him. Instead, he used those in which he found something useful to his own philosophical investigations: 'A certain number of elements which provide us with a model for a historical analysis of what I would call the politics of truth' (1994h: 550). Foucault was using Nietzsche's texts to discern ideas and movements of thought that were useful, for him, to pursue his own philosophical and political investigations.

Conclusion

This series of published essays and lectures sheds light on the manifold and changing ways in which Foucault engaged Nietzsche's writings – a remarkable trajectory of evolving ideas, each of which displaced others, rethinking and remodeling emerging theories of power, knowledge, and subjectivity. The monographs that resulted and were published during his lifetime – the books that Foucault allowed to go to press, and recall, he willed no posthumous publications – bore a different relationship to Nietzsche's texts. The books were the product not of modal studies of Nietzsche's writings, but rather of studies of the discourses of madness, the clinic, the disciplines, the prison, and sexuality, informed by his engagement with Nietzsche's texts. Nietzsche's words are not on the table in those books in the way in which they are explicit objects of study in these shorter essays and lectures. In the books, they recede

somewhat to the background. A more silent engagement. A more subtle deployment. One that would call for another, lengthier article.

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Notes

1. A better place to begin, perhaps, would have been with Foucault's earliest writings on Nietzsche, which trace to about 1953 in a series of experimental essays and drafts that accompanied his instruction on Nietzsche at the ENS (BnF, NAF 28730, box 65). Those early manuscripts reveal that Foucault was experimenting, taking up the words, expressions, and turn-of-phrases of Nietzsche's writing, in an effort to think through notions of reason and madness, of repetition, of dialectic and tragedy, of will, of the dangers of knowledge. Those writings, however, have not yet been published and are therefore not accessible to the reader – although they soon will be as part of the new series of Foucault's early lectures and writings, *Cours et Travaux avant le Collège de France* (Paris: Gallimard/Seuil). There is far more to say about those early manuscripts, but that will have to await their publication.
2. Foucault published his translation of Kant's *Anthropology* in 1964 at Vrin, but did not include his introduction for reasons discussed by Daniel Defert, François Ewald, and Frédéric Gros in their presentation of the work in 2008 (see Foucault, 2008: 8–9).
3. Foucault's essay was originally published, alongside the contributions of Deleuze, Pierre Klossowski, Karl Löwith, Jean Wahl and others, in the 1967 collection titled *Nietzsche. Cahiers de Royaumont* by Les Éditions de Minuit. References here are to Foucault, 1994c (French) and 1998 (English).
4. In a similar vein, Foucault stated, in an interview in 1970, that 'with Nietzsche, there finally arrives the moment where the philosopher would say: "In the end, perhaps I am mad"' (Foucault, 1994b: 113) (Or: '*Avec Nietzsche, arrive enfin ce moment où le philosophe dirait: "Finalement, je suis peut-être fou"*.')
5. Foucault had written an entire essay on this aphoristic sentence in 1953 (BnF, NAF 28730, box 65). He would return to this passage not only in the 1964 essay, but also in *The Order of Things*, which underscores that 'Thought […] is a perilous act. Sade, Nietzsche, Artaud and Bataille have understood this on behalf of all those who tried to ignore it' (1966: 339; 1970: 328).

6. The notion of irruption was important for Sarah Kofman and served as the inspiration for certain titles she gave to her books about *Ecce Homo* and Nietzsche's work (1992, 1993). This notion of irruption lends itself to the task of detecting different relations of force, of power, and of domination. One can see this well in the 1971 essay, in which Foucault speaks precisely of dominators and dominated (1994d: 145; 1984: 85).

7. The three-conference series at McGill will be published in its entirety in the forthcoming Nietzsche volume of the new series of Foucault's *Cours et travaux avant le Collège de France* (Paris: Galimard/Seuil, expected 2024).

8. For sources regarding Foucault's time at Vincennes, see Elden (2017: 192 n.22). The unpublished lectures delivered at Vincennes will also form part of the Nietzsche volume in the *Cours et Travaux avant le Collège de France*.

9. To be sure, elsewhere, in an interview at the end of his life in 1984, Foucault declared himself, in an ironic way, to be a Nietzschean – 'I am simply a Nietzschean', he told his interlocutor (1996b: 471; 1994e: 704); but that was only to emphasize, more precisely, in his words, how he used Nietzsche's texts: 'I try as far as possible, on a certain number of issues, to see with the help of Nietzsche's texts – but also with anti-Nietzschean theses (which are nevertheless Nietzschean!) – what can be done in this or that domain. I attempt nothing else, but that I try to do well' (Foucault, 1996b: 471; 1994e: 704).

10. As Foucault emphasized in an interview published almost 20 years later, 'There is not just one Nietzscheanism. One cannot say there is a true Nietzscheanism and that this one is truer than the other' (Foucault, 1996a: 356).

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