

Creativity and Discontinuity in the Paleolithic: Are We Modern Humans or Just Humans?

The theme of creativity is of utmost interest in many fields of human sciences. This talk, based on my master's thesis in anthropology, aims to discuss aspects of the debate on the emergence of creativity in human prehistory, highlighting some conceptual and epistemological issues in the ongoing discussion and the contribution that Massimo Fagioli's Human Birth Theory (HBT) can offer. For about 40 years, Paleolithic Archaeology has been trying to find a unifying theory to explain the spatially irregular and temporally discontinuous appearance of products such as paintings, engravings, musical instruments, and jewelry in the archaeological records of sites associated with *Homo sapiens*. The problem that archaeologists and paleoanthropologists have been grappling with for years is as follows: why has the *Homo sapiens* species, which is biologically recognized to have existed for about 250,000 years, only left traces of the production of objects related to creativity, art, and non-survival-related activities in the more recent phase of its history, starting around 100,000 years ago? The prevailing theory is that at some point, without explaining exactly how, *Homo sapiens*, while remaining anatomically unchanged as a species, developed a "modern human behavior". At this point, the problem became defining what this modernity consisted of, attempting to fit increasingly recent finds into a theory of human modernity. By the late 1980s, scholars began speaking of a Paleolithic revolution, only to refute this theory by the 2000s in light of discoveries made during the 1990s that pushed back the earliest appearance of certain phenomena, complicating the framework proposed in the initial theory. The debate found a partial solution with the rejection of the term 'revolution' in favor of a more gradual emergence of the aforementioned "modern human behavior," identified by a range of characteristics, without, however, being able to explain why it appeared. The thesis I wish to argue in this context is that the problem has been framed in a partial and fundamentally incorrect way. The attempt to identify the characteristics of presumed modernity and the search for it in the realm of the behavior, hides another and more loaded question, that of the search for what makes us human, a question that brings the burden of ethical, political, and cultural meaning, which the current debate attempts, in practice, to neutralize by reversing its logic. The idea of using certain archaeological records to infer the characteristics of the humans who produced them carries with it the problem—repeatedly encountered by archaeologists—that finding artifacts that are exceptions to the constructed model is sufficient to challenge the model itself, typically resolved by partially correcting the proposed theory to preserve its core. Furthermore, the problem of the sporadic appearance of artifacts attributable to a modern type of human creativity—and therefore the emergence of such behavior—remains unsolved. This issue arises because the significance of the underlying question driving this research is denied: it is a search into the origins of the human being and the characteristics that make us human. The HBT sees Massimo Fagioli's application of the medical method in observing the pathology of the non-conscious thought, not by attempting to inductively build a theory from it, but by deriving that if there was pathology, there must be a physiology that had not yet been discovered. His discovery of this physiology was deductive and allowed for the definition of what makes us human: the dynamic of human birth, realized as "disappearance fantasy", a thought without consciousness, which enables the definition of

the physiology of mind and the foundations of the coexistence of equality and diversity. The significance of this discovery allows us to approach the problem of the human origins by recognizing its importance, shifting the focus from that of the human behavior in the social sphere to a characteristic not directly traceable in the archaeological record, namely the non-conscious thought. This can allow anthropology and paleoanthropology to revisit the theme of origins, to continue researching the human behavior in various social contexts, and to explore the emergence of creativity beyond its material and socio-cultural roots.

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