

Preliminary ideas on the nature and purpose of genealogy, for Nietzsche
PHIL 449, Spring 2014

Groups: From the readings for today,

1. Did you get any sense of what genealogy is and/or what it does, for Nietzsche?
2. Any questions/concerns/other things you'd like to discuss from the readings?

If someone in the group has a computer, write on the wiki:

<http://wiki.ubc.ca/Course:PHIL449/discussions>

-- no names needed!

Preface to GM

1. Section 1: "We are unknown to ourselves, we knowers"—what does this mean, and why does it matter?

2. Section 2: this is a "polemic" "on the *origins* of our moral prejudices"

-- polemic (OED): "a controversial argument or discussion"; "aggressive controversy"

-- "moral prejudices": these are historically contingent, having developed through a particular historical sequence of events

3. Sections 3 and 6: main subject of this genealogy

-- how did we invent value judgments "good" and "evil," and "*what value do they themselves have?*" (Sect. 3)

-- "we need a *critique* of moral values, *for once the value of these values must itself be called into question*—and for this we need a knowledge of the conditions and circumstances out of which they have grown, under which they have developed and shifted" (Sect. 6)

-- why need to look at history to do this critique?

Owen, chapter 2

A. N's historical account of morality is "naturalistic"—relies on what is known about humans and nature through disciplines such as psychology, biology, history, philology

B. N concerned to show how and why we haven't accepted deep implications of death of God (28-30)

-- how is it that we haven't faced this death, acc to Owen's view of N?

C. Also wants to critique moral values we still accept from religious viewpoint, and for this need criterion for evaluating them—"will to power" (33)

-- “The criterion of evaluation that Nietzsche proposes is whether the feeling of power expresses and tracks power” (35)

-- see argument on p. 36 (also below): is #4 necessary for #3?

1. *if* one accepts the principle of will to power as a principle of explanation, then
2. one has accepted that human beings are characterized by an architectonic interest in the self-reflexive experience of power, and
3. since it is a necessary condition of the self-reflexive experience of power that the feeling of power is taken to express power, then
4. one must also accept that moral perspectives and the valuations of which they are composed can be evaluated in terms of whether (the degree) of the feeling of power that human beings experience under a given moral perspective expresses and tracks (their degree of) power.

D. For N’s critique to be convincing to audience, needs to use reasons internal both to his perspective and those of his audience (the following are all from Owen 41)

-- a perspective is “a system of judgments [that] denotes the space of reasons ‘which constitutes an agent’s *deliberative* viewpoint i.e., the viewpoint from which he forms his all-things-considered judgments about what to do’” (quoting from Reginster 2000, 43)

-- Nietzsche needs to show those with a different perspective “that they should endorse his perspective in the light of reasons internal to their current perspective,” and ones that express one or more of their motivational values so they will be moved to change views

-- further, in order for the change to be “reflectively stable,” the reasons given must also be internally valid in the new perspective to which people are to change (Nietzsche’s)

What then is Nietzschean genealogy/what does it do, according to Owen?

- Provides a history of currently-accepted beliefs and values, in order to
- evaluate them (as problematic)
- loosen their grip on us, opening up a space for something new

GM, specifically

Provides an account of beliefs and values that are holdovers from belief in God

-- values of compassion, selflessness, and more

-- beliefs in and value of unconditional truth, idea of a perspective that is not a perspective, a source of truth that doesn’t come from us

-- evaluating these as problematic through the criterion of will to power