

Danish literary historian Georg Brandes put due emphasis on this issue in his 1888 Nietzsche lectures — whose topics were received with enthusiasm even by Nietzsche himself — and he did so again in a 1889 essay on “Nietzsche’s aristocratic radicalism.” In his correspondence with Nietzsche, Brandes identified psychology as an especially effective and crucially important tool of philosophical investigation in the Nietzschean *oeuvre*, and — with Nietzsche’s personal agreement — localized its roots within a stimulating interdisciplinary and interartistic environment. In particular, when Brandes portrayed Nietzsche’s personal psychological stance, he foregrounded Nietzsche’s Dostoevsky interpretation and Ibsen, Strindberg and Kierkegaard’s “psychological problems,” in addition to the influence of French moralists and early psychologists. Thus, Brandes and Nietzsche explicitly referred to several crucial psychological sources that Pippin does not even begin to touch upon in his book.

The “*psychologist Nietzsche*” has been in the centre of interest ever since Nietzsche’s days; in nearly every decade since can we find at least three or four works that are relevant to the Nietzsche discourse at large and whose title includes ‘psychology’ or some cognate concept. During the triumphant years of psychoanalysis this number increased by several orders of magnitude. Among the great, “national” (i.e., German, French, North-American, Spanish, etc.) Nietzsche discourses that have proved to be crucial for the whole of philosophical thinking, it is the North-American Nietzsche discourse, e.g. that of Pippin’s, whose main pillar, Walter Kaufman’s *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (1950) also presents the Nietzschean oeuvre in explicit psychological context. This does not mean that it would necessarily be difficult or impossible to say something novel and substantial in this matter. Not even Pippin’s book can make us forget how modestly contemporary philosophy utilizes psychology in the Nietzsche research, how scarcely Nietzsche scholarship is exploited in contemporary psychology, and how difficult contemporary forward-thinking representatives of psychology find it to deal with Nietzsche. This is extremely unfortunate because Nietzsche discusses many issues that should be addressed in the framework of contemporary psychology, a discourse in which moral issues are constantly being “rediscovered.” Philosophers should also take a larger share in building a bridge between philosophy and psychology. Significant attempts to build this bridge, however, are yet to come, as is unintentionally demonstrated by Pippin’s book.

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Paweł Pieniązek. *Sovereignty and Modernity: A Study in the History of Poststructuralist Reception of Nietzsche’s Thought*. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2006. 517 pp.

Paweł Pieniązek is a distinguished Polish scholar. Beginning from the late 1980’s when democracy had finally triumphed in Poland and opened the country to the advanced theories discussed in the western humanities, it was Pieniązek who in a

perennial cooperation with Bogdan Banasiak and Krzysztof Matuszewski from the University in Lodz has made a colossal effort to introduce to Polish readers the philosophy of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Pierre Klossowski, Georges Bataille and Gilles Deleuze. By popularizing the major works of “French Theory” in a series of highly valued translations, insightful commentaries and interpretations, along with colleagues, Pieniążek has earned the much-deserved status of a pioneer and a luminary of the Polish reception of poststructuralism and postmodernism.

Pieniążek’s *Sovereignty and Modernity: A Study in the History of Poststructuralist Reception of Nietzsche’s Thought* is his most extensive contribution to Nietzsche studies. The book draws on almost a decade of work involving teaching, research and publications, summing up the author’s investigations in French poststructuralist Nietzsche’s reception.

The author’s point of departure and his working hypothesis do not seem surprising. Following the general tendency, Pieniążek argues that Nietzsche’s thought has been a major source of inspiration for French poststructuralism. The main representatives of this current: Maurice Blanchot, Georges Bataille and Pierre Klossowski, followed by the younger generation of thinkers such as Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, have worked out the key assumptions of their conceptions in constant reference to the thoroughly read and personally lived through oeuvre of Nietzsche.

To each of the mentioned theorists Pieniążek devotes a chapter whose title tellingly exposes the specificity and dynamics of the Nietzschean thought under investigation: “Bataille: Between the Immediate Experience and Transgression — The Ecstatic and Mystical Nietzsche”; “Klossowski: The Mysticism of Simulacrum — The Gnostic Nietzsche”; “Blanchot: The Ascesis of Transgression — The Frenetic Nietzsche”; “Deleuze: From Ontology of Becoming to the Philosophy of Difference — Nietzsche the Pluralist”; “Derrida: Transgression as Deconstruction — The Textual Nietzsche.”

Presenting this well-informed and perceptive study of Nietzsche’s influence on poststructuralism, Pieniążek reveals more than promised in the introduction to the book. He does not only discuss the selected conceptions in an extent that would allow him to highlight the overwhelming presence of Nietzsche’s thought in them. Instead, he produces a series of highly instructive mini-monographs of the French philosophers, showing diachronically the development of their thought and pinpointing the theoretical difficulties the philosophies in question faced at various levels of their evolution. In this way we receive an exceptionally lucid book in which “The Poststructuralist Nietzsche” is explained in depth in a way that simultaneously provides many insights into the complex history of poststructuralism itself.

However, it is not this merit that testifies to the greatest value of Pieniążek’s endeavor. This value is for us to be seen in the “Conclusion” of the book which reveals the author’s critical passion in developing and supporting his — hitherto only vaguely signaled — conviction as to the necessity of salvaging Nietzsche from the “claws” of the poststructuralist theory and essentially correcting the philosopher’s much manipulated image.

This conviction is articulated in two mutually illuminating theses: the first one states that the “failure” of Nietzsche’s oeuvre — interpreted in terms of his ultimate inability to ground the new non-metaphysical and non-nihilistic conception of man and culture — has been the *condition* for the rise of poststructuralism. Using Nietzsche as a powerful ally, poststructuralism has argued for the impossibility of introducing any form of socio-political order without resorting to ever new forms of totalitarian violence hiding behind them the allegedly inevitable metaphysical thinking. As a result of this disillusionment poststructuralism channels all its intellectual potential into the decentering of the lifeworld in which it not only refuses to build any form of stability, but wishes to destroy every unity, certainty and order it encounters by exposing its totalitarianism.”

The second thesis results from the first one and states that the poststructuralists have largely ignored the original *cultural* thrust of Nietzsche’s thought. By drawing from it a much limited body of ideas which, in addition, they have interpreted one-sidedly and partially, they have failed to account for their ambivalent status in Nietzsche and thus paradoxically “betrayed” their master thinker on various fronts. By conscientiously effacing the normative dimension of Nietzsche’s philosophy, the poststructuralists have revealed the tacitly nihilist — albeit hidden behind the veil of declared anti-dogmatism, liberalism and egalitarianism — face of their philosophies and proved that it is by no accident that the whole schema/formation can be seen as locating itself in the very structure of modernity’s growing nihilism which Nietzsche so desperately tried to overcome.

The final part of the book is different in tone. Every sentence seems to testify to a crisis that Pieniążek has undergone in his struggle with Nietzsche and his involvement in modernity. The author renounces the position of the historian of philosophy and presents himself as a thinker deeply moved by the fate of the “genius analyst” and “philosopher of culture” who in his effort to save culture from nihilism has been misunderstood by his French successors. Moreover, according to Pieniążek, Nietzsche could not evade the ambivalent logic of modernity in which the same categories of its description may simultaneously reveal their creative and nihilist aspect. It was on this ground of indeterminacy and undecidability that French poststructuralism could have been born and harbored. The book’s conclusion makes clear that it is its overt sympathy for those exact modern phenomena whose *ambivalence* left Nietzsche’s thought in an impasse that makes of poststructuralism quite an “un-Nietzschean” philosophy. The ambivalent phenomena in question are: the total critique, skepticism, individualism, perspectivism, and pluralism.

Pieniążek convincingly argues that poststructuralists have exploited only the “negative” side of Nietzsche’s work. The French thinkers found in it the conception of philosophy as a total critique and endless demystification of metaphysical claims. It is reminded that Nietzsche himself advocated the radicalization of critique advancing the thesis on the binary-oppositional character of our thinking. On the other hand, however, it was Nietzsche who anxiously observed the growing atrophy of the creative powers of culture which in his later works he linked to the

phenomenon of the dissolution of the absolute values waning under ruthless critique leveled on them by the rampant criticism.



Poststructuralism's historical error consists according to Pieniżek in approving the Nietzschean passion for critique without ever acknowledging the fact that for Nietzsche, "to philosophize with a hammer" does not only mean to joyfully destroy metaphysical idols, but to diagnose and intensively treat culture from its fateful loss of center as well. The hammer needs to stop at one moment and the individual must be able to finally say: "Here is my little island of sense and the truth that I believe in. I do not want anyone to destroy it and so I will fight for it!" Here we follow Pieniżek's articulation of this particular problem.

It has become a question of a philosophical *common place* to see in Nietzsche the patron of the poststructuralist idea of pluralism and perspectivism. The "anxiety of totality" and an aversion to any form of a positive, stable resolution of e.g., a dilemma or a controversy results in limitless criticism that undermines every construction of sense and in multiplication of ever new perspectives which do not compete with each other since they are restricted by the fear of the tyranny of the "Right One." Poststructuralism as interpreted by Pieniżek, does not wish to differentiate between perspectives, interpretations and values, but levels the differences and evades the necessity of creating hierarchies. The extreme example of such a position is to be found in Derrida's game of undecidability. Which of the poststructuralist readers of Nietzsche would dare to argue about values? — one is led to ask. Conversely, in Nietzsche the acceptance of the "plurality" of truths, opinions and perspectives has never implied a relativistic position on the question of which of them and why one is bound to choose. For Pieniżek, it is essential to remember that Nietzsche did distinguish between the soft and the strong type of skepticism. By the same token, he sensed the difference between a weak and a strong type of perspectivism. The strong, truly Nietzschean perspectivist will never disavow his or her position, unlike the "weak" one who "tolerates" every interpretation and welcomes their inconstancy as something inevitable and essentially "good."

Pieniążek challenges the interpretations produced in the circles of the enthusiasts of the “Postmodern” or “Poststructuralist Nietzsche” and delegitimizes the ambitious, albeit reduced image of Nietzsche as a prototype for deconstruction. Pieniążek’s *Sovereignty and Modernity* is all the more interesting in that it comes from an author genuinely fascinated with poststructuralism as a philosophy which has largely managed to discredit the metaphysical tradition of European thought. Writing his Nietzschean *summa*, Pieniążek has apparently settled accounts with poststructuralism: the years of intensive reflection and new readings have brought about the fall of the hitherto esteemed image of the philosophy in question as Nietzsche’s legitimate successor and replaced it with a much more sophisticated, complex and above all tragic vision. This new vision — well-documented with precisely selected citations, filled with convincing arguments and elegantly written — entices us to be more critical in our readings of Nietzsche and his poststructuralist interpreters. *Sovereignty and Modernity* is a powerful objection to construing Nietzsche as a patron of the skeptical, relativistic, liberal and egalitarian tendencies of our contemporary culture.

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Vanessa Lemm, *Nietzsche's Animal Philosophy: Culture, Politics, and the Animality of the Human Being*, Fordham University Press: New York, 2009; ix-xiv; 244 pp. Bibliography; index.

In *Nietzsche's Animal Philosophy*, Vanessa Lemm contends, *contra* Heidegger, that Nietzsche’s unique understanding of the animal plays a pivotal role in his greater philosophy and pervades his views on the tension between culture and civilization, the play of memory and forgetfulness, the politics of domination, and the natures of truth and historicity. She insists that the key to grasping the relationship between animality and humanity is culture. For Nietzsche, culture consists not in humanity’s conquest and transcendence of animality, but rather the resistance and return “of and to” its animality. Lemm argues that Nietzsche had a “biocentric” understanding of life that navigates the extremes of biologism and anthropocentrism, where biologism interprets culture as a means toward the end of species-preservation, and anthropocentrism interprets culture as the mastery and conquest of animality. Her basic conclusion is that Nietzsche’s philosophy of the animal invites us to rethink the traditional dichotomy between the human and the animal in a number of vital contexts in order to resist forms of political domination and exploitation and promote a healthier form of the philosophical life.

In the first chapter, “Culture and Civilization,” Lemm introduces a conceptual dyad foundational to her project: culture and civilization. For Nietzsche, the salient sense of these terms hinges on their relation to animality. He critiques civilization because it “reflects a process of moral and rational improvement of the human being which does not cultivate animal life but ‘extirpates’ and represses it” (4). Where