

Febr. 4, 91

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Dear C. Miller,

Andreas handed me your (not very kind) letter of the 10th with your reply to my 'Habits' essay. I shall not go into your refutations of my hypothesis, because they are so common sense as not to be interesting. But I am writing this letter, because it strikes me that we touch on an important point when you speak of my 'scientistic inebriation'. The point is this: in Modern tradition a distinction is made between quantity and quality (between measure and value), and thus between the so-called 'exact' sciences and what the Germans called 'Geisteswissenschaften' (the famous 'two cultures'). Now of course: it was admitted even in Modern times that quantity may change into quality (Marx) and vice-versa (for instance phonetics). Still: exact measurement was considered inadequate (incompetent) where qualities are concerned.

I believe that this division is now over. That exact sciences are just as competent for cultural phenomena as they are for nature, and for two converging reasons: (a) the exact sciences are not very exact, and (b) they are themselves cultural phenomena. The question turns (and you are right here) on what 'objectivity' means. If it meant (as in modern tradition) some transcendent point of view, then of course culture cannot be subject to the same criteria as nature. But if it means inter-subjectivity, the opposite is the case: nature is then seen to be a (late) product of culture, namely quantified culture. Now if you accept the notion of inter-subjectivity, you must abandon your idea of 'individual experience', because 'individual' then loses all meaning. Just like its etymological counterpart, the 'atom'. All and every experience is then intersubjective, and thus subject to 'inter'. (To the quantification of qualities, to the measurement of values).

You are quite right: this is indeed an inebriating vision. Because if you do away with the distinction between science and art (between truth and fiction), you open up spaces for the creation of alternatives to this sorry scheme of things we are in. Thank you for having given me the opportunity to say so in a brief letter.

Regards.