Foucault and Nietzsche: A Critical Encounter —edited by Alan Rosenberg and Joseph Westfall

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Alan Rosenberg and Joseph Westfall's *Foucault and Nietzsche: A Critical Encounter* responds to the fascinating quote of Michel Foucault, whose work often diverged from Nietzsche's, that: "I am simply a Nietzschean" (471). As well as taking on the challenge of making sense of this remark, the authors in this volume follow Alans Milchman and Rosenberg's suggestion in Chapter 4 that to be a good reader of both philosophers is to treat reading as an act of creative self-constitution in response to the provocations of the source material. Consequently, this critical encounter, a necessary port of call for the scholarship of Nietzsche and Foucault comparison, is packed with innovative and engaged readings.

Outstanding creative contributions include Brian Lightbody's ingenious use of the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone to elucidate Lamarck's notion of 'milieu' while mounting a defense of the Foucauldian subject in response to a Nietzschean objection (Chapter 7). Other such contributions include Jim Urpert's description of the will to power as a "religious immanence" and "Religion of Power" in the genealogical method of both philosophers (Chapter 8), and João Costâncio and Marta Faustino's theory of recognition extracted from ideas inchoate in Foucault and Nietzsche (Chapter 9). Equally innovative is Alan D. Schrift's defense of a persistent and persisting Nietzschean subject at the heart of the Foucauldian project. Schrift claims that the accounts of normative violence in *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality* presuppose a subject distinct from contingent sociohistorical forces. In so doing, Schrift offers a novel Nietzschean contribution to understanding what Foucault means by "soul" that is both highly plausible and at odds with popular poststructuralist readings.

A standout clarification in the work is Micheal Ure and Federico Testa's helpful distinction between Foucauldian ethics as Sisyphean in the sense that we must continually create, deconstruct, and re-create our own subjectivity as an infinite labor without end or *telos*, and Nietzsche's as Dionysian, because it aims to release prohibited values and justify a reality beyond good and evil. Schrift also highlights that the role Nietzsche gave to

language in the formation of the subject was a precursor to the linguistic turn in 20th century continental philosophy, a significantly overlooked Nietzschean contribution highlighted by Foucault. Other standouts are Keith Ansell-Pearson's lucid account of why the Gay Science is both 'gay' and 'scientific' (Chapter 3), and Jill E. Hargis's provocative accusations of an inchoate liberal individualism in both thinkers, an analysis which serves to remind that extracting progressive political prescriptions from Nietzsche or Foucault remains problematic (Chapter 6).

One criticism of this work is that, on occasions, it falls on the side of exegesis and comparison rather than critical interrogation. More specifically, that its careful exegeses raise grounds for Nietzschean critiques of Foucault, Foucauldian critiques of Nietzsche, and immanent critiques of both, but does not take them far enough. For example, in Chapter 1, "Foucault, Nature, and the History of Truth" Paul Patton argues that Foucault's generalization of the will to power to a structural and political theory of knowledge is at odds with Nietzsche's program for individual liberation. The problem lies in the use of this persuasive argument. Patton shows that the acceptance of domination and exploitation in Nietzsche's project of self-overcoming is not just profoundly at odds with Foucault's project of diversifying the normative perimeters of subjectivation, but that it stems from an incommensurable theory of the subject and a divergent normative aspiration. This speaks to a problem which Patton does not engage: that Foucauldian critique seems to endorse a normative aspiration which it simultaneously prohibits. Patton exposes that while Foucault's project of destabilizing the illusions of objectivity does not promise a liberation from pernicious social norms, Nietzsche supposes a vitality capable of escaping them. This lays the foundation for an alternative account of liberation based on a Nietzschean critique of the politicization of the archeological/genealogical method in the popular uses of Foucauldian critique (i.e. subversion as a form of political resistance in the service of contesting injustice, inequality, and the abuse of power stemming from the naturalizing and absolutizing of historically contingent values). That Patton focuses instead on the unsuitability of the specific Nietzschean quotes that Foucault claims support his project, while useful for comparative study leaves, at least this reader, wishing he had gone further.

While Alan Schrift is right in Chapter 2, "Nietzsche and Foucault's 'Will to know,'" that Foucault's genealogy of the modern subject follows Nietzsche in separating knowledge from truth, he too falls on the side of describing rather than interrogating the ideas compared. While Foucault is often assumed to better account for the limits concerning self-constitution, his project nevertheless presupposes an agentive power of normative critique and subversion. Schrift does not challenge the paradox that this power is, by Foucauldian lights, at least co-constituted by the contingent power relations it critiques. That we might expect Schrift to mount such a challenge is due to the fact he calls out the presupposition of the capacity to refuse social construction in both thinkers: in Nietzsche's "hangman's metaphysics" as presupposing a doer behind conditioned

deeds and in Foucault's assumption "that we can have knowledge of the norms and can make judgments as to how near or far [to] approximate them" (72). But while he highlights this problematic, Schrift does not explore its consequences. That omitting this analysis is an opportunity missed can be brought out in relation to a perennial tension between structuralism and progressive politics, a tension distinct from the epistemological and metaphysical doubts about the existence of critical space and agency. The worry is that, through historicizing values, Nietzsche and Foucault's critiques 'free' agency from any restraints in terms of justice, objectivity, or right. While Nietzsche is often criticized for supposing an extra-moral ahistorical vitality as the source for evaluating morality and his indifference to the vulnerable, Foucault is often lauded for his sympathy for the ostracized and oppressed, and for exposing the socio-historical contingency of the body and indeed any alternative to the contingent *a priori*. In showing that Foucault's presupposition of a potential agentive resistance to power leaves him closer to Nietzsche than is often thought, Schrift invites the critique of Foucauldian politics that it illegitimately, if implicitly, adopts a normative stance somehow beyond norms and/or prescribes non-conformity as a value beyond interrogation. Not only is this a question of why the freedom from conformity would be valuable in a theoretical frame which radically denaturalizes value, more worryingly, it also raises the question as to why subversion is immune to critique: Why not compassion, justice, (*or for that matter violent domination*)? The worry is that a deconstructive project severed from ideals and apparently valuing subversion above all may signal a politics of despair or even irresponsive and irresponsible freedom. It is, I think, a reasonable expectation that Nietzsche and Foucault scholarship should acknowledge if not engage this issue.

In Chapter 3, "'We Are Experiments' Nietzsche, Foucault, and The Passion for Knowledge," Keith Ansell-Pearson argues that Nietzsche's enlightenment-friendly middle phase, specifically *The Gay Science* and *Daybreak*, form the foundation of Foucault's valorization of truth in the Lectures at the Collège de France. As Pearson makes clear, rather than reject the *ethos* of the Enlightenment outright, middle-Nietzsche jettisons only the possibility of objective knowledge and a theory of everything, modelling an alternative science on active self-experimentation, excepting things provisionally, and embracing a wonder at a "vastness that would to early ages have seemed madness" (D V §501). Indeed, as Pearson's argues, it is purging the Enlightenment of its consoling *telos* that renders it "Gay." The familiar problematic recurs when Pearson likens Nietzsche's gay science of self-discovery to Foucault's ethics of self-care, in that Pearson's comparison raises critical questions which he does not engage. Nietzsche's project seems at odds with Foucault's in its presupposition of a coherent existentially independent individual and relative disregard for others. Nietzsche's creative, scientific endeavor releases a life affirming vitality concealed by conscience, while Foucault's reduces the self to contingent political power. Consequently, Pearson's comparison begs more questions than it answers: What would drive the passion for self-knowledge if the self is no more

than political power and the power to refuse it? What are we experimenting with other than coercive possibilities if there is no freedom from them? Why is there a collective obligation to critique power in Foucault but not in Nietzsche? The questions boil down to the following: Does Nietzsche's passionate pursuit of self-knowledge make any sense in a Foucauldian frame, and what are the consequences of our answer? It seems that a Nietzschean critique of Foucault or a Foucauldian critique of Nietzsche is implied but remains undeveloped in Pearson's essay.

Chapter 5, "Foucault and Nietzsche: Sisyphus and Dionysus" also raises grounds for a critique of Foucault and forgoes it for a comparison. Therein, Micheal Ure and Federico Testa argue that although both Nietzsche and Foucault revive the Hellenistic model of the philosopher as physician and use genealogy to diagnose ill-health. They locate this therapeutic aspiration in both Nietzsche's aim to expand the concept of humanity beyond moral and absolutist limitations so as to better equip it to encounter the vicissitudes of circumstance, and in Foucault's prescription of a continual, open-ended self-transformation. On Ure and Testa's reading, Nietzschean health entails learning to eternally affirm one's idiosyncrasy, while Foucault entails exposing the necessary as contingent to ground a freeing transgression. In recognizing this point of departure, Michael Ure and Federico Testa raise, but do not engage the possibility of another Nietzschean critique of Foucault which asks, "if all normative structures are necessarily contingent and delimiting why embrace an ethic of moving from one to another?" That Nietzsche, by contrast, sees an exit from the cage, seems fertile ground for a critical encounter unexplored in this chapter.

In summary, *Foucault and Nietzsche: A Critical Encounter* is a necessary port of call and a watershed moment for Nietzsche and Foucault comparison, full of outstanding exegetical achievements and innovative applications of both thinkers. It is particularly helpful in its comparative work on genealogy and the perspectives that concept brings to bear on history, truth, reason, science, and religion, in João Costâncio and Marta Faustino's theory of recognition, and at various points in its bringing together of Nietzsche and Foucault's allegedly divergent accounts of the subject and its potential freedoms. For readers looking for a comparison of Nietzsche and Foucault, this book is paramount. For those looking for a critical interrogation of Nietzsche and Foucault, a Nietzschean critique of Foucauldianism, or a Foucauldian critique of Nietzscheanism, this book is a good place to start.

Works Cited

Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, et al. Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality. Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Michel Foucault, "The Return of Morality," in Foucault Live: Interviews, 1961-84, trans. John Johnston, ed. Sylvère Lotringer. New York: Semiotext[e], 1989.