

*Born out of the mysteries of the dawn, they ponder how the day can have such a pure, transparent, transfigured and cheerful face between the hours of ten and twelve—they seek the philosophy of the forenoon.*

(Friedrich Nietzsche, 638 Human All Too Human)

As Nietzsche dramatically presents it, the ‘philosophy of the forenoon’ is that sharpest and most beautiful diamond of the intellect, born of a brave and curiously wandering temperament. To seek it is to seek a clear and sublime equilibrium of soul and of heart which makes one impervious to paradox and tragedy. Contradiction is no longer a defect. For such a philosophy, the ability to ‘bear’ contradictions within one’s mind and within one’s spirit— become a virtue, perhaps even the essential virtue of such a thinker.

But we ought not to be fooled when Nietzsche presents himself in his work as a wanderer. Though Nietzsche himself hints towards playing the indecisive, Zarathustra-style prophet, he’s certainly not playing a priest! On the contrary, he plays the role of saving us from our bad consciences — and on that account, it’s almost equally tempting to read him in the precisely opposite (and equally problematic) way: as a playful (but harmless) nomad, awake amidst the sedentary herd.

In fact both these contradicting impulses (to prophecy, to heresy) are shamelessly and ceaselessly at work in Nietzsche’s texts, in all their blatant subjectivity, their sublime impossibility. These very qualities constitute the lightning-intensity of his prose. Before anything else, Nietzsche is shaper of forces, always first the “immaculate” poet — which is not shameful, or even a criticism! It is rather to say we must bear in mind that the text for Nietzsche is a delicate instrument, one inevitably turned towards a higher goal.

Now, insofar as contradictions are an active force, Nietzsche’s writing is pregnancy, mysteriously containing the novel origin and the secret responsibilities of caring for a new life, even a new world. Indeed, Nietzsche inaugurates many modern ontological themes in his appreciation for difference, for an infinite difference which goes deeper than any contradiction — a tenderly-imparted distinction. Yet his style is such that even sensitivity and tenderness become weapons and traps. To be blunt, his style is force, born of a secret and arcane will.

Thus the central philosophical fixation in Nietzsche’s work is precisely the obscurity of the will, not our problem with violence — but our problem with weakness. Only when we perceive this does the deeper meaning of nomadism reveal itself. Nietzsche is a wanderer of secret and forbidden places; he is a subtle and tender revealer of precious novelty. His texts are themselves designed to ‘wander,’ to provoke stronger, healthier, more powerful kinds of lives — precisely by complicating our undisputed theories of what life ‘should’ be.

*Incidentally, the methodical search for truth itself results from those times when convictions were feuding among themselves. (Friedrich Nietzsche, 634)*

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