

# Seeking Ourselves in the Strange: Self-Knowledge in the Nietzsche's *Genealogy*

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## Abstract

In the nuanced tapestry of Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morality*, the exploration of self-knowledge emerges as a central, yet subtly presented, theme. This paper delves into the profound depths of this theme, uncovering the intricacies and challenges inherent in Nietzsche's portrayal of the self's quest. Nietzsche's work not only critically deconstructs the fallacies entrenched in conventional self-awareness but also charts an unorthodox path toward a more authentic understanding of the self. Embarking on this intellectual journey, the paper scrutinizes the notable juxtaposition found between the first and second sections of the *Genealogy's* preface, shedding light on the intricate relationship between moral constructs and self-realization. It then interprets the profound ramifications of Nietzsche's assertion, particularly in the preface's first section, that true self-knowledge is perennially shrouded in unfamiliarity. This study meticulously examines key terminologies such as 'sought', contextualized within Nietzsche's broader philosophical oeuvre, to trace the implicit, yet profound, pathway to self-knowledge that Nietzsche advocates. Ultimately, this exploration asserts that Nietzsche's *Genealogy* extends beyond merely exposing the inadequacies of conventional moral doctrines. It emphatically champions a perpetual pursuit of openness and an exploratory spirit in the odyssey towards self-discovery. This process involves embracing the unfamiliar and courageously engaging with the ebb and flow of one's existential reality, as part of the continual quest to understand and define the self.

**Keywords:** Self-Knowledge, Strange, Seek, Experience, Genealogy of Morality

## 1. Introduction

Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morality*, a seminal work in the annals of philosophy, is celebrated for its incisive critique of traditional moral values and its stimulating insights into human nature and culture. However, amidst its far-reaching influence on philosophical and ethical discourse, the aspect of self-knowledge in Nietzsche's exploration is often overlooked. This fundamental concept, frequently eclipsed by more prominent themes such as the will to power or moral critique, is pivotal to Nietzsche's oeuvre. In the preface, section one, of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche notes, 'We are unknown to ourselves, we knowers... We remain strange to ourselves out of necessity' (Nietzsche, 2020). It challenges not only the conventional perceptions of self but also invites a radical reassessment of our journey towards self-understanding. This paper aims to shed light on this undervalued facet of Nietzsche's philosophy, positing that an in-depth examination of self-knowledge in the *Genealogy* uncovers a complex and profound methodology for self-comprehension that transcends traditional boundaries. The exploration of Nietzsche's perspective on self-knowledge is critical not only for a holistic understanding of his philosophical pursuit but also for its relevance to contemporary dialogues on identity and self-perception. This study delves into Nietzsche's dissection of conventional self-understanding and his advocacy for unorthodox avenues towards self-knowledge, seeking to contribute fresh perspectives to a dimension of his work that is often neglected. This paper argues that Nietzsche's *Genealogy* accomplishes more than just revealing the flaws in traditional moral doctrines. It emphatically endorses an attitude of openness and a spirit of exploration in the quest for self-discovery, advocating the embrace of the unknown and a vigorous engagement with the dynamics of one's existence. This journey is not merely a theoretical endeavor but an invitation to reevaluate the foundational aspects of our understanding of self and our place in the world.

## 2. From Self-Knowledge to Moral Critique: A Disjunctive Transition

In the *Genealogy*, the shift from a focus on self-knowledge in the preface's first section to an emphasis on moral

critique in later sections is noteworthy. This transition is anchored in the unique narrative logic of the *Genealogy* and the intrinsic link between self-knowledge and moral concepts. Contrary to previous genealogical studies, The *Genealogy* refuses to adopt a simplistic linear approach to the development of moral concepts, and it eschews presupposing a logical thread from origin to ultimate purpose. It represents Nietzsche's profound critique and reconstruction of traditional moral notions. Nietzsche contends that moral standards are not transcendent and immutable but are products of history and power relations. Therefore, the narrative logic of the *Genealogy* markedly diverges from the metanarratives found in traditional philosophical works. It is not linear or systematic but exploratory and critical, aiming to uncover the origins and evolution of moral concepts through historical and cultural analysis, emphasizing the inherently dynamic nature of morality (Hassan 2021). Based on this narrative logic, the structure of the *Genealogy* also significantly differs from that of traditional philosophical texts. Its main body comprises three independent yet interrelated essays, each focusing on a different moral issue. This disjointed narrative approach is evident in the transition from the issue of self-knowledge in the first section of the preface to the moral questions addressed subsequently, necessitating an understanding of the *Genealogy* from this unique perspective and logic in its deliberate arrangement of the first and second sections of the preface.

Firstly, the formal disjunction between self-knowledge and moral critique in the *Genealogy* exemplifies the non-linear narrative logic at the textual level. As an ethical work, although its main theme is moral critique, the narrative does not follow a strict logical sequence like traditional philosophical texts. This unconventional approach is not only pervasive throughout the chapters of the *Genealogy* but is also evident in the transition from the first section of the preface to the subsequent content. In the first section of the preface, Nietzsche does not mention morality or values, yet he abruptly shifts to examining the origins of morality in the second section, which can be perplexing for readers. In fact, this thematic leap precisely underscores the *Genealogy*'s focus on the fractured historical chain, emphasizing 'the randomness and abruptness of events' rather than 'how events sequentially unfold' (Ma, 2017). As a specific form of event, the process of content presentation in the text adheres to this approach. In traditional metaphysics, the self is often viewed as an independent entity separated from the external world, with self-knowledge limited to individual rational reflection. Following this framework, after introducing the issue of self-knowledge in the first section of the preface, The *Genealogy* would logically examine the nature or methods of self-knowledge within the rational system. However, Nietzsche unorthodoxly opts to explore external factors (history, morality) seemingly irrelevant to the essence of the self in traditional metaphysics. Nietzsche posits that moral concepts profoundly influence people's self-knowledge and practices, with traditional morality, having stretched over millennia, already eroding and thwarting people's selves. Hence, the reader's confusion over the shift from self-knowledge to moral issues is actually a result of being confined by traditional thought patterns, mistakenly believing that a rationality-dominated linear history is the real history, unaware that it is an illusionary history that excludes various complex factors truly at play in the historical process and artificially constructs causal links. Therefore, the transition from self-knowledge to moral critique can be seen as the *Genealogy*'s restoration of truth characteristics by examining the disjunctive history outside the illusionary linear logic.

Secondly, the *Genealogy* has a unique understanding and treatment of beginnings. Compared to the extensive critique of morality, the solitary issue of self-knowledge in the *Genealogy* resembles more of a misdirection. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche asserts that the *Genealogy* begins with 'a potentially misleading start... ending often in a very terrifying explosion, revealing a new truth amid dense clouds' (Nietzsche, 2020). Following this logic, Nietzsche provides supplementary explanations for each of the three essays in the *Genealogy*. The first essay attributes the origin of Christian morality to a spirit of resentment, rather than the noble spirit many believe. The second essay sees conscience as an internalized brutal instinct, not the voice of God as commonly thought. And the third essay attributes the immense power of asceticism to its hitherto uniqueness and lack of competitors, not to divine activity behind the clergy as assumed. While Nietzsche's explanations primarily target each essay, the misdirection at the beginning goes further. For instance, Ken Gemes (2006) extends this misdirection to the interplay between chapters, suggesting that the first chapter's critique of Christian morality in the *Genealogy* is intended by Nietzsche to lower the reader's guard, with the real target being modern science and humanity, as focused in the third chapter. Indeed, the abrupt shift from self-knowledge to moral critique also involves such misdirection, with its brevity and haste often leading readers to mistakenly deem self-knowledge insignificant in the *Genealogy*. However, the *Genealogy*'s narrative has a final landing point; pure misdirection is not Nietzsche's intention. His fundamental aim is to have people see a new truth amid dense clouds. At the end of the *Genealogy*, readers may suddenly realize the purpose of Nietzsche's critique of morality, or understand that 'what is found at the beginning of things is not the identical origin that remains, but the inconsistency and disharmony of various other things' (Foucault, 2003). Thus, The *Genealogy of Morality*'s deliberate misdirection also presents a true historical picture to the readers, where the very beginning of moral issues is actually the seemingly unrelated issue of self-knowledge.

Finally, the disjunction and misdirection in the *Genealogy* also carry a deeper implication, namely, the attempt to create a distance between the reader and the focus of the text. This is done to allow ideas that are impactful and disruptive to better penetrate the reader's thoughts. Nietzsche views 'thoughts that become conscious' as merely a 'very small part' of human thinking, even the 'most superficial and worst part' (Nietzsche, 2022). To ensure the effectiveness of ideas, they need to act upon the reader from a subconscious level, starting from a place far removed from consciousness. Therefore, in the early parts of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche consistently maintains a distance between the text and the reader. From humanity's primitive ancestors at the inception of good and evil to the clergy of Christian morality, all are significantly temporally and spatially separated from people in modern society. As previously mentioned, this distance can lower the reader's psychological defenses, allowing them to truly follow Nietzsche's exploration of the development of moral concepts. When readers personally experience the entire process, they eventually realize that what Nietzsche is actually critiquing is the modern individual who believes in modern scientific rationalism. Thus, the *Genealogy*, through its dynamic manipulation of distance, ultimately reveals a truth. Modern individuals, thinking they have escaped the bondage of traditional Christian asceticism, do not realize that asceticism has been 'the master of all philosophy so far.' What they currently believe in is actually a transformation of, or even 'the best ally at the moment' for, asceticism. Their proud 'absolute will to truth' is in fact a belief in asceticism itself (Nietzsche, 2020).

### 3. The Intrinsic Connection Between Self-Knowledge and Moral Concepts

In the *Genealogy*, the relationship between self-knowledge and moral concepts is complex and closely intertwined, involving both direct interactions and indirect influences mediated by truth. Firstly, in terms of the direct connection between self-knowledge and moral concepts, The *Genealogy* understands the latter as a tool for constructing the self. Nietzsche posits that moral concepts largely shape people's self-understanding; individuals define their own and others' behaviors through moral concepts, thereby exerting influence. In the critical context of the *Genealogy*, traditional moral concepts and social norms often mask or even distort an individual's understanding of themselves. As Nietzsche states, 'The most significant and inscrutable illness that humanity, to this day, has not recovered from, is the affliction of man by man, of man within himself accompanied by the fact of the animal soul turning against and opposing itself' (Nietzsche, 2020). In other words, traditional morality demands suppression and denial of self, leading to internal conflict and distorted self-perception. Therefore, by examining the origins and development of moral concepts, Nietzsche reveals the 'complete contingency of Western moral concepts,' (Merrick, 2021) aiming to encourage people to transcend traditional moral frameworks and seek a deeper level of self-understanding and practice. With profound self-knowledge, individuals can confront themselves, unearth and release their long-suppressed life impulses, and thus rise to resist and break free from the shackles of traditional moral concepts. This enables a reevaluation and reshaping of one's value systems and beliefs.

Secondly, in the indirect interaction between self-knowledge and moral concepts, truth plays a pivotal role. Throughout millennia, both Christian morality and modern science have proclaimed themselves as the truth during different epochs. However, 'truth' (Wahrheit) is not directly equivalent to 'reality' (Realität). In Nietzsche's perspective, 'reality' refers to the fundamental state of life and existence, encompassing power, instincts, desires, and emotions, a mode more primitive and direct, closely aligned with individual intuitive experience and life experience. In contrast, 'truth' is a concept or belief, a framework constructed by people to interpret and understand the world, often shaped by social, cultural, linguistic, and power structures, and not necessarily reflective of the essence of things. Within the critical context of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche often regards truth as an illusion, considering it purely what we today call fantasies (Nietzsche, 2020).

Yet, why has this so-called illusory truth been long trusted by people? Nietzsche points out, The key lies not in whether something is true, but in how it functions—utterly lacking intellectual honesty. Everything is good, lies, slander, extremely shameless disguises, as long as they contribute to raising that temperature, until people believe (Nietzsche, 2006). In other words, they possess utility, 'this utility is rather the everyday experience of all times, something that is always again and again emphasized' (Nietzsche, 2020). In Nietzsche's view, the trust people place in Christian morality and modern science is based on this utility of truth. However, this does not conceal their malevolent and flawed values. Their values remain filled with various illusions and deceptions, constantly undermining individuals' self-knowledge and state of life.

However, truth in a strict sense actually originates from people's self-knowledge activities. Taking Christian morality and modern science criticized in the *Genealogy* as examples, their theoretical foundations correspond to metaphysical truth systems of different periods, which according to Nietzsche, are actually products of incorrect self-understanding. Starting from Socrates' 'know thyself,' Western philosophy gradually shifted its focus from the natural world to human beings themselves, establishing a truth system centered on 'man'. Nietzsche does not entirely deny the significance of this shift. In his view, all philosophy is 'the self-expression of its creator, an unintentional and inadvertent reminiscence' (Nietzsche, 2020), but there is a fundamental difference between the two. Traditional metaphysics, though

human-centric, pursued objectivity beyond human subjectivity itself. From Plato to Hegel, rational cognition has been revered, elevated above all other human impulses. In their self-understanding, not only must truth be founded on reason, but the essence of the self is also seen as a rational existence. However, traditional metaphysics overlooks a fact: human basic impulses are not equidistant; 'each of them too much wants to show itself as the ultimate goal of being, as the natural master of all other impulses. Because each impulse has a desire to rule', the individual's belief in morality ultimately reflects a question of 'who', that is, 'what kind of ranking do these most inner impulses occupy within an individual's nature' (Nietzsche, 2020). Thus, self-knowledge is inherently a highly subjective affair. The traditional metaphysicians' construction of self and truth based on reason merely indicates that, at that moment, the impulse of reason was predominant in their body, but this cannot be generalized to others, nor lend any universality to their moral concepts and truth system. The unconditional trust in these philosophers and the values they represent ultimately reflects people's deficiencies in self-knowledge.

Both Christians and modern individuals bear the imprint of truth in their moral practices. Christian morality demands the establishment of faith in God and the fulfillment of ascetic ideals in life, which in reality is a manifestation of its truth system. Based on the premise that the otherworldly is true, people increasingly abandon and deceive themselves unreservedly, 'fasting, abstaining from sexual activities, retreating into the wilderness... opposing the senses,' (Nietzsche, 2020) thereby denying numerous genuine desires, motives, and potentials born within themselves. Nietzsche perceives the essence of modern science in a similar light, where all irrational elements must yield to the elevation of Christian faith, that is, rationality. People continue to reject emotions and desires, failing to truly confront and understand themselves, blindly pursuing the so-called scientific truth under the dominance of rationality. Nietzsche remarks that modern scholars 'show their ascetic ideal today, they themselves are its most spiritualized grotesques, the forefront of its battling and reconnaissance teams, its most intricate, subtle, and unpredictable forms of seduction... They are no longer free spirits: for they still believe in truth' (Nietzsche, 2020). This scientific truth, like the Christian otherworld, has been excessively glorified and rigidly unified, ultimately binding individual life practices.

Therefore, truth serves as a pivotal link, interconnecting self-knowledge and moral concepts. Moral concepts are essentially expressions of the will to life, influenced primarily by the state of an individual's self-knowledge. In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche provides a physiological and psychological interpretation of the concept of 'good'. Contrary to traditional moral historians' belief that 'good' originates from utility or selflessness, Nietzsche argues that the standards of 'good' are not defined by the beneficiaries of good deeds, but by the good persons themselves. Traditional morality 'sought and established the true origin of the concept of 'good' at an erroneous place' (Nietzsche, 2020). The real judgment of 'good' originates from the doers of good deeds, 'the noble, the powerful, the higher-standing, the far-seeing—they themselves felt and set themselves and their actions as good' (Nietzsche, 2020). That is, the concept of 'good' is actually a product of the self-knowledge of good people, their overall and fundamental feeling about themselves and their distance from the opposition. The problem with traditional morality lies in depriving the good people of their dominance over the standard of 'good', transferring the value sovereignty to the beneficiaries, gradually replacing a morality born from the self-knowledge of the good with that of the beneficiaries. It appears as merely a change in the moral concepts and their creators, but in reality, it is a distortion of individual self-knowledge.

#### **4. The Reasons for Our Strangeness to Ourselves**

According to the context of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche criticizes modern individuals for being estranged from themselves mainly for two reasons: one is their belief in modern science, and the other is the way they understand themselves.

Firstly, modern individuals mistakenly interpret the essence of the self as an absolutely unified rational existence. From Descartes' 'I think' to Kant's 'pure apperception,' although the 'I' transitions from a thinking subject to a dual existence of subject and object, it still belongs to a static and unified rational category. The genesis and flow of the 'I' are not seriously addressed at the essential level. Although Kant acknowledges that humans, as animals, have sensations, impressions, and representations, these ultimately have to submit to the essential characteristics of humanity, namely rationality. Humans can only approach the self more closely by controlling their animalistic nature through their own rationality. At the essential level of the self, human emotions, sensations, and other irrational characteristics are systematically excluded, dominated by immense monotony, 'where all change is seen as brought about by the subject' (Nietzsche, 2006) Attributing the changes in the 'I' to the dominance of a unified rational subject is a fundamental error in modern individuals' understanding of themselves. Under the premise of rationality as the absolute benchmark, the essence of the self ultimately fails to break through the rational framework and to incorporate elements beyond rationality.

Modern metaphysics' self-presumed rationality originates from Descartes' skeptical reasoning, but Nietzsche views Descartes' Cartesian doubt as still incomplete. Nietzsche points out, 'Doubt ultimately also turns against itself: the

doubt of doubting. And here lies the question of the legitimacy and scope of truthfulness' (Nietzsche, 2006) On the foundation of doubt being indisputable, traditional metaphysics endowed the 'I' that doubts with supreme authority. However, doubt or thinking did not truly reach the end of its logical course. Nietzsche argues, 'The concept of a 'free spirit' is as fictitious as that of a 'free motion', (Nietzsche,2006)' suggesting that doubt, like the doubted, is a sign, symbolizing only the aspirations of the will to power. Given the diversity and inclusiveness of the will to power, both sensibility and rationality imply the motion of the will to power, dissolving the authority of rationality and thus liberating the self from being exclusively rational. Therefore, the self-presumption of traditional metaphysics is also distorted. As Nietzsche says, regarding the emotional flow of life instincts in the 'I', metaphysical knowers have 'never taken it seriously enough' nor have they 'really spoken 'concerning the matter', their 'heart is never in it,' and consequently, they are unable to truly know themselves (Nietzsche, 2020).

Secondly, the incorrect presupposition of the self leads to problematic approaches to self-knowledge among modern scholars. In the first section of the preface to the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche references God's criticism of Saint Jerome from the *New Testament ·Matthew*: 'For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also,'<sup>1</sup> using it to symbolize modern scholars who also fail to recognize themselves. As a Christian scholar, Saint Jerome was once deeply immersed in classical studies, and later, during a dream where he faced God's judgment, his self-identification as a Christian was refuted by God. God pointed out that a person's treasure determines where their heart lies; thus, Jerome was not a true Christian but merely a Ciceronian scholar passionate about Cicero's style and vocabulary. Jerome's error was that he viewed becoming a Christian as an achievement attainable through Ciceronian study. In Nietzsche's view, modern scholars, like Jerome, have strayed. Faced with a self full of passion, desire, and reason, they focus solely on reason, seeking to grasp the self through the pursuit of pure knowledge. However, this rational contemplation is nothing but an escape from the real world and the true self, failing to truly understand the self.

In the conclusion of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche draws a parallel between modern science and Christian morality to further reveal the deficiencies in the epistemological approach of modern scholars. Nietzsche states, 'The absolute will to truth is, in fact, faith in the ascetic ideal itself' (Nietzsche, 2020) Nietzsche criticizes this because modern scholars and Christians share a consistency in dealing with reality, both rejecting the real world replete with pain and randomness. However, the 'I' is first and foremost in the world, indivisible from it. Essentially, the 'I' is also a complex and chaotic entity. Attempts to ignore and escape the reality of pain, chance, and fragmentation, whether through faith or reason, run counter to the true self. Nietzsche argues that modern scholars mistakenly believe that the shift from a religious to a secular scientific worldview signifies an escape from the ascetic ideal. However, this transition is the most profound and advanced expression of the ascetic ideal. Modern scholars not only fail to realize this fact but also, under the dominance of rational cognition, become increasingly unable to see their true selves. Therefore, in addressing the issue of self-knowledge, Nietzsche critiques metaphysics both ontologically and epistemologically. 'Unknown to ourselves' is not only due to the illusion of the essence of the self by modern scholars but also due to their erroneous way of understanding the self.

### **5. Seeking in the Strange: The Right Path to Self-Knowledge**

In the first section of the preface to the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche reveals early on why people do not know themselves — 'We have never sought ourselves' (Nietzsche, 2020). Therefore, according to Nietzsche, the best way to face or dissolve strangeness is to seek oneself.

The concept of 'seeking' in German corresponds to two words: *streben* (striving, endeavoring) and *suchen* (seeking, exploring), both of which carry dynamic and active connotations in the German linguistic context, aiming to emphasize an individual's action and pursuit. The difference lies in that *streben* generally refers to a profound and enduring pursuit or effort, often involving deep-seated internal motivations and goals. *Suchen*, on the other hand, is typically used to describe the act of looking for specific objects or solutions, emphasizing the action of searching itself, involving concrete and practical aspects. In most of his works, Nietzsche tends to use the term *streben*, aiming to emphasize the individual's strength, will, transcendence, and the pursuit of higher goals. However, in the first section of the preface to the German version of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche uses the past participle form of *suchen*, *gesucht*. Although Nietzsche himself never explained this detail, considering the context of the first section of the preface and the critical core of the *Genealogy*, we can still understand Nietzsche's intentions and the deeper connotations of 'seeking' in the *Genealogy* from multiple perspectives.

On one hand, *gesucht/suchen* (seeking) in the *Genealogy* is contrasted with a relative term *fänden* (finding), which Nietzsche emphasizes in the text by using italics. Conceptually, *fänden*, as a variant of *finden*, typically denotes the result of seeking. Compared to *gesucht/Suchen*, *fänden/finden* focuses on the acquisition of some knowledge, truth, or

<sup>1</sup> The Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 6, Verse 21, in the New Testament.

personal insight, often involving a specific moment or event, marking a milestone or endpoint in the process of seeking. In traditional metaphysics, such moments often imply grasping an absolute truth. For instance, Platonic philosophy regards truth as an objectively rational concept, perceived as an absolute and unchanging idea, with the purpose of human existence being to discover these ideas. In modern philosophy, thinkers like Descartes and Kant, despite their skepticism about the knowledge-truth nexus, ultimately sought a truth that could no longer be doubted or would not need to be doubted within certain limits.

Therefore, in traditional philosophy, finding signifies an ideal state achievable through rational thought and spiritual enlightenment, and in some sense, it even signifies the complete culmination of self-knowledge activities. However, Nietzsche challenges this definitive approach that purportedly dictates and determines the entire meaning of life. He argues that ‘the ‘development’ of a thing, a custom, an organ is by no means a progress towards a goal, even less a logical, most convenient, least costly process utilizing minimal forces and costs’ (Nietzsche, 2020), but rather a series of sequences composed of multiple processes, the depth of process engagement, the expenditure of power struggles, and various forms of transformation and consequences. The process of self-knowledge is not only ‘fluid in form, but also fluid in ‘meaning’ ’(Nietzsche, 2020). Thus, Nietzsche’s emphasis and questioning of ‘finding’ aim to prompt a reexamination of the concept of ‘finding’ and a rethinking of the issue of self-knowledge.

Nietzsche does not entirely negate the significance of ‘finding’ but rather possesses deeper considerations and choices. In the context of the *Genealogy*, the so-called ‘finding’ is actually a part of the sequence of ‘seeking’. In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche claims: ‘Since I grew tired of the search and the quest, I learned to find’ (Nietzsche, 2022). This state of finding without seeking aligns well with traditional assumptions, but in the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche raises doubts: ‘so how are we ever supposed to *find* ourselves?’ (Nietzsche, 2020) Nietzsche’s seemingly contradictory discourse on ‘finding’ actually touches upon the most authentic state of ‘finding’. In his view, traditional philosophy misunderstands ‘finding,’ overly limiting its emphasis on results to the end of cognitive activities. Therefore, the counter-questioning of ‘finding’ in the *Genealogy* aims to critique the focus solely on some ultimate result while overlooking the stage achievements in the cognitive process. Unlike traditional philosophy, Nietzsche understands ‘finding’ as a cognitive activity without a final result, opposing the blind behavior of regarding truth as an absolute and unchangeable ultimate goal while neglecting the cognitive process. To him, ‘finding’ is not an endpoint leading to a final result but a constantly changing process, where each result is temporary and alterable, possibly changing with new discoveries and understandings. Nietzsche’s discourse in *The Gay Science* mainly emphasizes that when traditional methods of seeking knowledge or truth become tedious and ineffective, one can turn to a more direct and spontaneous process of ‘finding’ through introspection and self-enlightenment. For Nietzsche, true ‘finding’ is an exploration of the unknown and a pursuit of new meanings. It is not just a physical action, but a dynamic of the mind and spirit. In this sense, Nietzsche’s reinterpretation of the concept of ‘finding’ corresponds with the concept of ‘seeking’.

Nietzsche’s use and emphasis of seeking and finding in the *Genealogy* fundamentally aim to highlight the act of cognition itself and the processual nature of the self’s genesis. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche points out, ‘Man becomes what he is, presupposing that he does not know what he is’ (Nietzsche, 2016). Self-knowledge is a process of self-shaping, which is not carried out under a preconception of a certain self-image but is rather unfolded by breaking free from such presuppositions. If becoming oneself is a task or even a mission, then it is a call one cannot or should not consciously respond to (Hanauer, 2019), only through continual self-seeking can one truly shape oneself and discover the self in the process of genesis.

## 6. Conclusion

In this paper, we have delved into Nietzsche’s complex theme of self-knowledge in the *Genealogy*. By analyzing Nietzsche’s theories on the self, moral critique, and the sense of strangeness, the paper reveals his unique insights into the process of self-knowledge. Nietzsche suggests that true self-knowledge is a continual process of exploring and accepting the strangeness of the self, offering new perspectives on understanding and shaping our identity. Overall, Nietzsche’s philosophical thought challenges traditional notions of self-knowledge, providing profound philosophical insights into contemporary understandings of self and human existence. His approach encourages an ongoing journey of self-discovery, where embracing the unknown is integral to the formation of a genuine sense of self. This exploration, Nietzsche posits, is not a linear path but a dynamic engagement with life’s complexities, continuously reshaping our understanding of what it means to be human.

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