

"General Introduction", Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, *Oeuvres philosophiques complètes* by Friedrich Nietzsche (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), vol. V: *The Gay Science-Posthumous Fragments* (1881-1882), introduction, i-iv.

[*Dits et écrits*, 561]

'Cursed' thinkers can be recognized from the outside by three traits: a body of work abruptly cut short; abusive parents who exert control over the publication of posthumous writings; and a mystery book, something akin to 'the book' whose secrets we secretly sense.

Nietzsche's works were abruptly cut short by madness in early 1889. His sister Elisabeth took it upon herself to act as the imperious guardian of his work and legacy, overseeing the publication of a number of posthumous notes. Critics fault her less for outright falsifications (the only clear instances of which concern his letters) than for distortions: she endorsed the image of Nietzsche as an antisemite and a precursor to Nazism -- the anti-Nietzsche par excellence.

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From an editorial standpoint, the central issue concerns the *Nachlass*, long identified with the project for a book that was to have been titled *The Will to Power*. Before the most serious scholars gained access to the complete body of Nietzsche's manuscripts, what was known only vaguely was that *The Will to Power* did not exist as such, that it was not a book by Nietzsche, but rather the result of an arbitrary selection from his posthumous papers, mixing notes of diverse dates and origins. Working around a core of some four hundred "notes" and a four-part outline, the initial editors had constructed a fictitious volume.

It must be recalled that Nietzsche was simultaneously sketching out various plans; that he kept changing the designs for his great book; that he perhaps abandoned it when he decided to publish his works of 1888; and, in any case, that he conceived the continuation of his oeuvre according to 'techniques' that it would be absurd to

claim one could reconstruct and pin down. Readers of Nietzsche are aware of the prodigious innovations he introduced, if only in the technique of philosophical expression: the deliberate fragment (distinct from the maxim), the long aphorism, the holy book, and the highly distinctive composition of *The Antichrist* or *Ecce Homo*. Theater, *opéra-bouffe*, music, poetry, and parody are always present in Nietzsche's work. No one can predict the form or content that great book would have taken (nor the other forms Nietzsche might have invented had he abandoned the project). At most, the reader can muse on all this, although the means to do so must be provided.

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The complete set of manuscript notebooks amounts to at least three times the volume of the work published by Nietzsche himself. The posthumous writings already published are far fewer in number than those still awaiting publication.

Some editors have argued that knowledge of these posthumous writings would yield nothing new. In fact, when a thinker or a writer like Nietzsche presents several versions of the same idea, it stands to reason that the idea itself ceases to be the same. Moreover, the notes Nietzsche jotted down in his notebooks were intended not merely for revision or reworking, but for future books. It would be absurd to think he made use of everything, and even more absurd to claim that the unpublished notes contain nothing beyond what has already been published. Let us cite just two examples. In a notebook from 1875, Nietzsche examines and critiques in detail a book by Dühring, *Der Werth des Lebens*. How could one claim that the complete publication of this notebook would teach us nothing about the formation and significance of Nietzsche's concept of value? An entire notebook from 1881 deals with the *Eternal Return*; indeed, judging by *Ecce Homo*, it appears Nietzsche revisited this notebook shortly before his illness. Here again, how can one deny the necessity of a complete edition?

The new development is the freedom of access to the manuscripts since their transfer from the former Nietzsche-Archiv to the Goethe und Schiller-Archiv in Weimar, in

the German Democratic Republic (1950). Our reading of Nietzsche is profoundly altered in three essential respects. We can discern the distortions introduced by Elisabeth Nietzsche and Peter Gast; we can identify the errors in dating, misreadings, and countless omissions that characterized editions of the *Nachlass* until now. Finally, and above all, we can gain insight into the vast body of unpublished material.

In undertaking the immense task of examining the Weimar archives, Colli and Montinari determined the only viable approach for a scholarly edition: to publish the notebooks in their entirety, following a chronological order. Admittedly, Nietzsche would sometimes reopen an old notebook to add a note or, within a single notebook, deviate from a strict chronological sequence. Nevertheless, each notebook as a whole can be dated (if only through personal references and drafts of letters) and corresponds to a specific period of Nietzsche's creative activity. These notebooks shed unique light on Nietzsche's published works. They reveal how he revisited and transformed earlier ideas, how he set aside an idea only to take it up again later, how future concepts were prepared or sketched out, and precisely when specific major Nietzschean concepts took shape. It was therefore essential to publish the complete set of notebooks chronologically, organized into periods corresponding to the books Nietzsche himself published. Only in this way can this vast body of unpublished material reveal its multifaceted significance.

This edition is based on the manuscript texts as deciphered and transcribed by Colli and Montinari. Works published by Nietzsche have been translated according to the last edition released during his lifetime. The collection will therefore comprise:

- early writings;
- philological studies and lectures from 1869 to 1878;
- all works published by Nietzsche from *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) to *The Gay Science* (1882), each accompanied by the posthumous fragments belonging to its period of preparation and drafting;

- works published or ready for publication between 1882 and 1888 (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, *The Case of Wagner*, *Twilight of the Idols*, *The Antichrist*, *Ecce Homo*, *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, the *Dionysian-Dithyrambs*) and unpublished poems from the winter of 1882–1883 through 1888;
- the body of posthumous fragments written between the autumn of 1882 and his final mental collapse.

With the exception of his letters and musical compositions, a translation of Nietzsche's complete works is thus finally appearing in France, at the very moment when a critical edition based on the same documents is being released in German, and an Italian translation is underway under the direction of Colli and Montinari. Most of the French translations, even those of previously known works, will be new. We certainly do not overlook the significance of the undertaking by Charles Andler and Henri Albert early in the century, nor the importance of the translations already produced; in a few select cases, these will be retained.

We hope that the new light shed by the previously unpublished material will mark a return to Nietzsche. We hope that the notes he left behind, with their manifold outlines, will reveal to the reader the full range of combinations and permutations that now, in true Nietzschean fashion, forever embody the unfinished state of the "book to come."