



## **The Self-Sufficient Text in Nietzsche and Kierkegaard**

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## The Self-Sufficient Text in Nietzsche and Kierkegaard

Nietzsche and Kierkegaard have been coupled often enough, although they themselves were not great couplers in any sense of the word. They divorced themselves radically from every other thinker, and they gave birth, we assume, only to books. Yet they worried a great deal about who would finally grant them the status of fathers, by reading their books and becoming their disciples. And their worries were not unfounded, for their texts are fraught with the most multifarious seeds of thought and, one might say, profoundly heterozygous. In their texts they exposed themselves almost promiscuously to every interpreter and any interpretation that might be made of them. Yet each at the end of his career as an author insisted that he should not be misunderstood. This then is the spectacle at play: two quite recklessly daring, uninhibited and very prolific writers who seem to have drawn themselves up short at the ends of their careers, intent upon stifling mis- and multiple interpretations of their works.

The locus of this compulsive attempt to throttle other interpretations is in each case something like an autobiography. In a couple of the oddest autobiographical writings in occidental literature, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard both reviewed their authorship, to use Kierkegaard's term, apparently trying to specify how each text should be read. For Nietzsche this was *Ecce Homo: How one becomes what one is* (written in 1888 but not published until 1908); for Kierkegaard it was *The Point of View for my Work as an Author* (written in 1848 but not published until 1859) and several other shorter pieces written in the late 1840s and published with *The Point of View*.<sup>1</sup> These were among the last efforts of the two authors and

1. I shall refer to English translations of these two books: *Ecce Homo*, translated by Walter Kaufmann, in Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo* (New York: Random House, 1967); and *The Point of View for my Work as an Author*, translated by Walter Lowrie (New York: Harper and Row, 1962). Page references to quotations from these two volumes are included in the body of the paper.

were published posthumously in each case. In spite of certain obvious signs of ambivalence about readers that mark these texts, it seems quite obvious that they were both intended for eventual publication and at least for some few readers. Thus we might equally well call these texts literary testaments as autobiographies; but rather than worrying over how to categorize them among the genres I should like merely to describe the thought process involved in them and try to locate that sort of thinking in the general world of self-consciousness exhibited by the typical genius of the nineteenth century.

The typical genius did not indulge in the sort of auto-interpretation exemplified by *The Point of View* and *Ecce Homo*. In fact, the typical genius affected the attitude that he did not need his readers at all, but that his readers needed him. Of course a genius would not be a genius if he were not recognized as such, and if his readers did not appropriate his vision of the world. But only in the sense that the genius is legitimated by the function he eventually fulfills for his readers does the genius evince any need for his readers. The typical genius of the nineteenth century thus assumed that his readers were fascinated by him and adopted a regal attitude toward being viewed by them: it was his duty to display himself to them. By contrast, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, who teased their readers to think of them as geniuses in their earlier works, seem anxious in these last texts to fend off their readers' advances.

## I

To speak of typical and atypical geniuses at all is to step back from the common discourse about originality and creativity and call the category of the genius itself into question, for the genius has always been defined by his uniqueness. But to understand the difference between the self-conscious auto-interpretive moves of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche on the one hand and the apparently naive or unself-conscious geniuses on the other, we must first acknowledge that the genius is not a natural category. The genius is a subcategory of the author, a function in a historically specific discourse.

The assumptions that have governed our thinking about intellectual and artistic creativity since the mid-eighteenth century may be called "the ideology of the genius." When we think within this

ideology (and therefore within a discourse of individualism), we generally assume that individuals are the exclusive agents of cultural innovation, and that some individuals are born with the native capacity to create new things. This capacity differentiates geniuses in our minds from the merely talented, who seem to perform variations, however exquisite, upon inherited themes and within existing genres. This distinction between the genius and the talented cannot be found before the mid-eighteenth century, a fact of chronology that impels us to question the relationship of our conception of the genius to other components of modern ideology that emerged in the late eighteenth century. In fact, the notion of the genius is the cultural counterpart of the idea of the individual used in Enlightenment thinking about economy and society (e.g., by Turgot and Smith). In particular it legitimated the growing social and financial autonomy of individual artists and thinkers by providing an ontological basis and legal justification for their claims to private property in the books, paintings, music, etc. that they created. Copyright laws, for example, were unthinkable before the advent of the idea of the genius.

The characteristics ascribed to the genius since the late eighteenth century suggest that the concept was called into being not merely by the emergence of new social and material status for the artist and intellectual, however. It was fomented as well by the waning power of another set of beliefs about art and thought that had been used to explain cultural innovation in earlier centuries. According to the new ideology, the genius is supposed to be "born, not made." He<sup>2</sup> is purported not to have to learn his ability to create, but is believed to possess it inherently. The genius is also believed to be distinct and separable from his social context; indeed he is defined in part by his living in some sort of opposition to his contemporaries. Moreover, his works are thought to be "eternal" in an unspecified sense. It is also commonly assumed that geniuses are "original" and that they create, as it were, *ex nihilo*, independently of the influences of their predecessors and contemporaries. The "genius," in other words, emerged to replace God as the guarantor of artistic and intellectual novelty and of cultural innovation generally.

2. As to the gender of the genius: I use the masculine pronoun for the genius, not because I suppose that geniuses are in fact males, but in order to establish one more dimension of ironic distance from the category of the genius itself.

The category of the genius also has a narrative shape (for example see Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*). We imagine the life of the genius to be a species of heroic journey and tend to plot the life of a particular genius upon the trajectory of the mythic journey. We assume that the hero-genius has so departed from his contemporaries that we can say the genius is "ahead of his time," and thus explain to ourselves why the genius is so frequently misunderstood. We assume that the life and works of the genius are coherent and all of a piece, which causes us to look for a point of emergence and a process of development in the works of a genius as well as in his life: we understand it as a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end. Thus the heroic journey of the genius is a story of the movement of the genius away from us or his contemporaries and into the virgin territory of his own mind—dangerous territory where discoveries are to be made only at great risk, often at the risk of madness. But it also involves a return, with the genius bringing his newly won vision back to the rest of mankind in his works.

This is a story that we nongeniuses tell ourselves about geniuses. It is a pervasive metatext of which we as readers are usually only subliminally aware. But this metatextual story (and the ideology of the genius generally) also governs the thinking of geniuses about themselves.

The genius too is aware of the metatextual life—acutely aware of it as the subtext of his own life. In the whole period during which the ideology of the genius has governed our thinking about cultural innovation, it has been possible to aspire to the status of genius. For the last two centuries, in other words, artists and intellectuals have known that they might be/become geniuses. It has proven an irresistible fantasy. Like all the other forms of mimetic desire, this has permitted and indeed constrained geniuses to live a particular type of life, a life suited for inclusion in the canon of geniuses. Thus from the moment he realizes his difference, the genius is condemned to an awareness that the eyes of his readers and even his biographers are upon him.

Living in anticipation of one's readers and biographers entails a degree and constancy of self-consciousness unknown before the eighteenth century. The modern genius knows that the eyes of his readers—even the yet unborn—are closely scrutinizing his whole life—even the portion he has still to live. This inevitably involves the

genius in efforts to shape the way his life will appear to his readers, his biographers, and posterity generally. This striving to shape his own life is in fact an integral part of being/becoming a genius. The shapes of life that modern geniuses have striven for are various, for the preoccupation of the genius is his own uniqueness and capacity for innovation. But they all involve a troping or a turning of the conventions of autobiographic writing back upon the life itself. We customarily think of autobiography as a literary activity carried out towards the end of a life: writing a story of one's life near its end, a story modeled upon the life in some way. But in modern artists and intellectuals so constrained by the ideology of the genius, we are confronted with lives lived upon the general pattern of an autobiography imagined in advance, often when the subjects are quite young. Thus the literary figure of an autobiography—in this case the story of the culture hero's journey told by himself—becomes the model for lives yet to be lived. Consequently I call the life lived in anticipation of one's biographers an "autobiographical life."

An autobiographical life, needless to say, is not an autobiography, nor does living an autobiographical life necessarily entail writing an autobiography. The dialectic of the autobiographical life does not involve writing an autobiography at all: it lies rather in the relationship between desire and fantasy on the one hand and action on the other. Nonetheless, the dialectic of desire and action does frequently lead a genius to writing autobiographically. The resulting text constitutes a single moment of the dialectic, and cannot, of course, be considered a record of the autobiographical life in question. It is but one more fiction expressing the dialectical moment of the autobiographical life in its vector. Such texts originate within the parameters of the ideology of the genius and are plotted on the meta-story of the life of the genius.

Having returned to the question of autobiographical texts, we can locate the auto-interpretations of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche in one of the dimensions of the autobiographical life of the genius: one characteristic that distinguished Nietzsche and Kierkegaard from typical geniuses is their peculiar and even obsessive concern with the reader.

Typical geniuses like Rousseau, Goethe, Wordsworth, Hugo, to take a few examples for the sake of argument, seem relatively uncon-

cerned about their readers. They assume that their readers need and desire them, that their readers will inevitably interpret them, and that the resulting interpretations will reflect upon the readers rather than upon themselves. This attitude of the typical genius descends genealogically from the indulgent attitude of a god toward his worshipers. Typical geniuses seem, on the whole, quite comfortable being geniuses, and their complacency vis à vis their readers is relatively constant throughout their lives. Adapting Schiller's terms to my purpose, I therefore propose to call the typical geniuses "naive," for they give the impression of being unreflective about the problems of being interpreted by readers. (Of course Schiller had to create a fiction of Goethe to fill his category of the naive poet, as I am doing here too.)

Nietzsche and Kierkegaard on the other hand spent most of their careers seducing, provoking, and insulting their readers, but then finally declared themselves immune to interpretation. They are deviant geniuses in respect to their attitudes towards readers. They are "sentimental" in their painfully acute awareness of their readers, whether they are primarily concerned with seducing the disinterested, provoking the complacent, or finally just horrified at the prospect of what their readers might actually make of them. Their preoccupation with the reader is constant, intense, and volatile. This is perhaps most evident in their shifting styles. In Kierkegaard's case the pseudonyms together with the incredible difference in apparent intent among his writings actually deluded many of his contemporaries about his authorship. There are no pseudonyms on Nietzsche's title pages, but Derrida has shown us how various are Nietzsche's styles . . . as if there were not one Nietzsche but many. Thus we see that the virtual obsession with the reader seems to have at least partially broken down the category of the author in these two cases, and we can begin to understand that their late auto-interpretive moves may have been a response to anxiety about the disparate nature of their authorship: attempts to reconstitute themselves as authors.

A moment's reflection upon the relationship between the categories adapted from Schiller will point the way further. Nietzsche and Kierkegaard are "sentimental" in their obsessive concern with their readers. But as in Schiller's text, the sentimental variant deconstructs the naive one. For naive geniuses are also concerned about

their readers. Their apparent equanimity is a pose dictated by the ideology of the genius. The dominant variety of genius, striving to exemplify the godlike independence of the unmoved mover, pretends to be uninterested in his readers. Living an autobiographical life, however, is by definition reflective, as a vital trope of autobiographic writing. The autobiographical life is a creature of intense concern with readers. Thus by flaunting their obsession with the reader, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard deconstruct the naiveté of the dominant variety of genius. Consequently, by examining the sentimental moves of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard in *Ecce Homo* and *The Point of View*, we may enhance our understanding of the category of the genius itself while illuminating the particular auto-interpretive strategies that they adopted.

In their apparent innocence and equanimity, sometimes elaborately pled for, the typical geniuses seem or try to seem oblivious to the reception accorded them by their readers. They exude confidence in their own difference, their originality, and their unique value to the rest of mankind. And if they make autobiographical gestures of self-justification at all, it is with apparent confidence that their readers will eventually do them justice too, or be damned as a consequence. Even Rousseau, whose confidence in the capacity of his fellows to understand and judge him fairly may seem the shakiest of all the great geniuses of the last two centuries, even Rousseau insists on the first page of his *Confessions* that he is unique among men. Embarked upon what he asserted was an unprecedented act of literary self-revelation, Rousseau presents himself as a moral mirror for his fellows to measure themselves against: were they as honest with themselves as he?

Let the last trump sound when it will, I shall come forward with this work in my hand, to present myself before my Sovereign Judge, and proclaim aloud: "Here is what I have done. . . . So let the numberless legion of my fellow men gather around me and hear my confessions. Let them groan at my depravities and blush for my misdeeds. But let each one of them reveal his heart at the foot of Thy throne with equal sincerity, and may any man who dares, say "I was a better man than he."

In this passage and throughout *The Confessions*, Rousseau never lapses from his assumption that he is or would be transparent to a



worthy judge. In fact his very transparence is what characterizes him as the genius of virtue. He does not explain himself, he seems to say, but merely shows himself to his readers—and for their benefit. This is also true, but with greater equanimity, of Goethe, Wordsworth, Hugo, etc.

The rhetorical strategies and emotional tone of Kierkegaard's and Nietzsche's fictions of themselves diverge radically from this general metalife lived to be displayed to the reader for the reader's edification. Nietzsche and Kierkegaard were "sentimental" in ways and degrees that would have astonished even Schiller. But what is of particular interest to me here is that in their late but apparently urgent desire to forestall and counter misinterpretations of their words, they are quite unlike the typical genius . . . unlike even Rousseau, who was so worried about how his former friends were deliberately misinterpreting him—and even more unlike Goethe, Wordsworth, Hugo, and the rest. Having done what they could in their writings to disorient their readers, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard finally insisted that they be recognized for who they truly were.

## II

In my career as an author, a point has now been reached where it is permissible to do what I feel a strong impulse to do and so regard as my duty—namely, to explain once for all, as directly and frankly as possible, what is what: what I as an author declare myself to be.

—Kierkegaard, *The Point of View for my Work as an Author* [5]

Seeing that before long I must confront humanity with the most difficult demand ever made of it, it seems indispensable to me to say *who I am*. Really, one should know it, for I have not left myself "without testimony." But the disproportion between the greatness of my task and the smallness of my contemporaries has found expression in the fact that one has neither heard nor even seen me. I live on my own credit; it is perhaps a mere prejudice that I live. . . .

Under these circumstances I have a duty against which my habits, even more the pride of my instincts, revolt at bottom—namely to say: *Hear me! For I am such and such a person. Above all, do not mistake me for someone else.*

—Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* [217]

Thus the opening sentences of *Ecce Homo* and *The Point of View* evoke a crisis in the careers of their respective authors. Until the textual *now* of these passages a certain confusion has reigned, and the works of their authors have been grossly misunderstood or unappreciated. This is a matter of vital concern to the authors themselves, but until now they have been unwilling or unable to rectify the misunderstanding. Now the time has finally come for them to clear up their questionable identity and thus the meaning of their authorship as well. The occasion for this corrective presents itself in both cases at the completion of the *oeuvre*. At that point, self-clarification suddenly becomes the overriding duty.

In each case the movement of clarification consists of the author reading his own earlier works. In the course of these readings both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard indicate that misunderstanding and incomprehension of their works were induced by a species of silence that they themselves had inscribed in them. Their silences differ, of course. Kierkegaard's silence is dialectical, created only for the author to break it himself in *The Point of View*, whereas Nietzsche's silence only grows deeper in *Ecce Homo*. But in each case it is silence that gives rise to the auto-interpretive texts in question.

Kierkegaard asserts that until the moment of writing *The Point of View* he regarded a particular type of silence as his religious duty. This was not the silence of not publishing—he had published prolifically. Nor was it the silence of publishing exclusively under pseudonyms—he had indeed written a series of quite popular aesthetic books that appeared pseudonymously, but from the beginning he had also been heard as the author of religious or devotional works bearing his own name. The silence he had maintained was silence in regard to the meaning of his whole *oeuvre* or authorship: he had refrained from explaining the place of his individual works in his authorship. Now in *The Point of View*, he explains that “the reason I considered silence my duty was that the authorship was not yet at hand in so complete a form that the understanding of it could be anything but misunderstanding” (5). Kierkegaard envisioned a problem that most nineteenth-century authors never considered, least of all typical geniuses: that his works could not be understood until they had been explained by their author, and that they could not be explained even by their author until the authorship itself was complete. Thus in *The Point of View* Kierkegaard reads his individual

works as parts of a whole that gives them their true meaning. Separately, however, they have other, diverse, and quite contradictory meanings; so if they are all parts of a single literary entity as Kierkegaard asserts, they were bound to be misunderstood when understood individually. In fact, according to Kierkegaard in *The Point of View*, they were *intended* to be misunderstood.

The silence that Kierkegaard reads in his authorship as he reviews it in *The Point of View* entails duplicity as well. This is nowhere more apparent than in Kierkegaard's reading of the pseudonymous books that he classifies as the *aesthetic* portion of his authorship, for example *Either/Or*. In this work of two volumes, the reader is confronted with the papers of two fictitious authors, A and B, edited by the pseudonymous Victor Eremita. The papers of A present arguments for an unrestrained sensuous life, concluding with the "Diary of a Seducer." The papers of B argue for a life of ethical restraint. Thus the book seems to pose the alternative: *Either* a sensuous life / *Or* an ethical one. But, according to Kierkegaard in *The Point of View*, this was a ruse. Taken in the context of the authorship as a whole, he argues, the function of *Either/Or* is to force the reader to take notice of his own condition, whether he prefers the ethical or the sensuous life. And this is only the first step in the larger project of preparing the reader to recognize a third alternative, the religious life. The duplicity of the aesthetic portion of Kierkegaard's authorship lies therefore in intentionally creating a false impression of the author's intentions. But Kierkegaard carried this duplicity beyond his writing, for he claims literally to have adopted disguises in order to facilitate such misunderstanding: for several years he went to the theater every night pretending to be a dandy, for example, giving plausibility to the suspicion that he shared the point of view of A in *Either/Or*, and causing readers to fall the more readily and surely into the intended misunderstandings of his main purpose, the purpose of the authorship as a whole.<sup>3</sup>

3. It is fitting that Kierkegaard chose to masquerade as a dandy, not merely because the dandy is an ironic figure paralleling the textual irony of Kierkegaard's aesthetic works on the social plane—cf. Sima Godfrey, "The Dandy as Ironic Figure," *Sub/stance* 36 (1982), pp. 21–33—but because the dandy is one of the limiting cases of the genius. The dandy has all the qualities and characteristics of the typical genius but one: his originality lies in doing nothing, creating nothing. The figure of the dandy may be said to deconstruct the typical genius ironically. But this irony of employing all the talents of the genius to do nothing is precisely the inverse of the irony deployed in Kierkegaard's authorship as a whole, for Kierkegaard's overarching irony was to do everything while seeming to be a mere dandy.

In *The Point of View*, Kierkegaard describes his previous relationship to the reader as *indirect communication*, and suggests that maintaining this stance for so long had been something heroic in itself: "seldom has any author employed so much cunning, intrigue, and shrewdness to win honour and reputation in the world with a view to deceiving it, as I displayed in order to deceive it inversely in the interest of truth" (49).<sup>4</sup> With his indirect communications, however, Kierkegaard created a textual situation in which he would ultimately find it necessary to resort to *direct communication* and explain *what is what*. That, of course, is the function of *The Point of View*.

Merely to indicate in *The Point of View* that his authorship was a simple whole was for Kierkegaard the principle act of auto-interpretation. This is true precisely because Kierkegaard regarded his authorship as having much the same kind of integrity as we were once accustomed to ascribe to an individual work. (We assumed that it would be impossible to interpret a poem or a novel without reading it to its end—a view that has broken down in the face of interpretive strategies that focus upon the fissures in writing rather than the units of writing or the boundaries between them. Thus while the claims Kierkegaard makes for the integrity of his authorship might strain our credence even more than the idea of the integrity of the individual work, they do reveal again—from the other side, as it were—the arbitrariness of that idea.) To state that his whole career as an author had been devoted to creating a single work of art/authorship, with his individual writings merely a series of fragments of this larger work, dispels the earlier misunderstandings. The authorship as a whole, Kierkegaard asserts, was present to his mind as a grand strategy during the writing of all of the individual works that constitute it. And although he kept the plan a secret, it was this projected authorship, rather than the individual works, that had defined him as an author from the first. In declaring *what is what* in *The Point of View*, he broke the silence in regard to his authorship and thus transformed the meaning of his earlier publications.

Much of *The Point of View* is dedicated to demonstrating how a

4. Not only his pseudonymous aesthetic works, but the religious works signed with his own name are understood as indirect communications. In the religious works the author is ironically self-righteous, and his disguise is that of an indignant defender of public morality—as in the affair of *The Corsair*.

single author could have written both such aesthetic works as *Either/Or* and the religious works, for example the *Two Edifying Discourses*. According to *The Point of View*, the question of whether this disparity in his authorship indicated that he was an aesthetic or a religious author, or that he had once been an aesthetic author and then became a religious one is superficial. Kierkegaard insists that he had always been a religious author:

the contents of this little book [*The Point of View*] affirm . . . what I truly am as an author, that I am and was a religious author, that the whole of my work as an author is related to Christianity, to the problem "of becoming a Christian," with a direct polemic against the monstrous illusion we call Christendom . . . [5–6] *Furthermore*, the duplicity, the ambiguity, is a conscious one, something the author knows more about than anyone else; it is the essential dialectical distinction of the whole authorship. [10]

The interesting questions, and the ones Kierkegaard does feel obliged to answer rather than merely negate, are the questions of why a religious author would have written the aesthetic works and what is their part in his religious authorship. How are they related to the problem of becoming a Christian?

The answer to his question is affiliated with what Nietzsche described as the disparity between the greatness of his task and the smallness of his contemporaries. For Kierkegaard, of course, the disparity was defined in religious terms: the disparity between Christianity and Christendom. He found his readers living in an aesthetic/ethical state, under the illusion that they were in a religious state—the condition Kierkegaard defines as Christendom. How can a religious author approach such readers? In Kierkegaard's view, a religious author who wants to lead his readers to Christianity "must find exactly the place where the other is and begin there" (29). From this basic principle Kierkegaard concluded that he must be both an aesthetic and a religious author. As an aesthetic author—as in *Either/Or*, where he demonstrated the parity of the aesthetic and the ethical points of view—he takes the reader where he is and forces him to acknowledge his true state. He forces him "to take notice." This, in a word, is what Kierkegaard claims he did in his aesthetic works, and claims he intended from the very first. His aesthetic works were seductive in that, while to an irreligious person they seemed to affirm that the aesthetic point of view was as legitimate as the ethical, they

were really preparing such a reader for a third alternative, an alternative embodied in his religious works. This then was Kierkegaard's answer to the question of how a religious author could have made himself the scandalous author of such aesthetic works as he had written. It is also the explanation of his posing as a dandy. But the answer is less interesting, for my purposes, than Kierkegaard's mode of reply.

In order to answer the question, Kierkegaard thought it necessary to step into another role. He refused to defend himself directly from the charge of having been an aesthetic author and leading the virtuous astray—he cites Socrates as a precedent. For, as he writes in a remarkable passage of *The Point of View*,

I have little confidence in [authorial] protestations with respect to literary productions and am inclined to take an objective view of my own works. If as a third person, in the role of a reader, I cannot substantiate the fact that what I affirm is so, and that it could not but be so, it would not occur to me to wish to win a cause which I regard as lost. If I were to begin *qua* author to protest, I might easily bring confusion to the whole work, which from the first to last is dialectical. [15]

As if his authorship were not sufficiently complicated by his deliberate aesthetic/religious duplicity, Kierkegaard insists in *The Point of View* upon stepping out of the role of author altogether and explaining his authorship from the point of view of the reader. Neither his assumption of the role of the reader nor his alleged objectivity can be understood simply, however. He continues to write in the first person (not "as a third person") and in his constant self-reference, the authorial persona of *The Point of View* is perhaps the most subjective of all Kierkegaard's personae. The adoption of the role of the reader and the asseverations of objectivity are rather to be understood dialectically, in the sense of reflection. Viewed dialectically, it is precisely the apparent subjectivity and self-reference that create the textual objectivity of *The Point of View*, for they are the reflections of yet another authorial persona upon the earlier works of the authorship.

The text in question might as well be entitled *Yet another Point of View in my Work as an Author*. And the root impulse of Kierkegaard's authorship begins to seem the multiplication of subjectivities. This is perfectly compatible with Kierkegaard's assertion

that he always was a religious author having the one stated aim of leading his reader to becoming a Christian, i.e. sharing one point of view with him. For the multiplication of subjectivities can be understood—even in the case of the additional point of view of *The Point of View*—as serving the overarching purpose of leading author and reader to a single point of view: the point of view of the Christian. This presupposes a number of interesting ideas that would lead us astray here, such as the thought that the point of view of Christianity comprehends and transcends all other points of view and, more generally, that there is but one true point of view. But continuing my own line of reflection about Kierkegaard's auto-interpretive project, I confront a welcome paradox: the text that seems dedicated to revealing that Kierkegaard's authorship has only one point of view, can only operate by further fragmenting the authorship, by introducing still another authorial point of view. (For this additional point of view is that of a reader only in the sense that is the point of view of still another author reading the texts of the earlier authorial persona.) And although *The Point of View* bears the name of Søren Kierkegaard on the title page, it is a different "Kierkegaard" than the one who authored the religious works like the *Two Edifying Discourses*.

There are then three types of authorial persona in the authorship as a whole. First there are the various pseudonymous authors of the aesthetic works (among whom further distinctions can be made). Second, there is the Søren Kierkegaard, editor of *The Concluding Unscientific Postscript* and author of the religious works. And third, there is the Kierkegaard of *The Point of View*, the sole work in direct communication with the reader, and the book in which the author has become the reader of the works of the other/earlier authorial personae. This reduplication of authorial personae signals a disintegration of "the author" as a category and constitutes the necessary, equal, and opposite reaction to Kierkegaard's attempt to integrate his authorship as a whole as indicated above. There is, in other words, a further dialectical movement here (whether Kierkegaard was aware of it or not is immaterial): the authorship as a whole is integrated to an unprecedented degree precisely by an autobiographical life of duplicitous authorship and the disintegration of the author *qua* author. (And just as Kierkegaard's claims for the integrity of his "whole authorship" could be seen to contribute "from the other side" to the dissolution of the integrity of "the work," the fragmentation of his

authorial personae in the interests of this authorship contributes to our decomposition of the category of the author *qua* author, again as if from the other side. For while we are engaged in decomposing the author into author-functions as we study a discourse—in this case the discourse on the genius and individual agency generally—we see Kierkegaard receding as an author in the other direction. Kierkegaard's duplicitous and self-replicating authorial personae are continuously extracting themselves ironically from every worldly discourse and striving to generate a discourse unto themselves. Nonetheless, decomposing the author *qua* author has the same ultimate effect, whether in Kierkegaard's shattering performance in *The Point of View* or in the programmatic study of discourse exemplified in the works of Michel Foucault.)

The illusory finality of this further fragmentation of Kierkegaard's authorship is revealed in Kierkegaard's inability to conclude *The Point of View*. For it has not one conclusion but two, and the second is not written by "Kierkegaard" in either of his two earlier guises. The first is called an Epilogue and oddly precedes what is entitled the Conclusion. It is written in a somewhat wistful voice that recognizes that the complexity of the whole project has now been deflated by the revelations of this last author who has explained that the disparate books of the (earlier) duplicitous authorship were all of a seductive piece. This voice recognizes that the authorship is no longer as interesting as it was before these revelations. But of course this interest was an aesthetic property that the author of *The Point of View* is willing to abandon, now that the religious purpose of that interest has been fulfilled. This author is attached neither to the pose of the *flâneur* nor to that of the ironically religious combatant. He finally adopts humility as his demeanor, the one attitude consistent with the authorship as a whole. So at the end of this Epilogue he can say that "With this present little book, which itself belongs to a bygone time, I conclude the whole authorship, and then as the author (not the author simply, but the author of this whole 'authorship') I advance to meet the future. . . . in humility and also in penitence" (98–99). Humility appears at this point in the text as the resolution of the textual dialectic, much as the turn to direct communication in *The Point of View* as a whole presents itself as a resolution of the dialectical movement between the aesthetic and religious moments of Kierkegaard's (former) authorship. This would seem to con-



clude Kierkegaard's work as an author and "the whole authorship," and in one sense it does. But this is still not the end of the little book.

There follows a Conclusion, which begins in the voice of the author of the rest of the book but immediately shifts to that of another: "I have nothing further to say, but in conclusion I will let another speak, my poet, who when he comes will assign me a place among those who have suffered for the sake of an idea, and he will say: 'The martyrdom this author suffered may be briefly described thus: he suffered from being a genius in a provincial town.' . ." (100). There follows a literary panegyric of several pages in the voice of "my poet." The book ends without a return to Kierkegaard's voice. Thus there emerges yet another fragmentation of Kierkegaard's authorship, still another authorial persona to comment upon and read the works of the earlier ones. This one, however, comes to read not only the earlier works, but the one in which his own voice is inscribed, *The Point of View*. The utterance of "my poet" is perhaps the most complex and fascinating to read of any in the whole authorship, for it is in one sense beyond and outside of "this whole authorship." I shall not attempt to read it here, however, but leave it as the loose end that Kierkegaard left it. Without entering upon a discussion of this voice of yet another, I may nonetheless point out that this final auto-interpretive act of Kierkegaard's demonstrates his awareness that he will be interpreted and read as a genius, no matter how clearly he may have announced "what is what: what I as an author declare myself to be." It is perhaps a humble recognition of the fact, but humble in a duplicitous sense once again, for as he has warned us, "seldom has any author employed so much cunning, intrigue, shrewdness . . . etc." His poet reveals him a genius triumphant in his humility.

In Kierkegaard's fragmented authorship we finally discern several autobiographical lives. In the authorship that he completed before writing *The Point of View*, there are a number of possibilities, the most prominent of which is that of an aesthetic author of salacious books who was converted and subsequently became a religious author of imposing self-righteousness. This autobiographical life is formally very much like the autobiographical life of the typical genius, inasmuch as it is implied in the authorship and susceptible to the perceptions of readers. It is not silent but audible. Until he wrote *The Point of View*, Kierkegaard pretended indifference to the reaction of his readers. In this too he was not unlike the typical genius, and in his

popular aesthetic works he was taken for precisely that. But his deception—a deception that contributes to constituting the typical genius as a genius—was itself a deception for Kierkegaard: he planned all along to reveal that he cared passionately about the reaction of the reader. The autobiographical life that was audible in his works was itself a ruse. With *The Point of View* there emerges another autobiographical life that had formerly been silent. The silence itself sets this story apart from the mythical life of the typical genius, but the fact that it can and must be read by its author precisely at the completion of the authorship sets it even farther apart. Silence, fragmented authorship, and auto-interpretation make Kierkegaard a genius among geniuses and deconstructs—in one sense—the category of the genius.

### III

Nietzsche makes no extravagant claims about the integrity of his authorship, nor does he ascribe the general incomprehension of his works to his own duplicity. And although a parallel to Kierkegaard's fragmented authorship can be found in the differences between Nietzsche's own voice and that of Zarathustra, Nietzsche's authorship is not laid out as the work of a series of authorial personae, each reading the writings of the one before. Furthermore, Nietzsche's books are silent in a very different sense from Kierkegaard's. Thus while one of my purposes is to demonstrate a certain parallel between Nietzsche and Kierkegaard in their performance of disintegrated authorship, it must be understood that there are much deeper disparities between the two—disparities that give rise nonetheless to the same effects: dissolution of the author, auto-interpretation, etc.

As Nietzsche depicts it in *Ecce Homo*, his authorship was not dedicated to "deceiving [the reader] inversely in the interest of truth" (Kierkegaard), but to disillusioning the reader in the truth itself. For such a purpose neither secrecy nor deception was required: all Nietzsche needed to do was to state his case against the truth repeatedly and he effectively initiated a discourse of silence. Nietzsche's attacks upon the moral and metaphysical bases of the truth were just so outrageous that they produced their own silence. For believing in truth, Nietzsche's readers could only interpret his attacks as at-

tempts to establish different truths—truths at variance with the commonly accepted ones. Nietzsche therefore felt no compulsion to deceive his readers: they were already deceived by their own belief in truth, and he could rely upon their incomprehension. He found it equally unnecessary to disguise himself in any way, for, as he notes at the outset of *Ecce Homo*, “I only need to speak with one of the ‘educated’ who come to the Upper Engadine for the summer, and I am convinced that I do not exist” (217). He did not mean that no one had heard of his books, but that his contemporaries heard nothing even when they got his books into their hands and read them. Far from disappointing Nietzsche, this seems perfectly appropriate and even rewarding to him as he writes *Ecce Homo*. He does not go so far as to suggest that he intended to be misunderstood from the first, as Kierkegaard did, but the question remains: how could he take pleasure in being incomprehensible?

In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche does predict a great future for his works. Institutions would grow up to promulgate his teachings and academic chairs would be endowed for the interpretation of *Zarathustra*. And in his guise as the Antichrist the coming millenia would belong to him just as the foregoing ones belonged to Christ. However, he notes that “it would contradict my character entirely if I expected ears and hands for my truths today: that one doesn’t hear me . . . is not only understandable, it even seems right to me” (259). Nietzsche explains this attitude with his own theory of silence.

For what one lacks access to from experience one will have no ear. Now let us imagine an extreme case: that a book speaks of nothing but events that lie altogether beyond the possibility of . . . even rare experiences—that it is the first language for a new series of experiences. In that case, simply nothing will be heard, but there will be the acoustic illusion that where nothing is heard, nothing is there. This is, in the end . . . the originality of my experience. [261]

This Nietzschean silence is obviously very different from Kierkegaard’s, for it disavows the author’s influence over the reader altogether. It is nonetheless a judgment upon both his works and his readers. As far as his works are concerned, their incomprehensibility testified to the fact that he had had unheard of experiences and created a language for them as well.

As for his readers, he remarks with evident delight in *Ecce Homo*

upon the "innocence of people who [have] said No to my writings. Only this past summer, at a time when I may have upset the balance of the whole rest of literature with my weighty, too weighty, literature, a professor from the University of Berlin suggested very amiably that I ought to try another form: nobody read such things." Reviewers fascinated him by demonstrating rather than elucidating his discourse: one "treated my Zarathustra, for example, as an advanced exercise in style, and expressed the wish that later on I might provide some content as well" (260). Nietzsche recounts such incidents ironically, but without bitterness. The complete failure of his contemporaries to grasp the significance of his attack upon truth itself reassured him. It confirmed his suspicions about his mission as well as about his contemporary readers, illustrating that "disproportion between the greatness of my task and the smallness of my contemporaries." His works had indeed fallen upon deaf ears, fallen, that is, into silence. And these public incidents of naive incomprehension showed him both how radical was his attack upon truth and how wedded were his contemporaries to their truth. What is more, the general incomprehension gave him a reason and an opportunity to explain himself (in silence) once again. This is the task of *Ecce Homo*.

What elicited *Ecce Homo* was not a dialectical tension between silence and misunderstanding in earlier works, as was the case with *The Point of View*, but the silence itself. Nietzsche's declaration of "who I am" has other motives, therefore, than to end (*aufheben*) a dialectically fragmented authorship. Nietzsche was not concerned to locate the fragments in a larger whole. It should come as no surprise then that his reading of his earlier works has none of the dialectical tautness of *The Point of View*. It is as loose as the rest of his authorship, a work of silence commenting in kind upon the silences of his earlier works. It is the most silent of Nietzsche's books, and therefore also the most forthright. It is a triumph that he earned the right to celebrate by having created a discourse of silence in his earlier works: the right to be even more silent henceforth.

*Ecce Homo* is more outrageous and incomprehensible than any of Nietzsche's earlier books. It remains difficult to hear even for those who have conceived a great enthusiasm for one or another of Nietzsche's ideas or other books. The arrogance of the chapter titles indicates the new source of silence: "Why I am so Wise," "Why I am so Clever," "Why I write such good Books," and "Why I am a des-

tiny." The intensity of self-congratulation makes this book almost impossible to tolerate and creates a new species of silence akin to the obscene. In his earlier books Nietzsche at least had the good taste to attack truth from a variety of abstract and presumably objective points of view, or to ascribe his wisdom to the fictive voice of Zarathustra. But all along he substituted for truth the assertion that meaning is the subjective imposition of the (strong) individual. Now for the first time he illustrates this in *Ecce Homo*. The new vision substituted for truth is Nietzsche's interpretation. And anyone who breaks his silence and understands Nietzsche's project will have accepted Nietzsche's personal vision. In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche flaunts his own role in the transvaluation of all values.

Nietzsche reviews his authorship in much greater detail in *Ecce Homo* than Kierkegaard does in *The Point of View*, but he makes no effort to show that his works are all of a piece. He does not speak of his "authorship." He makes no claim to have known what he was doing from the start. In reviewing his books title by title, Nietzsche leaves them in the same random order in which he wrote them. With two caesuras he merely arranges his books into three loose categories (that could of course be compared to Kierkegaard's categories). First come the books written before he realized what his mission was: *The Birth of Tragedy*, the *Untimely Meditations*, and, somewhat ambiguously, *Human all too Human*. The rest of his authorship—all in what might be understood as direct discourse—is divided into the "Yes-saying" and the "No-saying" books. The former include *Dawn*, *The Gay Science*, and *Thus Spake Zarathustra*; the latter include *Beyond Good and Evil*, *The Genealogy of Morals*, *The Twilight of the Idols*, and so on. Only the relationship between the Yes-saying and the No-saying works is assigned strategic importance and no explanation is given of why the No-saying books did not precede the Yes-saying, as might seem more logical. And the distinction itself is arbitrary. There is no tidying up in *Ecce Homo*, and what tidying up there is does little to clarify. What clarification there is is clarification by more audacious formulation.

Nietzsche apologizes for the minimal popularity of his early writings. He acknowledges that he himself had been deaf to the silence he had begun to create in them. So instead of taking credit for the notoriety he had achieved with *The Birth of Tragedy*, he notes that "its effect and fascination were due to what was wrong with it—

its practical application to Wagnerism. . . . In this respect, this essay was an event in the life of Wagner [rather than an event in Nietzsche's own autobiographical life]. . . . what people had ears for was only a new formula for the art, the intentions, the task of *Wagner*—and what was really valuable in the essay was ignored" (270). He takes credit for the incomprehension of his contemporaries, even here where he himself did not yet comprehend his larger mission. Nietzsche finds *The Birth of Tragedy* valuable when reading it in *Ecce Homo* nonetheless. It is the book that first gave him "the right to understand [himself] as the first *tragic philosopher*" (273), by which he means the first philosopher to negate being and affirm becoming. This much of his project was already embedded in *The Birth of Tragedy*, and it is the decisive component of the whole. But he was no more aware of the importance of his project or his own role in it than were his readers. Similarly, in his readings of his untimely essays on Schopenhauer and Wagner: he admits that the two essays do not depict their subjects; instead they unconsciously characterized himself—"Schopenhauer and Wagner, or in one word, Nietzsche." Unlike Kierkegaard, who was so concerned to read back a consciously calculated strategy into his early writings. He had not known what he was doing, but he had been doing it anyway. His works were as silent to him as they were to his readers, but consistent with his notion of *amor fati* he affirms them nonetheless.

The other caesura in Nietzsche's career as an author as he reads it in *Ecce Homo* comes after the completion of *Thus Spake Zarathustra*: "The task for the years that followed was now indicated as clearly as possible. After the Yes-saying part of my task had been solved, the turn had come for the No-saying, *No-doing* part: the revaluation of our values so far, the great war—conjuring up a day of decision" (310). On this reading, *Zarathustra* is the culmination of the Yes-saying or myth making portion of Nietzsche's authorship, and he reads it more extensively than any of his other books. He elaborates at length upon the theme of *amor fati* and notes that this is "the concept of Dionysus once again." But I prefer to call attention to a less well known dimension of Nietzsche's reading of *Zarathustra*:

Zarathustra once defines, quite strictly, his task—it is mine too—and there is no mistaking his meaning: he says Yes to the point of justifying, of redeeming even all of the past. "I walk among men as among the fragments of the future—that future which I envisage.

And this is all my creating and striving, that I create and carry together into One what is fragment and riddle and dreadful accident. And how could I bear to be a man if man were not also a creator and guesser of riddles and redeemer of accidents." [308]

With these words of Zarathustra, Nietzsche illuminates not only his concept of personal life as *amor fati*, but his authorship as well. His writings are fragments, riddles, and dreadful accidents redeemed by his Dionysian mission of raising the chaos of life from falsehood to the status of opportunity. The opportunity, of course, is to impose his own meaning upon the chaos—the chaos of his writings as well as the chaos of life.

The Dionysian vision is trained upon the author's own works. The fragments, riddles, etc., are Nietzsche's books, all fragmentary beginnings at a task that he has only gradually discovered and understood himself. *Zarathustra* exemplifies this. Nietzsche reads *Zarathustra* as involuntary writing, written at incredible speed and without forethought. Writing *Zarathustra* he was inspired, and, as he says, if one had the least residue of superstition one would call his experience "*revelation*." In this state, "one hears, one does not seek; one accepts, one does not ask who gives; like lightning, a thought flashes up, with necessity, without hesitation regarding its form—I never had any choice" (300-01). His authority is unconscious here too, but it is a different unconsciousness than what shrouded his early books in misunderstanding. There it was a dull unconsciousness that overlay the deep but silent, i.e. incomprehensible, agenda with a superficial but distractingly readable Wagnerian agenda. In *Zarathustra* the unconsciousness is a state of writing that permits the new myths to emerge more fully than any conscious mind could manage or permit. Nietzsche does not of course ascribe this inspiration to any external source; it is the internal force of the self he is becoming that writes the book. This force is not the personal (Freudian) unconscious of course, but the unconscious as such.

After the completion of *Zarathustra*, according to Nietzsche in *Ecce Homo*, he lapsed into writing No-saying books. Unlike the imperious Yes-saying books, these entailed a "slow search for those related to me, those who, prompted by strength, would offer me their hands for destroying. From this moment forward [from *The Genealogy of Morals*, the first book after *Zarathustra*] all my writings are fish hooks: perhaps I know how to fish as well as anyone?—If nothing

was caught, I am not to blame. *There were no fish*" (310). Thus Nietzsche turns to breaking up idols in order to prepare the path for his own already formulated myths, viz. Zarathustra, *amor fati*, Eternal Recurrence, the Will to Power, etc. Naturally he writes polemically—in a style quite contrary to Zarathustra's mock biblical poetry—and polemic involves compromises with the reader. Nonetheless, there is silence here too, the silence of the fish hook. Nietzsche attacks in full awareness of what he wants to destroy now, and there is no longer the overlay of a more palatable agenda. He writes deliberately, even methodically in *The Genealogy of Morals* and *Beyond Good and Evil*. So we now can speak easily of Nietzsche's "genealogical method." Partly for this reason, it seems, these books are the most readable at present (excluding the early works like *The Birth of Tragedy*, that are readable in a different sense). His polemics retain an aspect of silence nonetheless. They do not search out the reader. They lie waiting for the reader in deep water. And if no readers present themselves for the time being, Nietzsche's self-assurance as a fisherman is undaunted. These are hooks upon which we can be caught more than once.

This schematic division of Nietzsche's writings previous to *Ecce Homo* makes his authorship seem more orderly than it actually appears in that final book. The earlier books appear there as fragments, riddles, and so on. And what characterizes *Ecce Homo* is not these two caesuras that I let stand for the plethora of breaks in his readings of the earlier works. *Ecce Homo* has its own characteristic fissure: two movements of interpretation—different styles of silence—that cut across each other and produce the chiasma/paradox of his insisting that his discourse of silence be heard. Nietzsche affirms his earlier writings in all their silence while he cries out to be acknowledged as the new Dionysos.

*Ecce Homo* is a performative declamation of the impossibility of Dionysian truth. Not imposing a system of authorship upon his writings in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche treats them as Zarathustra treats the past generally: he says yes to the point of justifying all his past writings. This is an effort of will that strives to supplant the truth with its own meaning, creating an autobiographical life of riddles and accidents. It is Nietzsche's textual *amor fati*, saying yes to his writings, just as he wrote them, without reordering or rewriting them. This is the modest achievement of *Ecce Homo*. This style of silence makes



*Ecce Homo* a work of great restraint,<sup>5</sup> perhaps surprisingly, for it is more obvious that the book immodestly proclaims its author's power. Nietzsche's restraint is undercut by the other source of silence in *Ecce Homo*: the apparently megalomaniacal tendency of Nietzsche to equate himself with the god Dionysos and oppose himself to Christ. It is an extraordinary Wagnerian effort of will to impose *himself* upon the world. This (strident) agenda of *Ecce Homo* deafens the reader to the former silence of restraint. It is nonetheless another style of silence. Even faithful Nietzscheans find it an embarrassment. In his self-congratulation he seems to have gone too far. Thus the two styles/impulses of silence in *Ecce Homo* deconstruct each other, making it Nietzsche's most silent book.

In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche prevents closure on a new truth. The silence or incomprehensibility of his books is based not merely upon their impossible contents—the assertion that truth is not—but upon their status as impulses and ultimately contradictory ones. Nietzsche's silence grows deeper in *Ecce Homo*, and yet he cries out "Hear me!" His silence is a provocation. He defies the reader to understand him, i.e., to find truth in his texts. And whenever one does, whenever the silence is broken, new avenues of discourse open up, new fictions become possible, and truth and reality recede yet again and farther.

As Nietzsche's silence deepens and he cries out "Hear me!" he seems to disappear as an author altogether behind the mutually deconstructing silences of *Ecce Homo*. This book is self-sufficient in the sense of auto-deconstructing, the ultimate reproach to the ideology of the genius.<sup>6</sup>

Nietzsche's silence, in his authorship as a whole as in *Ecce Homo*, is not silence in the strict sense. In one dimension it is simply the general incomprehension with which his works were received by his contemporaries. The parameters of such silence are just as Nietzsche described them: a new language for new experiences. But

5. In such a text, in such a situation of writing, it is an almost irresistible temptation for an author to indicate what his particular works mean, or what he wants them to have meant, and to ascribe a consciously intended meaning to the authorship as a whole, as we have seen Kierkegaard do. Nietzsche resisted.

6. Since completing this essay I have read Michael Ryan's excellent article on Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*: "The Act," *Glyph* 2(1977), pp. 64–87. I am pleased to find myself in basic agreement with his more extended reading of this text.

Nietzsche's silence has been broken repeatedly, to the point where Nietzsche's books are now perhaps the most provocative master texts we have. Of course it is an increment of experience and a different blindness (not greater insight) that distinguishes our generation from Nietzsche's contemporaries. Thus the importance Nietzsche's texts have assumed for us is dialectically related to their silence after all. Indeed, I propose that dialectical silence of this type is precisely what distinguishes not only the works of Nietzsche, but a few other unusually fertile texts as well, from the works of even the greatest founders of scientific disciplines, systematic philosophers, initiators of literary genres, etc., including Kierkegaard's. The Nietzschean style of silence is what permits us to return to these few master texts in every generation and find ourselves provoked in totally unanticipated ways—when we manage to break it, of course. It is through their silence and the possibility of our breaking it that they renew themselves and open up whole new areas of discourse. Nietzsche never broke his silence, as Kierkegaard did, hoping ultimately to reveal the meaning of his texts himself. He kept his silence. So the dialectic is not within the authorship, as in Kierkegaard's case, but without it. We readers are left to break the silences of his authorship from our ever changing vantages. We can break them only momentarily and partially, however, never permanently or fully. Breaking these silences yields a peculiar form of knowledge or insight that cannot sustain itself, but has to be learned again and again. And the silence remains to be broken countless times again.

At the conclusion of his essay "What is an Author?" Michael Foucault writes of certain "initiators of discursive practices," and ascribes to their texts a peculiar potency that permits us to return to them and find wholly new discursive impulses.<sup>7</sup> (He takes Marx and Freud as his examples.) An enduring fertility distinguishes these texts from those of typical geniuses in the arts and sciences, inasmuch as we usually return to the works of founders of scientific disciplines and their like with essentially historic interests in the origins of a particular type of discourse: we want to see, for example, how Adam Smith launched modern economics. But we return to the works of the founders of discursive practices to find altogether new

7. Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" in *Language, Counter-Memory, and Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 113–38, but especially pp. 131–36.

questions and to open whole new fields of inquiry. Foucault suggests that there is a qualitative difference between our rereadings, and the texts to which we return in the two types of cases. The distinction is of course overdrawn, both because we *do* return to the founders of scientific disciplines and literary conventions at times in the same way in which we return to Marx and Freud, and because the texts that seem to mark the inceptions of discursive practices are different at different times. Thus when we seek to determine what it is that distinguishes those texts that seem to mark the inception of discursive practices we must seek characteristics that a) are present in varying degree, rather than merely absent or present as seems to be implied in Foucault's essay, and b) seem to be more or less present depending upon the point in time, the generation, for example, from which they are being viewed or read. In conformity with these two criteria I suggest that what distinguishes Marx and Freud for us from even the greatest of their nineteenth-century rivals is something that Nietzsche distilled in even greater degree in his texts, namely their silence. The Nietzschean silence described in *Ecce Homo* explains to a remarkable degree why it is possible for us to return to the texts of these three authors so frequently and still discover wholly uncharted discursive territory.

One trait that unites the first chapter of *Capital*, for example, with Nietzsche's texts is its tenacity as a *beginning* of a discursive practice that would be impossible either to complete or to make systematic. (There is a certain aspiration to the status of system in the works of Marx and Freud, of course, but their texts occasionally belie this aspiration and entail a refusal of the system.) This is approximately what Foucault means by his concept of the "constructive omission," when he tries to categorize how Marx and Freud "cleared a space for the introduction of elements other than their own." But the unrealized discursive potential of the texts of Marx and Freud are much sparser than those of Nietzsche's. It is therefore curious that in "What is an Author?" Foucault should have excluded Nietzsche from his usual series—Marx, Nietzsche, Freud. The reason that he does exclude Nietzsche, I speculate, is that Nietzsche's texts not only refuse systematization, but are broken down into the greatest possible number of the smallest possible points of departure so that they are virtually immune to institutionalization. For as we know, there are no analogues of orthodox institutes of psychoanalysis or au-

thoritarian governments grounded upon the texts of Nietzsche. We cannot even speak of Nietzsche-ism. Nietzsche's silence seems to guarantee that no such institutions can grow up upon his texts. From one perspective this might seem a debility of Nietzsche's discourse. But Marxist governments and institutes of psychoanalysis are not testimonies to the fertility of the ideas of Marx and Freud; they are testimonies to the degree to which Marxist and Freudian discourse can be frozen and turned to repressive purposes. Such institutionalization is precisely what inhibits the particular sort of return to these master texts that Foucault values so highly. Of course we have seen that Nietzsche was not immune to the fantasy that institutions would indeed grow up around his texts. But this is an easily deconstructed fissure in *Ecce Homo*. Just as the tenacity with which the discourses initiated by Marx and Freud insist upon repeatedly beginning again frustrates their authors's aspirations to system, Nietzsche's texts are preserved from institutionalization by their overwhelming silence. This silence, as we have seen, grew out of Nietzsche's repeated assaults upon truth itself and upon the postulate of reality. Each attack is a new beginning and a steadfast refusal of completion. Nietzsche did initiate a discourse, therefore, but it is the closest thing we have to a discourse of silence. And this silence, present in certain texts of Marx, Freud, and others (perhaps to *some* degree in *all* texts), is what permits us to return to them in the way Foucault quite accurately describes our doing.

This reading of Nietzsche's silence extends Foucault's critique of the category of the author into the crucial subcategory of the genius. For when Foucault writes that "the subject must be stripped of its creative role and analyzed as a complex and variable function of discourse," he outlines a program that can only be carried out on the territory of the genius. Yet in his essay he is obliged to call precisely upon the authority of two particular creative geniuses—Marx and Freud—to underwrite his general critique of the creative subject/author/genius. In my terms, he has to cite the authority of two (sentimental) geniuses distinguished by their moments of silence in order to call into question the authority of typical or naive geniuses. This is of course no reproach to Foucault, but an explanation of why it must be so. We can see this more clearly in the case of Nietzsche: those who break his silences are forced to reconstitute him as an author/genius at precisely those moments when they recognize how

he has effectively deconstructed the genius by establishing the disintegrating authority of silence. My own essay is a performance of this.

The auto-interpretive strategy of both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard was an obvious one: to write one additional text in which the author usurps the role of the reader. This gesture was nothing more than a further radicalization of the role of the genius. For unlike the typical genius, who remained tied to the reader only through his function of illuminating the world, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard liberated themselves from the last vestige of dependence upon the reader with this act. They said—differently of course—that they did not need to enlighten the world in order to have been geniuses. They were textually as well as sexually self-sufficient. As obvious as this step may seem now, it was a radical innovation; it was an act of originality. Radical and original, it challenged the ideology of radical originality.

In their self-sufficient texts—*The Point of View* and *Ecce Homo*—each author gives a reading of his earlier writings, one by one. In so doing, however, he naturally raises more questions in the minds of other/subsequent readers than he answers or allays. These new questions give rise to further interpretations. Thus these texts are literally counterproductive of that single interpretation of their author's works to which they are apparently dedicated. They provide not merely one additional reading or interpretation of their authors's works, but call into question and fructify every other interpretation, provoking whole new generations of hybrid interpretations that would never have arisen without the additional seeds of these auto-interpretive texts. They demonstrate in the most literal and performative way the futility of that strife for a single right interpretation of a text in the terms of the author's supposed intentions. For here the author's intentions are redoubled and immediately riven. Yet when we realize that these texts are not the solutions to anyone's doubts about how to interpret the authors's earlier writings, we are left with the question: why *did* they write these books?

In usurping the role of the reader in their autobiographical texts, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche were acting out a fantasy that Nietzsche had recorded in an adolescent sketch of an autobiography: "to write a book and read it myself." Nietzsche expresses this remarkably innocent narcissistic fantasy again in an epigram that he placed at the

front of *Ecce Homo* thirty years later. Reviewing the literary production of his forty-fourth year he asks himself, "how could I fail to be thankful to my whole life? — and so I tell my life to myself." Telling their lives to themselves and reading their books to themselves was an enduring fantasy that promised some deep satisfaction to Nietzsche and, I conjecture, to Kierkegaard as well. Once we have undermined the impression of apparently compulsive attempts to forestall the importunate advances of readers and their vulgar interpretations, this particular textual pleasure looms. An analysis of the naive genius's relationship to the reader would equally well deconstruct the textual self-sufficiency of *Ecce Homo* and *The Point of View*.<sup>8</sup> But the beauty of these texts is that they can do it themselves. This is the onanistic pleasure of the self-sufficient text.

8. Rousseau is obviously not the naive genius that I constructed above. Cf. Jacques Derrida, *De la Grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967), pp. 145ff; and Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Blindness," in *Blindness and Insight* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 102–41, and all of the essays on Rousseau in *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979) but especially the one entitled "Excuses," pp. 278–301.