

*Just as the glaciers increase when in the equatorial regions the sun burns down upon the sea with greater heat than before, so it may be that a very strong and aggressive free-spiritedness is evidence that somewhere the heat of sensibility has sustained an extraordinary increase.*

Nietzsche (§232, Human, All Too Human)

As Nietzsche develops it, the specifically psychological question is already a social investigation, perhaps even close to the anthropological question. The psychologist asks: what is the specifically cultural essence, or social truth, which is expressing itself in such-and-such a symptom?

Hence in order to explain scientifically the psychological origins of culture, Nietzsche dares to suggest we have need of a truly new kind of science, one finally made capable of analyzing cultural institutions without prejudice, from a perspective both critical and healing at once. In order to maintain its deliberate and fruitful inconsistency, the science of the unconscious must first of all recognize that cultural shifts are like geological changes. Social evolution shifts all potential axes of action and reallocates the coordination of space and time. Cultural transformations can sometimes even involve a shift in cognitive dimension, as in the ‘cusp’ at the apex of a mountain range, born from a complex balancing of counter-movements.

Indeed, we see Nietzsche intervening in the popular account origins of society, of thought – but always in order to point towards a more legitimately scientific and psycho-historical way of diagnosing and re-evaluating specific cultural modalities. For the psychologist, a fable of creation (whether of the universe or a single idea) betrays jealousy and ambition. We ought to understand creativity in a purely immanent sense: not as diverging from being, but rather perceiving that creation functions as the origin of difference, and is not only concerned with temporary variations in dominant modes of consumption or production. The power of the originary impulse is such that it formulates even the second-order coordinations of coordination which all together frame the conditions of any potential change. This is why unrecognized difference is the very beginning of thought.

The dominant patterns of coordination express themselves culturally as a lattice of ontological limitations a people willingly imposes upon its self-creation: an absolute vision, of an absolute goal. Though creativity may fail, though the goal may be forgotten, the path is anachronistically adhered to: this is the meaning of an origin, as the traumatic real which lurks behind every symptom as unitary cause. Over time a people loses their original vision of the world; and when our very principles have been inverted, how could we hope to understand our own origin? Thus the question arises: have we misheard the voice of history? Has reality been misrepresented, or worse – has representation become indiscernible from reality?

*The desire to create continually is vulgar and betrays jealousy, envy, ambition. If one is something one really does not need to make anything—and yet one nonetheless does very much. There exists above the ‘productive’ man a yet higher species.*

Nietzsche (§210, Human, All Too Human)

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