



Handout

Lecture I: Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morality: Against Formalism

- The leading question that generates Nietzsche's critique of morality is asking about the value of values; it is indeed an invitation to evaluate our values instead of taking them for granted.
- Nietzsche is not against morality for the sake of being simply immoral. He is against the formality of morality. In other words, he believes that our moral values are just formal and without content; a dead system which lost its contact with real elements. This formality is what Nietzsche calls nihilism. Nihilism is modern man's pure formality which is empty of any tangible matter.
- Nietzsche criticizes morality to clear the space, not for religious faith in the manner of Kant, but rather for an ethics that emerges directly from life, from real interests, and healthy emotions.
- We do not live together because we are identical with each other, share a common substance, are capable of understanding each other, or because we need each other. We live together based on a more profound ground called desire or joy which underlies an openness to the other. This is Nietzsche's way to understand ethics based on life.

Lecture II: Michel Foucault's Idea of Parrhesia as the Element of Ethics

Parrhesiastic Truth:

- Having already criticized the institutional truth, Foucault in his final College de France lectures introduces a positive formulation of truth in terms of Parrhesia. Truth here is first and foremost truthfulness. This underlies the central role of ethics in philosophy.
- The first and foremost aspect of the parrhesiastic truth-telling is what distinguishes it from the conservative representational truth-telling: It does not respect common sense, in the form of the norms of society and the government which supports them. This is why Foucault focuses on the way this truth-telling always offends and irritates the interlocutor. This is why, according to Foucault, telling the truth requires courage.



- Since parrhesia requires telling the truth about oneself, it stands against rhetoric, or any technique of telling. Truth must be said directly and bluntly, without any trop or twist of speech.

#### Socratic Truth-Telling and Self-Care:

- Foucault reads the figure of Socrates in Plato's dialogues against the figure of Sophists as masters of Rhetoric, masters of contentless forms and convictions.
- Living truly requires the ethical endeavor of escaping the established form of life. It marks therefore a non-commonsensical ethics, non-formal and non-normative ethics which introduces "existence as an oeuvre", as a work of art, which can also be called revolutionary lives, revolutionary forms of life. This revolution is not just against an established political power but against an established and sedimented form of life.
- In a reading of the figure of Socrates, Foucault introduces the principle of taking care of oneself or epimeleia. It is not taking care of oneself against the others (if so, it would be taking care of one's ego), but inviting the others, and oneself, to take care of themselves. It is not a protectionist self-care but requires an openness and responsibility.
- In reference to Socratic dialogues, Foucault claims, the self is "the way in which one lives". "It is this domain of existence, of the mode of existence, of the tropes of life, on which Socrates' discourse and parrhesia will focus". This mode of life is the element of ethos. Existence as an oeuvre, as a work of art, is living a singular life, a singular mode of life, and expressing it courageously, instead of hiding it, instead of living the life of polis which is applied forcefully by the state. The notion of self entails an emphasis on the singularity of the mode of life. Socrates teaches the others to take care of themselves, to create their own mode of life, instead of asking them to follow Socrates' idea of the true life.

#### Cynicism and Philosophy as a Form of Life:

- This leads Foucault to discuss the Cynics as the heroes of "truth-telling without shame or fear, of unrestricted and courageous truth-telling"; a truth-telling which is connected to the mode of life. The main characteristic of Cynicism is to live without any respect to norms and established ideas of life.



- Here, we face philosophy as a mode of life, we face a philosophical life. Philosophy as a mode of life has Cynicism at its center and essence. It is a practice that aims reaching the pure life by reducing what distances life from true life in its nakedness. This is transforming philosophy from a discourse of representational truth to parrhesiastic truth, philosophy as a practice, not as science.
- The practical knowledge of the Cynics finds a theoretical account in late Stoicism. The move from Cynicism to Stoicism is important because if Cynicism is regressionary to the primitive and pure life, Stoicism takes the creative element but is progressive, not regressive. This means that it affirms what tradition provides for us, instead of rejecting it. But this affirmation does not mean being satisfied with the common sensical lifestyle. It takes the Cynic practical critique of the established life to add something substantial to it.

### Lecture III: Gilles Deleuze's Reading of Stoic ethics in Logic of Sense

#### Deleuze's Critique of the Representational Truth:

- In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze insists that truth is the matter of production not representation or adequation or correspondence. This critique is elaborated, in the third chapter of *Difference and Repetition* and also in the first third part of *Logic of Sense*, in terms of the priority of the realm of sense over that of referential truth, to borrow the terminology of Gottlob Frege.
- According to Deleuze, truth is the result of experience at the level of sense. The truths would be diverse and dependent to the singular cases or to the senses. Therefore, in *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze famously claims, "We always have as much truth as we deserve in accordance with the sense of what we say. Sense is the genesis or the production of the true, and truth is only the empirical result of sense".
- For Deleuze, sense is the condition of truth, but it is so in and through experience. For him, having sense is that which connects the proposition to the experience, say, to sense-experience. So as we can see, Deleuze connect sense in the sense of meaning and sense in the sense of sensing. And this sense, in my reading, is Deleuze's counterpart for what provides the real content or life for Nietzsche and Foucault. When I make a proposition, I'm expressing a real living experience. I can also fall into formalism or nihilism by making



a proposition without any sense-experience. Such a proposition would be without sense, even if it does have a signification or meaning. This formalism is indeed the production of common-sense and its formalism.

- For Frege and Russell the realms of sense and truth work independently, and in some respects, they couldn't consider conditioning as a real relation, although their progress in this direction is undeniable. For Deleuze, what is real is the process of genesis in the realm of ideal sense and the so-called material or scientific object or reference is nothing else than a limit or halt in that real process. Thus, the relation between the established (formal) sense and the established truth becomes the immanent production of truth out of sense as the ideational material (pure process).

Deleuze's Reading of the Stoic Ethics:

- My departure point in explication Deleuze's reading of the Stoics is that the ancient Stoicism entails a kind of vitalism. Therefore, I begin with the Stoic physics (as the realm of causality) and then through Stoic logic I move to the Stoic ethics.

Stoic Physics:

- The Stoics, unlike Plato and Aristotle, reject any incorporeal cause; according to them, the bodies themselves are the true causes. They define a body as that which has the capability to act or receive an action. On the other hand, the Stoic incorporeals are the effects of bodies or the results of actions and passions of bodies.
- For the Stoics the bodies are effective in themselves. So unlike Platonic cause which is mathematical or mechanistic, as the idea of circle is the cause of all real circles, the Stoic cause is dynamic and organic; it is the organic internal force of each body. In the Platonic system, the cause is external to the effect. In contrast, according to the Stoics, the cause is the internal force of movement of a body and therefore is biological, or organic. Interestingly, the Stoics apply this organic, dynamic, and internal view of causality, not only to plants and animals, but to all entities and the whole world.
- The realm of existence is that of bodies as causes together with the tensions between them which form the state of affairs. All bodies are connected together through the relation of causality and all bodies are internal mixtures of other bodies. This forms what the Stoics call existence (huparchein) or present (enestos). All bodies are connected together



through the living presents or causalities and form a unified being which is a “cosmic present embracing the entire universe”. Hence, the existence is existence in present and all what exists defines the cosmic present. And now, if the living present as the connection of two bodies defines causality, the cosmic present of the entire universe defines destiny.

Stoic Logic:

- While the realm of the corporeals define causality, incorporeals are the effects of causality. So the mixture of bodies produces effects. Deleuze claims that the effects are events on the side of state of affairs and senses on the side of propositions. And the Stoic logic is propositional (against Aristotelian logic which is judgmental) and its subject matter is the sense of proposition or what the Stoics call lekton. At the center of Deleuze's reading of the Stoics stands the claim that the sense of the proposition is the event and in this way the proposition really relates to the state of affairs, and logic relates to physics.
- The link between or the identity of sense and event makes the relationship between propositions and state of affairs different from just representation or denotation (or designation) or the Aristotelian adequation. This results in a very different logical construal of propositions and their sense, different from Aristotelian logic which was dominant over the history of logic including the modern formal logic of Frege's Begriffsschrift and its heirs. The difference, in short, is that the Stoic propositions are not nominative but verbal. This is to say that a proposition does not composed of two nominals which are linked by a copula. It is rather the connection between a nominal and a verb. For example, instead of the tree is green, the logical form of the proposition is the tree greens. Indeed, a proposition is nothing but the expression of an event (to green). The event is the effect because the proposition is a body which makes a mixture with a corporeal state of affairs. And the effect of the mixture would be the sense of the proposition.
- Now, if the Stoic physics studies the connection between corporeal causes, the Stoic logic, at the level of the relation between propositions, is the science of the link between the incorporeal events. This relation would be different from deduction.
- The totality of all causes forms destiny. The connection of all effects, or events, rather forms fatality; has to do with the notion of fate. Destiny is fatality because the event is the effect. And this identity constitutes the sense, the sense of the world or cosmos. So from reformulating the structure of the proposition in terms of the relation with the event to reformulating the relation between propositions in terms of fatality we move from the



sense of the proposition to the sense of cosmos. But we should see now what this fatality is. It is opposed to necessity and as will be seen the difference between the logic of necessity and the logic of fatality is in different ethical consequences of each of them.

#### Stoic Ethics:

- The Stoic logic as the logic of fatality finds an ethical aspect, based on the reformulation of the human knowledge of the future in so far as we can live a happy life. Briefly, the logic of necessary concepts (say, a physical or scientific logic) results in an unhappy life because it is based on a limited and hypothetical image of the whole as totality. In this case, the whole is determined and therefore knowing should be determinative. But reality is evental and non-determinable. This gap between the image based on necessity and the evental reality brings unhappiness.
- Since nature (or fate) is against our freedom, one would say it is the nature which is free. Thus, the only freedom which is graspable in our experience is graspable through living in harmony with nature. Deleuze's translation of this Stoic law is living the event, or loving the event, the well-known Amor fati; the event is that which happens to us from without and the good life is in loving your fate, which is, loving what happens to you, no matter what it is. What happens to me, whatever it is, is my fate and therefore is substantial to me. I am the outcome of what happens to me.
- This is also the true and practical meaning of freedom. Only the event is free, which is to say, only that which is external to my subjectivity is free. And the event is the name of that which is not derivable from, and reducible to, my subjective categories and concepts. If the ethical agent is defined as the free actor, Deleuze's Stoicism moves the agent to outside and in this way gives an ontological nature to ethics.

#### Conclusion

- The main thesis that this course aims to unpack is that twentieth-century philosophy, particularly in France, under the influence of Nietzsche, leads to an ontological ethics. By ontological I mean related to any philosophical attempt to dehumanizing the subject of knowledge. In contrast with the ontological ethics, morality remains limited to humanity.



- Both ethics and morality deal with values, and more precisely, with evaluation, which is to say, with distinguishing good and bad. The difference between ethics and morality underlies that an ontological evaluation, a distinction between good and bad at the level of being, is possible.
- This leads to a formulation of the notion of freedom which is applicable to being itself, beyond human consciousness, or in other words, the application of the notion of freedom to nature. Throughout the present study, I will argue that if freedom is defined as the element of human consciousness, it should be the element of nature in a priori sense, because human consciousness emerges in nature.
- In this view, ethics in the sense of modes of social life would be prior to morality at the level of individual minds or consciousness, and the social freedom would be prior to personal freedom. The way we can define the notion of freedom at the level of a people is a problem which is totally different from the freedom of a conscious individual and is closer to the ontological problem of the contingency of nature.