

CHAPTER THREE

Biopower and Biopotentiality

Grand Politics

It's no coincidence that the preceding chapter closed with the name of Nietzsche. He, more than anyone else, registers the exhaustion of modern political categories and the consequent disclosing of a new horizon of sense. We already gestured to him in the brief genealogy first sketched of the immunitary paradigm, but that reference isn't enough to restore the strategic relevance that his thought has for my own analysis generally. Nietzsche isn't simply the one who brings the immunitary lexicon to its full development, but is also the one who makes evident its negative power, the uncontrollable nihilistic dissipation in meaning that pushes it in a self-dissolving direction. This is not to say that he is able to escape it, to withdraw himself completely from its growing shadow. Indeed, we will see that for an important part of his perspective, it will result in reproducing and making it more powerful than before.¹ Yet this doesn't erase the deconstructive force his work exercises on other texts with regard to modern immunization, which prefigures the lines of a different conceptual language.

The reasons why such a language, irrespective of its presumed affiliations, has never been elaborated, nor even fully deciphered, are many, not the least of which is the enigmatic character that increasingly comes to characterize Nietzsche's writing. My impression, nevertheless, is that these reasons refer on the whole to the missing or mistaken characterization of its internal logic or, better perhaps; its basic tonality of logic, that only today, precisely from the categorical scenario utilized by Foucault, can be seen in

all its import. I am alluding not only to the two interventions that Foucault dedicated to Nietzsche—even if the second, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” more than any other (because it centered on the genealogical method), brings us directly to the question at hand: precisely how far does the Foucauldian analysis move within the biopolitical orbit? It is precisely the point of gravitation or the paradigmatic axis from which Nietzsche's entire production, with its internal twists and fractures, which begins to reveal a semantic nucleus that is inaccessible in the interpretive frames in which it has been placed until now. Otherwise, how would it be possible that something, let's call it a decisive stitch in the conceptual material, escaped our attention: that Nietzsche has been read not only in heterogeneous but in mutually opposing terms (even before he was *totus politicus* for some on the “right” or the left” and radically impolitical for others?)² Without even arriving at his more recent interpreters, if we simply compare Löwith's thesis that “this political perspective stands not at the margins of Nietzsche's philosophy but rather at its middle” with that of Georges Bataille, according to which “the movement of Nietzsche's thought implicates a defeat of the diverse possible foundations for contemporary politics,” we can understand the *impasse* from which Nietzschean literature still seems unable to extricate itself.³ Probably it is because both the “hyperpolitical” and the “impolitical” readings clash with mirror-like results within the notion of “politics”; Nietzsche's text is explicitly extraneous to such a notion, favoring instead another and different conceptual lexicon that today we can best describe as “biopolitical.”

It is with respect to such a conclusion that Foucault's essay “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” opens a significant tear in perspective.⁴ In it Foucault essentially thematizes the opacity of the origin, the interval that separates the origin from itself, or better, from that which is presupposed in it as perfectly conforming to its intimate essence. Thus, what is put up for discussion isn't only the linearity of a history destined to substantiate the conformity of the origin to the end—the finality of the origin and the originality of the end—but also the entire conceptual foundation on which such a conception is based. The entire Nietzschean polemic vis-à-vis a history that is incapable of coming to terms with its own nonhistorical layer—and therefore to extend to itself that thorough historicization that it demands be applied to everything but itself—takes aim at the presumptive airs of universality on behalf of conceptual figures born as a result of specific demands to which it is tied in both their logic and development. When Nietzsche

sees in the origin of things not the identity, unity, or purity of an uncontaminated essence, but rather the laceration, the multiplicity, and the alteration of something that never corresponds to that which it declares to be; when he discerns the tumult of bodies and the proliferation of errors as well as the usurpation of sense and vertigo of violence behind the ordered succession of events and the network of meanings in which they seem to consist; when, in short, he traces the dissociation and the contrast in the heart itself of their apparent conciliation, he profoundly questions the entire regulating form that European society has for centuries given itself. Furthermore, he interrogates the exchange that has often been verified, between cause and effect, function and value, and reality and appearance. This is true not only for modern juridical-political categories, beginning with equality, which practically all of the Nietzschean corpus contests, to that of liberty, deprived of its presumed absoluteness and reduced to the constitutive aporia that reverses it into its opposite, to law [*diritto*] itself, identified in its original semblance of naked command. It is especially true for the entire *dispositif* that constitutes both the analytic paradigm and the normative scenario of these categories, namely, that self-legitimizing narrative according to which the forms of political power appear to be the intentional result of the combined will of single subjects united in a founding pact. When Nietzsche describes the state—which is to say the most developed juridical and political construct of the modern epoch—as “some horde or other of blond predatory animals, a race of conquerors and masters which, itself organized for war and with the strength to organize others, unhesitatingly lays its fearful paws on a population which may be hugely superior in numerical terms but remains shapeless and nomadic,” one can consider “that sentimentalism which would have it begin with a ‘contract’” liquidated.⁵

From these first annotations the thread that links them to the proposed hermeneutic activated a century afterwards by Foucault is already clear. If an individual subject of desire and knowledge is withdrawn from and antecedent to the forms of power that structure it; if what we call “peace” is nothing but the rhetorical representation of relations of force that emerge periodically out of continuous conflict; if rules and laws are nothing other than rituals destined to sanction the domination of one over another—all the instruments laid out by modern political philosophy are destined to reveal themselves as simultaneously false and ineffective. False, or purely apologetic, because they are incapable of restoring the effective dynamics

in operation behind their surface figures. Ineffective because, as we saw in the preceding chapter, they bump up more and more violently against their own internal contradictions until they break apart. What breaks apart, precisely, more than the single categorical seams, is the logic itself of the mediation on which they depend, no longer able to hold or to strengthen a content that is in itself elusive of any formal control. What that content might be for Nietzsche is well known: it concerns the *bíos* that gives it the intensely biopolitical connotation in Nietzsche’s discussion, to which I’ve already referred. All of Nietzschean criticism has accented the vital element—life as the only possible representation of being.⁶ Nevertheless, what has a clear ontological relevance is always interpreted politically; not in the sense of any form that is superimposed from the outside onto the material of life—it is precisely this demand, experienced in all its possible combinations by modern political philosophy, which has been shown to be lacking in foundation. But, as the constitutive character of life itself, life is always already political, if by “political” one intends not what modernity wants—which is to say a neutralizing mediation of immunitary nature—but rather an originary modality in which the living *is* or in which being *lives*. Far from all the contemporary philosophies of life to which his position is from time to time compared, this is the manner in which Nietzsche thinks the political dimension of *bíos*: not as character, law, or destination of something that lives previously, but as the power that informs life from the beginning in all its extension, constitution, and intensity. That life as well as the will to power—according to the well-known Nietzschean formulation—doesn’t mean that life desires power nor that power captures, directs, or develops a purely biological life. On the contrary, they signify that life does not know modes of being apart from those of its continual strengthening.

To grasp the characteristic trait that Nietzsche alludes to in the expression “grand politics,” we need to look precisely at the indissoluble web of life and power [*potenza*]: in the double sense that living as such is only strengthened internally and that the power is imaginable only in terms of a living organism. Here as well emerges the essential sense of the Nietzschean project for constructing a “new party of life,” less tied to contextual contingencies. Leaving aside the prescriptive, troubling contents with which he from time to time thought to fill them, what matters here in relation to our argument is the distance such a reference constitutes with regard to every mediated, dialectical, and external modality that seeks to understand the relation between politics and life. In this sense, we begin to see how

much Nietzsche himself will say about it in *Beyond Good and Evil*, though such an observation could also be extended to his entire body of work. It is “in all essentials a *critique of modernity*, not excluding the modern sciences, modern arts, and even modern politics, along with pointers to a contrary type that is as little modern as possible—a noble, Yes-saying type.”⁷ Apart from the problematic identity of the kind prefigured by Nietzsche, what remains beyond any doubt is its polemical objective: modernity as the formal negation, or negative form, of its own vital content. What unifies his logical, aesthetic, and political categories is precisely the constitutive antinomy that wants to assume, preserve, and develop an immediate, what Nietzsche will call “life” through a series of mediations objectively destined to contradict them (because in fact they are obligated to negate their character of immediacy). From here the rejection not of this or of that institution, but of the institution, insofar as it is an institution and thus separated from and therefore given to destroying that power of life that it has also been charged with safeguarding. In a paragraph titled appropriately enough “Critique of Modernity,” Nietzsche states that “our institutions are no longer any good: this is universally accepted. But it is not their fault, it is *ours*. Once we have lost all the instincts from which institutions grow, we lose the institutions themselves because we are no longer good enough for them.”⁸ What produces such a self-dissolving effect is the incapacity of modern institutions—from party to parliament to the state—to relate directly to life and therefore their tendency to slip into the same vacuum that such an interval of difference creates. This is separate from the political position chosen beforehand: what matters, negatively, is its not being biopolitical—the scission that opens between the two terms of the expression in a form that wrings *bios* from politics and an originary politicized life, or better, from its constitutive power.

From here, in the affirmative reversal of such a negativity, the positive meaning of “grand politics” emerges:

The *grand* politics places physiology above all other questions—it wants to rear [*züchten*] humanity as a whole, it measures the range of the races, of peoples, of individuals according to . . . the guarantee of life they carry within them. Inexorably it puts an end to everything that is degenerate and parasitical to life.⁹

Before confronting with the requisite attention the most problematic part of the passage, that one relative to parasitic and degenerative pathology, let's linger over the passage's overall meaning. We know the emphasis Nietzsche

placed on physiological studies in opposition to every form of idealistic thought. From this point of view, the placement of psychological studies in a culture is clear, and more so given the language strongly influenced by Darwin (despite whatever the relevant distinctions that separate Nietzsche from Darwin in a form that we will have occasion to examine in detail).¹⁰ But we are not concerned only with Darwin. What Nietzsche wants to assert is that, at least beginning from a certain moment that coincides with the irreversible crisis of the modern political lexicon, the only politics not reduced to the mere preservation of already existing institutions is the one that confronts the problem of life from the perspective of the human species and of the mobile thresholds that define it, by contiguity or difference, with respect to other living species. Contrary to the presuppositions of modern individualism, the individual—which Nietzsche vindicates and exalts in its character of exceptionality—cannot be thought except against the backdrop of large ethnosocial aggregates that always emerge by way of contrast.

Nevertheless, this first consideration of method doesn't completely answer the question that Nietzsche poses, one that calls into question something whose extraordinary scope and ambivalent effects we are only able to make out today. It concerns the idea that the human species is never given once for all time, but is susceptible, in good and evil, to being molded in forms for which we do not have an exact knowledge, but which nevertheless constitute for us both an absolute risk and an inalienable challenge. “Why,” Nietzsche asks himself in a crucial passage, “shouldn't we realize in man what the Chinese are able to do with the tree, so thus it produces on one side roses and on another pears? These natural processes of the *selection of man*, for example, which until now have been exercised in an infinitely slow and awkward way, could be taken over by man himself.”¹¹ Rather than being disconcerted by the irregular approach of linking man to plant (not to mention that of breeding), what we need to foreground is Nietzsche's precocious understanding that in the centuries to come the political terrain of comparison and battle will be the one relative to redefining the human species in a scenario of progressive displacement of its borders with respect to what is not human, which is to say, on the one hand to the animal and on the other to the inorganic.

So too the central emphasis attributed to the body against its “disparagers” has to be traced back to the specificity to the biopolitical lexicon in the sense of the species. Naturally, a comprehensive polemic emerges that takes aim against a philosophical, spiritualistic, or abstractly rational tradition. We

recall that reason just as soul is an integral part of an organism that has its unique expression in the body, which in turn doesn't weigh indifferently in the deconstruction of the most influential metaphysical categories. However, to reread the entire history of Europe through "the underlying theme of the body" is an option that cannot be truly understood outside of an established biopolitical lexicon. Certainly, using a physiological terminology in politics is anything but original. Still, the absolute originality of the Nietzschean text resides in the transferral of the relation between state and body from the classical level of analogy or metaphor, in which the ancient and modern tradition positions it, to that of an effectual reality: no politics exists other than that of bodies, conducted *on* bodies, *through* bodies. In this sense, one can rightly say that physiology, which Nietzsche never detaches from psychology, is the very same material of politics. It is its pulsating body. But if we are to reveal all of the political pregnancy of the body, we must also examine it from another angle, not only that of the physiological declination of politics, but also that of the political characterization of physiology. If the body is the material of politics, politics—naturally, in the sense that Nietzsche confers on the expression—takes the form of the body. It is this "form"—there is no life that isn't in some way formed, thus a "form of life"—that keeps Nietzsche distant from any type of biological determinism, as Heidegger well understood.¹² Not only because every conception of the body presupposes a later philosophical orientation, but because the body is constituted according to the principle of politics—struggle as the first and final dimension of existence. Struggle outside oneself, toward other bodies, but also within as the unstoppable conflict among its organic components. Before being in itself [*in-sé*], the body is always *against*, even with respect to itself. In this sense, Nietzsche can say that "every philosophy that ranks peace above war" is "a *misunderstanding of the body*."¹³ This is because in its continual instability the body is nothing but the always provisional result of the conflict of forces that constitute it.

We know how much the Nietzschean conception of the body has weighed on contemporary biological and medical theories in authors such as Roux, Mayer, Foster, and Ribot.¹⁴ Our perspective emphasizes, however, that all of them derive from Nietzsche the dual principle that the body is produced by determinate forces and that such forces are always in potential conflict among them.¹⁵ It is not a *res extensa*, substance or material, but the material site of such a conflict and of the conditions of domination and

subjection, and hierarchy and resistance, that from time to time determine it. From here it is a short distance to the essentially political and hence biopolitical semantics that the same definition of life assumes.

One could define life as a durable form of *process of determinations of force* in which different forces in conflict grow in unequal measure. In this sense there is an opposition in obeying: one's own force is in fact not lost. In the same way, in commanding, we have to admit that the absolute force of the adversary is not defeated, absorbed, or dissolved. "To command" and "to obey" are complementary forms of the struggle.¹⁶

It is precisely because the power of single opponents is never absolute; he that provisionally loses always has a way of exerting his own residual forces such that the battle never ends. The battle never ends with a definitive victory or unconditional surrender. In the body neither sovereignty—the utter domination of another—nor the equality among many exists as they are perennially engaged in mutually overtaking each other. The uninterrupted polemic that Nietzsche wages against modern political philosophy has precisely to do with such a presupposition: if the battle within the single body is in itself infinite; if bodies therefore cannot distance themselves from the principle of struggle because struggle is the same form as life: how then can the order that conditions the survival of subjects to the neutralization of the conflict be realized? What condemns modern political concepts to ineffectuality is exactly this split between life and conflict—the idea of preserving life through the abolition of conflict. One could say that the heart of Nietzsche's philosophy will be found in his rebuttal of such a conception, which is to say in the extreme attempt to bring again to the surface that harsh and profound relation that holds together politics and life in the unending form of struggle.

Counterforces

From these initial considerations it is already clear that Nietzsche, without formulating the term, anticipated the entire biopolitical course that Foucault then defined and developed: from the centrality of the body as the genesis and termination of sociopolitical dynamics, to the founding role of struggle and also of war, to the configuration of juridical-institutional orders, to finally the function of resistance as the necessary counterpoint to the deployment of power. One can say that all the Foucauldian categories are present in a nutshell in Nietzsche's conceptual language: "War is another

matter”—so Nietzsche notes in the text that functions as the definitive balance sheet of his entire work. “Being *able* to be an enemy, *being* an enemy—perhaps that presupposes a strong nature; in any case, it belongs to every strong nature. It needs objects of resistance; hence it *looks for* what resists: the *aggressive pathos* belongs just as necessary to strength as vengefulness and rancor belong to weakness.”¹⁷ Nevertheless, this passage already leads to an analytic landscape not limited to foreshadowing the Foucauldian theorization of biopolitics, but which in some ways also moves beyond it, or better, enriches it with a conceptual structure that contributes to un-tangling the underlying antinomy to which I referred in the opening chapter: to that immunitary paradigm that represents the peculiar figure of Nietzschean biopolitics. According to Nietzsche, reality is constituted by a complex of forces counterposed in a conflict that never ends conclusively because those who lose always maintain a potential of energy, which is able not only to limit the power of those who dominate, but, at times, to reverse the predominance in their own favor.

In Nietzsche’s text, this systemic description, so to speak, is characterized by a tonality that is anything but neutral, but which is indeed decidedly critical: in the sense that once the play of forces has been defined from the objective point of view of quantity, assessing their quality remains open. Such forces, in short, are not in the least equivalent, so that it matters a great deal in a given phase which of these expands and which, on the contrary, contracts. Indeed, it is precisely on this that the larger trend depends—the “health,” to adopt Nietzsche’s lexicon—of the totality constituted by their struggle. There are forces that create and others that destroy; forces that strengthen and others that diminish; forces that stimulate and others that debilitate. Yet the peculiar characteristic of the Nietzschean logic is that the most important distinction between these forces doesn’t pass through their constructive or destructive effect, but rather involves a more profound distinction, relative to the more or less original character of the forces themselves. The question of immunization bears upon this aspect, not only the objective emphasis that it comes to assume, but also the explicitly negative connotation that Nietzsche gives immunity, in an opposite trend to the positive connotation that modern philosophy has conferred upon it. Such a hermeneutic difference or even deviation doesn’t relate to the preserving, salvific role that it exercises toward life—Nietzsche acknowledges it in the same way as does Hobbes—but instead to its logical-

temporal arrangement in relation to the origin. To say this in the most concise way possible: while for Hobbes the immunitary demand comes first—it is the initial passion that moves men dominated by fear—for Nietzsche such a demand for protection is second with respect to another more original impulse, constituted we know by the will to power. It isn’t that life doesn’t demand its own preservation—otherwise the subject of every possible expansion would vanish—but it is in a form that, in contrast to all the modern philosophies of *conservatio*, is subordinated to the primary imperative of development, with respect to which it is reduced to a simple consequence:

Physiologists need to think twice before putting the instinct of “preservation” as the cardinal instinct of an organic being. Above all, what lives wants to *give vent* to its own force; “preservation” is only one of the consequences of that.¹⁸

Here we are concerned with an argument to which Nietzsche himself assigns such prominence that he situates it exactly at the point of rupture with the entire tradition that precedes him: not only, he essentially adopts it against the philosopher to whom he otherwise is closest (even from this perspective), namely, “consumptive Spinoza”.¹⁹

The wish to preserve oneself is the symptom of a condition of distress, of a limitation of the really fundamental instinct of life, which aims at *the expansion of power*, and wishing for that, frequently risks and even sacrifices self-preservation.²⁰

The text cited above appears even more clear-cut than the preceding one: preservation isn’t to be considered only incidental and derivative with respect to the will to power, but in latent contradiction to it. And this is because the strengthening of the vital organism doesn’t suffer limits or reductions, but, on the contrary, because it tends continually to move beyond and transgress them. It moves as a vortex or a flame, disrupting or burning every defensive partition, every liminal diaphragm, every border of definition. It crosses what is diverse and joins what is separate until it absorbs, incorporates, and devours everything that it meets. Life isn’t only bound to overcome every obstacle that it comes up against, but is, in its own essence, the overcoming of the other and finally of itself: “And this secret life itself told me: ‘Behold,’ it said, ‘*I am that which must always overcome itself.*’”²¹ By now Nietzsche’s discourse bends in an ever more extreme

direction, which seems to include its own contrary in a powerful self-deconstructive movement. Identifying life with its own overcoming means that it is no longer “in itself”—it is always projected beyond itself. But if life always pushes outside itself, or admits its outside within it, which is to say, to affirm itself, life must continually be altered and therefore be negated insofar as it is life. Its full realization coincides with a process of extroversion or exteriorization that is destined to carry it into contact with its own “not”; to make of it something that isn’t simply life—neither only life nor life only—but something that is both more than life and other than life: precisely *not* life, if for “life” we understand something that is stable, as what remains essentially identical to itself. Nietzsche translates this intentionally paradoxical passage into the thesis that “human existence is merely an uninterrupted past tense, a thing that lives by denying and consuming itself, by opposing itself.”²² It is the same reason for which in *Beyond Good and Evil* he can write both that “life is *essentially* a process of appropriating, injuring, overpowering the alien and the weaker, oppressing, being harsh, imposing your own form, incorporating, and at least, the very least, exploiting” and simultaneously that life brings to the foreground “the feeling of fullness, of power that wants to overflow, the happiness associated with a high state of tension, the consciousness of a wealth that wants to make gifts and give way.”²³

At the bottom of such a conceptual tension, or indeed bipolarity, which seems to push Nietzsche’s discourse in diverging directions, is a presupposition that is to be made explicit. Once again Nietzsche—in contrast to the largely dominant paradigm of modern anthropology, but also differently from the Darwinian conception of “struggle for existence”—holds that “in nature it isn’t extreme angst that dominates, but rather superabundance and profusion pushed to the absurd.”²⁴ Life doesn’t evolve from an initial deficit but from an excess, which provides its double-edged impulse. On the one hand, it is dedicated to imposing itself over and incorporating everything that it meets. On the other hand, once it has been filled to the brim with its own acquisitive capacity, it is prone to tip over, dissipating its own surplus of goods, but also itself, what Nietzsche will define as “the bestowing virtue.”²⁵ Here one already begins to glimpse the most troubling aspects of Nietzschean discourse: entrusted to itself, freed from its restraints, life tends to destroy and to destroy itself. It tends to dig a crevasse on every side as well as within, one into which life continually threatens to slip. Such a self-dissolving tendency isn’t to be understood as a defect of nature

or as a breach that is bound to damage an initial perfection. Nor is it an accident or the beginning that suddenly rises up or penetrates into life’s domain. Rather, it is the constitutive character of life. Life doesn’t fall in an abyss; rather, *it is* the abyss in which life itself risks falling. Not in a given moment, but already at the origin, from the moment that that abyss is nothing other than the *interval* of difference that withdraws the origin from every identifying consistency: the in/origineity of the origin that the Nietzschean genealogy ultimately traced to the source of being-in-life. In order to find an image or a conceptual figure of such a *deficiency for excess*, it is enough simply to return to one of the primary and most recurrent categories for Nietzsche, namely, that of the Dionysian. The Dionysian is life itself in absolute (or dissolute) form, unbound from any presupposition, abandoned to its original flow. Pure presence and therefore unrepresentable as such because it is without form, in perennial transformation, in the continuous overcoming of its own internal limits, of every principle of individuation and of separation between beings, genus, and species, but simultaneously of its external limits, that is, of its own categorical definition. How do we determine what not only escapes determinacy, but is also the greatest power of indeterminacy? And then do we differentiate what overwhelms all identities—and therefore all differences—in a sort of infinite metonymical contagion, that doesn’t withhold anything, in a continual expropriation of everything distinct and the exteriorization of everything within? We can see in the Dionysian—understood as the in/original dimension of life in its entirety—the trace or the prefiguration of the common *munus* in all of its semantic ambivalence; as the donative elision of individual limits, but also as the infective and therefore destructive power of itself and the other. It is delinquency both in the literal significance of a lack and in the figurative sense of violence. Pure relation and therefore absence or implosion of subjects in relation to each other: a relation without subjects.

Against this possible semantic declension, against the vacuum of sense that opens at the heart of a life that is ecstatically full of itself, the general process of immunization is triggered, which coincides in the final analysis with all of Western civilization, but which finds in modernity its most representative space: “The democratization of Europe is, it seems, a link in the chain of those tremendous *prophylactic measures* which are the conception of modern times.”²⁶ Nietzsche is the first not only to have intuited the absolute importance of immunization, but to have reconstructed its entire history in its genesis and internal articulations. Certainly, other authors—

from Hobbes to Tocqueville—recognized the onset of immunization first in the fear of violent death and then in the demand for protection with respect to the danger of individual passions that are highly combustible. But the absolute specificity of the Nietzschean perspective with regard to antecedent and successive diagnoses lies, on the one hand, in the return of the immunitary paradigm to its originary biological matrix, and, on the other, in the capacity to reconstruct critically the negative dialectic of the paradigm. As to the first, we note that Nietzsche refers all of the *dispositifs* of knowledge, which are apparently directed to the search for truth, to the function of preservation. Truth he defines as a lie—today we would say ideology—more suitable for sheltering us from that originary fracture of sense that coincides with the potentially unlimited expansion of life.²⁷ The same is true for the logical categories, from that of identity, to cause, to non-contradiction—all understood as biological instruments necessary to facilitate survival. They serve to save our existence from what is most unbearable about it; to create the minimal conditions to orient ourselves in a world that has no origin or end. They construct barriers, limits, and embankments with respect to that common *minus* that both strengthens and devastates life, pushing it continuously beyond itself. The procedures of reason raise up an immunitary *dispositif* against that vortex that in essence we are; against the trans-individual explosion of the Dionysian and against the contagion that derives from it, one that aims at restabilizing meaning and at redrawing lost boundaries, filling up the empty spaces deepened by the power of “outside.” That outside is brought inside, or at least faced and then neutralized in the same way that what is open is contained and delimited in its most terrifying effects of incalculability, incomprehension, and unpredictability. Initially the Apollonian principle of individuation works to do this. Then, beginning with the grand Socratic therapy, followed by the entire Christian-bourgeois civilization (with an increasingly intensive and exclusive restorative expression) the following is attempted: to block the fury of becoming, the flow of transformation, the risk of metamorphosis in the “framework” of prevision and prevention.²⁸

If this is the anesthetic or prophylactic role of the forms of knowledge, the same holds true for power and for the juridical and political institutions that flank moral and religious codes, reinforcing them in a logic of mutual legitimation. Above all, these institutions are born from ancestral fear, but are always secondary with respect to the originary will to power that grips man in a way unknown to other animals: “If one considers that

man was for many hundreds of thousands of years an animal in the highest degree accessible to fear,” it seems clear that the only way of mastering it is to construct the great immunitary involucres intended to protect the human species from the explosive potential that is implicit in its instinct for unconditional affirmation.²⁹ From Greek civilization onwards, institutions constructed by men “grow out of precautionary measures designed to make them safe from one another and from their inner *explosivity*.”³⁰ The state is organized above all to defuse such explosivity, as, after all, modern political philosophy had already argued in a line of reasoning that saw in it the only way to master an otherwise lethal interindividual conflict. Nevertheless, it is precisely with regard to this last passage that Nietzsche grafts the change of theoretical paradigm that places him not only outside of that interpretive lineage, but in direct contrast with it: “The state is a prudent institution for the protection of individuals against one another,” he admits, but then soon after adds, “if it is completed and perfected too far it will in the end enfeeble the individual and, indeed, dissolve him—that is to say, thwart the original purpose of the state in the most thorough way possible.”³¹ Evidently, what is at stake is not only the ability of the state to protect but more generally the overall evaluation of the immunitary logic, which Nietzsche diametrically reverses with respect to the substantially positive one of modern anthropology.

The thesis he advances is that such a logic cures illness [*male*] in a self-contradictory form because it produces a greater illness than the one it wanted to prevent. This occurs when the decided-upon compensation, with respect to the preceding vital order, is so considerable as to create a new and more deadly disequilibrium. Just as the state homologizes through forced obedience the same individuals that it intended to free, so too do all the systems of truth, which are also necessary for correcting harmful errors and superstitions, create new and more oppressive semantic blocks that are destined to obstruct the energetic flow of existence. In both of these cases, therefore, the stability and the duration that immunitary programs assure wind up inhibiting that innovative development that they need to stimulate. Impeding the possible dissolution of the organism, they also stop its growth, condemning it to stasis and impoverishment. This is the reason why Nietzsche defines morality, religion, and metaphysics simultaneously as both medicine and disease. Not only, but as diseases stronger than the medicines that work against them because they are produced for the same use: “[T]he worst sickness of mankind originated in the way in

which they have combated their sicknesses, and what seemed to cure has in the long run produced something worse than that which it was supposed to overcome."³²

With Nietzsche we are already in a position to reconstruct the entire diagram of immunization. Immunity, because it is secondary and derivative with respect to the force that it is intent on fighting, always remains subaltern to it. Immunity negates the power of negation, at least what it considers as such. Yet it is precisely because of this that immunity continues to speak the language of the negative, which it would like to annul: in order to avoid a potential evil, it produces a real one; it substitutes an excess with a defect, a fullness with an emptiness, a plus with a minus, negating what it affirms and so doing affirming nothing other than its negation. It is what Nietzsche means by the key concept of "resentment," which he identifies with all forms of resistance or of vengeance, and which is contrasted with the originary affirmative forces of life:

For millennia this instinct for revenge has dominated humanity to such an extent that metaphysics, psychology and historical representation, and above all morality are marked by it. Wherever man has thought, even there, he has also inoculated the bacillus of revenge into things.³³

Perhaps nowhere more than here does Nietzsche penetrate so deeply into the countereffective logic of the immunitary paradigm. Furthermore, Nietzsche explicitly recognizes this as the force—weakness is also a force, albeit one that degenerates from the will to power—that characterizes the entire process of civilization. If, as often happens, we do have full knowledge of it, this is because knowledge, just like all cognitive apparatuses, is also its product. Yet what counts even more is the mode in which this force acts—or, more precisely, "reacts." Just as in every medical immunization, immunization here too injects an antigenic nucleus into the social body, which is designed to activate protective antibodies. Doing so, however, it infects the organism in preventive fashion, weakening its primogenital forces: it risks killing what it is meant to keep alive. Nevertheless, it is what the ascetic priest or the pastor of souls does with regard to the sick flock: "He brings salves and balsam, there is no doubt; but he needs to wound before he can cure; then, in relieving the pain he has inflicted, *he poisons the wound*."³⁴ More than a force that defends itself from a weakness, it is a weakness that draws off the force, draining it from within, separating it from itself. As Deleuze observed, the reactive force acts via decomposition and deviation,

subtracting its power from the active force in order to appropriate some and to divert it from its originary destination.³⁵ So doing, however, it incorporates a force that is already exhausted, thwarting its capacity to react. This force continues to react, but in a debilitated form that isn't an active response, but rather a response without action, an action that is purely imaginary. Establishing itself within the organism, be it individual or collective that it aspires to defend, the organism itself is brought to ruin. Having destroyed the active forces in order to assimilate their power, nothing remains except to direct the poison point within, until it has destroyed itself as well.

Double Negation

What has been delineated above is a paradigm of great internal complexity. Not only forces and weaknesses clash and become entangled in a knot that doesn't allow for a stable distinction to be made, but what was a force can be weakened to such an extent that it turns into its opposite, just as an initial weakness can, at a certain moment, assume the form of a force that takes possession of power. Furthermore, the same element can simultaneously constitute a force for some and a weakness for others. This happens in Christianity as well and in religion generally, which the few use instrumentally to impose their own domination over the many and which is therefore destined to reinforce the former to the detriment of the latter. In addition, it also furnishes the latter with the means to retaliate on another level against the former and to drag them down into the same vortex. Something similar can be said for art and in particular for music. They can serve as potent stimulants for our senses according to the originary meaning of the term "aesthetic"; but they can also become a sort of subtle "anesthetic" with respect to the traumas of existence. This is what happens to music of the Romantic period until Wagner. Not any different, finally, is the double [*doppia*], or better divided [*sdoppiata*], reading that Nietzsche proposes of juridical-political institutions, beginning with that of the state; from one perspective, the state is seen as the necessary bulwark against destructive conflicts, and from another it is a mechanism that inhibits vital energies that have been completely scattered. Moreover, the entire process of civilization implies consequences that are reciprocally antinomic—precisely those that concern facilitating and weakening life. And doesn't Nietzsche define history as something useful and yet harmful? In short, to live, man needs in different situations (but at times in the same situations) both one

thing and its opposite. He needs the historian and the nonhistorian, truth and lies, memory and forgetfulness, and health and disease, not to mention the dialectic between the Apollonian and the Dionysian into which all the other bipolarities finally devolve.

Such an ambivalence, or even aporeticity of judgment, derives from the mutability of perspective with which one views a given phenomenon, not to mention the always variable contingency in which it is situated. But digging deeper, the ambivalence is rooted in a contradiction that is as it were structural, according to which immunization, on the one hand, is necessary to the survival of any organism, but, on the other, is harmful because, blocking the organism's transformation, it impedes biological expansion. This in turn derives from the fact to which Nietzsche repeatedly draws attention, namely, that preservation and development, to the degree they are implicated in an indissoluble connection—that is, if something doesn't keep itself alive, it cannot develop—are in latent opposition when placed on another terrain, namely, the one decisive for the will to power. Not only, Nietzsche argues. In fact, what "is useful in relation to the acceleration of the rhythm of development is a 'use' which is different from that which refers to the maximum establishment and possible durability of what is developed," but "what is useful to the *duration* of the individual can become a disadvantage for its strength and its splendor, which is to say that what preserves the individual can hold it and block its development."³⁶ Development presupposes duration, but duration can delay or impede development. Preservation implies expansion, but expansion compromises and places preservation at risk. Here already the indissolubly tragic character of the Nietzschean perspective comes into view, not only because the effects are not directly referred back to their apparent cause, but because the wrinkle of a real autonomy opens between the one and the others: the survival of a force opposes the project of strengthening it. Limiting itself to survival, it weakens itself, flows back, and, to use the key word in Nietzschean semantics, *degenerates*, which is to say moves in the direction opposite its own generation. On the other hand, however, must we necessarily draw the paradoxical conclusion that to expand vitally, an organism has to cease to survive? Or, at a minimum, that it must face death?

This is the most extreme point of our inquiry, the conceptual intersection before which Nietzsche finds himself. In the course of his work (and frequently in the same texts), Nietzsche furnishes two kinds of responses, which sometimes appear to be superimposed, while at other moments

seem to be incompatible. A good part of the question plays out in Nietzsche's difficult relation with Darwinian evolution, or better with what he, not always correctly, considers as such. We already know that Nietzsche rejects the idea of an initial deficit that would push men to struggle for their survival according to a selection that is destined to favor the fittest. He overturns this "progressive" reading with a different approach that—interpreting the origin of life in terms of exuberance and prodigality—anticipates conversely a discontinuous series of increments and decrements that are governed not by a selective adaptation but rather by the struggle within the will to power: of the reduction of the will to power for some and of its increase for others. But rather than being to the advantage of the strong and best, as Darwin would have it (at least the Darwin reread by Nietzsche through Spencer), this redounds to the benefit of the weak and the worst:

What surprises me more than anything else when contemplating the grand destinies of man is to have always before my eyes the opposite of what Darwin with his school sees or *wants* to see: natural selection in favor of the stronger, the more gifted, the progress of the species. One can touch with one's hand the exact opposite: the elimination of cases to the contrary, the uselessness of types that are highly successful, the inevitable victory of the average and even of those *below* average.³⁷

The reason for such a qualitative decrease is found, on the one hand, in the preponderance of the number of those less endowed with respect to the superior few and, on the other hand, in the organized strategy put in motion by the former against the latter. While the weak, gripped by fear, tend to protect themselves against the traps surrounding them (and by this increase them), the strong continually put their life on the line, for example, in war, exposing life to the risk of an early dissolution. What results finally is a process of degeneration that continually accelerates given that the remedies utilized form part of the same process: medicines implicated in the same disease that they intend to cure, which are constituted ultimately by the same poison. This is the dialectic of immunization that Nietzsche continually linked to decadence and to which he gave the name nihilism, especially in his later works.³⁸ Nihilism includes within itself the instruments by which it overcomes itself, beginning precisely with the category of decadence. Thus nihilism conceptually appears to be insurmountable: modernity doesn't have different languages apart from immunization, which is constitutively negative.

Not even Nietzsche is able to escape from such a conceptual constraint (and from this point of view Heidegger wasn't wrong in keeping him on this side of nihilism, or at least on its meridian). Indeed, he remains utterly implicated in at least one conspicuous vector of immunization. It is true that Nietzsche intends to oppose that process of immunitary degeneration which, rather than strengthening the organism, has the perverse effects of debilitating it further. The substitution of the will to power for the struggle for survival as both the ontogenetic and philogenetic horizons of reference constitutes the clearest confirmation. And yet precisely such a negation of immunization situates Nietzsche (or at least this Nietzsche) within its recharging mechanism. Negating the immunitary negation, Nietzsche undoubtedly remains the prisoner of the same negative lexicon. Rather than affirming his own perspective, Nietzsche limits himself to negating the opposite, remaining, so to speak, subaltern to it. Just as happens in every logic of the reactive type, whose structurally negative modality Nietzsche so effectively deconstructs, his critique of modern immunization responds to something that logically precedes it. The same idea of degeneration (*Entartung*), from which Nietzsche derives the means of developing the antidote, has an intrinsically negative configuration: it is the contrary of generation, a generation folded upon itself and perverted—not an affirmative, but the negative of a negative, typical after all of the antigenic procedure. It isn't by coincidence that the more Nietzsche is determined to fight the immunitary syndrome, the more he falls into the semantics of infection and contamination. All the themes of purity, integrity, or perfection that obsessively return (even autobiographically) have this unmistakably reactive tonality, which is to say doubly negative toward a rampant impurity that constitutes the discourse's true *primum*:

As has always been my wont—extreme uncleanliness [*Lauterkeit*] in relation to me is the presupposition of my existence; I perish under unclean conditions—I constantly swim and bathe and splash, as it were, in water—in some perfectly transparent and resplendent element . . . My whole *Zarathustra* is a dithyramb on solitude or, if I have been understood, on cleanliness [*Reinheit*].³⁹

Not only, but Nietzsche presents the degeneration as both the cause and the effect of the progressive contagion of the uncontaminated by the contaminated. It is these latter who, in order to reject the positive force of their own power, contaminate the former, and so swiftly extend the infected

areas to the point that the decadence against which Nietzsche exhorts us to fight—more than a disease that can be easily eliminated as such—is unquestionably the advancing line of the contagion:

Decadence is not something one can combat: it is absolutely necessary and belongs to every epoch and every people. What needs to be fought against with all one's strength is the contagion of the healthy parts of the organism.⁴⁰

We cannot avoid the hyperimmunitary direction that this critique of immunization adopts. To refrain from an excess of protection—from the weaker species' obsession with self-preservation—protection is needed from their contagion. A stronger and more impenetrable barrier must be constructed, stronger than the one already in place. In so doing, the separation between the healthy and sick parts will be rendered definitive, where the biological distinction, or better opposition, between the physiological and the pathological has a transparent social meaning: "Life itself doesn't recognize either solidarity or 'equality of rights' among the healthy and diseased parts of an organism: the latter need to be lopped off or the whole will perish."⁴¹ It would be superfluous to indicate to the reader the numerous passages in which Nietzsche insists on the necessity of preservation. More useful would be to accentuate the rigid disjunction Nietzsche makes between different classes, and in particular between the race of masters and slaves. His exaltation of incommunicable castes in India speaks volumes on the subject. What is to be emphasized here is the categorical contrast that also emerges vis-à-vis modern political philosophy: Nietzsche opposes liberal individualism and democratic universalism's *homo aequalis* to the premodern *homo iearchicus*, which serves to confirm the regressive and restorative character of this axis in the Nietzschean discourse. Moreover, the favorable citations of de Boulainviller, which a biopolitical Foucault quotes on more than occasion, move in the same antimodern direction.⁴² De Boulainviller is one of the first to have contested the lexicon of sovereignty and of the one and indivisible nation in favor of an irreducible separation between conflicting classes and races. That Nietzsche's racism is of the horizontal or diagonal kind, in which he discriminates between diverse populations or makes a break within the same national community, is an undecidable question in the sense that he moves from one level to another according to the texts in question and the circumstances in which he is writing. But what deserves our attention in the conceptual profile sketched

here is the obvious contradiction with regard to the thesis of originary abundance, of a zero-sum game according to which the elevation of the one is directly proportional to the coercion, and indeed the elimination, of others:

The crucial thing about a good and healthy aristocracy, however, is that it . . . has no misgivings in condoning the sacrifice of a vast number of people who must *for its sake* be oppressed and diminished into incomplete people, slaves, tools.⁴³

Of course, Nietzsche's position, as some have observed, isn't an isolated one when seen against the background of his time.⁴⁴ Accents of the sort can be found not only in conservative thought, but even in the liberal tradition, where reference is made to the destiny of extra-European peoples subject to colonization and racial exploitation. But what makes it relevant for our analysis is its intense biopolitical tonality. What is undoubtedly in question in this sacrificial balance, in which one level must necessarily drop down so that another can rise up, isn't only power, prestige, or work, but life itself. In order for life's biological substance to be intensified, life must be marked with an unyielding distinction that sets it against itself: life against life, or, more severely, the life of one against the nonlife of others: "What is *life*?—Life—that is: continually shedding something that wants to die."⁴⁵ Not only is life to be protected from the contagion of death, but death is to be made the mechanism for life's contrastive reproduction. The reference to the elimination of parasitic and degenerative species comes up again in all its crudeness, contained in the text I cited earlier on grand politics. That it concerns refusing to practice medicine on the incurable, or indeed of eliminating them directly; of impeding the procreation of unsuccessful biological types; or of urging those suffering from irreversibly hereditary traits to commit suicide—all of this can be interpreted as an atrocious link in the gallery of horrors running from the eugenics of the nineteenth century to the extermination camps of the twentieth. Personally, I share the hermeneutic option of not softening (either metaphorically or literally) passages and expressions of the sort, which Nietzsche himself shares with authors such as Lombroso, Emerson, Lapogue, Gumplowicz, and still others: for an implacable border divides human life, one that conditions the pleasure, knowledge, and power of the few to the struggle as well as the death of the many. If anything, the open question remains how

to reconstruct the internal logic that pushes Nietzschean biopolitics into the shelter of its thanatopolitical contrary.

My impression is that such logic is firmly associated with that immunitary semantics against which Nietzsche too, from another point of view, struggles with clearly contradictory results. The epicenter of such a contradiction can be singled out in the point of intersection between a tendency to biologize existence and another, contrary and speculative, one, which is based on the existentialization or the purification of what also refers to the dimension of life. Or better: functionalizing the former so as to fulfill the latter. It is as if Nietzsche simultaneously moves in two opposite but convergent directions toward one objective: as we have already seen, on the one hand, he associates the metaphysical construct, which the theo-philosophical tradition defines as a "soul," to the body's biology; on the other hand, he withdraws the body from its natural degradation through an artificial regeneration that is capable of restoring its original essence. Only when *bios* is forcibly brought back into the circle of *zōē* can *bios* overcome itself in something that pushes it beyond itself. It isn't surprising that Nietzsche seeks the key to such a paradoxical move in the same Plato around whom his deconstruction turns. This is possible to the degree that Nietzsche substitutes a metaphysical Plato, the one of the separation and opposition of body and soul, for a biopolitical Plato. In this sense, he can argue that the true Platonic republic is a "state of geniuses," which is actualized through the elimination of lives that do not meet the required standards. At the center of the Platonic project, therefore, are the demands to maintain the purity of the "race of guardians" and through them to save the entire "human herd" from degenerative contagion. Leaving aside the legitimacy of similar interpretations of Plato—whose thanatopolitical folds we have seen, or will have occasion to see shortly—what counts most here at the end of our discourse is the intensely immunitary attitude that subtends the question. Not only is the solution to the degenerative impulse sought in the blocking of becoming, in a restoration of the initial condition, or in a return to a perfection of what is integral, pure, and permanent. Rather, such a restoration, or physical and spiritual reintegration (spiritual because it is physical), is strictly conditioned by the incorporation of the negative, both in the lethal sense of the annihilation of those that do not deserve to live, and in the sense of the crushing of the originary dimension of animality of those who remain. When Nietzsche insists on the definitive zoological connotation of

terms such as *Züchtung* [breeding] or *Zähmung* [domestication], he is determined to assert (against the entire humanist culture) that man's vital potential lies in that profound belonging to what is still not, or is no longer, human, to something that constitutes for the human both the primogenital force and the specific negation. Only when man undergoes the same selective treatment applied to animals or to greenhouse plants will he be able to cultivate the self-generating capacity that degeneration has progressively consumed.

When this Platonism, now reversed by a biopolitical key, comes into contact with the contemporary theories on degeneration of Morel and of Faré—of whom I'll speak at length in the next chapter—the results appear to be devastating. Thus it isn't entirely unfounded to see in *this* Nietzsche, on the one hand, the nihilistic apex of nineteenth-century social Darwinism, and, on the other, that conceptual passage toward the eugenic activism that will be tragically on display in the next century.⁴⁶ Its specific axis of ideological elaboration emerges in the confluence of Galton's criminal pathology and the animal sociology of authors such as Espinas and Schneider.⁴⁷ If the origin of the criminal act lies more deeply in the biological conformity (and therefore in the genetic patrimony of the one who commits the crime than in a free individual choice), it's clear that punishment cannot but be characterized by both prevention and finality, relative not to the single individual but to the entire hereditary line from which it comes. Such a line, when not broken, is destined to be transmitted to its descendants. But this first superimposition between the mentally ill and the criminal involves a second and more extreme superimposition between the human and the animal species. From the moment that man appears bound by an unbreakable system of biological determinism, he can be reclaimed by his animal matrix from which he wrongly believes to have been emancipated (precisely on the strength of that distortion or perversion, civilization, which is nothing other than continual degeneration). Seen from this angle, we are well beyond the metaphor of the animal that originated with Hobbes, the man who is a wolf toward his equals. Taken literally, the wolf-man isn't actually what remains of a superior type already under attack, or better, one inhabited by another kind of inferior animal destined to devour him from within: the parasite, the bacillus, or the tick that sucks his blood and transmits it, now poisoned, to the rest of the species. With regard to such a biological risk (which is *therefore* also political), there can only be a similarly biopolitical

response in the lethal sense in which such a term is reversed in the nihilist completion of the immunitary dialectic. Once again in question is the generation of the negation of degeneration, the effectuation of life in death:

A sick person is a parasite on society. Once one has reached a certain state it is indecent to live any longer . . . Create a new kind of responsibility, the physicians, to apply in all cases where the highest interest of life, of *ascending* life, demands that degenerating life be ruthlessly pushed down and aside—for example in the case of the right to procreate, the right to be born, the right to live.⁴⁸

Posthuman

Nonetheless, this isn't Nietzsche's last or only word on the subject. Certainly, it is the origin of a discursive line that is unequivocal in its conclusions and its effects of sense, whose categorical extraneousness from the most destructive results of nineteenth-century eugenics it would be arduous to demonstrate. But this line ought not to be separated from another perspective that is irreducible to the first, and indeed whose underlying inspiration runs contrary to it. The internal point of distinction between these two different semantics is to be found in the perspective that Nietzsche assumes with regard to the process of biological decadence, which is defined in terms of degeneration or of passive nihilism. How does one behave toward it? By trying to stop it, to slow it down, to hold it in check through immunitary *dispositifs* that are the same and contrary to those that it itself activated (and ultimately responsible for the decline under way); or, on the contrary, to push it toward completion, and so doing provoke its self-destruction? By erecting new and ever denser protective barriers against the wide-ranging contagion, or rather encouraging it as the means to the dissolution of the old organic equilibrium and therefore the occasion for a new morphogenetic configuration? By tracing more markedly the lines of separation between social classes, groups, and races to the point of conditioning the biological development of the one to the violent reduction of the others? Or instead by trying to find in their difference the productive energy for common expansion?

In the preceding paragraphs, we became familiar with Nietzsche's first response to these questions, along with its ideological presuppositions and the thanatopolitical consequences. Without being able to establish any chronological sequence between the two, it's opportune at this stage to

note that at a certain point (that contrasts with and is superimposed upon his response), he appears to follow another track. The supporting idea is that only by accelerating what will nevertheless take place can one liberate the field for new affirmative powers [*potenze*]. Every other option—restorative, compensative, resistant—creates a worse stalemate than before:

Even today there are still parties which dream of the crab-like *retrogression* of all things as their goal. But no one is free to be a crab. It is no use: we *have* to go forwards, i.e. *step by step further* in *décadence* (—this being *my* definition of modern “progress”...). You can *check* this development and, by checking it, dam up, accumulate degeneration itself, making it more vehement and *sudden*: no more can be done.⁴⁹

Implicit in such expressions is the perspective (not extraneous to what will take the name of “eternal return”) that, if a parabolic incline is continually increased, it ends up meeting itself in circular fashion at the point from which it began to move, returning again toward the top. It is exactly here that Nietzsche begins to deconstruct the hyperimmunitary machine that he himself set in motion against the debilitating effects of modern immunization. Where before he emphasized a strategy of containment, now enters another of mobilization and the unleashing of energy. Force, even reactive force, is unstoppable in itself: it can only recoil against itself. When pushed to a point of excess, every negation is destined to negate itself. After having annihilated everything that it encounters, negation cannot but fight against its own negativity and reverse itself in the affirmative. As Deleuze rightly argues, at the origin of this conceptual passage isn't the masked propensity for the dialectic (a sort of reverse Hegelianism), but rather the definitive release from its machinery: affirmation is not the synthetic result of a double negation, but instead the freeing of positive forces, which is produced by the self-suppression of the negation itself. As soon as the immunitary rejection, what Nietzsche calls “reaction,” becomes intense enough to attack the same antibodies that provoked the rejection, the break with the old form becomes inevitable.

Of course, this seems to contradict what was said about the irreversibility of degeneration. In part it does, but only if we lose sight of the subtle line of reasoning that implies the possibility of its own reversal. As is customary for an author who distrusts the objectivity of the real, the question is one of perspective. The self-deconstruction of the immunity paradigm that Nietzsche operates (that runs counter to his eugenic aim) doesn't rest on a weakening of the vitalistic project, nor on an outright abandonment of

the degenerative hypothesis. At stake isn't the centrality of the biopolitical relation between health and illness, but a different conception of one and the other and therefore of their relation. What fails in this more complex inflection of Nietzschean thought is the dividing line that separates them in the metaphysically presupposed form of the absolute distinction between good and evil. In this sense, then, Nietzsche can declare that “there is no health as such, and all attempts to define a thing that way have been wretched failures . . . there are innumerable healths of the body . . . and the more we abjure the dogma of the ‘equality of men,’ the more must the concept of a *normal* health along with a normal diet and the normal course of an illness, be abandoned by medical men.”⁵⁰ Yet, if it isn't possible to settle on a canon of perfect health; if it isn't the norm that determines health, but health that creates its own norms in a manner that is increasingly plural and reversible—then every person has a different idea of health and therefore it inevitably follows that even an all-engaging definition of illness isn't possible. And not only in the logical sense that, if one doesn't know what health is, a stable conception of illness cannot be determined [*profilare*], but in the biopolitical sense as well because health and illness are in a relation that is more complex than their simple exclusion. Illness, in short, isn't only the contrary of health, but is its presupposition, its means, and its path; illness is the something from which health originates and that it carries within as its inalienable internal component. No true health is possible that doesn't take in [*comprenda*]—in the dual sense of the expression: to know and to incorporate—illness:

Finally, the great question would still remain whether we can really *dispense with* illness—even for the sake of our virtue—and whether our thirst for knowledge and self-knowledge in particular does not require the sick soul as much as the healthy, and whether, in brief, the will to health alone, is not a prejudice, cowardice, and perhaps a bit of very subtle barbarism and backwardness.⁵¹

At stake in this polemic against a will to health, one incapable of confronting its own opposite (and therefore also itself), is the challenge the relation between life and death continually presents to health. There's no need to imagine such a challenge as the battle between two juxtaposed forces, as a besieged city defending itself from an enemy intent on penetrating and conquering it. Not that an image of the sort is extraneous to the profound logic of Nietzschean discourse, as clearly results from its explicitly eugenic side. But, as has been said, such an image doesn't exhaust

the logic. Indeed, one can assert that the extraordinary force of Nietzsche's work resides exactly in its intersection and contradiction of another analytic trajectory, which is situated within itself (and not worlds apart from it). The figure that emerges here is of a superimposition by way of contrast, all of whose logical passages (both in their succession and in their copresence) need to be recognized. We have seen how Nietzsche contests modernity's immunitary *dispositifs* not through negation, but instead by moving immunization from the institutional level to that of actual [*effettiva*] life; needing to be protected from the excess or the dispersion of life, no longer in the sense of a formal political order, but in the survival of the species as a whole. In a philogenetic framework of growing degeneration, such a possibility is conditioned both by the isolation and by the fencing in of those areas of life that are still whole with respect to the advancing contamination on the part of the weak whose life is ending, as well as by the reduction of the sick (in Malthusian fashion) in favor of the healthy. Nonetheless, we have seen how this prescription constitutes nothing other than the first hyperimmunitary or thanatopolitical stratum of the Nietzschean lexicon.

A second categorical vector draws alongside and is joined with it, one that moves in a direction that diverges from the first, or perhaps better, one that allows for a different reading. More than a revision, this vector moves through a semantic deferral of the preceding categories, beginning with that of "health" and "illness," bursting their nominal identity and placing them in direct contact with their contrary logic.⁵² From this perspective (and with respect to the metaphor of the besieged city), the danger is also biological; it is no longer the enemy that makes an attempt on life from the outside, but the enemy is now life's own propulsive force. For this reason "the Greeks were certainly not possessed of a square and solid healthiness;—their secret was to honour even sickness as a god if only it had power."⁵³ Being "dangerously healthy, ever again health" means that this kind of health must necessarily traverse the sickness which it seems to fight.⁵⁴ Health is not separate from the mortal risk that runs through it, pushing it beyond itself, continuously updating its norms, overthrowing and re-creating rules for life. The result is a reversal that occurs by an intensification of the defensive and offensive logic that governs the eugenic strategy: if health is no longer separable from sickness; if sickness is part of health—then it will no longer be possible to separate the individual and social body according to insurmountable lines of prophylaxis and hierarchy. The entire immunitary semantic now seems to be rebutted, or perhaps better, to be

reinterpreted in a perspective that simultaneously strengthens and overturns it, that confirms it and deconstructs it.

A paragraph in *Human, All Too Human* titled "Ennoblement through Degeneration" condenses in brief turns of phrase the entire trajectory that I've reconstructed to this point. At its center will be found the community held together by the equality of conditions and participation based on a shared faith. More than possible risks from the outside, what undermines the community's vitality is its stability: the more the community is preserved intact, the more the level of innovation is reduced. The greatest danger that the community faces is therefore its own preventive withdrawal from danger. Once immunized, the community doesn't run any risk of wounding, but it is precisely for this reason that it seals itself off blocking from within any possibility of relation with the outside and therefore any possibility of growth. Avoiding degeneration (according to the eugenic prescriptions of perfect health), the result is that the community loses its own self-generating potential. No longer capable of creating conditions of growth, it folds in upon itself. Saving it from such a decline are individuals who, free from the syndrome of self-preservation, are more inclined to experiment, although for the same reason they are biologically weaker. Disposed as they are to increasing the good that they possess (as well as their own vital substance), sooner or later they are bound not only to risk their lives, but also to damage the entire community. It is precisely here in the clench of this extreme risk, that the point of productive conjunction between generation and innovation is produced:

It is precisely at this injured and weakened spot that the whole body is as it were *inoculated* with something new; its strength must, however, be as a whole sufficient to receive this new thing into its blood and to assimilate it. Degenerate natures are of the highest significance wherever progress is to be effected.⁵⁵

This might seem to be mere theater for someone who elsewhere harps on defending the health of races and of individuals from the contagion of those who have degenerated. In reality, as we've already had occasion to discuss, the step in question is understood less as a distancing from the immunitary paradigm, and more as immunity's opening to its own communal reverse, to that form of self-dissolving gift giving that *communitas* names. The vocabulary that Nietzsche adopts indicates a similar semantic overlapping, which is situated precisely in the point of confluence between the lexicons of an immunity and community. I'm not speaking only of the

identification of the new with infection, but also of the nobilizing effects produced by inoculation. Just as in the body of the community, so too in that of the individual, “the educator has to inflict injuries upon him, or employ the injuries inflicted on him by fate, and when he has thus come to experience pain and distress something new and noble can be inoculated into the injured places. It will be taken up into the totality of his nature, and later the traces of its nobility will be perceptible in the fruits of his nature.”⁵⁶

Clearly, the language Nietzsche adopts is immunitarian, that of vaccination—a viral fragment is placed into the individual or collective organism, which it is intended to strengthen. But the logic that underpins it is not directed to preserving identity or to simple survival, but rather to innovation and alteration. The difference between the two levels of discourse (and the slippage of one into the other) lies in the mode of understanding the relation with the “negative,” and even before that with its own definition. That for which Nietzsche recommends the inoculation isn’t an antigen destined to activate the antibodies, nor is it a sort of supplemental antibody intent on fortifying the defensive apparatus of the immunitary system. In short, it isn’t a lesser negative used preventively to block the path of a greater negative. All of this is part of that dialectical procedure that Nietzsche criticizes as reactive and to which he poses instead a different modality according to which what is considered evil [*male*] upon first view (suffering, the unexpected, danger) is considered positively as characterizing a more intense existence. From this perspective, the negative not only is in turn detained, repressed, or rejected, but it is affirmed as such: as what forms an essential part of life, even if, indeed precisely because, it continually endangers it, pushing it on to a problematic fault line [*faglia*] to which it is both reduced and strengthened. Nietzsche sees the same role of philosophy—at least of that philosophy capable of abandoning the system of illusions to which it itself has contributed and so doing setting itself adrift—as a sort of voluntary intoxication. No longer the protecting Mother, but the Medusa that one cannot look upon without experiencing the lacerating power of unbearable contradictions. In this sense, the real philosopher “puts himself at risk,” because he singles out the truth of life in something that continually overtakes it, in an exteriority that can never be completely interiorized, dominated, or neutralized in the name of other more comforting or obliging truths.⁵⁷

Can we give the name of community to this exteriority with regard to the immunitary systems within which we endlessly seek refuge, just as Georges Bataille dared to do in his own time against an interpretive tendency oriented in the opposite direction?⁵⁸ Without wanting in any way to twist a philosophy whose entire layers and internal levels of contradiction I have tried to reconstitute, we can say that a series of texts induce a cautious, affirmative response. I am not referring only to those grouped around the theme of donation—of the “bestowing virtue”—whose deconstructive character cannot be avoided with respect to every appropriate or cumulative conception of the will to power.⁵⁹ Nor am I referring to those visionary passages concerning the “stellar friendship,” also extended especially to those who are far removed and remote from us, even our enemies.⁶⁰ Rather, it concerns splinters, flashes of thought that are capable of suddenly illuminating (if only for an instant) that profound and enigmatic nexus between *hospes* and *hostis* (one that is situated at the origin of the Western tradition in a knot that we have still not been able to unravel). Certainly, all of this carries us along to the semantic threshold of that common *munus* whose opposite pole we have glimpsed.

Yet, if we adopt a more complex perspective, it is also the center, the incandescent nucleus of *immunitas*. In order to see it more clearly, we need to understand donation and also the friendship with the enemy not in an ethical sense (which would be completely extraneous to the Nietzschean lexicon, constitutively immune [*refrattario*] from all altruistic rhetoric), nor in a properly anthropological sense, but in a radically ontological sense. In Nietzsche, donation is not an opening to another man, but if anything to the other *of* man or also *from* man. It is the alteration of the self-belonging that an anything but exhausted humanistic tradition has attributed to man as one of the most proper to him of his essential properties—against which the Nietzschean text reminds us that man is still not, nor will ever be, what he considers himself to be. His being resides beyond this or beyond that side of the identity with himself. And indeed, he is not even a being as such, but a becoming that carries together within itself the traces of a different past and the prefiguration of a new future. At the center of this conceptual passage lies the theme of metamorphosis. With regard to the “retarding elements” of every species that is intent on constructing ever new means of preservation (who are determined to last as long as possible), the *Übermensch* (or however we may want to translate the expression) is characterized

by an inexhaustible power of transformation. He literally is situated outside of himself, in a space that is no longer (nor was it ever) that of man as such. It isn't so important to know where or what he will become, because what he connotes is precisely becoming, a breaking through, a moving beyond his proper topos. It isn't that his life doesn't have form; it isn't a "form of life." Rather, it bears upon a form that itself is in perpetual movement toward a new form, traversed by an alterity from which it emerges simultaneously divided and multiplied.

In this sense, Nietzsche, the hyperindividualist, can say that the individual, the one undivided [*l'indiviso*], doesn't exist—that it is contradicted from its coming into the world by the genetic principle according to which "two are born from one and one from two."⁶¹ It is no coincidence that birth, procreation, and pregnancy constitute perhaps the most symbolically charged figure of Nietzschean philosophy, one Nietzsche characterizes as falling under the sign of a painful delivery. This occurs because no term more than childbirth refers the theme of donation to its concrete biological dimension, which otherwise is simply metaphorical or classically intersubjective. Childbirth isn't only an offer of life, but it is the effective site in which a life makes itself two, in which it opens itself to the difference with itself according to a movement that in essence contradicts the immunitary logic of self-preservation. Against every presupposed interiorization, it exposes the body to the split that always traverses it as an outside of its inside, the exterior of the interior, the common of the immune. This holds true for the individual body, but also for the collective body, which emerges as naturally challenged, infiltrated, and hybridized by a diversity that isn't only external, but also internal. It is so for the *ethnos* and for the *genos*, that is, for the race that, despite all the illusions of eugenics, is never pure in itself, as well as for the species.⁶² It is precisely with respect to the species, to what Nietzsche defines as human in order to distinguish it essentially from all the others, that he pushes the deconstruction or conversion of the immunitary paradigm farther and deeper into its opposite. Certainly, its superimposition with the animal sphere can be and has been interpreted in the most varied of ways. Undoubtedly, the sinister reference to "the beast of prey" or to "the breeding animal" contains within it echoes and a tonality that are attributable to the more deterministic and aggressive tendencies of social Darwinism. But in the animalization of man something else is felt that appears to mark more the future of the human species and less the ancestral past. In Nietzsche, the animal is never interpreted as the

obscure abyss or the face of stone from which man escapes. On the contrary, it is tied to the destiny of "after-man" (as we could hazard translating *Übermensch*). It is his future not less than his past, or perhaps better, the discontinuous lines along with which the relationship between past and future assumes an irreducible configuration vis-à-vis all those that have preceded him. It's not by accident that the destiny of the animal is enigmatically connected *through* man to him who can exceed him in power and wisdom—to a man who is capable of redefining the meaning of his own species no longer in humanistic or anthropological terms, but in anthropocentric or biotechnological terms:

What are the profound transformations that must derive from the theories according to which one asserts that there is no God that cares for us and that there is no eternal moral law (humanity as atheistically immoral)? That we are animals? That our life is transitory? That we have no responsibility? The wise one and the animal will grow closer and produce a new type [of human].⁶³

Who or *what* this new "type" is naturally remains indeterminate, and not just for Nietzsche. But certainly Nietzsche understands (indeed, he was the first to seize with an absolute purity of a gaze) that we are at the threshold beyond which what is called "man" enters into a different relationship with his own species—beyond which, indeed, the same species becomes the object and the subject of a biopolitics potentially different from what we know because it is in relation not only to human life, but to what is outside life, to its other, to its after. The animalization of man in Nietzsche contains these two signs, which are perilously juxtaposed and superimposed: taken together, they form the point where a biopolitics precipitates into death and where the horizon of a new politics of life, which I outline here, begins.

50. Cf. Dieter Nestle, *Eleutheria: Studien zum Wesen der Freiheit bei den Griechen und im Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1967); Émile Benveniste, *Indo-European Language and Society*, trans. Elizabeth Palmer (London: Faber, 1973); and Richard B. Onians, *The Origins of European Thought about the Body, the Mind, the Soul, the World, Time, and Fate: New Interpretations of Greek, Roman and Kindred Evidence Also of Some Basic Jewish and Christian Beliefs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

51. In this regard, see Pier Paolo Portinaro's dense postface to the translation of Benjamin Constant's *La libertà degli antichi, paragonata a quella dei moderni* (Turin: Einaudi, 2001).

52. Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *Four Concepts of Liberty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 130; my emphasis.

53. Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom: An Introduction to Philosophy*, trans. Ted Sadler (New York: Continuum, 2002), 13.

54. [Esposito is punning here on the assonance between *alterità* (otherhood) and *alterazione* (alteration). — *Trans.*]

55. Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Oxford World's Classics, trans. Julia Conaway and Peter E. Bondanella (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 64.

56. Thomas Hobbes, "Of Liberty and Necessity," in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, vol. 4 (London: John Bohn, 1890), 273.

57. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 37.

58. Locke, *Two Treatises*, 302.

59. *Ibid.*, 289.

60. Charles de Scondat, Baron de Montesquieu, *Spirit of Laws*, trans. Thomas Nugent (Kitchener, Ont.: Batoche Books, 2001), 206; Jeremy Bentham, *Rationale of Judicial Evidence*, in *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, vol. 7 (Edinburgh: John Bowring, 1843), 522.

61. Jeremy Bentham, *Manuscripts* (University College of London), Ixix, 56. See the doctoral thesis of Marco Stangherlin, "Jeremy Bentham e il governo degli interessi" (University of Pisa, 2001–2).

62. Michel Foucault, "La questione del liberalismo," in *Biopolitica e liberalismo: Detti e scritti su potere ed etica 1975–1984*, trans. Ottavio Marzocca (Milan: Medusa, 2001), 160.

63. Hannah Arendt, "What Is Freedom?" in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Viking Press, 1961), 155.

64. *Ibid.*, 150.

65. Michel Foucault, *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. Luther H. Martin (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 152.

66. Luis Dumont, *Essays on Individualism: Modern Ideology in an Anthropological Perspective* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

67. For the figure of the *homo democraticus* I refer to the reader to Massimo Cacciari's important observations in *L'arcipelago* (Milan: Adelphi, 1997), 117–18. See too Elena Pulcini, *L'individuo senza passioni: Individualismo moderno e perdita del legame sociale* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2001), 127–28. On Tocqueville more generally, cf. Francesca Maria De Sanctis, *Tempo di democrazia: Sulla condizione moderna* (Naples: Editoriale Scientifica, 1986).

68. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. Francis Bowen, trans. Henry Reeve, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Sever and Francis, 1862), 121, 124.

69. *Ibid.*, 169.

70. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols, or, How to Philosophize with a Hammer*, trans. Duncan Large (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 68; 64.

3. Biopower and Biopotentiality

1. [The term Esposito uses in the chapter title is *biopotenza*, which connotes both power and a potentiality for producing and undergoing change. Since Esposito intends it as a necessary step on the way to thinking an affirmative biopolitics, I have translated it as potentiality unless otherwise indicated. — *Trans.*]

2. [See the introduction to Esposito's 1998 preface to *Categorie dell'impolitico* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1988) for further thoughts on the "impolitical." — *Trans.*]

3. Karl Löwith, "European Nihilism: Reflections on the European War," in *Martin Heidegger and European Nihilism*, trans. Gary Steiner (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 206; Georges Bataille, "Nietzsche and the Fascists," in *Visions of Excess*, trans. Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 24.

4. Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology*, ed. J. Faubion (New York: New Press, 1998), 369–91.

5. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic: By Way of Clarification and Supplement to My Last Book, Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Douglas Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 66.

6. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Frammenti postumi (1885–1887)*, in *Opere complete di Friedrich Nietzsche*, vol. 8 (Milan: Adelphi, 1992), 139. [As no complete edition of Nietzsche's posthumous works exists in English, I have cited the Italian and where possible the German. — *Trans.*]

7. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 311.

8. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols, or, How to Philosophize with a Hammer*, trans. Duncan Large (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 65.

9. Nietzsche, *Frammenti postumi (1888–1889)*, 408.

10. On the complex relationship between Nietzsche and Darwinism and more generally with the biological sciences, see especially Éric Blondel, *Nietzsche, le corps et la culture: La philosophie comme généalogie philologique* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1986); H. Brobjer, *Darwinismus*, in *Nietzsche-Handbuch* (Stuttgart-Weimar: Metzler, 2000); Barbara Stiegler, *Nietzsche et la biologie* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2001); Gregory Moore, *Nietzsche, Biology and Metaphor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), as well as Andrea Orsucci, *Dalla biologia cellulare alle scienze dello spirito* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1992).

11. Nietzsche, *Frammenti Postumi (1881–1882)*, 432–33.

12. I am referring, of course, to Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, trans. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991).

13. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 34–35.

14. For this relation see especially Remo Bodei's chapter dedicated to Nietzsche in his important work *Destini personali: L'età della colonizzazione delle coscienze* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2002), 83–116, as well as Ignace Haaz, *Les conceptions du corps chez Ribot et Nietzsche* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002).

15. In this sense the work contemporary with Nietzsche of the greatest importance is Wilhelm Roux's *Der Kampf der Theile im Organismus* (Leipzig, 1881). For more on Roux, see Wolfgang Müller-Lauter, "Der Organismus als innere Kampf: Der Einfluss von Wilhelm Roux auf Friedrich Nietzsche," *Nietzschen Studien* 7 (1978): 89–223.

16. Nietzsche, *Frammenti postumi (1884–1885)*, 238.

17. Nietzsche, *Ecco Homo*, 231–32.
18. Nietzsche, *Frammenti postumi (1885–1887)*, 77–78.
19. “It should be considered symptomatic when some philosophers—for example Spinoza who was consumptive—considered the instinct of self-preservation decisive and *had* to see it that way; for they were individuals in conditions of distress” (Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 292).
20. *Ibid.*, 291–92.
21. Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, trans. Thomas Wayne (New York: Algora Publishing, 2003), 87.
22. Friedrich Nietzsche, “History in the Service and Disservice of Life,” in *Unmodern Observations*, trans. Gary Brown (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 89.
23. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 153, 154.
24. The reference here is to W. H. Rolph’s *Biologische Probleme zugleich als Versuch zur Entwicklung einer nationalen Ethik* (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1882).
25. “Uncommon is the highest virtue and useless, luminous it is and gentle in its brilliance: a bestowing virtue is the highest virtue” (Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, 57).
26. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 376.
27. See in this regard Umberto Galimberti’s *Gli equivoci dell’anima* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1987).
28. Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense,” in *The Nietzsche Reader*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson and Duncan Large (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 122.
29. Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 89.
30. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. Duncan Large (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 78.
31. Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 113.
32. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 52.
33. Nietzsche, *Frammenti postumi (1888–1889)*, 214.
34. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 105.
35. I am referring to Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).
36. Nietzsche, *Frammenti postumi (1885–1887)*, 283, 289.
37. *Ibid.*, 93.
38. For the theme of decadence, see Giuliano Campioni, “Nietzsche, Taine et la décadence,” in *Nietzsche: Cent ans de réception française*, ed. Jacques Le Rider (San-Denis: Éditions Suge, 1999), 31–61.
39. Nietzsche, *Ecco Homo*, 233–34. [The Italian translation of the German differs widely from the English. For “unclean” (*Lauterkeit* in German), one reads “contaminated” (*contaminare*) and for “cleanliness” (*Reinheit* in German), purity (*purezza*). Given Esposito’s emphasis on the themes of integrity and purity, I have chosen to add the German in brackets.—*Trans.*]
40. Nietzsche, *Frammenti postumi (1888–1889)*, 217.
41. *Ibid.*, 377.
42. [See in particular Michel Foucault’s “*Society Must Be Defended*”: *Lectures at the*

- Collège de France, 1975–1976*, ed. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), esp. the seminars of February 18 and 25, 1976.—*Trans.*]
43. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 152.
 44. I am referring to Domenico Losurdo’s important and debatable book *Nietzsche, il rebello aristocratico, biografia intellettuale e bilancio critico* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2002).
 45. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 100.
 46. Rather important in this direction is Alexander Tille, *Vom Darwin bis Nietzsche: Ein Buch Entwicklungsethik* (Leipzig: C. G. Naumann, 1895).
 47. Cf. Alfred Espinas, *Des sociétés animales: Étude de psychologie comparée* (Paris: G. Baillière, 1877), and two texts from Georg Heinrich Schneider: *Der Tierische Wille* (Leipzig: Abel, [188?]) and *Der menschliche Wille vom Standpunkte der neueren Entwicklungstheorien (des “Darwinismus”)* (Berlin: F. Dummlers, 1882). The texts of Espinas and Schneider were part of Nietzsche’s library.
 48. Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 61.
 49. *Ibid.*, 68.
 50. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 177.
 51. *Ibid.*
 52. In this direction, see Marco Voza, *Esistenza e interpretazione: Nietzsche oltre Heidegger* (Rome: Donzelli, 2001). On the metaphor of illness, see Patrick Wotling, *Nietzsche et le problème de la civilisation* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1995), 111ff.
 53. Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 99.
 54. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 346.
 55. Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 107.
 56. *Ibid.*, 108.
 57. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 96.
 58. Georges Bataille, *On Nietzsche*, trans. Bruce Boone (New York: Paragon, 1992), 8, 25.
 59. Cf. Furio Smerari, *Il predone, il barbaro, il giardiniere* (Bari: Dedalo, 2000), 145ff.
 60. Massimo Cacciari dedicates intense pages to this theme in *L’arcipelago* (Milan: Adelphi, 1997), 135–54.
 61. Nietzsche, *Frammenti postumi (1884–1885)*, 317.
 62. Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, 149.
 63. Nietzsche, *Frammenti postumi (1881–1882)*, 348.

4. Thanatopolitics

1. Michel Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*”: *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976*, ed. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 258–63.
2. See the section titled “Politics over Life” in chapter 1.
3. Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*,” 258.
4. *Ibid.*, 260.
5. Alain Brossat, *L’épreuve du désastre: Le XX^e siècle et les camps* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1996), 141ff.
6. Simona Forti offers an exemplary profile of the relation between totalitarianism and philosophy in her *Il totalitarismo* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2001).