

Foucault Studies

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ISSN: 1832-5203

Foucault Studies, No. 9, pp. 194-197, September 2010

REVIEW

Vanessa Lemm, *Nietzsche's Animal Philosophy: Culture, Politics, and the Animality of the Human Being* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), ISBN: 978-0823230273

Vanessa Lemm offers up new interpretations of Nietzsche's philosophy through an examination of his writing on the relationship between humans and animals. Her main thesis is centered on the tension between "civilization" and "culture" present in many of his works. For Nietzsche, civilization arose out of the need to form collective groups for the protection of the individual. Over time, however, civilization lost its life-affirming, innovative, and inspiring qualities, i.e. its animality, and began to produce docile, servile beings. Culture, on the other hand, served as counterpoint, reconnecting humans with their animality through its stress on creativity and an active engagement with life. In doing so, it returned humans to an animal-like state of forgetfulness that allowed them to focus on the future rather than the past, enabling them to transcend to a higher state and become what Nietzsche termed "over-human." Lemm examines these concepts through a discussion of the themes of politics, language, truth, and historicity in the philosopher's work, concluding with a discussion of animality's uses for the study of biopolitics.

After outlining definitions of civilization and culture, Lemm, in contrast to previous works, argues that Nietzsche's model of the overhuman can hardly be viewed as anti- or nonpolitical, as one's return to a life-affirming animality brings forth a stronger consciousness of responsibility. Preoccupied with the cultivation of freedom, a return to animality thus subjects the institutionalized concepts of responsibility and liberty found in civilization to a sustained and radical critique. The resulting struggle between the animality and the state ensures the continuation of freedom and social responsibility, as well as the maintenance of free institutions and the creation of future generations of free individuals.

Lemm then shifts to a closer reading of Nietzsche's concept of culture. Culture frees life from the domination of civilization by encouraging individual responsibility, in turn creating an aristocratic society juxtaposed to the degenerative effects of mass politics, which has sought to mechanize humans, ensuring their maximum exploitation by the reordering of their lives through ideology. Nietzsche argued that these attempts at regimentation would eventually lead to a countermovement founded on the principles of culture. However, Lemm is quick to note that although he placed primacy on the affirmative values of culture and its ability to penetrate civilization, Nietzsche acknowledged that civilization and culture are locked in an

infinite, dialectical embrace. Culture must juxtapose itself to the morality of civilization, and though it will eventually overcome it, through its efforts it spends itself and gradually withers, allowing civilization once again to colonize the terrain left by its passing.

The work then moves on to discuss the themes of gift-giving and forgiveness present in Nietzsche's work. For the philosopher, the act of gift-giving is animal-like in the sense it promoted the forgetfulness which would allow both parties to recover their instinct for life. By jettisoning the burdens of the past through a conscious decision to forget, both parties are then able to focus on the future, free from a legacy of trauma.

This process is contrasted to the Christian emphasis on forgiveness, which failed to create a sense of reconciliation and perpetuated a cycle of revenge fueled by a fixation on past suffering. For Nietzsche, the act of forgiving fails to bridge the gap between parties, as it creates a sense of moral superiority in victims by requiring them to set aside the trauma of their experience. Furthermore, forgiveness generates a continued reliance on the state and Church as intermediaries in conflict resolution, tying humans closer to institutions of domination. Here Lemm extends her investigation to the work of Derrida and Arendt, comparing their positions on the gift to those of Nietzsche. She finds Arendt's to be least influenced by him, in the sense that her notion of forgiveness relies on a confrontation with the memory of the past event. In contrast, Derrida bases his interpretations of the gift and forgiveness on the relationship between forgetting and forgiving.

This discussion is succeeded by a lengthy chapter on historicity that places animality and its life-affirming creativity at the center of Nietzsche's *On the Use and Disadvantage of History for Life*. In contrast to sterile "scientific" interpretations of history that are directed towards preserving the past and therefore weaken life, animal forgetfulness creates the illusion of eternity, creating a space outside of time, consequently disrupting memory and the pursuit of a clean, "true" past. Forgetfulness drives history forward by redirecting humans' focus towards the future, providing the action that generates new beginnings. Nietzsche termed this form of history "counterhistory." This type of historical thinking recognizes that the past is not truthful in an absolute sense, but open to interpretation based on a multiplicity of perspectives, generating creativity and freeing humans from the alienation caused by the scientific study of the past, enabling them to overcome their current condition. Acknowledging history as a creative endeavor places it on the side of life as a force that inspires humanity.

Lemm astutely uses the prefaces of Nietzsche's works as examples of the application of what she terms "artistic history." Added to all of his works from 1886 on, the prefaces were used by Nietzsche as a tool to confront his younger self and initiate a process of overcoming his own past as a writer. This exercise fragments the perceived unity of his work and exposes it as an unfinished project that will always remain incomplete. Instead, Nietzsche's books will remain immortal in the sense that they are dependent on the interpretations of future readers. This reliance on a myriad of constantly changing perspectives calls into question the author's

ability to control one's work, a point echoed by Nietzsche's comments on the role of historians. Describing history as a form of haunting, he describes one's encounter with the past as "a return to the past as much as a return of the past," exposing mankind's inability to control memory. (100) Cognizant of the power of the past to influence the present, artistic historians seek to preserve only what is worth remembering about the past because of its ability to encourage future endeavors.

The role of historians as "architects of the future" (100) is further extended in Nietzsche's discussion of truth, language, and the use of philosophy. He drew distinction between pictorial thought (*Bilderdenken*), thinking in images, which humans share with animals, and intuitive metaphor (*Anschauungsmetapher*), or conceptual thinking. Expressed through the creation of abstract symbols, i.e., language, intuitive metaphors divorced humans from their animality, aiding the domination of civilization. Nietzsche found pictorial thinking more useful, as it linked humans to animals, and therefore life. Conceptual thinking was unable to link humans to life, because, due to its abstract and artificial nature, it had no firsthand knowledge of life to convey. Furthermore, conceptual thinking's claims to an absolute "truth" were invalid, as its truth was in fact always metaphysical and directed back towards itself, rather than towards the "pure, honest truth" of the "thing in itself." The concept of "being," according to Nietzsche, thus had nothing to do with life itself, but with humans' own sense of self, which was then metaphorically projected onto other objects, imbuing them with a false sense of "being." In contrast, Nietzsche argued, images allow humans to access the world and its objects in a manner free from the influence of such anthropomorphisms, enabling them to view the world in its' real form. (120-121)

Intuitive metaphors form an inherently unstable system, as their abstractions leave the supposedly fixed definitions they created open to dissolution. This process could be enacted by pictorial images, which could form a counter language and infiltrate the system of metaphors and destroy it from within, dissolving its absolutes, forcing them into the flow of life, and hence returning language to an "honest" and animal-like, truth that challenges the hegemony of the version of truth espoused by civilization. Philosophers play an important part in this process, as they are to act as artists in the service of life. If truth becomes an obstruction to life, philosophers should seek out new, life-affirming truths. By doing so, philosophy embraces its true calling, that of engaging in "great politics"; the creativity and freedom of culture. (149)

Lemm ends her work with a brief discussion of Nietzsche's contribution to the subject of biopolitics. She links his work to what she terms an "affirmative biopolitics," one based on the continuities between humans and animals, emphasizing "the project of cultivating inherently singular, non-totalizable forms of life." (152, 154) Such an endeavor in particular addresses the gap in Foucault's work on resistance, as it links animality to creativity, allowing humans to cultivate their existence as living animals, counteracting totalitarian attempts to divide life to classifiable and controllable species. (154)

Nietzsche's Animal Philosophy is an engaging and thought-provoking work that challenges interpretations, both past and present, that have cast Nietzsche as, at best, nonpolitical, and, at worse, proto-fascist. Although the work suffers from redundancy in parts and could have been expanded its discussion of Nietzsche's influence on the work of philosophers such as Derrida, Arendt, and Foucault, these cavils are overshadowed by the value of Lemm's study, which convincingly reveals the positive political core of Nietzsche's work and successfully moves it beyond his own epoch, highlighting its relevance for the twenty-first century.

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