



The Critical Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900)

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Abstract

Friedrich Nietzsche's critique of Western modernity represents one of the most influential turning points in contemporary philosophical thought, challenging the epistemological, moral, and metaphysical foundations inherited from the classical tradition. This study examines Nietzsche's conception of knowledge through the analytical framework of genealogy, emphasizing its role as a critical method for exposing the historical, cultural, and political conditions underlying claims to truth. Using a qualitative philosophical methodology based on textual and conceptual analysis of Nietzsche's major works and relevant secondary literature, the article investigates the relationship between knowledge, truth, interpretation, and the will to power. The findings demonstrate that Nietzsche rejects the notion of objective, universal, and immutable truth, arguing instead that knowledge is historically contingent, perspectival, and inseparable from relations of power. Genealogy is presented not merely as a historical investigation but as a philosophical instrument for dismantling dominant systems of thought, revealing the ideological mechanisms through which values, morality, and knowledge acquire authority. The study further argues that Nietzsche's critique extends beyond nineteenth-century philosophy and remains highly relevant to contemporary debates on epistemic authority, ideological domination, and the construction of social reality. By integrating Nietzsche's epistemology with his genealogical method, this article contributes to a deeper understanding of the continuing significance of his philosophy for contemporary critical theory, post-structuralism, and the philosophy of knowledge.

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INTRODUCTION

The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche is considered one of the Western thinkers who criticized Western modernity and revealed its true nature and foundations. In doing so, he employed the genealogical hammer, attempting to eliminate the idolatrous mode of thinking that laid the groundwork for Western modernity. Accordingly, Western modernity is based on power and

domination, thereby contradicting all the moral values it claimed to uphold. Western modernity is a destructive and exploitative modernity that relies on destruction in the name of progress. Nietzschean genealogy is a critical endeavor aimed at uncovering the truth of modernity.

From this perspective, the following questions arise:

What is the concept of knowledge according to Nietzsche? How did he construct genealogy as a critical method for its analysis? And how can truth be attained according to Nietzsche?

1. Knowledge According to Nietzsche

Nietzsche begins his philosophy of knowledge with the assertion that all our knowledge is merely a falsification of reality and of what is presented to us as truth. Consequently, there is no fixed or absolute knowledge, because there are no things that inherently possess truth. Even if such fixed truths did exist, it would be impossible for us to know them, since the demands and interests of life govern knowledge. In other words, knowledge is shaped by our own construction; we determine it according to our desires and means, in addition to the influence of cultural and social structures on its formation.

The will to power inherent in every individual drives human beings toward the desire to dominate things insofar as they provide benefits and advantages. Therefore, Nietzsche categorically rejects the existence of absolute and immutable knowledge, since knowledge is fundamentally variable, differing from one person to another, from one society to another, and from one cultural environment to another.

Nietzsche states that “the entire instrument of knowledge is an instrument of experimentation and simplification; it is directed toward mastering things and taking possession of them. Thus, there is no perception except insofar as it is useful” (Jaafar, 1999, p. 294).

It becomes evident here that knowledge is not that which corresponds to reality, which is the traditional concept of truth. Nietzsche rejects this definition because the concept of truth or reality is dependent upon specific instruments supported by power, enabling them to redirect the course of knowledge according to the demands of interests and utility. Nietzsche also rejects the logical principles and rules upon which some rely to distinguish between truth and error. He considers these principles to be illusions and mere myths established to justify failure, which he describes as an inability to keep pace with the continuity and becoming of life (Pearson, 2026; Prescott-Couch, 2024; Rayman, 2022; Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2026).

Consequently, Nietzsche linked his philosophy to change and relativity, maintaining that there are no eternal, fixed, or absolute principles or forms of knowledge. He was particularly critical of idealist thinkers, beginning with Platonic Greek philosophy and extending to later idealist philosophers. Nietzsche describes Plato as being attached to decadent ideas and abstract concepts detached from the changing conditions of life and time, concepts that have lost their meaning and usefulness. He compares this approach to the practice of the ancient Egyptians, who mummified priests and rulers in an attempt to preserve them forever (Belagrouz, 2010, p. 130).

Furthermore, Nietzsche argues that all our knowledge is an invention shaped by the language through which we express it. Absolute concepts such as substance, matter, and God do not exist in themselves. The knowledge we circulate originates from imaginary constructions and chaotic interpretations. We are the ones who shape and organize these interpretations according to our will, and they eventually come to be called knowledge. What truly exists are interpretations of reality according to the will of individuals; there are no fixed essences determining things. Nietzsche states: “We should not seek the phenomenon elsewhere than where it appears, for there is nothing more apparent; more precisely, there is no greater illusion than this external world which we observe through that famous inner sense” (Nietzsche, 1991, p. 202).

Thus, all forms of knowledge are, according to Nietzsche, mere “illusions,” including those established within logic itself, namely the principles of reason. Nietzsche strips these principles of any claim to absoluteness or truth and regards them as merely subjective laws that fail to correspond to the perpetual process of becoming and change in life. For example, the principle of identity, which asserts that a thing remains the same and is always identical to itself, does not accord with the reality of becoming. The principle of identity is merely a tool employed by reason to locate a fixed point within the uninterrupted flow of becoming (Jaafar, 1999, p. 299).

Nietzsche also rejects a number of concepts traditionally regarded as fundamental to philosophical knowledge. Concepts such as subject and object, cause and effect, substance, and being are, in his view, nothing more than linguistic conventions. They possess no independent existence and are merely grammatical categories detached from reality rather than rational or ontological truths. Nietzsche consequently reinterprets certain rational principles. Necessity, for instance, is understood as a form of force, while teleology is viewed as an interaction expressing an order of forces. Likewise, he denies the existence of causality, arguing that the

notion of cause arises from fear of the unfamiliar and represents an attempt to seek what is familiar. Thus, the distinction between cause and effect is merely a means of organizing the world in a way that renders it intelligible and acceptable.

Accordingly, reason is limited in Nietzsche's philosophy because the data upon which life is based are subject to the interpretations of individual minds. Different interpretations emerge regarding any given phenomenon, and the interpretation that prevails is the one that possesses the greatest power. Through its success, it comes to be regarded as the "true" interpretation. Reality, therefore, reflects the principle of power, whereby every interpretation embodies a will that seeks to impose itself upon competing interpretations.

The alternative proposed by Nietzsche to dominant and closed systems of thought is irrationalism, which serves as a substitute for all doctrines whose adherents claim possession of complete or absolute truth. As Ahmad Abd al-Halim Atiyya notes, the widespread belief that human reason is capable of attaining a science that provides certain knowledge and moral systems—namely, that science and reason can replace religion—is itself nothing more than an illusion (Atiyya, 2010, p. 173).

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a **qualitative philosophical research design** based on conceptual, hermeneutic, and genealogical analysis. Rather than relying on empirical data, the research investigates Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical thought through a systematic interpretation of his principal works and the relevant body of contemporary philosophical scholarship. The methodological framework combines **conceptual analysis**, **textual interpretation**, and **genealogical critique** in order to examine Nietzsche's understanding of knowledge, truth, modernity, and the will to power.

The primary sources include Nietzsche's major philosophical writings, particularly *The Gay Science*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, *Human, All Too Human*, and *The Will to Power*. These texts are examined using a **hermeneutic approach**, which emphasizes the interpretation of philosophical concepts within their historical and intellectual context rather than treating them as isolated propositions.

The study further adopts **Nietzsche's genealogical method** as both an analytical object and a methodological framework. Genealogical analysis is employed to trace the historical emergence of philosophical concepts, moral values, and systems of knowledge, demonstrating how they are shaped by relations of power, cultural conditions, and historical contingencies rather than by universal or transcendent principles.

To strengthen the analytical perspective, Nietzsche's arguments are critically examined alongside interpretations developed by influential contemporary philosophers and scholars, including Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, Martin Heidegger, and other major commentators on Nietzsche's philosophy. This comparative conceptual analysis enables the identification of convergences and divergences in their interpretations while highlighting the continuing relevance of Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics and modernity.

The research follows a **descriptive–analytical** and **interpretive** approach. Philosophical concepts are analyzed through close textual reading, contextual interpretation, and critical comparison of primary and secondary sources. No statistical techniques, experimental procedures, or human participants were involved. Consequently, the study is entirely theoretical and conceptual in nature, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of Nietzsche's critical philosophy and its significance for contemporary debates in epistemology, critical theory, and the philosophy of modernity.

2. The Genealogical Method in Nietzsche

Nietzsche is regarded as the first philosopher to formulate the genealogical method, which is fundamentally a critical method. He developed it as an approach for criticizing modern philosophies, particularly the German idealist philosophies of Kant and Hegel. This method introduces the concepts of meaning and value into philosophy, especially since modern philosophy is largely concerned with the formation of intellectual issues related to knowledge and values (Deleuze, 2001, p. 5).

The genealogical method is considered the antithesis of metaphysics. It seeks to dismantle and deny metaphysical propositions because genealogy does not believe in essences, fixed truths, foundational principles, or metaphysical ends. Rather, it eliminates all ideas that claim an original source, thereby rejecting notions of ultimate purpose and finality (Benabdelali, 1991, p. 27).

The task of Nietzschean genealogy is specifically a genealogy of metaphysics—that is, a study of the emergence of metaphysics. However, this does not mean investigating where metaphysics originated in the conventional sense; rather, it involves understanding its historical and experiential formation. As Heidegger stated in his work on Nietzsche: "Origin does not merely mean asking where things came from; it also means how they came to be. It refers to the manner in which something exists and never simply to its empirical historical emergence" (Heidegger, as cited in Benabdelali, 1991, p. 29).

Genealogy thus seeks to reconstruct the various operative systems of thought. It is both an interpretation of the history of metaphysics and a deconstruction of metaphysical history. Gilles Deleuze describes genealogy as follows: “Genealogy is the differential and distinguishing element of values, the element from which value itself originates. It signifies origin and generation, but it also signifies difference and distance” (Deleuze, as cited in Benabdelali, 1991, p. 29).

Accordingly, the genealogy discussed by Nietzsche, particularly in *On the Genealogy of Morality*, focuses on investigating the origin of moral prejudices. In the fifth section of the work, Nietzsche states: “The issue concerns the value of morality itself... We need a critique of moral values, and therefore we must first place these values into question by examining the conditions of their emergence and the circumstances that facilitated them... My aim is to draw attention to the history of morality... I mean the hieroglyphic text that must be deciphered, which constitutes the past of human morality” (as cited in Benabdelali, 1991, p. 29).

Nietzsche regarded the philosophical period extending from Plato to Hegel as a closed circle in which much time had been wasted without benefit. The reason, in his view, is that these idealist philosophies were fundamentally grounded in the pursuit of perfection. Such ideal perfection is impossible, or at least inaccessible, because our knowledge is determined by what our subjectivity perceives as beneficial. Moreover, metaphysical discourse sustains itself through the denial of its origins, the forgetting of the conditions of its emergence, and the concealment of the mechanisms through which it operates (Andaloussi, 2006, p. 26).

Nietzsche’s reading of metaphysics was not intended to refute it in the name of an opposing absolute truth. Rather, he rejected any positivistic separation or definitive determination of truth. The genealogical method is therefore not a political philosophy that merely criticizes positive philosophies, nor does it oppose metaphysics with a counter-metaphysics. Instead, it diverges, differs, and affirms rather than negates. Nietzsche sought to liberate negativity from every synthetic framework and move beyond traditional philosophical oppositions (Benabdelali, 1991, p. 33).

Nietzsche employed genealogy as a strategic process of questioning and investigating the original formation of concepts, as well as overturning dominant moral values. It serves as an alternative to prevailing rationalism and the objective studies characteristic of earlier philosophical thought. Genealogical critique thus represents a new method and an alternative to dominant rationality. As Belagrouz explains: “Genealogy is a method that deepens the question concerning the formative origin of things, reason, and its categories. What are the forces of reason and perception? What is the will concealed behind reason and the creation of categories? This is the method that achieves genuine critique; it is the genealogical method” (Belagrouz, 2010, p. 150).

A. NIETZSCHE’S CRITIQUE OF GREEK METAPHYSICS

1. Nietzsche’s Critique of Socratic Metaphysics

One of the first targets of Nietzsche’s genealogical critique was Greek philosophy and metaphysics, beginning with Socrates and his philosophical doctrines. Nietzsche argued that “Socrates represented the model of Greek decline and decadence through his call for the authority of reason against instinct, although reason, according to Nietzsche, is a force that distorts life” (Jaafar, 1999, p. 157).

For Nietzsche, the Socratic foundation of philosophy upon reason signaled the emergence of the theoretical individual—an idealized and transcendent figure detached from reality. Nietzsche regarded this development as producing a trivial and impoverished conception of existence. Socrates diminished the value of instinct and considered it an obstacle preventing reason from exercising its proper function. This constitutes the fundamental disagreement between Nietzsche and Socrates. For Nietzsche, instinct is the source of creative energy and the force that drives human beings toward creativity and self-expression. Socrates emphasized only one aspect of the human being—reason—and consequently transformed the world into a realm governed solely by logical thought. In doing so, he failed to recognize instinct as the true source of creativity. Nietzsche therefore viewed Socrates as a symbol of the decline of the Greek spirit. Moreover, Socrates influenced a generation of Greek youth, most notably Plato, who became deeply attached to his teachings (Fink, 1974, p. 308).

According to Gilles Deleuze, Nietzsche explains in *The Birth of Tragedy* how Socrates excluded instinct and treated it as an enemy of consciousness. Nietzsche writes: “Whereas instinct in all productive individuals is an affirmative and creative force and consciousness a critical and negative force, in Socrates instinct becomes critical and consciousness becomes creative” (Deleuze, 2001, p. 20).

Socrates elevated reason to a supreme position and subjected all aspects of existence to its authority. As a result, Nietzsche referred to him as the “theoretical man,” who regarded morality and art as matters of theoretical inquiry. Nietzsche maintained that aesthetic creativity cannot originate in morality but rather springs from creative instinct. Since everything subjected to reason becomes abstract and conceptual, artistic creativity, as an inner and latent human power, cannot arise from reason itself (Matar, 1984, p. 147).

For this reason, Nietzsche sought to demolish the transcendent rational ideas associated with Socrates. This is why Nietzsche's philosophical approach came to be symbolized by the "hammer," representing the destruction of beliefs and concepts that become idolized within human thought. Nietzsche states: "Socrates is the first genius of decadence; he opposes life with the idea and judges life by the idea... Socrates is the theoretical man, the sole opposite of the tragic man" (Deleuze, 2001, p. 76).

Among the negative consequences that Nietzsche believed resulted from Socrates' rational philosophy was the weakening of both bodily and intellectual powers through the suppression of instinct. One significant consequence was the transformation of Plato from an artist, athlete, poet, and storyteller into a thinker devoted to a transcendent idealist metaphysics detached from reality. Although Plato initially displayed artistic and poetic inclinations, Socrates' influence led him toward rational idealism stripped of emotional vitality. He eventually came to distrust poets and artists, undergoing a profound transformation in both his philosophical outlook and intellectual convictions (Durant, 1982, p. 513).

Thus, Socratic virtue was, in Nietzsche's view, a purely rational doctrine detached from instinct. It was founded upon the reconciliation of virtue with knowledge, or belief with morality (Deleuze, 2001, p. 75).

2. Nietzsche's Critique of Plato's Metaphysics

The Greeks linked all forms of knowledge to the realm of myth in their attempt to attain absolute knowledge. According to Nietzsche, however, all the efforts undertaken by Greek philosophers ultimately failed. He cites Plato's Theory of Forms as an example, describing Plato as a thinker whose "embodied desire was to become the greatest legislator and founder of the state of virtue. His suffering resulting from his failure to achieve this ideal appears to have been immense; in the final years of his life, this suffering was filled with the darkest resentment" (Nietzsche, 2002, p. 142).

Accordingly, the just or ideal state that Plato sought to establish through his Republic remains, in Nietzsche's view, a metaphysical fantasy incapable of realization in actual life. Plato's theory divides existence into two realms: an ideal world and a real world. Absolute truths are said to reside in the ideal realm, whose influence extends to the empirical world. Nietzsche rejects this division, arguing that if the ideal realm contains all knowledge, values, and fixed truths, then the real world should necessarily reflect those same absolute values and truths. This, according to Nietzsche, constitutes a contradiction within Platonic thought. As he states: "There is thus a movement toward another world and the adoption of that world as a criterion by which our world is judged. Metaphysical thought affirms a world other than that of life, nature, and history; yet in affirming that other world, it simultaneously negates our own world" (Nietzsche, 1993, p. 210).

Nietzsche further rejects the notion that knowledge and values can pass from an ideal realm into the real world. Reality, in his view, is characterized by transience, illusion, and deception. Thus, the divine secret of existence cannot be sought in a metaphysical realm beyond experience. Nietzsche writes: "Things cannot derive from this perishable, deceptive, and illusory world; rather, their foundation must be sought in the depths of existence, in what is eternal, within the divine mystery, and in the thing itself rather than outside it" (Nietzsche, n.d., p. 23).

3. Nietzsche's Critique of the Metaphysics of Western Modernity

Nietzsche's critical vision of modern philosophy is rooted in a radical re-evaluation of the foundations of Western thought. As Abd al-Rahman Badawi notes, Nietzsche's philosophy involves a return that signifies the rejection of what had long been considered sacred, good, and true. Consequently, Nietzsche's name is commonly associated with a profound critique of religion, philosophy, science, and morality (Badawi, p. 509).

Nietzsche maintains that Western modernity derives its intellectual foundations from Greek metaphysics. The cultural and intellectual decline of modernity, in his view, stems from the persistence of Greek metaphysical thinking within European philosophy. He argues that many individuals continue to seek metaphysics because of a deep desire for certainty. Even the scientific and positivist mentality of the modern age reflects this longing for something stable and absolute. Nietzsche writes: "Many people still need metaphysics. Even this intense longing for certainty that erupts today among the masses in a scientific and positivist form—the desire to possess something absolutely enduring—reveals the need for support and foundation. In short, it is the instinct of weakness that creates religions, metaphysics, and convictions in all their forms" (Nietzsche, 1993, p. 210).

Nietzsche's philosophical orientation differs fundamentally from that of Hegel. Whereas Hegel continually draws upon the past in constructing his philosophy, Nietzsche regards attachment to the past as a sign of weakness, particularly because modernity itself was founded upon metaphysical assumptions. The alternative proposed by Nietzsche centers on a philosophical orientation concerned with ontology, theology, and ethics rather than with inherited metaphysical systems (Al-Shabi, 2005, p. 182).

Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics begins with his rejection of Greek metaphysics, which he viewed as the earliest philosophical system. He regarded it as fundamentally mythological despite the Greeks' claim to be the masters of wisdom and rationality—what he called the “tyrants of reason.” Nietzsche rejected mythical thinking because he believed that the Greeks excelled in describing their lives, projects, and conflicts through myths detached from reality. He writes: “The only subjects that illuminated Greek life were those illuminated by the rays of myth; everything else remained in darkness. These philosophers were in fact searching for a brighter sun. Myth was not sufficiently clear for them. Each found that light in what he called truth” (Nietzsche, 2002, p. 142).

For this reason, Nietzsche remained in constant opposition to metaphysical thinking, a position that contributed to his reputation as a philosopher of nihilism and will (Dortier, 2009, p. 513).

4. Nietzsche's Critique of Immanuel Kant's Idealist Philosophy

When examining Nietzsche's criticisms of Kant, one finds an attitude marked by both admiration and rejection. On the one hand, Nietzsche acknowledged Kant's philosophical significance; on the other hand, he criticized him for remaining within the metaphysical tradition that originated with Socrates and Plato—a tradition Nietzsche considered an expression of illusion and decline.

Despite his criticism, Nietzsche recognized a positive dimension in Kant's philosophy. In *The Gay Science*, he suggests that Kant led Germans to question the absolute certainty of scientific knowledge and even to doubt the extent to which knowledge itself could provide secure foundations. As cited by John Lewis, Nietzsche writes: “With Kant, we Germans began to doubt the definitive value of scientific knowledge; moreover, we came to doubt whether what is knowable itself possesses the value once attributed to it” (Lewis, 1978, p. 128).

In Kant's philosophy, particularly in his critique of reason, human beings are unable to attain complete knowledge of the external world. Reason becomes sterile when separated from experience and deprived of its connection to it. Consequently, metaphysics, understood as knowledge of what lies beyond experience, loses its legitimacy and validity (Deleuze, 2001, p. 115).

However, Enlightenment philosophers maintained that the principles of reason are valid for describing the elements of nature, but they collapse when employed as foundations for the absolute structure of the universe, since reason itself has limits. In this sense, reason becomes the effective servant of empirical science. Once detached from experience, reason becomes empty of content and therefore useless. This is precisely what occurred with metaphysics when it became separated from empirical inquiry; it degenerated into an abstract discipline incapable of constituting a science worthy of pursuit in itself.

Nevertheless, Nietzsche did not regard Kant's critique of pure or theoretical reason as a genuine critique. Rather, he viewed it as a form of subtle skepticism or sophistry, since Kant attempted to attain a transcendent truth through non-philosophical means. Nietzsche therefore questioned the nature of the relationship between the phenomenal world and the noumenal world, particularly if the principle of causality applies only to sensible objects. As John Lewis observes, Nietzsche's analysis of Kantian criticism led him to conclude that it was not a critique at all. As Deleuze notes, “Never before have we seen a total critique that was more tolerant or more respectful; nor have we seen a critique of reason carried out by reason itself” (Lewis, 1978, p. 129).

5. Nietzsche's Critique of Contemporary Philosophers

A. Nietzsche's Critique of Schopenhauer

Nietzsche was initially an admirer of Schopenhauer's philosophy, but this admiration did not last long. Nietzsche eventually moved beyond pessimism and became a philosopher of strength and affirmation. In contrast, Schopenhauer remained deeply influenced by Christianity. Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power differs fundamentally from Schopenhauer's conception of the will, since Nietzsche viewed life as a continuous process of becoming and transformation. Nietzsche states: “What Schopenhauer calls the will is merely an empty expression. It is nothing but the will to live, and life itself is only a particular manifestation of the will to power, for every being struggles to enter into some form of the will to power” (Abdel Maati, 1993, p. 412).

Nietzsche's book *Human, All Too Human* was directed in part toward his former teacher Schopenhauer, whose pessimistic outlook Nietzsche considered inadequate. Nietzsche writes: “For me, the issue concerned morality, and regarding this issue I could only formulate my problem in relation to my exceptional teacher Schopenhauer, to whom that book was addressed. Those instincts which Schopenhauer himself had long encouraged me to revere later became the basis upon which he founded his denial of life” (Nietzsche, 1981, p. 13).

B. Nietzsche's Critique of Darwin

Nietzsche rejected Darwin's theory of natural selection as presented in *On the Origin of Species*. He argued that the law of struggle cannot replace the law of power. Consequently, he regarded Darwin's theory of survival as limited, passive, and overly simplistic when compared with the concept of the will to power. For Nietzsche, life is not fundamentally a struggle for survival but rather a struggle for power, expansion, and domination. He states: "The Darwinian theory of survival is not the only perspective capable of explaining the advancement of positions of power within humanity or within a species" (Nietzsche, 1981, p. 14).

According to Nietzsche, Darwin's theory of evolution ultimately favors the survival of the weak through adaptation, whereas his own philosophy leads to the triumph of the strong, since struggle reaches its culmination only in those who possess strength and power.

C. Nietzsche's Critique of History

History, or historical knowledge, is generally understood as objective knowledge of the past. Nietzsche's criticism of history and historians in general, however, is not governed by purely epistemological concerns or methodological objectives. As Michel Foucault notes, in *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche critiques historians' history from a perspective that transcends history itself (Foucault, n.d., p. 76).

According to Nietzsche, traditional history often imposes supposedly eternal truths and claims access to objective knowledge. In reality, however, it remains under the influence of metaphysics. Metaphysical tradition preserves a rigid understanding of the past and present, as well as of origins and margins. Nietzsche's approach to history is grounded in the close relationship between the problem of history and what he calls "effective history." In this sense, he introduced a new form of historical inquiry: the search for descent and genealogy.

There is a fundamental difference between the metaphysical and genealogical approaches. The former seeks original beginnings and foundational sources, whereas the latter regards such beginnings as contingent and even ironic episodes in human history. Nietzsche states: "This metaphysical perspective opens the way for speaking of origins as existing in the vicinity of the sacred and always accompanying it" (Foucault, n.d., p. 67).

By contrast, Nietzsche maintains that historical beginnings are always located at lower and more humble levels of existence. Consequently, they do not deserve reverence or glorification but rather critical examination and the removal of all forms of sanctification.

For this reason, history must become genealogy. Genealogical history interprets morality, ideals, and metaphysical concepts in order to dismantle them and disperse their alleged unity. Nietzsche did not intend to provide a substitute form of knowledge for history, nor did he seek to establish another philosophy in its place. Rather, he transformed history itself into an instrument of distribution and fragmentation. Historical knowledge should not be grounded in fixed certainties, since such certainties reinforce a transcendent image of humanity that falsely claims complete knowledge of its own past.

Nietzsche sought to move beyond metaphysical history as a rigid conception of objective knowledge and replace it with a historical sense based on perspectival understanding. The metaphysical model of history poses a danger to human identity because it functions as a counter-memory. Its purpose is not to recover the roots of identity but rather to undermine them. The historical sense differs from metaphysical history in that it seeks to reveal the ruptures, discontinuities, and fractures that traverse historical development.

Accordingly, history should be employed as a critical method for judging the past and severing its roots in order to eliminate the layers of sanctity produced by metaphysics. Nietzsche further argues that history often harms the life of peoples more than it benefits them, contributing to the paralysis of life itself. Therefore, historical consciousness must replace traditional history as a new mode of practice, allowing history to escape the grip of metaphysics and become an effective instrument of genealogy (Badawi, 1981, p. 205).

Nietzsche also maintains that the more value we attribute to history, the weaker and more exhausted real life becomes. Excessive historical knowledge distances us from reality and leads us to inhabit a diseased world. He even portrays professional historians as individuals whose personalities are weakened and erased in order to make room for others. Such individuals become deprived of will and taste, resembling priests belonging to a family of ascetics. Nietzsche attributes these characteristics to historians because they have not yet learned how to make history serve life. Instead, they should expose the great struggles that exist among peoples rather than presenting history as a metaphysical body of knowledge.

CONCLUSION

Within the framework of genealogical critique, the philosopher assumes the role of a physician of modern civilization. The task of philosophy is to expand the domains of critical knowledge that have been obscured by metaphysical historical knowledge.

Nietzsche's concern with historical studies and his call for their critique are clearly expressed in *Untimely Meditations*, where he argues that metaphysical historical knowledge leads to several harmful consequences:

- It weakens human personality and creates a prior opposition between the inner and the outer dimensions of existence.
- It privileges one historical era over another, portraying one period as an age of virtue and justice and another as an age of vice.
- It confuses the instincts of a people and hinders the maturation of both individuals and communities.
- It fosters the illusion of humanity's old age and encourages the belief that the self is merely a late imitator of what has already existed.

These are, therefore, the negative consequences produced by the metaphysics of history. It generates emptiness within the self, alienates individuals from their lived reality, and burdens memory with illusions and false certainties.

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Author Contributions

Halim Benhebri and Akram Belkhiri jointly conceived the study, conducted the literature review, developed the conceptual framework, analyzed Nietzsche's philosophical texts, interpreted the findings, drafted the manuscript, critically revised the article, and approved the final version for publication. Both authors contributed equally to this work.

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The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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AI Use Disclosure

Artificial intelligence tools were used solely for language refinement and editorial assistance where appropriate. The conceptual framework, philosophical analysis, interpretation of Nietzsche's works, and all scholarly conclusions were developed, verified, and approved exclusively by the authors, who assume full responsibility for the accuracy and originality of the manuscript.

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