



An Interpretation of Nietzsche's Tragic Philosophy from the Perspective of Humanism. The Psychological Origin of Nietzsche's Philosophy

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Abstract. Nietzsche's psychological thoughts are closely linked with Freud's psychoanalysis theory, Maslow's humanistic psychology and other humanistic psychology from its unique Angle, and have strong exploration value. The purpose of this paper is to explore Nietzsche's psychological origin and his hypothesis applied to psychotherapy.

Keywords: Nietzsche · Tragedy philosophy · psychoanalysis · Self-actualization theory

1 Introduction

In most people's eyes, Nietzsche appears as a philosopher and aesthetician, so people are used to reading Nietzsche's books as philosophical works. But Nietzsche is not just a philosopher, we need to think of him as a psychologist. He is considered by the existentialist philosopher Kaufman to be "the first great psychologist" (Kaufman & Heyong 1987). Nietzsche is the founder and representative of voluntarian philosophy and aesthetics, and the founder and representative of Freudian psychoanalytic psychology and aesthetics, and Kaufman believes that the psychology of both are rooted in literature full of imagination (Kaufman & Heyong 1987). At the same time, Nietzsche repeatedly stressed that he was a great psychologist (Nietzsche 1887). In the field of psychology, Nietzsche's concept of psychology has deeply influenced Freud's psychoanalysis theory, Maslow's self-actualization theory, Jung's analytical psychology and so on (Kang 2009; Liang 2020). And many scholars in the field of psychology, philosophy and sociology have also carried out a lot of research on this.

Nietzsche's psychology is rooted in philosophy and provides unique insights for psychological theories, especially psychoanalysis theory, self-development theory, individual psychology and so on. Therefore, it is of certain significance to explore Nietzsche's tragic philosophy from the perspective of psychoanalysis, especially its application to philosophical consultation in the new rational therapy in the 21st century (Cohen & Ding 2013).

2 Look Back at Nietzsche's Philosophy from a Psychological Perspective

2.1 Influence on Psychological Theory

Nietzsche's influence on psychology is mainly scattered in psychoanalysis theory (Kang 2009), Maslow's self-actualization theory, Adler's individual psychology and so forth.

2.2 Influence on Methodology

Its psychological theory under the methodology of visualism and genealogy analysis provides a new direction for humanistic psychology, and has certain application value in the new rational psychotherapy in the 21st century.

3 Psychology in Nietzsche's Philosophy

Nietzsche's most important work was to introduce the concepts of meaning and value into philosophy (Friedrich 2001).

Humanism emerged from Nietzsche and the philosophy behind him. So Nietzsche's influence on psychology is mainly reflected in the following aspects, which will be elaborated in detail below.

3.1 Apollonian Spirit, Sublimation and Dreams

What Nietzsche means by the sun god is the myriad illusions that give the name of the sun god to the appearance of beauty (Nietzsche 1987). We can understand that dream is the state of the Apollonian spirit in daily life, but also the individual world. We can go back to Nietzsche, who once said, "I am dreaming, and I must continue dreaming so that I will not perish, and the night traveler must continue dreaming so that he will not fall into the abyss" (Nietzsche 2000). Therefore, we can simply understand it as a rational force that modifies and restrains the Dionysian Spirit carnival.

And under this unconscious motive, like Freud's unconscious iceberg, repression and sublimation emerge gradually. Indeed, as Kaufman points out, the psychology of Freud and Nietzsche is rooted in the literature of the imagination (Kaufman and Heyong 1987), Freud and Nietzsche both emphasized the use of dreams to explain and analyze human psychology, and even agreed that the principle of dreams is the fulfillment of wishes. What we can see in Nietzsche's work, he says, is that the depths of our soul, the ground floor of our everyday life, are transformed into dreams in which we experience the necessity of deep joy and pleasure (Nietzsche 1987). Nietzsche even thought that the dream itself was a kind of sublimation—the dream released the power to see, to connect, to create (Nietzsche 2007). In the dream, Nietzsche, like Freud, recognized the domination of reason by the body and the mind. They believe that the meaning of dreams can have implications not only for the study of individual psychology, but also for the physical body.

3.2 Peak Experience and Dionysian Spirit

In his book, *The Self-Actualized Man*, Maslow writes about peak experiences: "Experiencing a visceral emotional experience of trembling, euphoria, contentment, and transcendence (Maslow 1987)." The liberation of their humanity, the freedom of their hearts, lit up their lives. A feeling of excitement and joy that I had never experienced before, a feeling like standing on the top of a mountain, a joy that, though brief, could be particularly profound, a feeling that misty rain could not express. He calls it peak experience (Kang 2009).

At the same time, Maslow believed that people in peak experience have the highest level of identity, are closest to their true self, have reached the peak of their unique personality, and have exerted their potential to the maximum extent. And people who are self-actualized, those at the top of the needs pyramid, are more likely to have peak experience, because people who reach this stage have a need for personal development, and they don't suffer from anxiety like most of us, and this distortion of reality allows them to judge others and situations more clearly.

"When you want to be exalted, look upward. I look down because I am high (Nietzsche 2007)." This is what Nietzsche wrote in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. We can see that he refers to "elevation" as the realization of the highest self-value, and the enhancement of moral sense and self-sense after "elevation" is closely related to the dionysian spirit. That comes from the intoxication of art, which coincides with Maslow's peak experience.

However, in Maslow's self-actualization theory, self-value is reflected in the highest level of demand, which means to get close to perfection and realize their ideals and goals, so as to obtain a sense of achievement. And the lack of self-realization of the people, easy to feel the emptiness of life, meaningless. This resonates with Nietzsche's "superman", which is perpetually unformed and approaching infinite possibilities. For each of us, it's just a matter of finding our way forward in life, even if it's not enough to satisfy all of our needs. After all, only a few of us reach the peak of self-actualization.

3.3 Freud's Triadic Structure of Personality and Nietzsche's Dionysian/Apollonian Duality

As we all know, in 1879, Wundt established the first new laboratory at the University of Leipzig in Germany, thus marking the birth of scientific psychology. Nietzsche graduated from the University of Leipzig. In 1900, the same year Nietzsche died, Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* was published. One of Nietzsche's students, Salome, later became a student of Freud. And Nietzsche and Freud were twelve years apart, they were in the same era. The cultural styles they were exposed to had something in common with the currents of thought. That's where the similarities come in.

It will be expanded from the following three parts: Narrow pleasure and artistic intoxication, The restraint of reason and the force of stillness, The rejected "moral" and superego.

- Narrow pleasure and artistic intoxication

First, to understand narrow pleasure and artistic intoxication, we need to understand Nietzsche's Dionysian spirit. Nietzsche said in *The Birth of Tragedy*; "The Dionysian

suffering is vaporized, hydrated, sodified, cremation, and so we must look upon the individual condition as the source and principal cause of all suffering, which is in itself an unpleasant experience. From the smile of Dionysus came the Olympians, and from its tears man. As the dismembered god, Dionysus has two personalities, the brutal brutality of the devil and the gentle kindness of the monarch (Nietzsche 1987).” In fact, this is consistent with the “living contradiction” and “primitive chaos” on the genius he proposed. At the same time, Nietzsche uses Dionysian spirit to affirm tragic life; Dionysus requires individuals to look at their own individual life from the standpoint of life noumenon. The Dionysian spirit actually comes from the Dionysian sacrifice in ancient Greece. In the Dionysian sacrifice, people break taboos, indulge their desires and return to nature, which is an irrational state of pain and ecstasy. Dionysus represents emotional indulgence and the excitement of an entire emotional system.

According to Nietzsche, the disintegration of the individual is the highest pain, but this pain removes the source of all pain and achieves the highest joy of integration with the noumenon of the world. This emotional excitement can be described as noble and detached. Not narrow. In contrast, the id in Freud’s three-original structure of personality pursues narrow happiness, which can even be simply understood as sexual pleasure. This is different from Nietzsche’s Dionysian spirit in essence, but their expression of happiness has something in common; But Freud seems to be in agreement with Nietzsche on sex. Nietzsche thinks that the main elements of Dionysian spirit are lust and cruel instinct, and that artists are passionate people. In his core concept of “will to power”, there is also a reference, a certain degree of force is a certain desire and emotion, decadence is the self-contradiction of instinct, psychology is the theory of the development and form of will to power. In addition, Nietzsche also believes that if lust can be vented in art, there is a trade-off. Freud, like him, affirmed lust and human sexual desire and instinct; Now consider the story of Oedipus and Sinos. The Oedipus plot mentioned by Freud is actually the expression of the so-called sexual instinct desire hidden in the subconscious of the iceberg, while Sinos’s “don’t be born, don’t exist, become nothing” is also the repressed expression of desire (Nietzsche 1987).

- The restraint of reason and the force of stillness

We’ve mentioned before that the helios represent the power of reason, which modifies and restrains the Dionysian revelry. It is also the interaction of Dionysus and Apollo, the god of Dionysus, that people’s spiritual activities will fully unfold and become a rich and complex world. This concept can be paralleled by Freud’s “ego”, which acts as a neutralizing constraint on the unconditional indulgence of the ID. If the ID is a runaway horse, the ego is the rider on horseback, trying to curb the id’s illicit desires. Dionysian spirit is to release this impulse completely, to the realm of carnival. The corresponding spirit of The Sun god is a quiet and balanced power, which displays the Dionysian impulse in a different art form, that is, both “self” and “sun God” realize the impulsive and instinctive release of “id” and “Dionysian spirit” through “sublimation”.

It is worth mentioning that although the “ego” and the “sun god” play a moderating role, but in their respective relations, the id and Dionysus are the master and the source. Like the rider, it’s secondary. The mustang is supposed to run. It’s a matter of nature. And the energy of the ego comes from the id, because the ID is the most basic component of

the personality; Dionysus is the first, but also the essence of man. As mentioned before, the artistic symbol of Dionysus is intoxication, while the artistic symbol of Sun is dream. Dreams are just an expression of intoxication. But Freud had a different view on this. He believed that dream is the symbolic impulse of the self, which is transformed by the power of reason to condense, transplant, symbolize and embellish, so that the original impulse can be realized in dream in an acceptable way (Yan 2006).

Let's take a look at the very important aspect of repression and unconsciousness. At this point Nietzsche thought that consciousness was the outward appearance, and Freud thought that repression was the unconscious level beneath the iceberg. Nietzsche believed that memory and self are often in conflict. If memory causes pain and embarrassment, consciousness will tamper with memory and even choose to forget, that is, to "suppress" unbearable memories into the unconscious. For example, Nietzsche once wrote in his book *Superior Good and Evil*: "My memory says I have done these things, but my ego says I cannot do such things. At last my memory gave way (Nietzsche 2000)." That is, he will choose to say to others—I did not do such a thing. This can be expressed as a psychological self-defence mechanism.

- The rejected "moral" and superego

Is there a corresponding concept for Freud's "superego" in Nietzsche's theory? Many scholars have explored this, and the author thinks that there is no. On the contrary, Nietzsche offers the opposite of the self will, the opposite of the repressed instinct: morality. We may also wonder why Nietzsche does not include the "moral I" or the "ideal I" in his description and explanation of human beings. The author thinks that this answer, together with Christian morality and secular morality advocated by Him, is the poisoning and repression of individual will of life and Dionysian spirit advocated by him. He also spoke of "de-moralization" several times. He thinks morality is like a chain imposed on human beings. Just as he proposed that "Superman" is "beyond history" and not stereotyped.

But different from Nietzsche, Freud's psychology is scientific, historical and socialized science. He believed that as social morality, the "superego" should be internalized in personality, and the "superego" is also a part of personality. Without the role of the superego, there would be no source of repression. There is no need for such psychological defense mechanisms as empathy, projection, denial, reverse action, identification, degradation and sublimation. It is precisely because of the psychological defense mechanism that makes the id; Power cannot be directly expressed, so there must be the existence of "self" to achieve a state of balance between the two, so as to reconcile the need of contradiction. In Freud's view, the three-in-one personality structure of id, ego and superego is a complete and interrelated personality system, one of which is indispensable.

The scholar Kaufman once suggested that the psychology of both is rooted in imaginative literature. Nietzsche is the founder and representative of voluntarism philosophy and aesthetics, and Freud is the founder and representative of psychoanalytic psychology and aesthetics (Kaufman and Heyong 1987).

As we can see, Nietzsche's theory and particularly his tragic philosophy are very illuminating for our study of psychology.

4 Conclusion

It is of great significance to interpret Nietzsche's tragic philosophy from the perspective of humanism, especially from the perspective of psychoanalysis, not only to help us understand psychology and philosophy, but also to apply philosophical thoughts to psychology. As you can see, the triadic structure of psychoanalysis is closely related to Nietzsche's tragic duality. Whether it is the correspondence of ego and id with Dionysian and Heliosian spirits, or the superego rejected by Nietzsche, we can see the inner connection between the two—that is, to explore the core of human nature.

They are very concerned about the potential and inner energy of human nature, and believe in the guidance of spiritual power or will to power, which is also of great significance for us to explore the essential meaning of self.

Nietzsche's psychological thoughts are externalized in the form of philosophy, which is of great significance in the field of psychotherapy, especially in the direction of new psychotherapy in the 21st century.

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