

Evangelos Tsempelis

International School of Analytical Psychology, Switzerland

Personality and education in the Digital Age: an attempt at a hermeneutic rehabilitation of an old problematic

Streszczenie

OSOBOWOŚĆ I EDUKACJA W EPOCE CYFROWEJ – PRÓBA HERMENEUTYCZNEJ REHABILITACJI DAWNEJ PROBLEMATYKI

Wiele zostało już powiedziane o religijnych i filozoficznych wpływach obecnych w pracach twórców psychologii głębi. Zygmunt Freud i Carl Gustaw Jung mieli odrębne zapatrywania na religię, mimo to obydwaj usiłowali – za pomocą naukowego, psychoanalitycznego podejścia, które bierze w nawias to, co religijne – odpowiedzieć na cierpienie poszczególnej jednostki oraz zagubienie znaczenia w sekularyzowanym świecie. Celem tego eseju jest ulokowanie jednostkowego cierpienia w szerszej, historycznej strukturze późnej nowoczesności poprzez badanie różnych zagadnień – będących w całkowitej zależności od edukacji, osobowości, rozumu, znaczenia i celu – poruszanych w dziełach Schillera, Kanta, Gadamera, Loewitha, Freuda oraz Junga. W duchu tych analiz można stwierdzić, że indywidualne cierpienie mieści się dzisiaj wewnątrz szerszego nurtu **subiektywizacji i deterioryzacji** (*deterritorialization*) w historii idei, które doprowadziły do czegoś, co – zapożyczając się pojęciowo u Gadamera, który mówił o „odróżnieniu estetycznym” – nazywam **odróżnieniem psychologicznym**. Polega ono na retrospektywnym przywłaszczeniu fundamentów i odpowiedniej pozytywizacji źródeł transcendentalnych w zatowiszowanej sferze psychologicznej wewnętrzności jednostki. Za pomocą tej ostatniej możemy być może zacząć rozumieć paradoks świata cyfrowej hiper-łączności, w której cały świat mamy „na kliknięcie myszki”, podczas gdy tracimy jego widok.

Słowa kluczowe: psychoanaliza, Schiller, Kant, Gadamer, Freud, Jung, religia, historia, subiektywność transcendentalna, rozróżnienie psychologiczne, epoka cyfrowa.

tłum. z ang. Małgorzata Przanowska

Much has been written about the religious and philosophical influences in the works of the founders of depth-psychology. Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung have each taken a different view at religion, yet both have attempted to respond to individual suffering and loss of meaning in a secular age by means of a scientific psychoanalytic approach which brackets the religious. Through a selective exploration of various themes that hinge on education, personality, reason, meaning and purpose in the works of Schiller, Kant, Gadamer, Loewith, Freud and Jung, respectively, this essay aims to place individual suffering in late modernity within a wider historical framework. In that vein, individual suffering today is placed within a larger trend of *subjectivization* and *deterritorialization* in the history of ideas which has led to what borrowing from Gadamer's notion of aesthetic differentiation I have called *psychological differentiation*. Namely, the retrospective appropriation of foundations and the corresponding positivization of transcendental origins within an atomized realm of individual psychological interiority. It is by means of the latter that we can perhaps begin to understand the paradox of a hyper connected digital world in which we have the world at the click of a button as we lose sight of it.

1. I cannot forget the anguish in the face of a young woman in her early twenties who was receiving intensive psychiatric assistance for her heightened degrees of anxiety and depression. A gentle, frail and shy woman who was visibly under enormous pressure to conform to societal demands. She had recently finished college and was for sometime in a state of limbo as she could not choose a career or identify a suitable path for her future. She described in a broken voice a terrifying incident in which a senior person at university or at a job interview had looked at her CV and said to her that there was "nothing notable there". This statement had been received by the young woman as an overarching judgment regarding her own personal worth. It soon became evident, as I inquired to learn more about this fatal incident, that there had been no distance in her mind between her own self and her CV. So much so, that she had received a comment that directly pertained to her professional presentation and credentials as a verdict concerning her own person. An enormous sigh of relief came at my suggestion that the comments regarding her CV were about a document that one works to revise and improve along the way and not about her person *per se*.

This vignette would not have been noteworthy if it did not represent a wider phenomenon that is increasingly encountered today as young individuals find themselves hard-pressed to adapt to the demands of an ever more competitive work place. In that regard, one wonders if there is indeed some correlation

between the spread of a digital late modern globalized economy and culture, on the one hand, and an increasing insistence on conformity and standardization, on the other. Moreover, it is worth inquiring as to the psychological effects associated with placing young people under the pressure to adapt to the norms of a job market that often values disproportionately the capacities that match the needs of a globalizing digital economy. As the capacity to manipulate units of information according to modalities that privilege image, caption, speed and connectivity takes prevalence over the ability to construct meaning, cultivate depth and explore interiority in our times, one wonders as to the wider implications of such developments on the experience and understanding of our individual selves today.

A new field of research is developing that examines the consequences of the digital age of ubiquitous connectivity on the construction of subjectivity. From a psychoanalytic perspective researchers like Aaron Balick problematize the influence of the technological world on our “relational connectivity” with ourselves and others. Depth-psychological notions, such as the *persona* and the *false/true self* categories, are deployed in order to address processes that seem to be taking place in the globalized digital world in which we live. More specifically, drawing from Marshal McLuhan’s work, Balick posits the virtual space as an extension of the self. Such move allows us to begin to think of the internet as a deterritorialized space of relatedness extending beyond the confines of the conventional physical and cultural worlds that we inhabit while problematizing virtual space as a field of “relationality” and “self-construction” in terms akin to developmental psychology.

2. The gist of developmental psychology lies in the recognition that there is a progression in an individual’s inner life. Freud’s work in that regard was pioneering. He postulated a certain development in the way psychic sexual energy (libido) cathected (invested) different erogenous zones in the body from the time of infancy and onwards in the life of the growing child. His analytical work with neurotic patients consisted mostly in working through their defenses in order to reach those unconscious wishes, which had been fixated in one of three stages of development that he described as: oral, anal, and phallic (genital). This course of development, according to Freud, constituted a sort of biological maturation progress.

In developmental terms, Jung expanded that maturation process to the entire life span of the individual beyond infancy and early childhood. Whereas Freud analyzed his patients regressively in order to uncover the precipitating

cause of the neurosis in some traumatic event or some repressed wish that went back to the infantile world of the individual, Jung used prospective analysis. For Jung the cause of the neurosis was not in the past, but rather in the present. Symptoms were not “compromise formations”, as Freud had suggested, resulting from the conflict between the repressed desires and the repression agencies (ego, superego). Rather, according to Jung, the symptom was a natural symbol of the unconscious pointing to an imbalance between the conscious attitude of the individual and the overall orientation of the totality of his/her personality. Jung postulated the existence of a polyvalent (not exclusively sexual) psychic energy. From that point of view, healing was conceived as a process of becoming conscious and accepting of the inner dynamic of progressive energy evidenced in dreams, fantasies and, occasionally, mental illness. Accordingly, the individual during the course of her life, from infancy to old age, faces a developmental process which sets consciousness into a path of increasing differentiation and integration. The development of consciousness, along these lines, could be seen as a path of progression along a continuum, which at one side marks an undifferentiated unconscious existence between self and world and, on the other side, that of a differentiated ego consciousness. At the beginning of the continuum, the individual is in a state of fusion with the outside world. As the infant grows, it develops the capacity to differentiate between self and world, between subject and object. Consciousness develops by means of differentiating between a world of internal wishes, fantasies, needs and impulses and a world of external objects.

Jung particularly underlined how consciousness was involved in a process of increasing psychic integration in the course of a person’s life-time. In the inner lives of his patients’ dreams he recognized the unfolding of a psychic process pushing ostensibly towards wholeness. He called this natural psychic process of increasing integration, *individuation*. The latter was seen as extending beyond the confines of a limited ego consciousness, beyond the sovereign command of the will. The individuation process was conceived as having its roots in the unconscious and as such involving the totality of an individual’s personality. Namely, all those aspects which are associated with her conscious existence as well as those which reach deep into the dark unfamiliar regions that sustain and condition her being.

D. Winnicott’s work is essential in pointing to the importance of the context within which the human maturation process takes place. Winnicott has given particular attention to the role of the mother as an intermediary between the infant and the world. He expanded psychoanalytic thought by bringing new

awareness into the importance of the mother (and the father) in creating a *facilitating environment* by means of properly serving the infant's various needs and surviving its omnipotent fantasies. Winnicott cogently captures that dynamic by saying that infants creatively discover the word by means of negating it. It is by means of properly holding (both literally and metaphorically) the infant and by responding to its diverse needs that the parents facilitate its *maturation process*. From that point of view neurotic illness is an indication of an early failure of that facilitating environment. Radical failures of the facilitating environment can cause, well beyond a simple (neurotic) hindrance of the maturation process, a disruption of the very core of ego consciousness. Psychosis, a condition where the individual can not separate between inner fantasy and the outside world of objective reality, is from that point of view the result of a disintegrated ego consciousness, which Winnicott attributes to radical failures of the facilitating environment. Winnicott's work is also particularly seminal in the differentiation introduced between a *true and a false self* in human development.

In situations where the facilitating environment is not good enough, Winnicott describes the emergence of a false self as a type of defense against parental failure. The false self serves the purpose of defending by means of hiding the true self. The false self manages this by way of complying and over-adapting with environmental demands. Over-adaptation, from this lens, can be seen as a strategy of sealing-off a fragile part of the psyche that has not been properly nurtured. The eclipse of a true self essentially marks a situation where adaptation to the outside world is not authentic, it is rather based on imitation/introjection. Introjection takes place at the detriment of the organic impetus of the individual as rooted in the body and the unconscious aspect of her existence/being. The false self is manifested in an inherent inability to exist in the intermediate space between dream and reality and to thus be spontaneous and creative. There is no play, culture and/or creativity where imitation is the dominant principle.

Jung's notion of the *persona* carries interesting similarities to what Winnicott calls the false self even though it is notably different. In its Jungian context the term *persona* refers to the "face" that an individual has developed throughout interaction with her social environment. As such a *persona* is not pathological. Rather, it is an inextricable part of our societal existence and its requirements for exchange and participation. Gradually as we progress in new roles and stages of development our *persona* also is adapted to fit to new circumstances. It is only to the extent that adaptation cannot take place and one's ego becomes rigidly

identified with the persona that we can begin to place this term within a context of morbidity.

3. Against this background, it is worth inquiring into the particularities of persona-construction in our digital age. Aaron Balick has particularly emphasized this aspect of intersection between psychology and technology as it pertains to the pervasive penetration and use of social media in our lives. The underlying issue can be drawn in a wider frame to address the effects of virtuality, and deterritorialization – understood as the delinking of individual identity and psychology from a stable point of cultural/linguistic/communal reference point – on our understanding of personality today. In that vein, the challenge seems to be how to make sense of our world and of ourselves today by remaining attentive to how contemporary phenomena may relate to the unfolding of older processes. It is to this that we now turn hoping to unearth older themes and processes that can ground and deepen our insight as to how to begin to think within a wider framework about personality and education today.

Hans-Georg Gadamer in his *magnum opus*, *Truth and Method*, describes in glaring detail the long history of historical shifts leading to the late notion of the “aesthetic consciousness” as propounded originally by Schiller, through his *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* and later evidenced in our modern understanding of art. Schiller’s work is placed in a seminal position by Gadamer in terms of a continuum consisting of a series of transitions leading to the emancipation of aesthetic consciousness from any stable reference of truth or content in the modern era. We read:

Whereas a definite taste differentiates – i.e., selects and rejects – on the basis of some content, aesthetic differentiation is an abstraction that selects only on the basis of aesthetic quality as such. It is performed in the self-consciousness of “aesthetic experiences” (...) Thus this is a specifically aesthetic kind of differentiation. It distinguishes the aesthetic quality of a work from all the elements of content that induce us to take up a moral or religious stance towards it, and presents it solely by itself in its aesthetic being. (Gadamer 1975: 74)

Schiller in his 27 letters on the subject of the aesthetic education claimed that it is through the appreciation of Beauty that mankind makes the transition from sensation to thought, “(...) from matter to form, from perception to principles, from a limited to an absolute existence” (Schiller 1795: 93). In a language that often seems to prefigure or inform later psychoanalytic insights Schiller describes two fundamentally opposed principles acting within man: person and his condition. Schiller remarks that for man to be able to undergo change there must be an underlying factor, some ground, that remains unchanged: his person,

the source of freedom. Conversely, man can only have recourse to existence through the experience of his finite conditional being.

So long as he only perceives, only desires and acts from mere appetite, he is still nothing but world, if we understand by this term simply the formless content of time. It is indeed his sense faculty alone which turns his capacity into operative power; but is only his personality which makes his operation really his own. Thus, in order not to be merely world, he must lend form to his material; in order not to be merely form, he must make actual the potentiality which he bears within himself. (Schiller 1795: 63)

Two inimical demands confront man corresponding to his double sensuous-rational nature. The *sensuous impulse* proceeds from his physical existence and is concerned with setting man within the bounds of time turning him into matter. By matter, Schiller refers to “reality which occupies time”, namely, alteration imbuing time with a content. This condition of occupied time, reality, Schiller calls sensation and it is within it that he sees physical existence proclaiming itself. This impulse relates to the finiteness of man. The second impulse, Schiller describes as formal. The *formal impulse* strives to set man free and is derived from man’s rational nature. Interestingly, in a prefiguration of Jungian psychology, Schiller (1795: 66) describes liberty in terms of: “...bring(ing) harmony in to the diversity of his [man’s] manifestation and to maintain his person throughout every change of circumstance.”

Schiller understands this in terms of the absolute indivisibility of the person. As already mentioned above, personality is here posited as the unchanging ground that precedes, or better, is the condition for the possibility of time and alteration. As such, personality embraces the whole time series, “...it annuls time and change; it wishes the actual to be necessary and eternal, and the eternal and necessary to be actual; in other words, it aims at truth and right” (Schiller 1795: 66).

Schiller posits that it is the role of culture, in the form of an aesthetic education, to secure an equality of both of the aforementioned impulses in man’s life. So long as he is subject to the one sidedness of either of the two impulses man is condemned to be a slave. If his feelings rule his principles, he is a savage. If his (rational) principles destroy his feelings, he is a barbarian. As a creature of two worlds, man has to satisfy at the same time two opposing demands exerted on him and to bring them in harmony with one another. It is the aesthetic that unites sensuousness and reason, matter and form delivering him to freedom. It is from this vantage point that Schiller proclaims that education is defective so long as it addresses and caters solely to one of these inimical impulses.

The State should respect not merely the objective and generic, but also the subjective and specific character of its individuals, and in extending the invisible realm of morals it must not depopulate the realm of phenomena. (Schiller 1795: 32)

This antithesis that man experiences between the sensuous and the formal impulses, or its corollary, the clash between reason and feeling is also articulated in a historical trajectory by Schiller. The latter sees a progression from the Greeks living harmoniously with nature to his time exemplified by the disintegration of personality and further extending to the future of a perfect whole-man-to-come. So long as man only feels, his personality remains a mystery to him, Schiller asserts. Conversely, so long as he only thinks his existence in time remains a barred possibility. It is the play impulse that provides the opportunity for a true synthesis in personality. To the extent that the play impulse awakens man to the aesthetic qualities of phenomena and to the apperception of Beauty, it makes possible a true synthesis where matter and form, as inimical impulses, can co-exist and be superseded (sublated): "...this play impulse would aim at the extinction of time in time and the reconciliation of becoming with absolute being, of variation with identity" (Schiller 1795: 74).

Gadamer reveals how Schiller's view of the aesthetic is derived from Kant's *Critique of Judgement*. In his critique of aesthetic judgement, Kant was attempting to bring a systematic conclusion to his philosophy. In effect, Gadamer (1975: 48) explains, Kant was attempting to rehabilitate the notion of teleology "(...) whose constitutive claim as a principle of judgment in the knowledge of nature had been destroyed by the Critique of Pure Reason."

In this regard, judgment was to provide the necessary missing link that would bridge understanding and reason. In nature and in art beauty was posited by Kant as the *a priori* principle lying entirely within subjectivity. In beauty, natural or artistic, no principle or concept of knowledge are postulated as the basis for aesthetic judgement. Rather, the only valid principle of judgement for artistic beauty is its suitability to promote the feeling of freedom in the pay of our cognitive faculties. This was a monumental achievement by Kant in terms of emancipating the sphere of art and aesthetics from questions of objective rational truth and of positing subjectivity and our feeling for life as the basis for aesthetic judgement.

This achievement, Gadamer explains, would lay the foundations for important later developments in the history of ideas. Neo-Kantians would take Kant's notion of an *a priori* locus of judgments in subjectivity and attempt to place all objective validity on (transcendental, i.e. *a priori*) subjectivity. Particularly important in terms of a certain development that we are retracing here is the

emergence of the notion of *Erlebnis* post the 1870s. The development of this term, which connotes “an immediacy with which something real is grasped” in actual experience, is particularly associated with the work of Wilhelm Dilthey. The emergence of “life” and “inner experience” as legitimate bases for judgment as opposed to Enlightenment rationalist emphasis on perception and representation would, in turn, be seminal in terms of the later development of phenomenology, hermeneutics, existentialism and depth-psychology. Even though these developments cannot be retraced here, for our purposes it suffices to note and recall that today’s almost commonsensical notion that life ought to have a meaning or that the realm of our interiority is a legitimate source of experience carry their own history of development. Recalling this historical development seems necessary lest we fall prey to a certain objectification, a closing off and forgetfulness of the historicity informing questions about (lack of) meaning and purpose which confront and menace so many individuals in our times. As Gadamer masterfully reveals what Kant had devised in order to save a place for teleology into his system, aesthetic judgment as an *a priori* principle instilled in the transcendental subject, later thinkers starting with Schiller would appropriate and imbue with positive content. Kant’s philosophy was an attempt to secure knowledge on a firm rational ground and to fend off the arbitrary postulates of dogmatic metaphysics. It seems that as this danger would become less pressing for later secular thinkers what had been erected as a terrain for the derivation of legitimate claims about teleology and understanding to be preserved within a system of pure reason, the transcendental subject, would become increasingly a locus of positive meaning and purpose so much so that the transcendental subject could gradually evolve, transmute and equate into the unconscious, and eventually, the psychological subject *per se*.

In this regard it is important to pay attention to Gadamer’s remarks about the emancipation of “aesthetic differentiation” along this process that Kant commenced. Whereas previously the notions of “taste” and “beauty” derived their semantic content from a *sensus communis*, a common sense shared by a peoples to be encountered as far back as in the classical concept of practical wisdom (phronesis) in the western tradition, we now moved to a certain deterritorialized version of the “aesthetic”, which was evacuated from community or content while becoming positivized hypostatically into a quality of a “psychological subject”. In that regard it is particularly worth noting, what immense expectations have been placed by our society on the artist, the genius and progressively each and every individual subject who is interpellated to live creatively in our time.

The aesthetically educated subject became the mediator between worlds, the real world of objectivity and rationality and the sublime world of abstracted Beauty and wholeness in Schiller. The positing of “reality” and “culture” in oppositional terms defined a rift in which the Hegelian spirit would also operate as it would strive to overcome its alienation from nature. This very rift, arguably, was also a necessary precondition for the later emergence in 19th century of the “psychological individual” as a possessor and locus of self-enclosed inner truth (in suffering).

The Idea of aesthetic cultivation – as we derived it from Schiller – consists precisely in precluding any criterion of content and disassociating the work of art from its world. (...) Whereas a definite taste differentiates – i.e, selects and rejects – on the basis of some content, aesthetic differentiation is an abstraction that selects only on the basis of aesthetic quality as such, It is performed in the self-consciousness of “aesthetic experiences.” (Gadamer 1975: 73)

In these words about the rise of the aesthetic we recognize a parallelism, a metaphor, regarding a certain process, whose culmination we seem to experience today, whereby individual experience becomes increasingly an abstracted individual psychological realm within a hyper-connected world that seems to be transcending stable semantic content or reference.

4. Taking stock of this process we can posit the notion of “psychological differentiation” as an equivalent and a corollary to the process that we have been tracing so far with regard to the cultivation of the aesthetic consciousness. *Psychological differentiation would then connote a certain historical process, which through a tortuous path, to be further traced and elucidated, has led to the rise of an abstracted individual self who makes sense of the world “psychologically” sealed-off, forgetful of the world (culture, history, religion, politics) in which it arises.* In Heideggerian this could be re-articulated in terms of the *ontological difference*. Namely, the gradual mis-appropriation of the ontological realm by the ontic. The ontological realm, through a historical process that we have called “psychological differentiation” eventually becomes concealed by a certain psychologized objective positivity, a modern subject, which limpidly wishes to stand on its own, “psychologically” divorced from the ontological sources that nourish it and embed it in a long obsolescing tradition. It has been my implicit hypothesis that this progression goes part and parcel and is reinforced by the rise of a deterrorializing global culture enabled and exported to an unprecedented degree by digital technology today.

From that point of view, it cannot be coincidental that so many individuals suffer symptoms of panic attacks often manifesting themselves in nausea and

dizziness as they are confronted with a world that is as menacing and unintelligible as ours is today. Nor can it be incidental that so many conspiracy theories or esoteric philosophies flourish as much-needed points of anchorage in times of inner turmoil and semantic vertigo. As traditional reference points become destabilized and conventions are discredited and rendered obsolete, individuals are confronted with the awesome task of having to assume upon ourselves the responsibility to construct on their own, in isolation and with limited means, the very world that they inhabit. They are confronted with the daunting challenge of having to live their lives as projects, to be the managers and the innovators to their very own individual labor force, to make a brand out of themselves and their talents and to then construct a business model so that they can extract a revenue from a (virtual) market. As such, they are menaced by the herculean task of having to develop a worldview, a personal secular religion to believe in, as to be able to carry on living in an otherwise alienating world of meaninglessness, vacuity and contingency. The search for ground, oddly, has become the psychological holy grail of our times. The old awesome question of Being has evolved into one of an ever elusive (psychological) well-being.

5. In an essay written in 1932 and entitled, *The Development of Personality*, Jung associates the development of personality with "(...) obeying the law of one's being" (1954: 183). Jung sets personality development as a supreme educational task for "modern man". In that vein, a *sine qua non* for this task is that the educator has dedicated her own self to that strenuous task. The notion of the training analysis as a key component of becoming an analyst maintained still today by psychoanalytic institutes world-wide is a natural extension of this view, namely, that before treating analysands one has to have gone through the process herself. This being so, because the "process" is not one to be applied like a medical cure, but rather one to be performed as a natural extension of "personality" and "relationship". It is here important to note that for Jung the very idea of a cure and its corollary, psychological growth, carry strong overtones from what we encountered earlier in Schiller as it is conceived and articulated in terms of the "development of the whole individual human being" (Jung 1954: 171). Also notable is the counter-distinction here drawn between "individualism" and "individuation". The latter is conceived as a "natural development" requiring a painstaking "fidelity to the law of one's own being" that entails one's conscious engagement with one's singularly own fate beyond and despite the requirements for adaptation posed by the social milieu (Jung 1954: 173). Individualism, in that regard is counter posited as a cheap substitute:

(...) nothing but an unnatural usurpation, a freakish, impertinent pose that proves its hollowness by crumpling up before the least obstacle... Clearly no one develops his personality because somebody tells him that it would be useful or advisable to do so. Nature has never yet been taken in by well-meaning advice. The only thing that moves nature is causal necessity, and that goes for human nature too. (Jung 1954: 175)

In a language stunning to modern secular sensibilities, Jung coined fidelity to the (natural) law of one's being in religious terms requiring "loyal perseverance" and "confident hope" of a kind similar to that of a religious man towards God.

The law of one's being Jung elucidates in term of the existence of a "vocation" in one's life. Vocation is in turn defined as: "(...) an irrational factor that destines a man to emancipate himself from the herd and from its well-worn paths...vocation acts like a law of God from which there is no escape" (Jung 1954: 175).

Such an irrational factor springing from the "unconscious natural psyche" is traced in terms of a "voice of the inner man", a calling. The calling of vocation, is substantially different, as we have seen, from the acts of conscious individual will. Acts of will may originate from the one sided barbarous (or savage) existence that Schiller so eloquently admonished in his *Education of Man* or from a blind, uncritical, subscription to predominant social conventions so markedly scorned by Jung. Vocation, as here postulated, goes part and parcel with the commitment towards a "fuller life", a more comprehensive consciousness developed by engaging with unconscious contents. Strikingly, Jung associates the very occurrence of neurotic suffering as ensuing from a defense, an escape from one's inner voice. Conversely, the meaning of one's life emanates from a commitment towards one's true being, one's very own personality. Audaciously, Jung examines the life of Jesus Christ as a "shining example of the meaning of personality" in history. Jung psychologically interprets Jesus life in terms of the latter's commitment to his inner voice and his engagement with the contents that sprung from the natural objective psyche of his time: "The religion of love was the exact psychological counterpart to the Roman devil-worship of power" (Jung 1954: 181).

6. Shifting our lens, from the psychological to the historical and from the individual to the collective, we turn to Karl Loewith who reveals how the ideas of progress and meaning, as encountered in the history of the west from Isaiah to Marx, from Augustine to Hegel, and from Jachim to Schelling have a Judeo-Christian religious foundation. Loewith shows how Hebrew and Christian faith have shaped the way we (forgetfully) define the notions of progress, development and purpose in secular modernity.

The outstanding element, however, out of which an interpretation of history could arise at all, is the basic experience of evil and suffering, and of man's quest for happiness. The interpretation of history is, in the last analysis, an attempt to understand the meaning of history as the meaning of suffering by historical action. (Loewith 1949: 3)

The modern secular ideas of development or progress would have been meaningless and incomprehensible to the ancient Greeks. The claim that history has a meaning or a purpose, Loewith explains, implies a final purpose or goal transcending the actual events. For the Greeks events were: "(...) full of import and sense, but they were not meaningful in the sense of being directed toward an ultimate end in a transcendent purpose that comprehends the whole course of events" (Loewith 1949: 6).

The very notions of purpose and meaning in history presuppose and ensue from an eschatological temporal horizon. The present is made sense of in terms of an expected future, in contradistinction to the Greeks for whom past and present shared re-concurrent patterns and for whom the future did not hold prospective possibilities:

In the Greek and Roman mythologies and genealogies the past is re-presented as an everlasting foundation. In the Hebrew and Christian view of history the past is a promise to the future; consequently, the interpretation of the past becomes a prophecy in reverse, demonstrating the past as a meaningful "preparation" for the future. (Loewith 1949: 6)

Antiquity, Loewith explains, believed in divination as a consequence of an underlying belief that the future could be foreknown because it was pre-ordained. Future events were only slightly hidden and therefore unveiled by a penetrating mind.

Loewith's remarks about Burckhardt, as the soundest modern reflection on history, are profound. In Burckhardt's work Loewith recognizes an understanding of both the classical and the modern points of view as well as a distancing of both. Burckhardt pays homage to the virtues of antiquity while recognizing that its spirit is not ours. At the same time, his outlook is divorced from the philosophies of history from Hegel to Augustine which professed to know the truth about historical events and their successions: "They know it, not as scientific historians, not even as philosophers, but as theologians who believed in history as a story of fulfillment" (Loewith 1949: 26).

Appalled by the rapid industrialization and vulgarization of Europe, Burckhardt believed that only religion could provide the transcendent urge that could outweigh the clamor for money and power and the imminent disaster

that came with that for Europe. In that vein, he admired the early Christians for the ascetic and otherworldly outlook. He saw Christianity as a religion of suffering and renunciation. Early Christians, the hermits and monks provided a response to an ailing civilized Hellenistic world in a state of deep decadence and barbarism. They became the gatekeepers of the church as the only spiritual institution which nursed and preserved all higher education and which cultivated a knowledge which was not worldly or practical. He deplored the watering down of that early Christian Spirit of the apostolic Church and remarked on the emancipation of morality from its religious foundations. Burckhardt was particularly critical of the spreading of liberal optimistic Protestantism. Against its secularized, liberal optimistic spirit he insisted that the strength of early Christianity consisted in its out-worldly transcendent character so much so that in his view modern Christianity comprised a contradiction in terms.

In a similar vein, Loewith extends his analysis to include Marx. Here he makes the bold statement that Marx's theory of history is fundamentally informed by the Christian religious spirit of prophetism: "The Communist Manifesto is, first of all, a prophetic document, a judgment, and a call to action and not at all a purely scientific statement based on the empirical evidence of tangible facts" (Loewith 1949: 43).

In the Marxist outlook of universal history and in its implicit notions of exploitation of the proletariat class, Loewith recognizes a transmutation of the biblical notion of "original sin".

It is the old Jewish messianism and prophetism – unaltered by two thousand years of economic history from handicraft to large-scale industry- and Jewish insistence on absolute righteousness which explain the idealistic basis of Marx's materialism. Though perverted into secular prognostication, the Communist Manifesto still retains the basis features of a messianic faith: "the assurance of things to be hoped for (...) Historical materialism is essentially, though secretly, a history of fulfillment and salvation in terms of social economy." (Loewith 1949: 44)

For Marx, Christianity was a religion peculiar to capitalism and its superstructure and as such an indication of the problems that needed to be solved by a change in economic conditions. After the destruction of religious consciousness by left-wing Hegelians (D.F. Strauss, L. Feuerbach, B. Bauer, M. Stirner) and especially Feuerbach's assertion that:

"God is only an infinite projection of finite man and that the essence of theology is anthropology" Marx took up the task to establish man's truth on earth: "We reclaim the whole content of history but we do not see in it a revelation of God but only of man (Marx)." (Loewith 1949: 48)

Loewith reminds us that Hegel's idealism, much alike like all of German idealism rests solidly on the Christian tradition while making the provocative assertion that Marx's materialism retained covertly its religious derivation more markedly than Hegelian idealism. Here the insightful implication is that Marxist materialism in its atheist pretensions retains a dualism between imminence and transcendence which Hegel's explicit idealism attempts to exhaustively overcome. By equating the history of the Spirit – the translation of faith in Christ as the Lord and Logos of History into a philosophical category – with the history of the world Hegel's system ostensibly overcomes prior dualisms between matter and spirit, immanence versus transcendence: “compared with Marx, the greater realist is Hegel” (Loewith 1949: 51).

Hegel's philosophy of history is of pivotal importance then in terms of tracing the story of the process by means of which the religious foundations of a Judeo-Christian world were progressively forgotten, reabsorbed and sublated by the world that they gave birth to all the way to our modern secular views about history (and self). Resting on notions of temporality, development and progress cleansed from the religious/existential foundations whence these have sprung, secular modernity posits an imminent scientifically-informed reality which obfuscates its foundations in the mysterious, riddle-some depths of the history of human experience whilst projecting in receding notions of abstracted imminence the promise of delivery (salvation) from suffering by means of technology, science and material affluence. In Hegel we find all those elements associated with a Christian world view – linear temporality, progression/development and eschatology – coached in philosophical language and operationalized in the categories of Reason and Spirit:

The History of the World begins with its general aim-the realization of the Idea of Spirit – only in an implicit form (*an sich*) that is, as Nature; and the whole process of History, is directed to rendering this unconscious impulse a conscious one. (Hegel 1822: 25)

The multiplicity of interests, volitions and activities encountered in history, Hegel explains, are the instruments and the means by which the World-Spirit attains its object and realizes it by bringing it to consciousness. The object and the aim is for Spirit to find itself and to contemplate itself in concrete actuality. Spirit is reason: “(It) is the Sovereign of the World (...) the history of the world, therefore, presents us with a rational process” (Hegel 1822: 9).

Reason governs the world and its history. All else in relation to this independent and universal substantial existence is subservient and subordinate and the means of its development. Hegel's philosophy of History traces the

vicissitudes of this development whereby Spirit, passing through different stages of historical development, comes to realize itself as self-consciousness and freedom. This developmental course ostensibly finds its culmination in Hegel's philosophy, which from its vantage point is able to discern the logical sequence that Spirit follows in its development to self-consciousness. This course also follows a historical trajectory which is developmental in a geographical/cultural sense as well commencing from the East where nations knew that one is free; continues to the Greek and Roman world where only some were free; and culminates in Europe (Germany) where men know that all men are free; freedom is the essence of Spirit. Matter and spirit are opposites. Matter is composite consisting of parts that strive toward wholeness. Its particle of matter occupies a space that excludes another particle. As such matter strives after the realization of an ideal of unity. This ideal if accomplished would amount to the destruction of matter; as such matter strives toward the realization of its negation (an indivisible point). Spirit is defined by Hegel as that which has its centre in itself. It exists in and with itself. Spirit is freedom as self-contained existence.

Hegel describes the development of Spirit as a process that is very different to the way natural objects develop. According to Hegel's conception, natural objects grow according to an internal unchangeable principle or essence. But whereas, natural objects develop in an unhindered manner to become what they always were in potential, Spirit follows a different trajectory. Its realization is mediated by the faculties of consciousness and will, which are sunk in a merely natural life. Spirit is consequently in conflict with its very own self in order to realize in confrontation with its own nature its ideal being. Remarkably, in the struggle to realize its own ideal being, Spirit hides that goal from its own vision and is satisfied in this alienation from it. Spirit is the result of its own continuous self-transcendence. The negation of its own unreflected and immediate existence and the return to itself at a higher progressive embodiment which includes all earlier steps.

As Loewith poignantly argues, Hegel operationalizes philosophically the notion of divine Providence by introducing the logically systematized notion of *cunning of reason*. The cunning of reason is that element which drives the process of struggle and negation between particulars in the temporal theatre of history as to realize a universal idea. This reason is for Hegel coterminous with God:

The insight then to which (...) philosophy is to lead us, is, that the real world is as it ought to be – that the truly good – the universal divine reason – is not a mere abstraction, but a vital principle capable of realizing itself... God governs the world; the actual working of his government – the carrying out of his plan – is the History of the World. This plan philosophy

strives to comprehend; for only that which has been developed as the result of it, possess bona fide reality. That which does not accord with it, is negative, worthless existence. (Loewith 1949: 36)

7. The references to Hegel, Marx and Burckhardt in this narrative all serve the purpose of re-activating an insight that Loewith's work is instrumental in pointing out. Namely, that our secular world is still fundamentally embedded within its religious (Christian) foundations. Loewith demonstrates how secular notions of progress and temporality are inherently linked and derived from a belief in the incarnation of God in Christ and the consummation of history in His coming. The ideas that history in itself has a meaning or that the world moves along a trajectory of progress in its own, divorced from the Christian experience of radical faith, are, Loewith argues nonsensical: "The problem of history as a whole is unanswerable within its own perspective. Historical processes as such do not bear the least evidence of a comprehensive and ultimate meaning. History as such has no outcome" (Loewith 1949: 191).

A Christian interpretation of history rises or falls with the belief in Christ, the doctrine of the Incarnation, says Loewith. From this point of view, history has a meaning because the story of salvation "(...) redeems and dismantles, as it were, the hopeless history of the world" (Loewith 1949: 197). The condition for the possibility of our modern secular experience of history as a sequence of momentous events presupposes a radical experience of faith which disrupted a pagan understanding of time in terms of eternal cycles of growth and decay by inserting the radical belief that history had ended with the coming of Christ. Divorced from that radical experience of belief in the *eschaton*, the modern understanding of history as well as the very belief in progress or development or purpose would have been altogether impossible according to Loewith.

8. This excursus to the history of ideas is particularly relevant to our discussion about personality today to the extent that it points to the paradox that the construction of individual meaning entails in our psychological times. Eighty years ago Jung addressed the spiritual problem of modern man's search for meaning in an essay written in 1933 which would appear in his renown book *Modern Man in Search Soul*. Jung's key premise was that humanity was at the cusp of a new spiritual era. Confronted with the effects of "Americanization," modern man, according to Jung, longed for security in an age of insecurity. The demise of religious institutions and metaphysical certainties and their corollary, man's inability to find safety and meaning in the outer material world despite the enormous advances of industrialization and science, had led to an unprecedented interest and fascination with psyche evidenced in the rise of psychology as

a science, but also in the surge of popular interest for spiritualism, eastern philosophies, theosophy, astrology and parapsychology already at that time. In this turn, Jung recognized a modern parallel to the rise of gnostic thought during the first two centuries after Christ. Central to this phenomenon was an abhorring of faith and religion based on it and the search for meaning and validation based on knowledge-content that accords with man's own psychic background and first-hand experience (Jung 1964: 84). From that point of view, Jung describes psychic life as a ground of reality and experience that potentially offers a counterweight to the instability of a relativized, volatile material world:

To me the crux of the spiritual problem today is to be found in the fascination which the psyche holds for modern man. If we are pessimists, we shall call it a sign of decadence; if we are optimistically inclined, we shall see in it the promise of a far-reaching spiritual change in the Western world. (Jung 1964: 92)

It is fascinating to notice how deeply relevant the notion of tradition is in the problematic that Jung introduces. In the opening of his essay, Jung directly addresses modern man's relation to history and tradition:

The man who has attained consciousness of the present is solitary. The "modern" man has at all times been so, for every step towards fuller consciousness removes him further from his original, purely animal participation mystique with the herd, from submersion in a common unconsciousness... Only the man who is modern in our meaning of the term really lives in the present; he alone has a present-day consciousness, and he alone finds that the ways of life on those earlier levels have begun to pall upon him. The values and strivings of those past worlds no longer interest him save from the historical standpoint. Thus he has become 'unhistorical' in the deepest sense and has estranged himself from the mass of men who live entirely within the bounds of tradition. Indeed, he is completely modern only when he has come to the very edge of the world, leaving behind him all that has been discarded and outgrown, and acknowledging that he stands before the Nothing of which All grow. (Jung 1964: 75)

9. This brings us to the very issue that we have been tracing during the tortuous path that this essay has followed. Namely, how through a process of disassociation from origins and a severing from tradition we have come to the emergence of an individually differentiated psyche that the burgeoning field of psychology engages with theoretically and therapeutically. Traditional notions of faith and salvation or larger metaphysical questions about Being were gradually transmuted during modernity in new guise as they became the plight of a solitary search for meaning for individuals plagued with the psychological suffering unique to our times. In that vein, Jung's remarkable insights also introduce a paradox, or perhaps a symptom that represents a knot in the core of modern psychological

suffering. The very insights and postulates that constitute scientific discoveries made based on Jung's empirical method as a modern secular psychologist are incontestably associated with a long European history of ideas as well as with a very distinctive Christian tradition. Our excursus to aspects of that tradition by means of Loewith's work have aimed to bring us to a point where we can begin to see how Jung's discovery of a psychic tendency towards wholeness and integration or his references to an inner being/voice (vocation) guiding a process of personality development as individuation can not be delinked from the particular horizons from which they borrow their original semantic content and impetus. More generically then, the paradox consists in what we have called, borrowing from Gadamer's discussion of the aesthetic, *psychological differentiation*. Namely, the tendency to subsume wider historical references and origins within new categories which are subsequently imbued with psychological subjectivized status. In the case of Schiller we have seen that process in terms of his appropriation of the aesthetic as originally postulated by Kant. In Jung, we recognize a similar tendency in his discussion of personality development in terms of the inner voice/vocation and his attempt to then explain retrospectively the history of ideas and religions (including the personality of Christ!) in psychological terms after having posited the "unconscious psyche" as a firm explanatory ground for scientific discovery and individual encounter with meaning. Even more explicitly, the point here is that the subjectivized category, the unconscious psyche in this case, carries within it tacitly the very categories that it subsequently discovers in the world.

10. Yet here we are, in a post-religious psychological age in search of individual "meaning" and "purpose". Confronted by a world of virtuality, fluidity and nauseating contingency "individual interiority" becomes the terrain where "psychologically differentiated" suffering is experienced ubiquitously today. We have been arguing that the notions of psychological "wholeness", "development" and "integration" have an internal notional history that inevitably lead to Kant's attempt to define a terrain where knowledge based on secure principles of pure reason could stand on its own without having to resort to metaphysics. We have seen, by reference to Gadamer, how Kant's "aesthetic judgment" was an attempt to bridge "understanding" and "reason" and to legitimate "teleology" in the latter's systemic philosophy. "The purposiveness of nature for our cognitive faculties (...) prepares the understanding to apply the concept of purpose to nature", Gadamer explains in his reading of Kant (1975: 48). In turn we have seen how Schiller would take the transcendental principle from Kant and imbue it with positive content for the *Aesthetic Education Man*. The "radical subjectivization"

which Kant introduced by means of grounding aesthetics on a transcendental function progressed even further by acquiring positive content in his aftermath. What was in Kant associated with the *a priori* of transcendental subjectivity would become a positive function of the subject in Schiller. Further along this historical progression we have seen how the ideas of wholeness and integration, prefigured in Schiller's *Aesthetic Education* find later a full depth-psychological articulation. In Jung we have encountered the idea of education linked to that of vocation posited as *being faithful to one's being*. We have remarked at the religious overtones underpinning these notions even though, in a Kantian fashion, Jung too aimed to secure a firm secular (and scientific) ground for psychological inquiry and practice. Coming full circle, we have resorted to Karl Loewith in order to trace the Christian historical origins of our subjectivized/psychologized notions of "meaning" and "purpose". Taking stock of what Gadamer introduced as an autonomization of aesthetics in the history of ideas we have introduced the notion of "*psychological differentiation*". Similar to the process where art and taste were gradually divorced from having a positive content linked to a particular community, practice and place in the world to become general and abstract forms of expression, inquiry and appreciation, we can postulate a process where "purpose" and "meaning" become psychological abstractions divorced from the specific source from which they derived their original impetus and semantic content. Jung's audacious psychological interpretation of Christ is perhaps an emblematic example of a retrospective appropriation of foundations and a corresponding positivization of transcendental origins within a subjectivized and autonomized framework, which I have been trying to thematize in this discussion. If indeed, as suggested earlier in this discussion, our digital age has ushered us into a world of ever more fluidity, virtuality and subjectivization then it is well-worth remaining attendant to the new acts of translation, adaptation and appropriation that lie ahead in terms of our notions of personality development, individual meaning and suffering. Within this context psychoanalysis, as a field founded at the very core of the Gordian knot connecting tradition to subjectivization and religion to science has still much to say and undergo.

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