Abstract

Contested scenes of civilized masculinity
A feminist re-reading of Friedrich Nietzsche’s Genealogy of Morals

Patricia Purtschert, philosopher, lic.phil.I
University of Basel, Switzerland /
University of California, Berkeley U.S.

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The work of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche has been taken up by many feminist poststructuralist scholars. Especially his concept of ‘genealogy’ makes it possible to link the creation of meaning to the struggle for power and thus to the question of hegemony. But in all those readings of Nietzsche, the question of how the numerous ethnic and gendered references in the Genealogy of Morals has rarely been addressed.

In my reading of this text, I approach the highly ambivalent notion of the subject not only as a scene of negotiating the question of modernity and (christian) morality. I try to show that embedded in Nietzsche’s notion of the modern subject one can also find a contested scene of civilized masculinity. Thus, Nietzsche’s struggle against human ‘domestication’ in modern society can be read as an attempt to come to terms with the concepts of civilization and masculinity that had been shaped and reshaped in the discourses of his time. Whether or not this allows us to read Nietzsche as an early critic of Andro- and Eurocentrism or rather as their exponent will be the guiding question of my paper.

Patricia Purtschert, lic.phil.I, Ph.D. student at the Department of Philosophy and Gender Studies in Basel. Currently a visiting scholar at the Department of Rhetoric in Berkeley.