

French Nietzscheanism and the Emergence of Poststructuralism

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1968 may be the watershed year in recent French cultural history, but by the time French students began tearing up the cobblestones of the Latin Quarter and occupying the Sorbonne, a philosophical revolution that would change the course of French philosophy for the remainder of the 20th century was already well under way: in 1966, Michel Foucault published *The Order of Things*; that same year, in October, Jacques Derrida presented “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences” at the critically important conference on “Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man” at Johns Hopkins University, and the following year saw the publication of his triumvirate *Of Grammatology*, *Writing and Difference*, and *Speech and Phenomena*; and Gilles Deleuze’s two theses – *Difference and Repetition* and *Spinoza and the Problem of Expression* – while published in 1968, were completed before the events of May. What these works announce is the posting of structuralism, that is, a distinctly *philosophical* response to the challenge posed to philosophical thinking by the emergence of structuralism as the dominant intellectual paradigm in the late 1950s, and collectively they set the philosophical agenda for the remainder of the century in terms of what we, outside France, refer to as “French philosophy.”

There are a number of stories that might be told about the emergence of structuralism, but I’d like to highlight one – namely, that structuralism rose in popularity proportionate to the fall from hegemony within the French academic and intellectual world of philosophy as the master discourse. 1960 is the year that for all practical purposes marked the end of existentialism in France with the death of Albert Camus in a car accident in January and the publication later that

year of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Critique de la raison dialectique*, which Sartre himself described as a "structural, historical anthropology." And by 1960, the hegemony of structuralism as the dominant epistemological paradigm was already established, with the influence waning not just of existentialism but of philosophy in general. The emergence of structuralism as a dominant intellectual force can be tied to many factors, not least a number of political and historical events – including the end of World War Two and the beginnings of the Cold War, the Soviet invasion of Hungary, colonial unrest in Vietnam and Algeria – that left many politically active students dissatisfied with the relatively ahistorical and otherworldly reflections of the Sorbonne philosophers. That students of philosophy would turn to the human or social sciences is not surprising when one remembers the proximity of philosophy and the human sciences in the French educational system, a situation quite different from the US. Until the 1960s, to receive the certification in philosophy necessary for a teaching position at a *lycée* or university, one was required to do advanced work and be certified in one of the sciences,¹ whether a "hard" science like physics, mathematics, chemistry, or biology, or a "soft" science like psychology, or ethnology, or prehistory.² In addition, because sociology was not a discipline recognized for advanced degrees in France until 1958, most of the great French sociologists and anthropologists – including Émile Durkheim, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Raymond Aron, Henri Lefebvre, and Pierre Bourdieu – had their educational training and advanced degrees in philosophy and, for those teaching at universities, taught within departments of philosophy. But

¹ Michel Serres discusses this with Bruno Latour in *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time*, trans. Roxanne Lapidus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), p. 35. This explains, in part, why Merleau-Ponty and Foucault wrote their first works in conjunction with research in psychiatry and psychiatric hospitals, and why a number of the important French philosophers, including among others Jean Cavailles, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Serres, and Alain Badiou, are familiar with and make use of advanced concepts in mathematics.

² Prehistory is defined in André Lalande's *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1928) as: "Part of history that is too ancient to be known by written documents or traditions, and that can only be induced from existing material traces, or reconstructed by reasoning from a priori considerations" (18th edition, p. 814).

once both undergraduate and graduate degrees [a *licence* and *Doctorat du troisième cycle*] were approved for sociology in April 1958, it became possible for students interested in the theoretical study of society to completely avoid doing advanced work in departments of philosophy, and as Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron note, by 1968 – ten years after the creation of the undergraduate degree in sociology – there were “in Paris as many students registered for this new degree . . . as there [were] candidates for the Degree in Philosophy.”³

This institutional history is important to recall because one of the essential features of French intellectual history in the sixties is the reinvigoration of philosophy *after* structuralism, as evidenced by the works of Foucault, Deleuze, and Derrida I mentioned a few moments ago. And central to this renewed interest in philosophy is the emergence of interest in Nietzsche’s work among philosophers in France. In fact, returning for a moment to those foundational events in the emergence of *post*-structuralist French philosophy mentioned a moment ago, Nietzsche’s philosophical importance for this emergence becomes apparent when one recalls the way Foucault plays Nietzsche against Kant in *The Order of Things*, Derrida plays Nietzsche against Lévi-Strauss in “Structure, Sign, and Play,” and Deleuze plays Nietzsche against Hegel in any number of his works. Nietzsche was not, of course, first “discovered” by the French in the sixties, as there was considerable interest in his thought early in the twentieth century.⁴ But this interest was located primarily outside the university and, when in the university, outside the

³ Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, “Sociology and Philosophy in France Since 1945: Death and Resurrection of a Philosophy without a Subject,” *Social Research* 34, no. 1 (Spring 1967): 193.

⁴ Laure Verbaere, in *La Réception français de Nietzsche 1890–1910* (thèse de doctorat d’histoire, Université de Nantes, 1999) notes that between 1890 and 1910, more than 1,100 references to Nietzsche appear in French, with 47 books and more than 600 articles or studies discussing his thought. (Cited in Jacques Le Rider, *Nietzsche en France de la fin du XIXe siècle au temps présent* [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999], p. 104.)

faculty in philosophy.⁵ Professor of German Literature Henri Lichtenberger (1864–1941) taught the Sorbonne’s one full-year course in German Language and Literature in 1902–03 on Nietzsche, and Lichtenberger’s *La Philosophie de Nietzsche*,⁶ first published in 1898, was already in its ninth edition by 1905. Charles Andler (1866–1933), also a Professor of German Literature, published a magisterial six-volume study of Nietzsche between 1920 and 1931.⁷ Outside the university, from the 1890s into the early 20th century, Nietzsche was widely read by and associated with the literary avant-garde, most notably André Gide (1869–1951) and his circle, many of whom studied with Andler at the École Normale Supérieure and were later associated with *La Nouvelle revue française*. There was also an attraction to Nietzsche among certain literary and political circles on the Right that began in the 1890s and was later associated with Charles Maurras (1868–1952) and the Action Française, and this attraction continued until the approach of World War One, when their nationalistic and anti-German attitudes made it impossible for them to look any longer upon Nietzsche with favor.⁸

⁵ Verbaere, in *La Réception français de Nietzsche 1890–1910*, notes that between 1890 and 1910, more than 1,100 references to Nietzsche appear in French, with 47 books and more than 600 articles or studies discussing his thought (cited in Le Rider, *Nietzsche en France de la fin du XIXe siècle au temps présent*, p. 104). Bianquis’s *Nietzsche en France: L’Influence de Nietzsche sur la pensée française* (1929) remains the best source of information on Nietzsche’s early reception in France.

⁶ Henri Lichtenberger, *La Philosophie de Nietzsche* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1898). In 1910, this work was the first French text on Nietzsche to be translated into English, as *The Gospel of Superman: The Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. J. M. Kennedy (Edinburgh: T. N. Foulis, 1910).

⁷ Charles Andler, *Les Précurseurs de Nietzsche; La Jeunesse de Nietzsche: Jusqu’à la rupture avec Bayreuth; Le Pessimisme esthétique de Nietzsche: Sa philosophie à l’époque wagnérienne; La Maturité de Nietzsche: Jusqu’à sa mort; Nietzsche et le transformisme intellectualiste: La Philosophie de sa période française; La Dernière philosophie de Nietzsche: Le Renouveau de toutes les valeurs*. Andler’s first two volumes were sent to Félix Alcan in 1913, but publication at that time was impossible because of the war (see Le Rider, *Nietzsche en France*, p. 84). The six volumes were published together in three volumes by Éditions Gallimard in 1958 as *Nietzsche, sa vie et sa pensée* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1958).

⁸ For a discussion of the literary attraction to Nietzsche among the Right and Left during this period, see Christopher E. Forth, *Zarathustra in Paris: The Nietzsche Vogue in France 1891–1918* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001); for a discussion of Nietzsche’s appropriation by the Action Française, see Virtanen, “Nietzsche and the Action Française: Nietzsche’s Significance for French Rightist Thought,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 11 (April 1950): 191–214.

While the literary Left welcomed Nietzsche as a philosopher-poet who challenged the strictures of contemporary morality, the philosophical establishment was dismissive of Nietzsche's stylistic transgressions, his "irrationalism," and his "immoralism." Where Gide promoted his association with Nietzsche in his novel *L'Immoraliste*, published in 1902, Alfred Fouillée's *Nietzsche et l'immoralisme*,⁹ one of the few works on Nietzsche written by a philosopher during this period, also appeared in 1902, went through four editions by 1920, and was extremely critical of Nietzsche, questioning why any serious philosopher would attend to his thought. In fact, Nietzsche was so closely identified with "immoralism" that the term was introduced and defined as "Nietzsche's doctrine" in the prestigious philosophical dictionary *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie*, compiled from 1902–23 by members of the Société Française de Philosophie, under the direction of their General Secretary André Lalande.¹⁰

The near total failure by university philosophers to acknowledge Nietzsche's work from 1890 through World War One and beyond is less the result of unfamiliarity with his work than a consequence of the *universitaires'* decision to "professionalize" philosophy both by emphasizing its logical and scientific rigor and by distinguishing sharply between philosophy and literature,¹¹ a decision, by the way, that provoked a similar animosity among philosophers at the Sorbonne and École Normale to the work of Henri Bergson. During this period, although there were serious antagonisms between the three dominant "schools" within French academic philosophy –

⁹ Alfred Fouillée, *Nietzsche et l'immoralisme* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1902).

¹⁰ The members of the Société met regularly to discuss the meanings of key philosophical terminology, and they published their proceedings in two issues each year of the *Bulletin de la Société Française de Philosophie*. Lalande collected and annotated these proceedings and published them with Félix Alcan in a single volume in 1925–26. The *Vocabulaire*'s eighteenth edition was published by Presses Universitaires de France in 1996.

¹¹ Louis Pinto makes this point in *Les Neveux de Zarathoustra* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1998), pp. 38ff.

the positivists, neo-Kantians, and spiritualists¹² – the university professors were united in thinking that the university was the only space for “serious” philosophical discussion. As a consequence, Nietzsche’s popularity among so-called philosophical “amateurs” was taken as evidence of his philosophical unworthiness within the academy.¹³ Even after World War One, although Nietzsche remained a canonical figure within German studies¹⁴ and was very much a part of the cultural debate between the Right and the Left, there was almost no philosophical scholarship on his thought.

From the 1930s to the 1950s, Nietzsche continued to be ignored by the university philosophers. But during these years, a “second moment” of French Nietzscheanism took shape as his thought emerged as an important reference for avant-garde theorists who would, in the 1960s, become associated with philosophers. The most significant figure here was Georges Bataille, for whom Nietzsche was a constant object of reflection from the foundation of the journal *Acéphale* in 1936 through his *Sur Nietzsche*, published in 1945.¹⁵ Through Bataille, Pierre Klossowski, and others, including the Sorbonne philosopher Jean Wahl, Nietzsche was a constant presence in the activities of the *Collège de Sociologie*.

Somewhat surprisingly, given Nietzsche’s early association in the English-speaking world with existentialism, the second Nietzschean moment in France, while emerging at the

¹² I discuss the tensions between these “schools” and their leading representatives – Émile Durkheim, Léon Brunschvicg, and Henri Bergson, respectively – in the opening chapter of my *Twentieth-Century French Philosophy: Key Themes and Thinkers* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2006).

¹³ The general point of the hostility between “professional,” i.e., university, philosophers and philosophical “amateurs” is discussed in Jean-Louis Fabiani, “Enjeux et usages de la ‘crise’ dans la philosophie universitaire en France au tournant du siècle,” *Annales ESC* (mars-avril 1985): 377–409.

¹⁴ Beginning in 1903, Nietzsche appears roughly every four or five years on the *Programme* of the *agrégation d’allemand*, even through World War Two, appearing on the *Programmes* in 1940 and 1942.

¹⁵ Georges Bataille, *Sur Nietzsche: Volonté de chance* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1945); English translation: *On Nietzsche*, trans. Bruce Boone (New York: Paragon House, 1992). Vincent Descombes regards Bataille as the central figure in Nietzsche’s “second French moment.” See Descombes, “Nietzsche’s French Moment,” trans. Robert de Loaiza in *Why We Are Not Nietzscheans*, ed. Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), pp. 70–91. While I do not share Descombes’s unsympathetic view of Nietzsche’s third, “philosophical” moment, my chronology here basically agrees with his.

same time as French existentialism, is not particularly associated with that movement. Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Beauvoir were all familiar with Nietzsche's works, but Nietzsche's thought did not play nearly as influential a role in existentialist philosophy as that played by Hegel, Husserl, or Heidegger. Even Jean Wahl, who was the figure at the Sorbonne most closely associated with contemporary German philosophy, devoted far more time during these years to Kierkegaard than to Nietzsche. The existentialist who was most comfortable appealing to Nietzsche was Albert Camus, but he did so more from the perspective of a literary rather than philosophical writer. Sartre, on the other hand, was quite hostile to the idea of Nietzsche's philosophical importance. As a student at the École Normale, Sartre presented a paper at Léon Brunschvicg's 1927 seminar at the Sorbonne titled "Nietzsche: Is he a Philosopher?" and, as Jacques Le Rider comments, "like all the philosophers, [Sartre's] answer is no."¹⁶ Two decades later, in an essay on the work of Brice Parain, Sartre wrote that "We know that Nietzsche was not a philosopher."¹⁷ And were there any doubt of his opinion of Nietzsche's philosophical merit, he follows this comment by asking: "But why does Parain, who is a professional philosopher, quote this crackbrained nonsense?"

The situation changed considerably in the 1960s, and there has been much speculation as to the causes of the emergence of "French Nietzscheanism," especially amongst philosophers, in the 60s and 70s. A standard story for explaining the massive proliferation of French philosophical scholarship on Nietzsche during these decades was that this scholarship, initiated by Deleuze's 1962 book, was largely in response to the publication of Heidegger's two-volume

¹⁶ Le Rider, *Nietzsche en France*, 136. See also Le Rider's "Léon Brunschvicg, critique de Nietzsche," in *Nietzsche. Cent Ans de Réception Française*, ed. Jacques Le Rider (Paris: Les Éditions Suger, 1999), 97–102.

¹⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, "Aller et retour," first published in *Les Cahiers du Sud* in 1944 and reprinted in *Situations I* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1947), p. 217; English translation: "Departure and Return," in Sartre, *Literary and Philosophical Essays*, trans. Annette Michelson (New York: Criterion Books, 1955), p. 171.

Nietzsche lectures in 1961.¹⁸ But given their length – almost 1200 pages – and difficulty of Heidegger’s text, and the lack of its French translation until 1971,¹⁹ it seems to me that there is a more likely and indigenous explanation for the increase in publications by philosophers on Nietzsche, one that points to the importance of a unique French institution – one with no equivalent in the English-speaking or German academic systems. This institution is the *Agrégation de Philosophie*, which is a competitive annual exam that certifies students for teaching philosophy in secondary and post-secondary schools, and which is part of the intellectual formation and career of virtually every academic philosopher educated in France before 1970, including every philosopher teaching in a university and the vast majority of philosophers teaching the *classe de philosophie* in French *lycées*. When a philosopher’s work appears on the reading list for the *agrégation*, as Nietzsche’s did six times between 1958 and 1971, this insures not only that all students taking the exam will have to read that work, but also that a significant component of the teaching corps will be offering *lycée* or university courses that address that work. It is Nietzsche’s appearances on the reading list and the university and *lycée* teaching that would be associated with them, that sets the context, I believe, for the appearance of Deleuze’s book and the emergence first of French Nietzscheanism, and then of French poststructuralism.

Let me explain.

¹⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 2 Bd. (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961).

¹⁹ Heidegger’s *Nietzsche* was not translated into French until 1971, in two volumes, by Pierre Klossowski and published by Éditions Gallimard. Rather than Heidegger, Deleuze himself, in *Différence et répétition* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), credits two essays by Klossowski for “renovating or reviving the interpretation of Nietzsche” (pp. 81–82). These essays are “Nietzsche, le polythéisme et la parodie,” first published in 1958 and reprinted in *Un si funeste désir* (Paris: NRF, 1963), pp. 185–228, and “Oubli et anamnèse dans l’expérience vécue de l’éternel retour du Même,” presented at the Royaumont conference on Nietzsche in 1964 and published in *Nietzsche: Cahiers du Royaumont, Philosophie VIIe colloque*, 4–8 Juillet 1964 (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1967), pp. 227–235.

When *philosophers* refer to “French Nietzscheanism,” they are referring not to the first time Nietzsche’s thought was taken up by French intellectuals. Instead, when philosophers speak of “French Nietzscheanism,” they have in mind that moment when Nietzsche’s thought is for the first time taken up by professional philosophers, and Nietzsche’s *philosophical* moment in France begins, I would argue, in 1958 when *La Généalogie de la morale* appeared on the reading list in French translation for the *agrégation de philosophie*.²⁰ This was his first appearance since 1929, when *Die Genealogie der Moral* appeared as an option for the German explication, and also his first appearance in French translation. In precisely these years – 1958 and 59 – when Nietzsche’s *Genealogy* was one of the required texts, Deleuze was beginning his university career at the Sorbonne, where he taught as *Maître-assistant* in the history of philosophy from 1957-60, and where he taught, among other things, a course on the *Genealogy* in the fall of 1958,²¹ which surely explains why the *Genealogy* plays such a central role in Deleuze’s *Nietzsche et la philosophie*.²² In addition, in 1959 and 1961 Jean Wahl gave the first lecture courses on Nietzsche ever offered by a Professor of Philosophy at the Sorbonne,²³ and during

²⁰ The *agrégation de philosophie* is a competitive annual exam that licenses students for teaching philosophy in secondary and post-secondary schools. Appearing on the *Programme*, or reading list, for the *agrégation* insures not only that all students taking the exam will spend the year reading one’s work, but also that a significant component of the teaching corps will be offering both lycée and university courses that address figures and texts on the annual reading list. I discuss the history and influence of the *agrégation de philosophie*, examining in detail the role it played in the emergence of French Nietzscheanism, elsewhere; see “Effects of the *Agrégation de Philosophie* on Twentieth Century French Philosophy,” in *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 46, 3 (July 2008): 449–73.

²¹ I thank Giuseppe Bianco for providing me a copy of a student’s notes from Deleuze’s 1958 course which offered a “*Commentaire de ‘La Généalogie de la morale.’*”

²² Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche et la philosophie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962); English translation: *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983). Among the other philosophers who are on the *Programmes* for the written examination or French explication while Deleuze is at the Sorbonne are Bergson, Kant, and the Stoics (1957), Spinoza, Hume, and Kant (1958 and 1959). Deleuze published on all of these figures in the following decade, during the first four years of which (1960–64), he was freed from teaching while an *attaché de recherches* at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS).

²³ Jean Wahl, *La Pensée philosophique de Nietzsche des années 1885–1888* (Paris: Centre de documentation universitaire, 1959) and *L’Avant-dernière pensée de Nietzsche* (Paris: Centre de documentation universitaire, 1961).

precisely these years, 1958–62, we see appear the first six articles on Nietzsche ever to be published in France’s two most prestigious philosophical journals, *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* and *Études philosophiques*.²⁴ To appreciate the novelty of Deleuze’s publication of *Nietzsche et la philosophie*,²⁵ consider this: in the four decades preceding its publication in 1962, there were only three books on Nietzsche published in France by academic philosophers, two of which were introductory texts written by instructors at the Lycée Condorcet.²⁶

The first question to ask, then, is what explains Nietzsche’s appearance on the reading list in 1958. Here I would suggest this is explained by two factors, both of which are central to the

²⁴ Before Deleuze’s book appears, articles by Jean Wahl (1961: “Le problème du temps chez Nietzsche”), Henri Birault (1962: “En quoi, nous aussi, nous sommes encore pieux”), Pierre Klossowski (1958: “Nietzsche, le polythéisme et la parodie”), Angèle Kremer-Marietti (1959: “Nietzsche et quelques-uns de ses interprètes actuels”), and Hermann Wein (1958: “Métaphysique et anti-métaphysique: accompagné de quelques réflexions pour la défense de l’oeuvre de Nietzsche”) appear in *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*. Prior to 1958, the last article on Nietzsche published in the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* was Marie-Anne Cochet’s “Nietzsche d’après son plus récent interprète,” a review published in two parts in 1931 (pp. 613–41) and 1932 (pp. 87–119) of Charles Andler’s six-volume biography. Only one other article on Nietzsche appears in a philosophy journal between 1958 and 1962: Pierre Fruchon’s “Note sur l’idée de création dans la dernière pensée de Nietzsche,” which appears in *Études philosophiques* in 1962. *Études philosophiques* last published article on Nietzsche prior to this was Jean Wahl’s 1936 review of Karl Jasper’s book *Nietzsche, Einführung in das Verständnis seines Philosophierens* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1936). For another indication of how French scholarship has changed since the early 1960s, consider that Jean Wahl’s 1963 review of *Nietzsche et la philosophie* in *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* (no. 3: 352–79) begins by saying that Deleuze’s book belongs alongside the most important books on Nietzsche, which he then names: those of Jaspers, Heidegger, Fink, and Lou Salomé.

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²⁶ Félicien Challaye’s *Nietzsche* (Paris: Mellottée, 1933), and André Cresson’s *Nietzsche, sa vie, son oeuvre, avec un exposé de sa philosophie et des extraits de ses oeuvres* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1942). It is not until much later, in Angèle Kremer-Marietti’s *Thèmes et structures dans l’œuvre de Nietzsche* (Paris: Lettres modernes, 1957), that Nietzsche’s work receives a more philosophically sophisticated treatment. An indication of Nietzsche’s position within the academic philosophical world can be gleaned from Armand Cuvillier’s 1944 *Manuel de Philosophie à l’usage des Classes de Philosophie et de Première Supérieure* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1944), a preparatory text for students studying for either the *baccalauréat* or the entrance examinations for the *Grandes Écoles*, including the *École Normale Supérieure*. Cuvillier’s text mentions Nietzsche only four times in over 650 pages, and does not include any of Nietzsche’s texts in a list of one hundred “Important Works Published since 1870” (p. 668). Another indication: in 1946, the *Société Française d’Études Nietzscheennes* was founded by Armand Quinot and Geneviève Bianquis and among its eight founding members, all were Germanists with the exception of the philosopher Félicien Challaye. The society continued until 1965 and eventually included among its members the philosophers Jean Wahl, Angèle Kremer-Marietti, Gilles Deleuze, Richard Roos, Pierre Boudot, and Jacques Derrida.

emergence of poststructuralist philosophy in France: the tensions in the late 50s and 60s between the faculty of philosophy and the faculty in the human sciences, and the desire for an alternative to the model of the subject provided by phenomenology and thoroughly repudiated by structuralism. Although Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud – baptized by Paul Ricoeur in 1965 as the “masters of suspicion”²⁷ – are more commonly associated with French philosophy *after* structuralism, it was initially the structuralists’ desire to locate the underlying structures of kinship, the unconscious, or society that led them to read Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud as kindred spirits who sought to decipher the superstructural world in terms of underlying infrastructural relations of economic forces and class struggle, relations of normative forces and wills to power, and relations of psychic forces and unconscious libidinal desires, respectively.²⁸ But here it is important to note that Marx and Freud were already firmly entrenched within the canon of the human sciences. For those in control of the processes of instruction and philosophical formation – and here Georges Canguilhem plays a critical role – opting for Nietzsche over Marx or Freud might have been seen as a way to persuade the philosophical establishment to acknowledge the changing times and the interests of the younger generation of students while maintaining philosophy’s independence from the human sciences.²⁹ Canguilhem occupied several important administrative positions governing philosophical instruction and, if not the prime mover behind Nietzsche’s entering the canon, he could certainly have delayed or tried to blocked it had he

²⁷ See Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 32. As was mentioned earlier, Nietzsche begins to appear on the *Programme* for the *agrégation de philosophie* in the late fifties and sixties. Charles Soulié suggests that his appearance might “constitute a concession of the *jury d’agrégation* to modernity” insofar as Nietzsche was the “most canonical” of the three “masters of suspicion” (“Anatomie du goût philosophique,” *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, no. 109 [octobre 1995]: 12).

²⁸ For a good account of what resources the structuralists found in Nietzsche, Freud, and Marx, see Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Freud, Marx,” trans. Alan D. Schrift in *Transforming the Hermeneutic Context: From Nietzsche to Nancy*, ed. Alan D. Schrift and Gayle L. Ormiston (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), pp. 59–67.

²⁹ It is also perhaps worth noting that 1957 saw the first change in the presidency of the *jury d’agrégation* in fourteen years, as the sociologist Georges Davy was replaced by the Sorbonne’s Professor of Aesthetics Etienne Souriau, who held the post until he was replaced by Canguilhem in 1964.

wanted to. Canguilhem also had other reasons to encourage students to read Nietzsche: in addition to his own interest in Nietzsche, in whom he found a positive notion of health congenial with his own,³⁰ he had already seen, and thoroughly supported, Michel Foucault's attempt to look to Nietzsche for insight into how to move beyond the phenomenological, transhistorical subject in Foucault's early efforts to provide an account of the historicity of reason.³¹

After Nietzsche's initial *agrégation* appearances in 1958 and 59, *Also sprach Zarathustra* appeared as a German option, in 1962 and 1963, and this was followed by another event that played a significant role in legitimating Nietzsche's philosophical reputation. I refer here to the major conference on Nietzsche at Royaumont in 1964 that treated Nietzsche as a serious philosopher. Although organized by the young Foucault and Deleuze, the conference at Royaumont was presided over by the distinguished historian of philosophy Martial Guérout and included presentations by, among others, respected senior academic philosophers Jean Wahl, Jean Beaufret, Karl Löwith, and Eugen Fink, as well as the prestigious non-academic philosopher Gabriel Marcel.³² Following Deleuze's book and the Royaumont conference,

³⁰ See, for example, Georges Canguilhem, "Health: Crude Concept and Philosophical Question," trans. Todd Meyers and Stefanos Geroulanos, *Public Culture* 20:3 (2008): 467–77, esp. 470. Canguilhem understood health in terms of the power to act, and not the absence of disease; as such, he was inclined toward Nietzsche's viewing health as among the highest values.

³¹ Cf. Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits IV*, p. 436.

³² The proceedings were published as *Nietzsche, Cahiers de Royaumont* (Paris: Editions du Minuit, 1967). As an aside, there is an interesting story to tell about this conference in terms of the eventual decision to produce a German edition of the Critical Edition of Nietzsche's collected works, edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari. Colli and Montinari's original edition was to appear in Italian, published by Adelphi Edizioni, and French, published by Éditions Gallimard, and edited by Foucault and Deleuze. Montinari had been trying unsuccessfully since 1961 to get a German publisher to agree to publish a German edition. At the invitation of Deleuze and Guattari, Colli and Montinari attended the conference at Royaumont, where they presented a paper titled "Etat des textes de Nietzsche" (published in *Nietzsche: Cahiers du Royaumont*, pp. 127–40). While at Royaumont, Colli and Montinari met and spoke about their project with Karl Löwith, who returned to Germany and in February 1965 persuaded Heinz Wenzel, then the managing editor of the humanities section at Walter de Gruyter, to acquire the rights from Adelphi and Gallimard to publish the Colli-Montinari edition in its original language. The first German volumes began appearing in 1967, and the project is not yet complete. I discuss this in a history of the English translation of the Critical Edition, which I am currently editing along with Duncan Large for Stanford University Press, in "Translating the Colli-Montinari *Kritische Studienausgabe*," **Error! Main Document Only.** *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 31 (Spring 2007): 64–72.

Nietzsche's philosophical reputation had been confirmed to the point where he could be situated in the canon as a major figure whose entire *oeuvre* could be required reading in preparation for the written examination of the *agrégation*, where he appears four times between 1970 and 1977.³³

What do these two historical developments – the emergence of structuralism and the human sciences as a challenge to the hegemony of philosophy and the emergence of Nietzsche as a focus of philosophical reflection – tell us about post-structuralist philosophy in France? Together, they provide a context in which one sees that, for all their philosophical differences, it does make sense to unite philosophical thinkers like Deleuze, Foucault, Derrida, and Lyotard, as we do in the Anglophone world, as “post-structuralist.”

Focusing on the turn to Nietzsche, let me sharpen this claim a bit and say that “French Nietzscheanism” leads us to poststructuralist philosophy because in many ways it was in their appropriation of Nietzschean themes that the dominant poststructuralist philosophers – Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Jacques Derrida – distinguished themselves both from the structuralists who preceded them and from the more traditional philosophical establishment in France, whose authority they sought to challenge. It was, in other words, by virtue of their appeal to Nietzsche that these philosophers both “escaped” from philosophy and returned to philosophy. Pierre Bourdieu astutely observes that although the influence of philosophy had declined within French academic institutions in the wake of the structuralists focusing their critical attention on the discursive and analytic practices of the human sciences, Nietzsche appealed to the new

³³ This might also be related to the decision of Éditions Gallimard to begin publishing a French translation of Colli and Montinari's Critical Edition of Nietzsche's collected works. This edition, *Œuvres philosophiques complètes*, was placed under the editorial direction of Gilles Deleuze and one of the Sorbonne's most senior historians of philosophy at that time, Maurice de Gandillac. The first volume to appear was a translation of *Le gai savoir. Fragments posthumes: (1881–1882)* by Pierre Klossowski in 1967.

generation of philosophers because he had been overlooked by the more “traditional” university philosophers.³⁴ It was, according to Bourdieu, and Foucault says something similar, precisely Nietzsche’s “marginal” status as a philosopher that made him “an acceptable philosophical sponsor” at a time – the late fifties and early sixties – when it was no longer fashionable in France to be a “philosopher.”³⁵

While Bourdieu’s observation of the poststructuralists’ desire to keep their distance from the Sorbonne philosophers is important, it should not obscure the fact that for all the rhetoric concerning the “end of philosophy,” one of the most obvious differences between the structuralists and the poststructuralists is the degree to which the latter’s discourse remains philosophical.³⁶ The role Nietzsche plays in this renewal of philosophical discourse is not insignificant. Unlike the rigid, scientific and constraining systems of structuralism, Nietzsche appeared to his new readers to be both philosophically inspired and philosophically inspiring. Derrida, for example, in the essay on the sources of Valéry in *Margins of Philosophy*, provides the following list of themes to look for in Nietzsche:

the systematic mistrust as concerns the entirety of metaphysics, the formal vision of philosophical discourse, the concept of the philosopher-artist, the rhetorical and philological questions put to the history of philosophy, the suspiciousness concerning the

³⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*, trans. Peter Collier (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988); see pp. xviii–xxv.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xxiv. Foucault made a similar point concerning Nietzsche’s relation to “mainstream” academic philosophy in a 1975 interview, translated as “The Functions of Literature” by Alan Sheridan and reprinted in *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture. Interviews and other Writings 1977–1984*, ed. Lawrence D. Krizman, (New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 312.

³⁶ It is important to note that Althusser remains an important exception to this structuralist turn away from philosophy. Although he suffered throughout his life from serious mental health issues, when he was able to work, his primary responsibility at the Ecole Normale was to prepare the philosophy students to take the *agrégation*. In that role, he worked closely with most of the philosophy students from the early 60s through the 80s, and was close to many of the leading names in philosophy during those years, including among others Foucault, Derrida, Etienne Balibar, Pierre Macherey, and Dominique Lecourt.

values of truth (“a well applied convention”), of meaning and of Being, of “meaning of Being,” the attention to the economic phenomena of force and of difference of forces, etc.³⁷

And in *Of Grammatology*, he credits Nietzsche with contributing “a great deal to the liberation of the signifier from its dependence or derivation with respect to the logos and the related concept of truth or the primary signified, in whatever sense that is understood [by his] radicalizing of the concepts of *interpretation, perspective, evaluation, difference ...*”³⁸

Moreover, by addressing questions concerning human existence without centering his reflection on human consciousness, Nietzsche indicated how one might respond to structuralism’s sloganistic “death of the subject” by showing a way to raise anew questions of individual agency without succumbing to an existentialist voluntarism or subjectivism. At the same time, the poststructuralists saw in the notion of eternal recurrence³⁹ a way to again entertain questions of history and historicity, questions that had been devalued within the structuralists’ ahistorical emphasis on synchronic structural analyses.⁴⁰ That is to say, where the structuralists responded to phenomenology and existentialism’s privileging of consciousness and history by eliminating them both, the poststructuralists took from structuralism insights concerning the workings of linguistic and systemic forces and returned with these insights to reinvokethe question of the subject in terms of a notion of constituted-constitutive-constituting agency

³⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 305.

³⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri C. Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 19.

³⁹ One cannot overestimate the role played here by Pierre Klossowski’s work, in particular “Oubli et anamnèse dans l’expérience vécue de l’éternel retour du Même” (see note 19), and *Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1969); English translation: *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

⁴⁰ In their introduction to *Post-structuralism and the Question of History*, Geoff Bennington and Robert Young also make this point, nothing that where structuralism sought to efface history, “it could be said that the ‘post’ of post-structuralism contrives to reintroduce it” (Derek Attridge, Geoff Bennington and Robert Young, eds., *Post-structuralism and the Question of History* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987], p. 1).

situated and operating within a complex network of socio-historical and intersubjective relations. In this way, Nietzsche's emergence as a *philosophical* voice, I am arguing, played an *unparalleled* role in the development of poststructuralism as a historical corrective to the excesses of both its predecessor movements.

Among the more important themes in post-structuralist philosophy that I think could be traced back to this turn to Nietzsche in the sixties, I would include the role Nietzschean genealogy plays in the turn to history and attention paid to conditions of emergence, the role Nietzsche's attention to force differentials plays in the entire field of philosophies of difference, and the re-emergence of a more problematized concept of the subject. In the remainder of my discussion, I want to focus on these latter two themes, highlighting in particular the ways that Foucault's and Deleuze's pre-68 treatments of Nietzsche echo throughout their respective thinking on the subject and force differentials.

Where the rhetoric of the "death of the subject" was characteristic of the structuralists, this was never really the case with most of the philosophers labeled *post-structuralist*. To be sure, thinkers like Derrida, Foucault, or Deleuze were never comfortable with the reflexive, subject-centered thinking of the existentialists or phenomenologists. But they were equally uncomfortable with the straightforward dismissal of the subject in structuralist thinkers like Althusser or Lévi-Strauss. Thus Derrida could reply to a question concerning the "death of the subject" from the existentialist-leaning literary critic Serge Doubrovsky following his presentation at Johns Hopkins: "The subject is absolutely indispensable. I don't destroy the subject; I situate it. I believe that at a certain level both of experience and of philosophical and

scientific discourse, one cannot get along without the notion of the subject. It is a question of knowing where it comes from and how it functions.”⁴¹

Foucault says something quite similar in response to a question from Marxist sociologist Lucien Goldmann following his presentation of “What is an Author?” to the Société Française de Philosophie in February 1969. Goldmann asks whether Foucault reduces the existence of man or the subject to the status of a function, and Foucault responds:

I did not say that I reduced them to a function, I analyzed the function inside which something like an author could exist. I have not made an analysis of the subject here, I made an analysis of the author. If I had delivered a lecture on the subject, I would probably have analyzed it in the same way as a subject-function, that is, made the analysis of the conditions under which it is possible that an individual fulfills the function of the subject. It would still be necessary to specify in which field the subject is a subject, and of what (of speech, of desire, of economic process, etc.). There is no absolute subject.⁴²

Thinking about where the subject comes from, and how it functions, is perhaps the unifying feature of Foucault’s thought, underlying the transitions between his archeological, genealogical, and ethical periods. Foucault himself seemed to realize this by the end of his career, as his attention turned specifically to sexuality and the construction of the ethical subject, when he noted that the question of *assujettissement* or subjectivation – the transformation of human

⁴¹ Jacques Derrida, from the discussion following “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences,” trans. Richard Macksey in *The Structuralist Controversy*, ed. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), p. 271.

⁴² Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits I*, p. 818: “Je n’ai pas dit que je les réduisais à une fonction, j’analysais la fonction à l’intérieur de laquelle quelque chose comme un auteur pouvait exister. Je n’ai pas fait ici l’analyse du sujet, j’ai fait l’analyse de l’auteur. Si j’avais fait une conférence sur le sujet, il est probable que j’aurais analysé de la même façon la fonction-sujet, c’est-à-dire fait l’analyse des conditions dans lesquelles il est possible qu’un individu remplisse la fonction du sujet. Encore faudrait-il préciser dans quel champ le sujet est sujet, et de quoi (du discours, du désir, du processus économique, etc.). Il n’y a pas de sujet absolu.”

beings into subjects of knowledge, subjects of power, and subjects to themselves – had been “the general theme of [his] research.”⁴³

While Foucault had a tendency to read his current research interests into his earlier work,⁴⁴ there can be little question that he was consistently engaged with rethinking the question of the subject, and this interest in the subject is central to his reading of Nietzsche. Foucault first read Nietzsche in 1953, having been led to him by his reading of Bataille, and as he would remark later, “curious as it may seem,” he read Nietzsche “from the perspective of an inquiry into the history of knowledge, the history of reason.”⁴⁵ It was, in other words, not his interrogation of power but his effort to “elaborate a history of rationality,” which he claimed was “the problem of the 19th century,” that first led him to Nietzsche.⁴⁶ Reading Nietzsche became, for Foucault, the point of rupture (*la fracture*) that made possible one of the decisive events that mark the emergence of post-structuralist philosophy insofar as Nietzsche showed the way beyond the phenomenological, transhistorical subject. Nietzsche showed, in Foucault’s words, that “There is a history of the subject just as there is a history of reason.” At the same time, Nietzsche also demonstrated to Foucault that, contrary to the Husserlian paradigm that had

⁴³ Michel Foucault, “Why Study Power: The Question of the Subject,” in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 209. This is reflected as well in the titles Foucault gave to the last two courses he taught at the Collège de France for which he completed the required resume: “Subjectivity and Truth” (1980–81) and “The Hermeneutic of the Subject” (1981–82).

⁴⁴ Cf. “When I think back now, I ask myself what else I was talking about, in *Madness and Civilization* or *The Birth of the Clinic*, but power” (Michel Foucault, “Truth and Power,” trans. Colin Gordon in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954–1988. Vol. 3: Power*, ed. James D. Faubion [New York: The New Press, 2000], p. 115); cf. also the following: “If I wanted to pose and drape myself in a slightly fictional style, I would say that this has always been my problem: the effects of power and the production of ‘truth’” (“Power and Sex,” trans. David J. Parent in Kritzman, ed., *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, p. 119).

⁴⁵ Michel Foucault, “Structuralisme et poststructuralisme,” in *Dits et écrits IV*, p. 437.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 436: “aussi curieux que ce soit, dans cette perspective d’interrogation sur l’histoire du savoir, l’histoire de la raison: comment peut-on faire l’histoire d’une rationalité – ce qui était le problème du XIXe siècle.”

guided early French phenomenology, “we can never demand that the history of reason unfold as a first and founding act of the rationalist subject.”⁴⁷

It is Nietzsche’s disclosure of the history of the subject, the history of reason, and the interrelations of these two histories that dominate Foucault’s early, archeological works, works that Foucault himself acknowledged owe “more to Nietzschean genealogy than to structuralism properly so called.”⁴⁸ To understand what these works owe to Nietzsche, we need only look at the way Foucault deploys Nietzsche first in his *thèse complémentaire*, “Introduction à l’*Anthropologie* de Kant,” and again when he returns to many of the same themes in *The Order of Things*. In his *thèse*, which accompanied his French translation of Kant’s *Anthropologie*, Foucault provides an account of the place of Kant’s *Anthropologie* in relation to the three *Critiques* as well as the *Opus Postumum*. The key to this relation is articulated in Kant’s *Logic*, where the three questions that guide the Critical Philosophy – “What can I know?” “What should I do?” “What may I hope for?” – now appear along with a fourth: “*Was ist der Mensch?*” (“What is man?”). This fourth question, Foucault tells us, “gathers [the first three] together in a single frame of reference,”⁴⁹ which is to say that the answer to the questions of metaphysics, morality, and religion are, for Kant, ultimately to be found in anthropology.

According to Foucault, Kant thereby sets the agenda for all subsequent philosophy insofar as the entire problematic of post-Kantian philosophy can be located in the interrogation of human finitude, which Foucault understands in terms of Kant positioning man as synthesis of God and world. Such an understanding explains Nietzsche’s surprising appearance in an

⁴⁷ Ibid.: “il y a une histoire du sujet tout comme il y a une histoire de la raison, et de celle-ci, l’histoire de la raison, on ne doit pas demander le déploiement à un acte fondateur et premier du sujet rationaliste.”

⁴⁸ Michel Foucault, “On the Ways of Writing History,” trans. Robert Hurley in *The Essential Works of Foucault. 1954–1984. Vol. 2: Aesthetics, Method, Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1998), p. 294.

⁴⁹ Michel Foucault, *Introduction to Kant’s Anthropology*, trans. Roberto Nigro and Kate Briggs (New York: Semiotext(e), 2008), p. 74.

“Introduction” to Kant’s *Anthropology* insofar as Nietzsche also positions a being – but a being other than “man” – as the synthesis this time not of God and world but of values and Earth.

Foucault thus closes his “Introduction à l’*Anthropologie* de Kant” with the following sentence:

“The trajectory of the question *Was ist der Mensch?* in the field of philosophy reaches its end in the response which both challenges and disarms it: *der Übermensch*.”⁵⁰

Working out this trajectory of the question “What is man?” is the central theme of *The Order of Things*, a text in which Nietzsche figures prominently. In the first place, Nietzsche is credited with initiating the attempt – “to which,” Foucault writes, “contemporary thought is dedicated” – to go beyond “man”:

Perhaps we should see the first attempt at this uprooting of Anthropology [...] in the Nietzschean experience: by means of a philological critique, by means of a certain form of biologism, Nietzsche rediscovered the point at which man and God belong to one another, at which the death of the second is synonymous with the disappearance of the first, and at which the promise of the superhuman signifies first and foremost the imminence of the death of man.⁵¹

While Foucault is often associated with the rhetoric of the “death of the subject” in his works in the sixties, I think it should be clear to any careful reader of Foucault that a distinction must be drawn between the “end of man” – which Foucault affirms – and the “death of the subject.” It may well be the case that Foucault’s early work engages in thinking the end of man, as we see in the passage just quoted as well as in the closing pages of *The Order of Things* when he draws this conclusion concerning Nietzsche:

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 124.

⁵¹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), p. 342. Translation altered.

Rather than the death of God – or, rather, in the wake of that death and in profound correlation with it – what Nietzsche’s thought heralds is the end of his murderer; it is the explosion of man’s face in laughter, and the return of masks; it is the scattering of the profound stream of time by which he felt himself carried along and whose pressure he suspected in the very being of things; it is the identity of the Return of the Same with the absolute dispersion of man.⁵²

It is, in other words, a mistake to equate the referent of “man” in these early works with what Foucault means in general by the “subject.” This is precisely what he indicated when he remarked that it was Nietzsche who showed that there is a “history of the subject.” There is no question that the subject named “man” in philosophical discourse, from Descartes’s Archimedean *cogito* to Kant’s autonomous rational moral agent, is a concept toward which Foucault has little sympathy. But this subject named “man” here functions as a technical term for a certain conceptual determination of human being, one that names that “strange empirico-transcendental doublet,” the analysis of which takes place at the transcendental levels of the biological and historico-cultural conditions which make empirical knowledge possible. “Man” thus names that conceptual foundation which serves to center the increasingly disorganized representations of the classical *epistēmē* and that, as such, comes to be the privileged object of philosophical anthropology.⁵³ While this foundational concept has been privileged in the discourse of the human sciences since Kant, it is not *the* subject but only one historical construction of the concept “subject,” a construction the beginning of whose end Foucault

⁵² Ibid., p. 385.

⁵³ See *ibid.*, pp. 312–13.

locates in the announcement of the *Übermensch* which, insofar as it functions in Nietzsche's texts as the other to both man and God, heralds both of their ends.⁵⁴

Nietzsche's waking us from Kant's anthropological slumber is tied to Foucault's broader view of Nietzsche in *The Order of Things* as the precursor of the *epistēmē* of the twentieth century, the *epistēmē* that erupted with the question of language as "an enigmatic multiplicity that must be mastered."⁵⁵ For Foucault, it was "Nietzsche the philologist" who first connected "the philosophical task with a radical reflection upon language",⁵⁶ it was Nietzsche, in other words, who, long before Heidegger, suggested that one could learn about the genealogy of morality by examining the etymology and evolution of moral terminology (e.g., in the First Essay of *On the Genealogy of Morality*⁵⁷). And it was Nietzsche who recognized that a culture's metaphysics could be traced back to the rules of its grammar, and who recognized that, for example, Descartes's proof of the *cogito* rested on the linguistic rule that a verb – thinking – requires a subject – a thinker – and that this very same linguistic prejudice leads to the metaphysical error of adding a doer to the deed (see, e.g., *BGE* 17, and *GM* I 13). Insofar as the structuralists all based their theories on the view of language as a system of differences, we can therefore understand why Foucault could regard the question of language as the single most important question confronting the contemporary *epistēmē*. And insofar as Nietzsche viewed our metaphysical assumptions to be a function of our linguistic rules (grammar as "the metaphysics of the people" [*GS* 354]), and he understood both our metaphysics and our language in terms of

⁵⁴ See Foucault, *Introduction to Kant's Anthropology*, p. 128.

⁵⁵ Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 305.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ In what follows, I will cite Nietzsche's texts with the following abbreviations: *AC* = *The Antichristian*; *BGE* = *Beyond Good and Evil*; *GM* = *On the Genealogy of Morality*; *GS* = *The Gay Science*; *TI* = *Twilight of the Idols*. Roman numerals will refer to major divisions within a book; Arabic numerals will refer to sections. All translations are from *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche* (Stanford University Press) except *GS* (Kaufmann translation).

the difference between forces, one can understand why Foucault traces the roots of the contemporary *epistēmē*, which no longer views man as the privileged center of representational thinking and discourse, back to Nietzsche as its precursor.

Foucault's desire to deflate the subject "man" as epistemically and discursively privileged was never conjoined with an attempt to eliminate the subject entirely. Instead, Foucault seeks to analyze the subject as a variable and complex function of discourse and power, which, he writes, means not to ask, as an existential phenomenologist might, "How can a free subject penetrate the substance of things and give it meaning?" but to ask instead: "How, under what conditions and in what forms can something like a subject appear in the order of discourse? What place can it occupy in each type of discourse, what functions can it assume, and by obeying what rules?"⁵⁸ What this means, and what has been largely misunderstood by many of Foucault's critics, is that his so-called "anti-humanism" was not a rejection of the human per se; it was instead an assault on the philosophically modern idea that sought to remove man from the natural world and place him in a position of epistemic, metaphysical, and moral privilege that earlier thought has set aside for God, as well as an assault on the phenomenological transhistorical subject who could escape the epistemic constraints of the world through acts of phenomenologically reduced reflection. His work is less an anti-humanism than an attempt to think the human subject after the end of (modern) man. Far from being a thinker of the "death of the subject," Foucault simply refuses to accept the subject as given, as the foundation for ethical or rational thinking. The subject is, instead, something that has been historically created and all of Foucault's work after 1968 was engaged in analyzing the various ways that human beings

⁵⁸ Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" trans. Josué V. Harari, in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), p. 118. It might be worth thinking about how one might observe the development from the former to the latter question in Merleau-Ponty's development from *Phenomenology of Perception* to the essays in *Signs* and other works of the 50s and 60s.

constitute themselves as subjects of knowledge, as subjects acting on other subjects, and as moral subjects.⁵⁹

In other words, the subject that Foucault retains in his post-68 work is an ambivalent one, inspired by Nietzsche's analysis in *On the Genealogy of Morality* (Essay I, 13) of the subject not as a metaphysical given but as a historical construct whose conditions of emergence are far from innocent. This "subject" is not only a superfluous postulation of a "'being' behind the doing," a "doer" fictionally added to the deed. In addition, this subject is postulated by slave morality both to convince the strong that they are free to be weak – and therefore are accountable for their failure to be weak – and to convince the weak that they are, in reality, strong and should therefore take pride in having freely chosen – by choosing to refrain from action – to be weak. For Nietzsche, "[t]he subject (or, to speak in more popular terms, the *soul*) ... enabled the majority of mortals, the weak and oppressed of every kind, to interpret weakness itself as freedom, and their being thus-and-such as a *merit*" (*GM* I, 13). For this reason, Nietzsche directs his genealogical gaze to the life-negating uses made by the "metaphysics of the hangman" that invented this concept of the responsible subject in order to hold it accountable and judge it guilty (*TI* "The Four Great Errors," 7).

This is the account of the subject that inspires Foucault to link the modern form of power with subjects and subjection:

⁵⁹ Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress," interview conducted in April, 1983: "Three domains of genealogy are possible. First, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to truth through which we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge; second, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to a field of power through which we constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others; third, a historical ontology in relation to ethics through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents." (*The Foucault Reader*, p. 351.) This interpretation of his oeuvre is quite similar to his characterization of his work as an analysis of the "three modes of objectification which transform human beings into subjects" at the start of the essay "Why Study Power: The Question of the Subject," in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 208.

It is a form of power that makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word subject: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to.⁶⁰

In *Discipline and Punish*, his most Nietzschean text, Foucault notes the link between power and the subject while arguing that the history of the micro-physics of punitive power would be an element in the genealogy of the modern “soul.”⁶¹ Foucault addresses this soul most explicitly in the discussion of the construction of the delinquent as a responsible subject, arguing in Nietzschean fashion that there is a subtle transformation in the exercise of power when punishment no longer is directed at the delinquent’s actions (his “doing”), but at his very person, his “being” as (a) delinquent.⁶² And in his final works, it is this very same subject who can be constituted by the ethical practices of subjectivation (*assujétissement*) and “the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself, *rapport à soi*, which [he calls] ethics, and which determines how the individual is supposed to constitute himself as an ethical subject of his own actions.”⁶³

The question of the subject also engages Deleuze as he approaches Nietzsche, but in a decidedly different way. Where Foucault approaches Nietzsche from the perspective of questions raised by Kant and concerns for the autonomous *individual* subject, Deleuze approaches Nietzsche in a way that opens Nietzsche not to Kant but to Spinoza and questions concerning

⁶⁰ Foucault, “Why Study Power,” p. 212.

⁶¹ Cf. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan. (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), p. 29.

⁶² Foucault repeats this argument at a crucial moment in the first volume of the *History of Sexuality*, noting the point at which the homosexual, no longer simply the performer of certain “forbidden acts,” emerges as a subject with a “singular nature,” a new “species” (p. 43).

⁶³ Michel Foucault, “On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress,” in *The Foucault Reader*, p. 352. Translation altered.

singular bodies as relations of forces, but not necessarily as individual, autonomous subjects.⁶⁴

Deleuze's book, we should recall, is not titled "Nietzsche's Philosophy" but *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, and in addition to providing an interpretation of Nietzsche, it highlights what Nietzsche offers to philosophy: on the one hand, a "new image of thought" and, on the other hand, an understanding of a body as any relationship of forces. This *new* image of thought is put forward in contrast to the "dogmatic image of thought" that, guided by the "will to truth" and fearing the body, passions, and sensuous interest as forces foreign to truth, has heretofore dominated philosophy. In place of truth, Nietzsche situates meaning and value, which is why the epistemological question of truth gives way to a genealogy of values. The question of value takes us out of the realm of metaphysics and confronts us with the problem of a genealogy of forces: where the question that guides metaphysics is "what is?" and the answers that are sought take the form of essences, genealogy, on the other hand, is guided according to Deleuze by the question "which one?" ("*qui?*"), and the answers sought take the form not of metaphysical essences but relations of forces and capabilities, that is, what this one can do.

That Nietzsche would be Deleuze's guide out of the dogmatic image of thought is not surprising, given that questioning the "will to truth" is perhaps his most consistent task in his mature, post-*Zarathustra* writings. Somewhat more surprising is Nietzsche's second contribution to contemporary philosophy: the understanding of a body as any relationship of forces, with forces understood as either dominant/active or dominated/reactive. Relations of forces are, for Deleuze, one of the two great axes in terms of which Nietzsche's philosophy is organized.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Whether Deleuze would agree with my reading here is open to question, as he notes that Foucault and Nietzsche share a conception of force not in relation to a being or an object but as "the relation of force with other forces that it affects or that affect it." (*Negotiations*, trans. Martin Joughin [New York: Columbia University Press, 1995], p. 117)

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. x.

What Nietzsche means when he asks the question “which one?” is: “What are the forces which take hold of a given thing, what is the will that possesses it?”⁶⁶ And the answers Nietzsche will accept never refer to an individual person; they refer instead “to an event, that is, to the forces in their various relationships in a proposition or a phenomenon, and to the genetic relationship which determines these forces (power)” (*NP xi*). In other words, the answers Nietzsche will accept to the question “which one?” will take the form not of a specific instance or example, but of a *type*, which for Deleuze means “a determinate relation in the subject itself between the different forces of which it is made up” (*NP 115*). The task of typology, then, is to interpret “forces from the standpoint of their quality, be it active or reactive” (*NP 115*), and Nietzsche’s originality as a genealogist of morals, for Deleuze, is located in part in his “delineation” of a new type, “a genuinely reactive type of forces” (*NP x*) that has taken the form of the man of *ressentiment* in whom reactive forces have come to prevail over active forces (*NP 111*). Because types are “constituted by the quality of the will to power, the nuance of this quality and the corresponding relation of forces” (*NP 79*), Nietzsche’s typological analysis takes the form of a genealogical analysis of the will to power.

Power is, for Deleuze, the second axis along which Nietzsche’s philosophy is organized,⁶⁷ and the one that is most misunderstood insofar as the question of power is thought to result in a politics, while in Nietzsche it “forms an ethics and an ontology” (*NP x-xi*). What Nietzsche means by “will to power,” according to Deleuze, is not the desire to have some thing –

⁶⁶ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, pp. 76–77. Hereafter cited in the text as NP followed by the page number in the English translation.

⁶⁷ Cf. Michel Foucault, “Prison Talk,” trans. Colin Gordon, in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Random House, 1980), p. 53: “It was Nietzsche who specified the power relation as the general focus, shall we say, of philosophical discourse – whereas for Marx it was the productive relation. Nietzsche is the philosopher of power, a philosopher who managed to think of power without having to confine himself within a political theory in order to do so.”

power – but the having of this power in order to act upon the world rather than be acted upon by the world. For Nietzsche, and here he joins Spinoza – who for Deleuze also understands power in terms of an ethics and an ontology – life is the incessant process of acting on and being acted upon, which for Spinoza is expressed in terms of actions and passions (or more technically, active affects and passive affects), while for Nietzsche these are expressed in terms of the forces of strength and the forces of weakness. In order to highlight the difference between Nietzschean affirmation and Hegelian negativity – and we should never lose sight of the fact that Deleuze’s Nietzsche book is written in part to challenge the dominance in the early sixties of Hegelianism in French philosophy – Deleuze reframes this distinction between the forces of strength that Nietzsche associates with the noble and the forces of weakness he associates with the slave in terms of the forces of action and reaction: where the noble *actively* and affirmatively differentiates himself from his rivals, the slave *reactively* opposes all that is other than himself. Hegel’s dialectic of the master and the slave thus emerges in this context as an example of the triumph of reactive forces, of the becoming-reactive of active forces, insofar as Hegel’s master, no less than his slave, is capable only of reaction in the struggle for recognition.

What draws Deleuze to both Nietzsche and Spinoza is that he finds in them the strongest expression of the power of affirmation. The will to power itself is the principle of multiple affirmation, the differential element that simultaneously determines the relation of forces (in terms of their quantity) and the respective qualities of related forces in terms of their being active or reactive. True to his own affirmative spirit, Deleuze unites with Nietzsche and Spinoza in opposition to Hegel, confronting Hegel’s “labor of the dialectic” with Nietzsche’s “games of the will to power,” and contrasting Hegel’s discovery of the “negation of the negation” with Nietzsche’s alternative discovery of the “affirmation of affirmation” (*NP* 197). This leads

Deleuze to provide his own affirmative account of reactive force not as a power of negation but as force which separates active force from what it can do, while understanding active force as force which goes to the limit of what it can do. In place of Hegelian negation, then, Deleuze situates Nietzschean critique, a critique that confronts the triumph of reactive forces that, now separated from what they can do, both deny active forces and turn against themselves. The goal of critique is not to negate but to transmute these reactive forces: only through transvaluation, through the becoming-active of reactive forces will critique succeed and will force, now active, take its place as force that affirms its difference and makes its difference an object of enjoyment and affirmation (*NP* 61). In other words, while Nietzsche's critique might look dialectical, he departs from Hegel and the Hegelian tradition precisely here. In place of Hegel's "speculative element of negation, opposition or contradiction," Deleuze writes, "Nietzsche substitutes the practical element of *difference*" (*NP* 9). Where the dialectic is engaged in the "*labor* of the negative," and seeks to sublimate all difference and alterity, Nietzsche offers a theory of forces in which active force does not negate or deny the other but "affirms its own difference and enjoys this difference" (*NP* 9).

If post-structuralist French philosophy is characterized first and foremost in terms of the philosophy of difference, I would argue further that the "real" origin of the philosophies of difference is to be found again in Deleuze's 1962 Nietzsche book, in which, as we just saw, he appeals to the concept of difference to show how Nietzsche departs from the Hegelian tradition, to explicate Nietzsche's will to power, and to interpret Nietzsche's thought of the eternal recurrence. Nietzsche's notion of will to power is, for Deleuze, a theory of forces in which forces are distinguished in terms of both their qualitative and quantitative differences. In fact, what Nietzsche names with the "will to power" is "the genealogical element of force, both differential

and genetic. *The will to power is the element from which derive both the quantitative difference of related forces and the quality that devolves into each force in this relation*” (NP 50). And, given the importance that difference plays in Deleuze’s reading, it is not at all surprising to find him concluding that what returns eternally is not the same or the identical; rather, what returns is the repetition of difference.⁶⁸

Deleuze develops these themes much further in *Difference and Repetition*, a book he sees as reflecting the “generalized anti-Hegelianism” of the time in which “difference and repetition have taken the place of the identical and the negative, of identity and contradiction.”⁶⁹ Hegel is not the only culprit, however; rather, he is simply the culmination of a metaphysical tradition that associates difference with opposition and the negative, while privileging identity and the Same as primary. Treating difference as derivative begins with Plato, who Deleuze claims first introduced the concept of difference not in terms of the difference between the Form and its physical copies but in terms of the tertiary relation between the copy and its simulacra.⁷⁰ From Plato to Hegel, the metaphysical tradition sees the different in opposition to and derivative upon the one, while Deleuze sets out to develop an ontology of difference in which “it is not difference which presupposes opposition, but opposition which presupposes difference” and treats it as the negation of identity.⁷¹ Deleuze’s project in this work is nothing short of reversing the tradition

⁶⁸ Cf. NP 46: “We fail to understand the eternal return if we make it a consequence or an application of identity. We fail to understand the eternal return if we do not oppose it to identity in a particular way. The eternal return is not the permanence of the same, the equilibrium state or the resting place of the identical. It is not the “same” or the “one” which comes back in the eternal return but return is itself the one which ought to belong to diversity and to that which differs.”

⁶⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Athlone Press, 1994), p. xix.

⁷⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 127: “Indeed, it is in this sense that difference comes only in third place, behind identity and resemblance, and can be understood only in terms of the comparative play of two similitudes: the exemplary similitude of an identical original and the imitative similitude of a more or less accurate copy. . . . More profoundly, however, the true Platonic distinction lies elsewhere: it is of another nature, not between the original and the image but between two kinds of images, of which copies are the first kind, the other being simulacra.”

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

that privileges identity by showing identity to be an optical effect produced “by the more profound game of difference and repetition.” While “the primacy of identity, however conceived, defines the world of representation,” his goal, on the other hand, is to “think difference in itself independently of the forms of representation which reduce it to the Same, and the relation of different to different independently of those forms which make them pass through the negative.”⁷²

As a final point, let me briefly highlight one other feature of Deleuze’s reading of Nietzsche that informs much of what goes on in French philosophizing after structuralism: the attention to ethics that one can locate in the work of Levinas, Foucault, Irigaray, Lyotard, and many others. In particular, I want to highlight one feature of this attention, which is emphasized in Deleuze and which is one of the defining differences between French and German philosophy: the distinction between an ethics and a morality. A recurrent theme throughout Deleuze’s works is the desire to remain within the plane of immanence and refuse any move to a transcendent or theological plane that takes us away from bodies and what they can do. On several occasions, he addresses this point by noting a distinction between ethics and morality. In a 1986 interview, Deleuze put the distinction this way:

Morality presents us with a set of constraining rules of a special sort, ones that judge actions and intentions by considering them in relation to transcendent values (this is good, that’s evil...); ethics is a set of optional rules that assess what we do, what we say, in relation to the ways of existing involved.⁷³

⁷² Ibid., p. xix.

⁷³ Deleuze, *Negotiations*, p. 100. Translation modified.

This distinction, which Deleuze sees in Foucault and Spinoza, he sees first and foremost in Nietzsche. Nietzsche, of course, is well known for being the philosopher who sought to go “beyond good and evil,” but it is equally important to remember, as Nietzsche noted explicitly at the close of the First Essay of *On the Genealogy of Morality*, that to go “beyond good and evil” “does *not* mean [to go] ‘Beyond Good and Bad.’” The difference between “Good and Evil” and “Good and Bad” is the ostensible topic of the *Genealogy*’s First Essay, and reflecting on this difference is the very first topic Deleuze addressed in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. For Nietzsche, the distinction between “Good and Bad” remains grounded in the natural, while the “Good and Evil” distinction is grounded in the divine: where the originators of determinations of “Good and Bad” had sufficient confidence in their own natural instincts to establish these normative categories on their own, the originators of judgments of “Good and Evil” lacked this confidence – in Nietzsche’s language, they lacked the strength – and they sought a transcendent justification for their judgments in the will of God. Deleuze opens *Nietzsche and Philosophy* by addressing this point, as he recasts Nietzsche’s distinction between the natural and the divine by distinguishing between the immanent, ethical difference between noble and base that grounds evaluative judgments on one’s “way of being or style of life,” and the transcendent moral opposition between good and evil that grounds evaluative judgment on an absolute and otherworldly ideal (*NP* 1; cf. pp. 121–22). And when Deleuze returns to this point later in the text, he distinguishes “good and bad” from “good and evil” again in terms of the distinction between the ethical and the moral: “This is how good and evil are born: ethical determination, that of good and bad, gives way to moral judgment. The good of ethics becomes the evil of morality, the bad has become the good of morality” (*NP* 122).

This is also a central feature in Deleuze's reading of Spinoza, especially in his second, shorter book *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. Nietzsche plays a surprisingly important role in this text, as evidenced by, among other things, Nietzsche's name being the text's very first word, and by Deleuze choosing to organize the book's most philosophically significant chapter – in which he discusses Spinoza's three “scandalous” main themes – his denunciations of consciousness, of values, and of sad passions – in terms of these themes being “the three major resemblances with Nietzsche.”⁷⁴ When Deleuze discusses the scandal of “Spinoza the immoralist” in terms of Spinoza's rejection of transcendent values, particularly of “evil,” in favor of “good and bad,” Deleuze again marks a sharp distinction not only between Spinoza's book called *Ethics* but Ethics in general and Morality: Spinoza, he tells us, shows us how ethics, which “is a typology of immanent modes of existence, replaces Morality, which always refers existence to transcendent values.”⁷⁵ In contrast to the fictitious moral ideas of good and evil, Spinoza claims we should consider good and bad naturalistically as concepts with an objective meaning: good is what agrees with our nature (and thereby increases our vitality, our power to act) and bad is what disagrees with our nature (and thus diminishes our vitality and power to act). Spinoza's examples here are instructive: nourishing food is a model for what is good, while poison is a model for what is bad. What is objectively bad limits what a body can do and is thus linked to affects of sadness, while what is objectively good enhances what a body can do and is productive of joyful affects. Spinoza's theory of the affects thus turns us away from seeking a transcendent moral standard for judging what is good or evil, and returns us to the immanent question concerning modes of existence – by which I mean modes of life as lived – and what we are capable of doing.

⁷⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza, Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), p. 17.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

This is why, for Spinoza, psychology leads to ethics, as both give rise to the same vital question: has our power to act in the world been increased or decreased?

Spinoza's proximity here to Nietzsche is obvious. It is Nietzsche, after all, who understands psychology "as morphology and *doctrine of the development of the will to power*" (*BGE* 23), and who answers the question "What is good?" with the comment "Everything that heightens in the human the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself" (*AC* 2). In the conclusion to *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Deleuze comments that "it is no exaggeration to say that the whole of Nietzsche's philosophy, in its polemical sense," is an attack on three ideas that define the dialectic, one of which is "the valorization of the 'sad passions'" (*NP* 195-96). And in the final chapter of his little Spinoza book, titled "Spinoza and Us," Deleuze suggests that Spinoza tells us that what ultimately mattered was not the metaphysics or epistemology, but the ethics and the politics, specifically, the intervention into the political so as to increase the amount of joy and decrease the sadness. Like Nietzsche and Spinoza, Deleuze is also primarily a practical thinker, a thinker of practices. And his practical goal, also like Nietzsche's and Spinoza's, is to increase the joyful passions—those that increase our power to act—and decrease the sad passions that diminish our power to act. Perhaps this is what Foucault had in mind when, in his preface to the English translation of *Anti-Oedipus*, he remarked somewhat provocatively: "I would say that *Anti-Oedipus* (may its authors forgive me) is a book of ethics, the first book of ethics to be written in France in quite a long time."⁷⁶

Before I conclude, let me return to my opening remark about the year 1968 and say that although the posting of structuralism was already well under way by the time the students took to the streets, something important in French philosophy did begin with 1968. Here I refer to the

⁷⁶ Michel Foucault, Preface to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (New York: Viking Press, 1977), p. xiii.

explicit theorizing about power, which we see most clearly after 1968 in Foucault and in Deleuze's work with Guattari. While Foucault subsequently claimed that power was the issue throughout his archeological period, the fact remains that he did not explicitly thematize power until the works of the mid-70s. And Deleuze's work also turned more explicitly toward the question of power in the works of the 1970s, most explicitly in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. This is not surprising, considering that the events of 1968 came to be understood as a failed revolution of the left, one that led many to look for new ways to think about questions of power. But while philosophers like Foucault and Deleuze do, I think, start thinking explicitly about power after 1968, to return to my initial thesis, the foundation for the way they approach the question of power was established in each of their cases *before* 1968, in their engagement with Nietzsche, who was, after all, the philosopher of the will to power, which is to say, the philosopher for whom power, as *puissance* and not *pouvoir*, as *Macht* and not *Kraft*, is first and foremost productive.