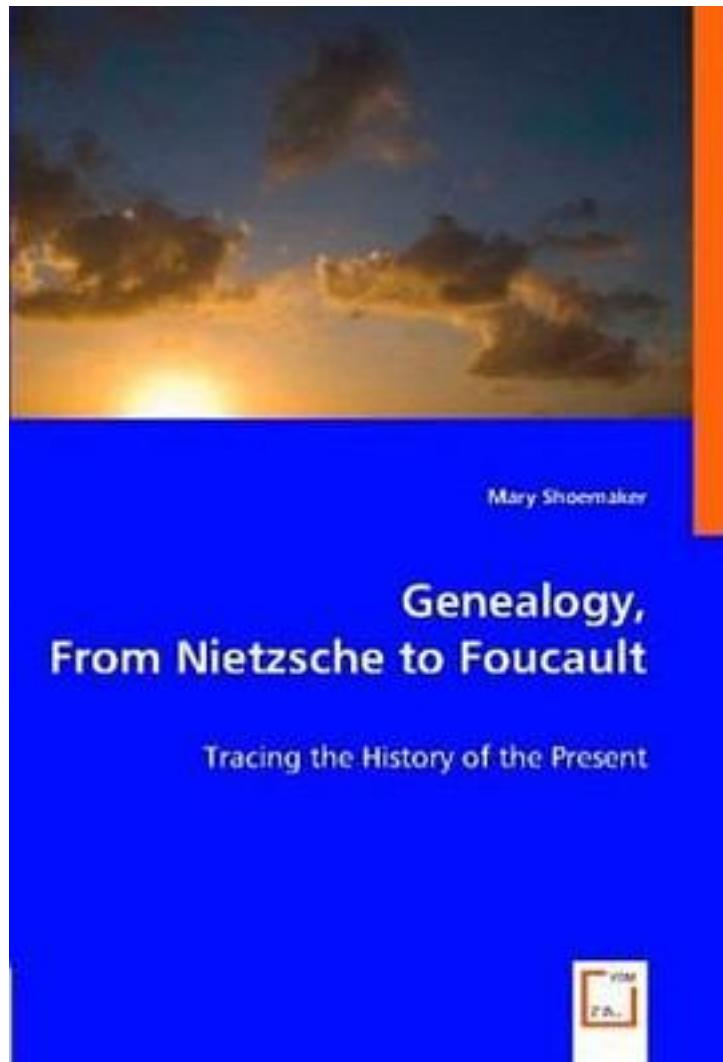


Genealogy, from Nietzsche to Foucault



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Since the nineteenth century we live subject to ever-quicken social change. To deal with this challenge, Friedrich Nietzsche recommended employing purposeful historical analyses that could explain the present and control the future. Building on Nietzsche's example, Michel Foucault in the twentieth century developed his own way of presenting the past in order to serve the living present. Foucault's analyses were intended to be genealogies, that is, family trees of our major social and political institutions, like churches, schools, hospitals, and prisons. The focus of this study is Foucault's most successful and illuminating genealogy, DISCIPLINE AND PUNISH: THE BIRTH OF THE PRISON. In it he demonstrates his method and shows how understanding the facts of the past in their interaction is the thread which can help us move ahead in the present. How did the edifice of laws, the courts, and the prison system come into being? How did it grow so powerful? We may not agree with Foucault in every detail, but we know that the prisons are too often the causes of crime, rather than its solution. He explains why.

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Mary Shoemaker, PhD, studied American literature at Harvard, English Literature at Syracuse University, and most recently the History of Philosophy at American University. She is a retired American diplomat, whose field of expertise is South Asia.

目录:

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标签

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Nietzsche

Foucault

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