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Conditions of the beginning
School of Psychology and Educational Sciences
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A new perspective

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We are witnessing today, with some ease, that most of the discourses in different areas of expertise, begin with a referral to the present state of affairs and continue with a permanent connection, in terms of causality, to significant events of recent date. Like a pattern, phrases such as *“we live today uncertain times”* or *“we are facing with great challenges”* have become the companions of introductions to various speeches or talks.

It has become clearer that we are dealing with crises, and there are many events today that are unsettling, instead of reassuring us. In a certain way, the headline for these introductions of speeches is held by the pandemic crisis that has traversed and axially traced humanity. Nevertheless, how can such a subject be attacked if, unexpectedly, a clear answer is not tried, but just persisting in an area of blur?

Looking back on the issue of the pandemic crisis caused by the Covid-19, the theme of responsibility has been circumvented, if not better said, from the speeches on. Would such a discussion have been inappropriate, given that the main problem was that of survival? Since the last century, the philosopher Hans Jonas laid the premises for a fragile responsibility, fixed for a technological civilization¹.

The fragility was obviously devalued and became, paradoxically, the main asset of humanity. At the heart of a technological development, more than 20 years after the „verdict of Jonas, we realize that in fact, as Ricoeur notes, the object of responsibility is perishable as such. During the pandemic episodes, life, in its multiple, and not just biological, connotations, was framed in its own perishability. More than ever, the human being has known in the deepest way the double facet of vulnerability: of the species as such and of the host planet. If we were to rightly think of the planet as such as a fortress of each of us, then its survival depends only on us, as Hannah Arendt pointed out. Moreover, survival has become a common problem of people, and to cope with it should be shown a common willpower.

But beyond any questioning of the causality and propagation of the Covid19 virus (we are in no way trying to problematize this matter here), ever since the onset of the pandemic crisis we have been, to some extent, forced to lift our own veil, like the disciples at Sais in

¹ Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility. In search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*, translated by Hans Jonas & David Herr, The University of Chicago Press, 1984

search of the goddess Isis. Inaccessibility has become the norm of humanity. What seemed at first an uneven ratio soon became a balance of active presence. The human subject was losing its own consistency and brand, and the object (Covid-19) was diluting, until annihilation, its opacity, thus becoming more and clearer.

If we were to answer today the question of whether there is a discipline-witness to crises, able to respond to the construction and application of possible solutions, perhaps psychology would be one of the variants. Why? Perhaps only because people suddenly, more than ever, recognize the need to direct their actions in the paradigm of the idea of meaning. Goals slide into projection from immediate or perspective to installation in the sensual-conceptual framework of existence as such.

However, the *preparation* itself is a work, elaborated and thought out as a decisive stage in the composition of a path. The need for meaning is suddenly postulated in one of the great themes of humanity, framed in the picture of inter and trans-disciplinary searches and discussions. Such preparation, if we recall what Rilke was saying about love, as a formative stage in re-creation of the individual apt for it, is "(...) the work for which all other work was only preparation".

Such a stage can be captured in the courses of the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences of the Romanian-American University, which debuted, with its first promotion of students in the academic year 2025-2026. Moreover, every beginning projects, beyond the enthusiasm and dedication of both students and teachers, a working perspective, a coordinating axis in concerns, topics, discussions and meetings.

So, at the beginning of this journey, I wish to faculty' students and to my colleagues a journey strewn with academic challenges and to welcome with openness and curiosity every meeting with the topics of psychology in the coming years. After all, if we started together on this road, we should not forget that "a trip does not need reasons to be confirmed. And it proves shortly that it is self-sufficient. We think we're taking a journey, but actually it is the trip itself, it the one that makes us and brake us." (N. Bouvier, *L'usage du monde*).

Sliding Identity: Who Becomes Whom?

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Abstract

If we consider any approach to identity an act of psychological insight, we immediately recognize that the self emerges from layered processes, such as temperament, familial imprint, social roles, and unconscious patterns, which continuously interact with context. This paper explores identity as a sliding and adaptive configuration, revealed through everyday reflections and the internal mirrors that structure experience. By examining how inherited tendencies can be noticed, reframed, and gradually shifted, the analysis highlights practical ways in which identity change becomes possible through awareness, narrative revision, and small intentional acts. Our guiding question, Who becomes whom when identity begins to slide?, becomes, at the same time, our analysis, unfolding through multiple interrogations that open more pathways than conclusions. We merely arrive at further questions, leaving the answers to an individual act of critical thinking or to a balanced process of reflection within a broader cultural frame; we know that we don't know anything!

Keywords: identity, inter-subjectivity, disruption, self-reflection, transformation

Whom do you actually see when you look in the mirror?

When you stand directly before the mirror, you meet the familiar face, the one rooted in your temperament, the biological rhythm that has always accompanied you like a quiet metronome beneath experience. Yet temperament alone never scripted the person in front of you. As you shift a small step to the right, the reflection bends and another layer appears: character, those slower, enduring tendencies shaped by choices, habits, disappointments, and the subtle deals you made with the world in order to stay alive.

A move to the left unveils a different layer: inherited mannerisms, soft fingerprints from earlier generations. The way you lift an eyebrow when skeptical, the gesture you make when explaining something complex, the cautious breath before disagreeing, which belong as much to family systems and cultural rituals as to "you". They form part of your bodily grammar.

Turn toward the mirror on the sidewall, and more performative self-flickers into view. This is the version of you sculpted by roles: the student who learned to appear competent, the child who softened their voice, the friend who absorbed others' emotions, and the professional

who sounds certain even when unsure. Eventually, these roles live in your muscles and tone of voice as much as in your memories.

Behind you, in the narrow hallway mirror, a more elusive silhouette appears the shape of your shadows. Here linger traces of traumas you tried to outgrow, impulses you were told to hide, softness protected behind sharpness, anger swallowed to keep peace, fear tucked away behind competence. Some shadows shout, others whisper, but all of them quietly bend your choices and color your inner dialogue. Already, identity is sliding across mirrors: temperament, character, mannerisms, roles, shadows. The question is no longer, whether identity moves, but who becomes who each time it shifts.

Where Does Identity Begin Before We Do?

Because we need to start from this geographical status, of an assumed position where the shift, as a decisive action implies a re-location of the self, we may say that the shifting reflections in the mirror reveal an unsettling paradox: you experience yourself as a single, continuous “I”, yet the foundations of that “I” were laid long before you could choose them. Much of your identity formed before consciousness, in a mixture of biological disposition and psychological inheritance. Jung’s work helps clarify this tension. What you treat as a stable self is often the *persona*, the socially cultivated surface you learned so early that it now feels natural. Beneath it lies the *shadow*, a store of unintegrated impulses and emotions that surface in reactions you “didn’t mean” to have (Jung, 1959). Lacan reframes this through the *mirror stage*: the ego first appears as identification with an external image, an early misrecognition that offers unity while concealing internal multiplicity (2006). The self you call “mine” is therefore shaped by reflections—literal and symbolic—provided by caregivers, institutions, and cultural norms.

Camil Petrescu, in his philosophical writing² captures this architecture with the idea of tensioned unit (*unitate tensionată*): consciousness does not possess unity by nature, and it works toward it. Identity becomes a strained unity, held together as the mind weaves inherited patterns, conflicting roles, and lived experiences into something workable (1940). Adler (1940) adds that early feelings of inferiority crystallize into compensatory strategies that later function as personality; our “style of life” often grows out of people’s attempts to secure belonging and dignity in formative environments. Many of the habits, ambitions, and relational reflexes that feel “like me” began as survival strategies.

Classical thinkers trace similar dynamics. Aristotle (1940) describes the psyche as the organizing form of a living being, the principle that grants coherence to otherwise scattered tendencies. Plato’s cave allegory shows how easily we mistake shadows for substance, confusing partial reflections with the truth of who we are. Contemporary cognitive science also echoes them: predictive self-models filter perception and emotion through expectations built from past experience, resisting change even when our self-story becomes outdated (Deane, 2021; Marchi & Newen, 2022).

In our perception, identity does not arise from a single source. It emerges from the layered interplay of temperament, character, family imprint, cultural codes, mannerisms, social roles, trauma, unconscious dynamics, and predictive expectations. Much of what you call “yourself” is, in fact, sedimented history, namely biological, familial, cultural, emotional, which are mistaken for autonomy. Once these layers come into view, the guiding question

² Camil Petrescu, *Doctrina substanței*, 2 vol, Editura :Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1967

sharpens: *Quis in quem mutatur?* Who becomes whom when identity begins to slide? Do you reshape the self, or does the inherited self keep reshaping you each time you try to change?

Why Do We Struggle to Truly Know Ourselves?

We live under a cultural directive: „*Be yourself!*”, yet most people have never examined how much of that “self” was formed before they were able to reflect. Identity feels coherent because the mind stitches it together, but its base is built in years where adaptation, not authenticity, was the priority. As children, you learned which emotions drew people closer and which created distance, which parts of you were rewarded, which were ignored, which were too much.

Jung’s idea of the persona helps explain why so much of identity begins as adaptation: we learn early which versions of ourselves invite acceptance, while the unwelcomed parts slip into the shadow long before we understand their value (1959). Adler extends this insight by showing how these early negotiations often leave emotional residues—subtle feelings of inadequacy that solidify into habitual ways of coping and later pass as personality (1940). What results is not a naturally unified self but, as Petrescu suggests, a tense unity (*unitate tensionată*), held together through continual psychological effort rather than inner harmony (1940). Across development, this tension persists, for identity is never a finished product; Erikson’s work makes clear that it is renegotiated at every stage as inner inclinations meet outer expectations (1968).

Many traits feel “*just the way I am*” even though you never chose them. You did not choose conflict, to over-explain yourself, to feel fake when admired, to apologize before thinking, to dread disappointing others, or to be drawn to familiar but unhealthy dynamics. These patterns feel personal but are historical: traces of environments that shaped your nervous system and self-concept long before you had language for either. No wonder self-knowledge is difficult; most of what you live as “me” was assembled before you started looking.

Even so, self-knowledge remains possible. It begins not with digging for a “*true core*”, but with observing your layers. Insight often arrives in small, almost embarrassing recognitions: the moment you realize you are shrinking in a conversation that does not actually threaten you, the discomfort you feel when praised, the familiar shame that appears in situations that are objectively safe. These micro-moments create a gap between who you are and who you have been performing.

Narrative identity research shows that people change when they reinterpret their experiences; meaning reorganizes identity from within (McAdams, 2013), and internal models update when new interpretations repeatedly conflict with old expectations (Deane, 2021). Marchi and Newen believe that predictive habits can shift once you become aware of the assumptions beneath your reactions (2022). Self-knowledge, then, is not a treasure hunt for an essence. It is a slow peeling away of learned, inherited, and protective layers. A fear once felt as truth starts to look like residue. A “preference” reveals itself as someone else’s expectation. A habit that once protected you begins to feel like a cage. Each peeled layer prompts new questions: Whose voice is this? Whose fear am I carrying? Whose script am I still performing? And if I stepped outside this script, who might I begin to become?

What Triggers Genuine Identity Change in Modern Life?

Identity rarely changes because we simply decide to “*work on ourselves*”. More often, transformation begins when the story we have been rehearsing can no longer sustain the weight of lived experience, and the old logic quietly fractures under its own exhaustion. Burnout, relational breakdowns, moral dissonance, migration, sudden success followed by emptiness, which create a mismatch between the identity we perform and the life we are actually living. Thus, the narrative strains and the persona feels thin.

In our opinion, crises can act as mirrors, as they reveal the gap between who you have been and who you can no longer convincingly remain, exposing the tension between an identity that once protected you and one that has quietly outgrown its original function. Jung saw such moments as invitations from the shadow (1959), while Adler (1940) viewed failures and frustrations as openings for new directions. Contemporary narrative-identity research shows that major life disruptions frequently prompt people to reconsider what matters, who they are, and where they are heading. In these moments, identity becomes visible as a construction, not a fact.

While disruption is necessary, it is not sufficient. Without reflection, a crisis is just another repetition. The self-model is conservative; it prefers prediction over novelty, even if the old pattern hurts (Deane, 2021). Many people bend the meaning of new events to fit old narratives: burnout becomes proof they are not good enough, rather than evidence that their identity of over-responsibility is unsustainable. This is why predictive minds tend to reinterpret contradiction in ways that protect familiar self-stories (Marchi & Newen, 2022).

From a different angle, we may say that culture reinforces people’s apathy. Modern life often rewards consistency and performance more than authenticity: the reliable overworker, the emotionally available friend, the always-competent professional. Even when you glimpse that an identity no longer fits, the world may keep applauding you for staying the same. The question “Who am I now that this no longer works?” can feel dangerous to answer honestly. Therefore, real change begins when disruption is paired with interpretation, when you allow the crisis to challenge the story you live inside.

How Can Identity Change Actually Unfold in Daily Life?

Most identity change is quiet, unfolding in those nearly invisible moments in which a familiar reaction hesitates for the first time. It is precisely in these micro-interruptions, so easy to overlook, that the psyche begins to renegotiate what it has long taken for granted. You catch yourself silencing your opinion and, just once, choose to speak and you notice your reflexive apology and, this time, decide to stay with the discomfort instead of erasing yourself. Jung (1959) might say the shadow is starting to participate, and Adler (1940) would call it a shift in your style of life. These are sliding moments: the self slips slightly out of an old track. Nothing spectacular happens externally, but internally the predictive model gets a new data point—maybe you do not have to be that version of yourself here. When such moments repeat, identity begins to reorganize. You are no longer only the person your history trained you to be; you are also, slowly, the person your present choices are allowing you to become.

As isolated acts accumulate, reflection reorganizes them into a discernible trajectory, one in which the self gradually recognizes both the adjustments it must make and the direction those adjustments point toward. When you journal about a turning point, explore it in therapy, or speak honestly with someone you trust, you begin to weave these small shifts into a larger narrative. You are no longer just “the one who burned out,” but “the person who realized that always pleasing others was unsustainable.” Narrative work is not mere storytelling; it is structural editing of the self. Each time you tell the story differently: “this reaction belongs to

my past, not my present,” “this fear used to protect me, now it holds me back”, which means you teach your mind to expect a different identity. Over time, the new story stops feeling like an experiment and starts feeling like home from home.

How Can We Practically Engage in Identity Transformation?

Practical identity work begins the moment you stop seeing yourself only as an actor in your story and start recognizing yourself as its author. That does not mean inventing a shiny new persona but revisiting the lines you have been reciting for years. Petrescu’s tensioned unity points to the same ongoing work: identity stabilizes through continuous reorganization, not through rigidity (1940).

Narrative psychology shows that when people reinterpret key memories, revise old conclusions, and articulate new directions, their sense of self shifts accordingly (McAdams, 2013). Keeping a reflective journal, revisiting a few formative experiences and asking what else they could mean, or noticing how often your self-talk echoes criticism rather than care are useful identity work. Adler’s insight that identity can change when old compensations are consciously replaced with new choices becomes concrete when you decide, in one specific situation, not to over-function, not to apologize for existing, not to downplay your needs (1940). Deane’s (2021) work on self-models becomes visible when you repeatedly act “as if” a new identity is possible until your predictive system starts to believe it.

At the same time, meaningful change requires some distance from the external mirrors that keep reflecting old versions of us. Social media, workplace cultures, family scripts—they all act as Lacan’s (2006) surfaces, showing us who we are “supposed” to be. Without awareness, we end up demanding acceptance for an identity we barely understand. Pragmatically, this means asking uncomfortable questions: Does this online self-reflect me, or a persona I have learned sells? Am I acting from conviction or from fear of losing approval? Small acts, such as a social media pause when you feel inadequate, telling the truth instead of curating it, letting yourself being seen as “*in process*”, create room for a less performative identity to emerge.

The difficulty is not a lack of tools—reflection, journaling, mindful self-observation—but the depth of our attachment to what is familiar. Internal models resist updating, especially when old identity structures feel safer than the uncertainty of change (Marchi & Newen, 2022). Environments often depend on your old role: the reliable one, the quiet one, the peacekeeper, the overachiever.

When the self begins to reorganize, the world around it destabilizes in tandem, for the systems that once relied on its earlier structure must suddenly recalibrate—and recalibration rarely occurs without friction. The brain contributes to this resistance as well: guided by predictive mechanisms and wired to conserve metabolic resources, it gravitates toward familiar patterns because they reduce uncertainty and demand less energy to maintain. Yet, this very mechanism that resists change is also the one that enables it, for neuroplasticity requires exposure to new cues, new interpretations, and new behavioral possibilities. When you choose, even once, to act from a different narrative, the mind receives a small but consequential signal that this alternative identity might be workable. With repetition, these signals accumulate; energy costs drop, prediction errors shrink, and the new pattern no longer feels experimental but lived. In time, consistency begins to replace effort, and change settles into the body as something inhabitable rather than imposed.

What Makes Identity Work Harder Than It Needs to Be?

One common trap is assuming that having many selves means being fake or unstable, when in reality multiplicity is normal and often healthy. Jung noted that the psyche contains many potential attitudes, not a single fixed center (1959), whereas Erikson emphasized that identity evolves across life stages (1968). When you demand total consistency from yourself, you pathologize your own flexibility. Another danger is the rush to impose a perfectly coherent story, for coherence forced too soon can erase the ambivalence and complexity that genuinely belong to the experience. Petrescu's notion of a strained unity clarifies that identity is sustained by tension rather than order, helping explain why growth looks disordered before it gains meaning (1940).

A further obstacle arises from the outside world, whose expectations and relational habits often pull us back into the versions of ourselves it already knows. Families, institutions, and social systems often rely on your old role: the calm one, the high achiever, the emotional caretaker. Predictive models in the mind prefer the familiar; systems in the world often do, too (Deane, 2021; Marchi & Newen, 2022). Expecting identity work to be smooth ignores how much of you is relationally anchored. Hence, identity work becomes more sustainable when you treat it as a series of negotiations rather than a single transformation. Small, consistent acts, like expressing a preference, holding a boundary, can have more impact than grand resolutions.

What Does Sliding Identity Reveal About How We Change?

Sliding identity is not a symptom of confusion; it is the visible trace of how deeply we are shaped and how genuinely we can change. Because identity is assembled rather than discovered, it inevitably moves, sliding between inherited layers and emerging choices, between who others needed us to be and who we are slowly learning to become.

The cultural directive "*Be yourself*" rings hollow when you realize how little of that self was consciously chosen. But it becomes meaningful again when "*being yourself*" is understood not as expressing a fixed core, but as participating actively in how your identity continues to slide. Each pause before an old reaction, each challenge to a harsh inner voice, each decision to speak from conviction rather than fear marks a subtle shift in who is becoming whom.

In the end, sliding identity is the closest we come to answering our own question. You do not uncover a single, definitive self; instead, you discover that each moment of reflection, reinterpretation, or altered action permits a new configuration of self to take shape. The inherited layers never vanish, but they cease to dictate the entire narrative. The real work of identity in the 21st century is not to remain fixed before the mirror, insisting on one stable reflection, but to learn how to move—to let identity slide with awareness—until the self that emerges feels less like a costume and more like a life that can be inhabited without pretense.

From here, understanding the self becomes an ongoing epistemic practice, one that unfolds through the gradual peeling of inherited meanings, each layer shifting the standpoint from which the next is examined. As these layers surface, the self becomes easier to recognize as something shaped through context, continually balancing what the past has instilled with what the present moment requires. And what if this peeling is not a stripping-away at all, but a reorientation, a recognition that coherence is something we construct rather than uncover? Seen through this lens, sliding no longer suggests instability; it signals the mind's capacity to revise its relation to experience and to reassemble itself better. To know yourself, then, is to stay open to this ongoing process, recognizing that becoming is not a disruption but a basic condition of the self.

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The relationship between self-esteem and body image

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Abstract

Self-esteem and body image shape essential aspects of psychological functioning, influencing the way individuals understand themselves, regulate their emotions and form relationships.

This paper explores the connection between these two constructs by integrating classical philosophical foundations with contemporary psychological research. Aristotle's view that emotional balance supports clarity of self-understanding provides an early conceptual anchor for modern theories that show that body perception often becomes a reference point in evaluating personal worth.

Empirical findings indicate that negative body image predicts lower levels of self-esteem, greater emotional vulnerability and interpersonal difficulties, while cultural contexts shape how people internalize standards of appearance.

In today's digital environment, visual media intensify comparison processes, amplify idealized body norms and influence personal identity. By combining theoretical perspectives and scientific evidence, our paper explains how self-esteem and body perception develop together and why understanding this relationship is essential for maintaining psychological well-being.

Keywords: *self-esteem; body image; emotional vulnerability; cultural context; digital influence*

Introduction

The relationship between self-esteem and body image is one of the most important subjects of developmental psychology and personality psychology. The two concepts are formed separately, but they come to influence each other continuously. The way a person evaluates himself or herself as a whole is related to how he or she perceives his or her body image, and the body image, in turn, is filtered through emotional, relational, and cultural experiences that define self-esteem.

Interest in self-assessment is a concern that accompanies European culture and civilization. In ancient philosophy, the idea of personal value was closely related to inner balance. Thus, Aristotle believed that emotional stability provides clarity in relation to oneself. Later, the Stoics differentiated the person from his actions, suggesting that the inner value does not change with the outer circumstances. Modern psychology starts from these intuitions and transforms them into detailed theories about self, self-assessment and emotion.

In Nathaniel Branden's sense of self-esteem is a combination of a sense of personal efficiency and a belief that the individual deserves respect and fulfillment. Albert Ellis draws attention to the vulnerability that occurs when personal value is conditioned by the

performance, appearance, or approval of others. Such a global assessment transforms any imperfection into a verdict on the whole identity.

Body image becomes part of this equation because the body is not just a physical reality. It is also a symbolic space, a place of comparisons, interpretations and social meanings. Thomas Cash describes body image as a collection of body-related perceptions, beliefs and emotions influenced by family, culture, relationships, and experiences of every stage of life.

The current society is amplifying this connection. The digital environment constantly exposes people to idealized aesthetic standards, and these repeated images shape expectations and inner assessments. The difference between the real body and the ideal body can create a space of tension that affects your self-esteem. In this context, understanding how the two concepts interact becomes crucial to the analysis of contemporary psychological functioning.

This paper aims to explain how self-esteem and body image are formed, how they are conditioned and how they can influence emotional balance. The structure aims at theoretical definition, exploration of individual formation, analysis of cultural and social influences, interpretation of how external pressure shapes the perception of the self and the exposure of essential connections between the body and identity.

Definitions – theoretical field established

Understanding the relationship between self-esteem and body image starts from clearly defining these two constructs. They are not isolated abstractions, but together form a core of psychological identity. For further analysis to be sound, a clear, complete and anchored conceptual framework in the scientific literature is necessary.

Self-esteem is the global assessment that a person gives to their own identity. Nathaniel Branden describes this process as the result of two central elements: a sense of personal efficiency and a sense of personal worth. A simple example: two people may have the same performance in an activity, but one interprets it as proof of its ability, and the other treats it as a lucky accident, considering it not worth the success. These differences reflect different levels of self-esteem, even when the objective results are identical.

In addition, Ellis draws attention to the danger of global assessments of the self. If someone conditions their personal value for success, appearance, or social approval, their identity becomes fragile. A person who says „worth only if I look good” introduces an unstable relationship between body image and identity. From this perspective, self-esteem should not be confused with self-confidence. A brilliant doctor can trust his professional skills, but low self-esteem if he perceives himself physically as „sub standards”.

Body image, in the sense of Thomas Cash, is much more than the visual perception of the body. It includes how the person interprets their body, how they feel about it, and the behavioral reactions that flow from those perceptions. For example, two women can have the same number on the scales. One feels comfortable with its own body, sees its body as functional and expressive, and the other perceives it as „inappropriate”, „too large” or „unworthy of appreciation”. The difference comes not from the body itself, but from emotional history, messages received in childhood, social comparisons and internalized standards.

Although the term „body image” appears in the XX century, the concern for the significance of the body is much older. In ancient philosophy, the body was considered the expression of inner harmony. In Greece, the body was associated with virtue and discipline. Stoics believed that the value of a man did not depend on how he looked, but on how he interpreted his experiences, situations and reactions. For them, what matters is not the event itself, but the judgment we form about it. Instead, in the XX century, with the advent of modern

media, the body begins to be treated as an aesthetic symbol, and the body image becomes vulnerable to constant comparisons.

Recent empirical studies confirm the direct link between negative body image and low self-esteem. Muinao (2023) shows a strong correlation between body dissatisfaction and overall self-assessment. Examples in clinical practice support this relationship: adolescents who are intensely exposed to filtered images on social networks report a significant drop in self-esteem, even when there are no objective medical or aesthetic reasons. Similarly, young adults from competitive professional backgrounds tend to evaluate their bodies according to idealized standards, and this interpretation influences how they perceive their personal value.

Cultural differences provide clear examples of how context shapes both concepts. Thus/on the one hand in individualistic cultures (for example, the United States, Canada, the Netherlands), self-esteem is closely related to uniqueness, personal success, independence. The body becomes an individual project: the expression of identity, autonomy and performance. In these cultures, aesthetic ideals are intensely promoted and often associated with personal discipline, control, and status.

On the other hand, in collectivist cultures (for example, Japan, South Korea, China), self-esteem is related to harmony with the group and compliance with social norms. The body can function as a symbol of responsibility to the community. In some contexts, higher body weight was traditionally associated with health and economic stability. It was only after the globalization of Western ideals that aesthetic standards became uniform.

For example, in Japan, research shows that self-esteem is more related to relationships and social role than to the body. In the United States, 60-70% of teens say that body image directly influences how they evaluate their capabilities and personal value.

An essential distinction is that between self-esteem and self-confidence. For example, an athlete may trust his athletic performance, but low self-esteem if he compares his body to idealized images from the media. This difference explains why seemingly safe, competent, and professionally accomplished people experience emotional vulnerability when it comes to body or appearance.

Through this theoretical framework, self-esteem and body image become two different but interdependent concepts. Self-esteem is formed through introspection, relationships, experiences, and personal values. Body image is formed by the interaction between the real body, the perceived body and social standards. The relationship between them is progressively built and transformed according to the emotional, cultural and social context in which the individual lives.

For an individual understanding of concepts

Self-esteem and body image are not mere theoretical notions, but experiences experienced concretely by each person. They take shape from interactions, interpretations, comparisons and relationships, and the way they are integrated differs significantly from one individual to another. In order to understand their real functioning, a transition to the personal plane is necessary, where each concept acquires its unique form.

1. Self-reflection and introspection

Self-esteem begins to form from the first interpretations that the child applies to his own reactions and behaviors. Introspection becomes an inner evaluation tool only in later stages, when the person begins to consciously observe his thoughts and emotions.

Here is a simple example from psychological practice: two teenagers receive the same 8 on a test. The first considers the note as „reasonable”, analyzes its errors and aims to organize

better. The second interprets it as evidence of „lack of intelligence”. The difference comes from the structure of self-esteem, not from objective performance.

Another example consistently observed in research states that people with stable self-esteem treat introspection as an analysis of behavior, while people with fragile self-esteem turn it into a global assessment of themselves, which intensifies self-criticism and emotional vulnerability.

Introspection is not a uniform process. For some, it is an opportunity for clarification. For others, it becomes a space of doubt. Therefore, the way the individual relates to their own inner life directly influences their self-esteem and the way they interpret their body.

2. The Self in social and interpersonal relationships

Self-esteem is directly shaped by messages received from the social environment. Relationships work as constant feedback. It is not only the behavior of others that matters, but the interpretation that the individual gives to those reactions.

Frequently observed example: a person with high self-esteem receives a critique at work and treats it as a punctual suggestion. A person with low self-esteem interprets criticism as an invalidation of his identity and proof that „is not good enough”.

In close relationships, this mechanism becomes even clearer: adults who have internalized the belief that their value depends on the approval of others tend to enter into relationships in which they seek continuous confirmation. This pattern influences both self-esteem and how they perceive their body; any observation of appearance becomes a global assessment of identity.

Research in adolescents shows that group dynamics strongly influence body image. For example, girls exposed to groups where physical appearance is a dominant criterion report lower levels of self-esteem and greater concern for the body than girls in groups oriented to values, hobbies or academic performance, and boys in sports groups may experience pressure on strength or musculature even when they are healthy and active this shows that it is not the body itself that is the problem, but the internal standard built through the group.

3. Domination of technology and media

The digital age has radically altered the way people relate to the body and identity. Continuous exposure to filtered images, narrow aesthetic standards and visual comparisons alters both body assessment and self-esteem.

Examples documented in current literature:

-adolescents who spend a lot of time on visual platforms report lower levels of self-esteem and higher levels of body dissatisfaction than those with low consumption.

-adults exposed to idealized images reported to fitness more often develop distorted body perceptions, even in the absence of any medical or physical problems.

Another illustrative example from the studies: a 22-year-old woman describes the fact that „cannot post her photos without filters”, although she has no health problems or marked physical differences. Her feeling is that „is not enough without editing”. This type of story occurs frequently in studies of young populations in the United States, Europe, and Asia.

The media is also changing how individuals compare their own bodies to ideals that do not reflect biological reality.

For example, in South Korea, a collectivist context, the beauty industry and extremely high aesthetic standards are putting a major strain on young women who report high levels of self-criticism and concern for the issue. On the other hand, in the United States, an individualistic context, pressure is observed in the sense of maximizing individual

performance, and the body becomes a personal project, which can lead to physical overstrain and aesthetic distortions.

In both situations, the media does not create corporeal discontent, but strengthens the pre-existing tensions between the self, the body, and the social identity.

4. Body transition and framing in the age stages

Body image changes with the body. Biological transformations bring moments when the individual has to renegotiate his relationship with himself.

Below are a number of examples observed in longitudinal studies:

-in adolescence, girls begin the process of social comparison earlier and report more body dissatisfaction than boys, even when they are within normal developmental parameters.

-during adulthood, men may experience muscle pressure or physical fitness, especially if they work in competitive environments where performance is associated with body image.

-in the period after childbirth, many women describe a distance between the real body and the body before pregnancy, which leads to adjustments in self-esteem even in the absence of a pathology.

-in middle age, men become more concerned about the signs of aging, and women become more sensitive to changes in skin texture or weight.

These examples show that the flow between self-esteem and body image changes with the life stage.

5. The body as a psychological vector

The body sends messages and stories. A person with a stable self-esteem interprets the body in functional terms: „I can walk, work, enjoy life”.

People with fragile self-esteem tend to turn body appearance into a scene of self-assessment. In this regard, we offer some examples:

- an adult who has had repeated aesthetic criticism in childhood can interpret his body negatively even if he is healthy, active and appreciated at present.
- a person with a sports history can relate positively to their own body even when going through natural age changes.

In this case the body is not determined, but the narrative built around it.

6. The aesthetic body and the pressure of current standards

The XXI century introduced aesthetic standards so narrow that most people do not fit into them, regardless of culture. Body image has become an indicator of personal value, and the distance between the real body and the ideal body produces emotional tension.

A few current examples give us a clear picture of how a corporate perception swipe has been achieved. For example, the ideal „skinny” promoted in the 2000s was later replaced by the ideal „fit”. In both cases, the actual body of the population does not correspond to these extremes.

In the same vein, in research on European populations, both women and men declare that current aesthetic standards are hard to reach and make them feel „insufficient” even when they are healthy.

This distance explains why negative body image affects self-esteem independent of objective reality.

Tensions, influences and dynamics between self-esteem and body image

The connection between self-esteem and body image is not linear, but reflects a complex interaction in which emotions, interpretations, social context and life stages intertwine. The dynamics between the two can support the development of a stable identity or, on the contrary, can generate vulnerability, confusion and pressure.

1. When low self-esteem pushes the person to the outside

People with fragile self-esteem tend to seek confirmation externally. The body becomes the first place where it tries to get validation. Instead of being an expression of identity, the body becomes a criterion by which the individual tries to compensate for perceived shortcomings within.

Examples commonly observed in research:

- young people who obsessively check their social profiles to see reactions to photos, although they don't have any real changes in their lives;
- advanced by disproportionately investing in physical appearance, considering that an aesthetic improvement will make them „more worthy” or „more accept”;
- persons who repeatedly modify photos before posting them, feeling that the actual version „is not enough”.

These behaviors do not stem from narcissism, but from the feeling that personal value is fundamentally conditioned by the outside. The body becomes the stage on which fears, desires, and interpretations are projected that are unrelated to objective reality.

2. Difference between the limits of the person and social standards

Dominant aesthetic standards are narrower than the real diversity of human bodies. From this discrepancy arises a tension that affects both body image and self-esteem. The person knows, on a rational level, that body diversity is natural, but he feels the pressure to correspond to media or cultural norms.

Here are some documented example:

- women in Western countries report high levels of body dissatisfaction even when they fall within the medical parameters considered healthy; and
- in South Korea, the cultural pressure for a „female body, thin and delicate” strongly influences the self-assessment of teenage girls;
- in the European context, many men declare pressure to have a „athletic” body, even when there is no health concern.

Here appears a recognized psychological phenomenon: the dissonance between the real body and the expected body.

This dissonance does not often come from the body, but from internalized standards. The individual relates to an ideal that does not belong to him, and in this confrontation his self-esteem becomes vulnerable.

3. The interaction between social pressure and individual response

Two people exposed to the same social message may react completely differently. The difference comes from the structure of self-esteem, past experiences, and social support.

We offer some examples from the psychological literature:

- an adolescent who has a stable base of family support interprets an idealized image from the media as a simple aesthetic representation, not as a self-assessment criterion;
- a teenager with fragile self-esteem turns it into a personal standard, even if it is not realistic;
- an adult woman may interpret age-related changes as natural, while another woman, exposed to repeated criticism in childhood, may interpret them as signs of „losing value”.

These different reactions show that social pressure does not automatically cause a negative body image. It all depends on how the person filters the influences.

4. The inner conflict between the real body and the ideal body

When the real body does not correspond to the ideal body, an emotional conflict arises. The ideal body is often built from media images, constant comparisons and internalized standards.

Even healthy, active, and valued people can live a painful distance between reality and ideal.

Here are some examples of this:

- that women who wear wider clothes to hide areas of the body from which, objectively, they should not feel embarrassed;
- male who avoids going to the gym out of fear of not „looking weak compared to the other”;
- someone who feels comfortable at home but gets anxious in public spaces because of the idea that „everyone is looking at them”.

In these cases, the body is not seen as an instrument of life, but as a measure of personal value.

5. From social norm to identity: how to internalize pressure

Cultural studies show that pressure is not felt to the same extent in all societies.

- in the United States, the body is an individual project. The person feels responsible for how they look and associate appearance with discipline, success, and personal control.
- in Japan, the pressure is more subtle, but related to social harmony. Appearance must be „suitable”, not „bother” group aesthetics.
- in India, social traditions influence differently the perception of the body in urban versus rural areas.

These cultural differences alter the dynamics of self-esteem. In cultures where aesthetic pressure is intense and explicit, body image becomes more easily a criterion of global self-assessment. In cultures where identity is defined by social role, pressure is geared toward status, not the body.

6. The body as an emotional landmark

For many people, the body becomes the place where unexpressed emotions are discharged. A fragile self-esteem can cause a negative emotional experience to be translated into criticism of the body.

Frequent example in psychological practice: a person experiencing professional stress begins to notice „defects” in his body, interpreting these details as signs of his own insufficiency.

This phenomenon is not related to corporeal reality, but to how the body becomes a symbol for inner feelings.

7. How to turn tension into vulnerability or growing

People who have resources for support, emotional education and capacity for self-reflection can turn pressure into a process of maturation:

- it separates personal value from appearance;
- understand the body in functional terms;
- relate critically to social standards.

People without these resources internalize pressure as a global assessment. In this case, the tension leads to:

- anxiety
- social avoidance
- repeated bodily criticisms
- relational vulnerability
- decreased self-esteem
- risks to emotional health.

Here it is most clearly seen: self-esteem and body image do not exist separately, but feed on each other.

Conceptual clarifications and theme expansion

Understanding the relationship between self-esteem and body image involves clarifying questions that frequently arise in both literature and psychological practice. These questions are not secondary details, but support points that explain how the two constructs form, influence and transform over time.

A necessary distinction is that between self-esteem and self-confidence. The person with high self-esteem has a positive overall assessment of their own identity, while self-confidence refers to the ability to cope with a specific field or task. This difference explains situations where someone feels competent in the professional environment, but lives an inner vulnerability when it comes to body or relationships. Many people with solid positions at work describe a feeling of fragility in relation to their own body image. Here, self-confidence is present, but self-esteem remains conditional on the appearance or approval of others.

Another important question is whether self-esteem can be manipulated. Studies show that self-esteem is not a fixed element, but a dynamic process. It changes with emotional experiences, relationships, personal values, and internalized social messages. Self-esteem can grow from successful experiences, a balanced family climate, or a stable relationship. It may decrease following repeated criticism, rejection, or social messages that emphasize the

difference between the real body and the ideal body. This flexibility shows that self-esteem is not just a psychological quality, but a process in constant inner negotiation.

Are we born with self-esteem or develop it later? There are temperamental predispositions, but self-esteem is formed largely through interaction. The child learns who he is and how much he is worth by the way adults respond emotionally, by subtle messages about the body, behavior, and acceptance. A child praised only for performance learns that its value depends on results. A child compared to others internalizes the idea that its value depends on the outside. A child constantly encouraged to notice how he feels and what he thinks develops a more stable basis for self-acceptance. That's why family, school, and first interactions are essential to creating flexible, healthy self-esteem.

A frequent question concerns the „modern” character of self-esteem. Is self-esteem a recent concept? In academic psychology, the model of self-esteem as a global assessment of the self appears in the XX century. However, the idea is not new. Aristotle emphasized that emotional balance is necessary for a virtuous life. Stoics believed that the value of a person should not be related to circumstances or appearance, but to his ability to interpret reality with discernment. What is new in modern psychology is language, not essence. Branden and Ellis formalize concepts that have existed in philosophical traditions for centuries.

Self-esteem is not permanent, but not completely temporary. It has a stable core formed in childhood, but it adjusts according to adult experiences. Body transitions, status changes, aging, relationships, and illness reconfigure self-esteem. For some, a stable relationship or professional success strengthens identity. For others, loss, rejection, or bodily changes can lead to painful re-evaluations of oneself. In this regard, the body becomes sensitive ground. Natural changes in age can be interpreted as signs of decline or, conversely, as expressions of maturity.

Self-esteem is measurable by validated tools, and these measurements allow you to distinguish between healthy, low or artificially inflated levels. A high but realistic level is associated with emotional balance and adaptation. A low level is associated with vulnerability, withdrawal, and self-criticism. An artificially high level can lead to rigidity, denial of responsibility, and conflicts in relationships. Scientific evaluations show that it is not the level itself that is decisive, but the quality of the assessment: whether the person realistically sees himself or whether the interpretations are influenced by social pressures or permanent comparisons.

Education and economic status influence self-esteem through access to autonomy and resources. People with access to education can develop a more flexible, learning-oriented identity, not just performance-oriented. Physical disabilities or limitations do not automatically generate low self-esteem. It all depends on the social context. There are numerous studies that show that in supportive environments, people with disabilities develop stable self-esteem because their value is defined in functional, affective or moral terms, not aesthetic.

Gender differences add an extra layer. Women tend to be exposed to more intense aesthetic pressures, and body image becomes a central source of self-assessment. Men report pressures related to performance, status, and physical strength. In individualistic cultures, differences are emphasized by the emphasis on personal expression. In collectivist cultures, differences can be blurred by the emphasis on social roles. Thus, men and women do not experience pressure in the same way, but both directions can affect self-esteem.

Religion plays a variable role. Traditions that emphasize compassion, dignity and equality of souls provide a framework conducive to the development of stable self-esteem. In traditions where the emphasis is on moral perfection, people with a fragile structure tend to evaluate themselves more harshly. Differences arise not from religion itself, but from the way religious values are internalized and applied.

We believe that a delicate point is the connection between self-esteem, the group we belong to and close relationships. Belonging to a group is an important source of identity. Groups provide safety, but also pressure. Sometimes pressure comes through internal comparisons. For example, in a sports team, the body becomes a criterion for evaluation, and people who do not meet the group standard may experience a decrease in self-esteem. In other contexts, the group can become a source of protection, strengthening positive body image and reducing self-criticism.

The link to health is two-way. A physically healthy person frequently reports more stable self-esteem. In turn, high self-esteem supports healthy behaviors and psychological resilience. Physical or mental illnesses can affect body image and self-esteem, but they do not automatically. Many people rebuild their identity in a mature and realistic way when they receive support and understanding, and the body sometimes becomes a symbol of adaptability.

Relationships are a decisive factor. High self-esteem supports authentic communication, emotional stability and intimacy. Healthy relationships, in turn, strengthen self-esteem. People who live in a calm relational climate learn to look at their bodies with more acceptance. Those living in conflicting relationships can interpret their body as „insufficient” even when there are no objective reasons.

A relevant analogy is the Dallenbach cow experiment, which shows that perception depends on cognitive processing, not just visual stimulation. Similarly, the body image reflects not only the body, but how the mind organizes information about it. The person sees not only the shape of the body, but also the story he tells himself about that body.

The topic is becoming current in relation to artificial intelligence. AI boosts aesthetic standards through hyper-realistic images, filters and algorithms based on visibility. At the same time, it can be used for psychological education, support of introspection and access to therapeutic resources. Positive impact occurs when AI is a tool, not a benchmark of evaluation. The negative impact occurs when the person searches for validation in algorithms, which intensifies comparisons and body vulnerability.

Essentially, these clarifications show that self-esteem and body image are sensitive processes, influenced by biological, cultural, social and emotional factors. They cannot be understood separately, because they are formed in constant dialogue, in the interaction between the inner world and the outer world.

Final conclusion

I have been following, throughout these pages, how the relationship between self-esteem and body image is one of the most important intersections of psychological functioning. Although they are two distinct concepts, they form and transform together. Self-esteem influences how the person perceives his body, and body image contributes to how the individual evaluates his identity. This inner dialogue is present at every stage of life, whether we are talking about childhood, adolescence, adulthood or aging.

The analysis we conducted showed that self-esteem is not a fixed element, but a continuous process shaped by experiences, cultural contexts, relationships and body changes. Stable self-esteem allows the person to treat the body realistically, differentiate between personal value and external standards, adjust their interpretations, and accept the natural diversity of the human body. Instead, a fragile self-esteem amplifies aesthetic pressures, intensifies social comparisons, and transforms the body into a criterion for overall self-assessment.

Body image works as a psychological mirror. It reflects not only physical traits but also how the person integrates cultural messages, relationships, criticism, expectations, and

aesthetic ideals. In today's society, dominated by filtered images and uniform visual standards, the body becomes a sensitive terrain. The difference between the real body and the ideal body can generate emotional tension and vulnerability, especially among teenagers and young adults.

Human relationships make a strong contribution to this dynamic. Stable self-esteem strengthens communication and intimacy, and healthy relationships support a realistic body image. The family, the educational environment, social groups and cultural context can support or vulnerability identity. At the same time, physical and mental health influences how the person perceives his body and his own worth. These two-way links show that identity is built through integrated processes, not by isolated elements.

The influence of technology and the digital environment is increasingly visible. Visual platforms enhance comparisons and promote ideals that do not reflect real diversity. However, technology can also be an educational tool if used with discernment. The difference between beneficial and harmful effects depends on how the person handles their reporting to the digital content.

Overall, the relationship between self-esteem and body image shows how the individual builds the meaning of personal value. Healthy development involves the ability to separate identity from unrealistic ideals, understand the body from a functional and emotional perspective, filter social pressure, and keep an inner anchor stable. In a rapidly changing world, this ability becomes not only a psychological goal, but also a condition for well-being, maturity, and stable relationships.

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The Mythology of Personal Development

Outline of a Journey, Landmarks of a Path of Encounter

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Abstract

Perhaps what is missing from the continuation of the subtitle is that reference point we should think about, or keep in mind, when imagining our project. A journey toward what? An encounter with whom? From the perspective of our field (psychology), the answer appears easily and almost automatically: the self. A journey toward the self, an encounter with the self. After all, if psychology has a clear purpose—regardless of the branch we consider—does it not revolve around knowing ourselves? And more than that, if we add to this self-knowledge certain tools or mechanisms that help us understand ourselves better, intended for personal development, then perhaps we should guide ourselves by returning to the origins, by rediscovering a form of mythology. This paper aims to map out these reference points in the journey toward personal development.

Keywords: mythology, dispositif, development.

The Mythological Dispositif

“Why is mythology important in relation to personal development?”

We begin with this question in order to adapt our perspective to the assumption of such a relationship. An initial approach to this issue consists in associating mythology with the idea of a dispositif. It may sound simple, but if we consider the concept of “dispositif” as it appears in Michel Foucault’s work, things immediately take on a different meaning. To better understand the idea of the dispositif, we will refer to an explanation of this concept offered by a contemporary Italian philosopher, Giorgio Agamben.

According to Giorgio Agamben’s analysis, a dispositif is a heterogeneous ensemble that includes diverse elements such as discourses, institutions, buildings, laws, and administrative measures, all connected within a network that guides, determines, shapes, and controls the gestures, behaviors, opinions, and discourses of living beings. It is, essentially, a network of relations and practices that shape and control behavior and subjectivity. Agamben specifies that between living beings (including humans) and dispositifs there exists a complex relationship, and that an individual can be the site of multiple processes of subjectivation through different dispositifs.

He argues that the “subject” is the result of the relationship between the living being and the dispositif, and that an individual’s availability within a dispositif can vary depending on context.

Why Mythology, and How Do We Position Ourselves Today, in the 21st Century, in Relation to Mythology?

Why mythology? We begin with this question, which can generate a multiplicity of responses, and it is precisely this multiplicity that interests us. Like any construction block, we start from an empty plot of land on which we lay the foundation. This empty land represents the limited thinking of ancient societies, a primordial, untamed mind that could be shaped depending on who worked upon it. Myths were the foundation that supported an entire structure, all generations up to the present day, who would continue to require education. They represent the beginning of an education that does not require an end, a continuous line that could be measured according to the perimeter of each individual's curiosity.

We have come to seek the keys to success and well-being. Once we enter this labyrinth of curiosity, at every corner we encounter a new subject that different people have adapted to their own lives, and which works for them. This is why books on personal development have emerged, followed by volumes on self-love, financial acceptance, and so on. All these volumes of ideas promote, within a commercial orientation, the values and virtues of mythology, linguistically adapted to capture the target audience of our century.

Today, we use terms such as manifestation, spiritual ascension, mindfulness, and grounding, but fundamentally everything simplifies into accessible words: courage, willpower, confidence, faith, love, acceptance. In theory, myths today are considered mere stories—something lost or forgotten, at most taught in schools to cultivate a vague form of general knowledge. In practice, however, all advice that involves mindset change, all practices and rituals meant to alter frequency, and all books sold under the category of “personal development” are rooted in teachings derived from mythological education. We are so close, yet still so far, much like the pursuit of psychological ascension.

How Does Personal Development Integrate into the Current Dispositif?

Personal development is the process of continuous evolution of the human being throughout life, achieved through self-knowledge and education. Through this process, both the intrinsic and extrinsic environments change. The more we change, the more our environment changes in direct proportion. Human development depends on three factors: genetics, environment, and education.

Personal development can occur consciously, through the desire to become better or to develop a new identity, but also involuntarily, as environment and education exert a strong influence.

Given that personal development is both hereditary and autodidactic, it can intertwine with mythological knowledge for the same reasons. Myths are both inherited and self-taught. We can integrate them either through the teachings passed down in the families in which we grow up or by discovering them ourselves and adapting them to our lives.

From their very beginnings, myths aimed to help people integrate new concepts into daily life, concepts that could change their existence. As in the present, attempting to incorporate mythological values was dangerous because it required stepping outside one's comfort zone. Comfort is a necessity in development, yet if we do not allow ourselves to be uncomfortable during growth, we can never feel satisfied or fulfilled. The difference lies in the amount of time devoted to comfort. A constantly comfortable individual represents the ideal of stagnation.

To evolve, stepping out of comfort is essential, something ancient people were curious enough to do in pursuit of a better life. As they learned, they integrated. Today, this concept is difficult to maintain. Willpower still exists, as do curiosity and desire, but something holds us

back. We enjoy learning new concepts and applicable ideas, yet we fail to apply them, or application is insufficient.

What is the difference between today's society and ancient society? One answer we boldly propose is the substantial and powerful manner in which society influences the individual.

When Did the Concern for Personal Development Begin?

Whether we speak of the 10th century or the 21st century, humans have preserved a constant desire: the desire to understand. Beginning with our ancestors, who created myths to understand the human condition and to educate society toward a moral self and a collective identity, we arrive at the present day, where personal development books dominate over fiction.

Personal development does not stem from reading a hundred books about self-improvement. We followed the path of our ancestors but lost ourselves among repetitive information. We develop through education, this is true, but education is vast by nature. Formal, informal, and non-formal education are key sources that our ancestors knew how to access in various ways, and we still need them today. Human intelligence grew through curiosity and continued to grow through the persistence of curiosity and the need for innovation.

Our development is also sustained by the skills we acquire through life experience. Declarative competencies are essential for excelling in any field of knowledge, including self-knowledge. Like any learned formula, applicability is necessary to develop problem-solving understanding, which is why procedural competencies are required, through trial and even failure, to discover solutions to our problems.

Within myths, each god represents essential human values and virtues characterized by competencies and their validation. The myth of Psyche represents the ability to create alchemy through life's trials during evolution. She undergoes tests to prove her love and willpower, which help her achieve immortality and enlightenment. The myth teaches us to move through life with an open heart and mastery over our desires, regardless of the obstacles we face.

The myth of Ariadne represents the ability to guide, help, and support, essential social values for coexistence within a community.

All these myths highlight the importance of cardinal virtues, which our ancestors considered fundamental for shaping a respectable character. Prudence, justice, courage, and temperance were not mere concepts for them, but life landmarks. Ariadne symbolizes prudence and justice through guidance; Psyche represents courage and temperance through restraint and endurance; other myths complete this framework.

Thus, mythology not only explains the world and its mysteries but also shapes an inner code of conduct, without these virtues, our development remains incomplete.

The Encounter with the Myth

Myths were created to help humans cope with the vulnerability of existence caused by the unknown. They have always been instruments for interpreting reality, offering information and answers to existential dilemmas. The unknown brings insecurity and fear, which later become reasons for maladaptive reactions to life. Constant questions about what we are, who we are, and why we are cause us to lose control over our identity. In such moments, myths intervene to help us live with meaning and intensity by pushing us beyond the boundaries of our personal experiences.

Today, the word "myth" is often used to signify something false or erroneous. In truth, myths represent not fantasy but human experience. They combine imagination and creativity with information in order to educate societies toward evolution.

The world of the gods represented the possibility of fulfillment and enlightenment. Society sought to embody divine values, exploring a sense of divinity within themselves. Divinity was not considered external to life; people were taught that gods existed in the same form as mountains, rain, neighbors, seas, and land, it was inherent to existence.

By feeling divinity within themselves, society became stronger through shared energy and frequency. People no longer identified solely by name but by the power transmitted through myths. Surpassing personal limits fostered faith, confidence, motivation, love, communion, family, and many other virtues embodied by divine characters.

A primary example is the myth of Eros and Psyche, representing union through love. Whether Eros or Agape, love is essential to the soul. "Psyche" means "soul," representing its personification. The external beauty described in the myth symbolizes the beauty of the soul. We are endowed with purity that can be contaminated by thoughts. "Eros" signifies love, passion, and desire. He falls in love with a mortal, protects her, and even after betrayal continues to care for her in silence. Although Eros represents love, both characters embody Agape, unconditional love.

The soul possesses unconditional love, but passionate and carnal love must be learned. Thus, Eros and Psyche represent both human vulnerability and the idea that success is achieved through consciousness, curiosity, failure, and the understanding that human experience is not linear, even in purification and enlightenment.

Why Is the Encounter Fundamental?

The encounter is fundamental because it represents one of the essential ways through which people form, change, and evolve. In a profound sense, encounters are not limited to romantic ones, but include any genuine contact, with a person, a place, a smell, or an experience.

Through encounters, we are educated. Whether we encounter information, people, pleasant or unpleasant experiences, all encounters lead to development. Encounter is essential for choice, the choice to continue or give up, to appreciate or resent, to agree or disagree.

As in *The Hero's Journey*, which Joseph Campbell identified as a universal monomyth, psychology interprets both the mental and physical stages of life, where encounter signifies contact with transformation. Among these stages, "Meet the Mentor" represents a pivotal encounter, with a teacher, guide, tools, divine belief, or hope that helps the hero continue.

In our case, the helpful encounter is with myth. Myth can function as both a helpful tool and a form of divine belief, depending on its influence on our lives. Whether accidental or intentional, encounters intervene in our lives with varying intensity. Both in antiquity and today, myths hold the power of evolutionary knowledge and have long served as mentors to societies.

If myths once mentored societies, how can they still offer evolution today? The answer may seem contradictory, but due to many external factors, humans as social beings have involuted. Evolution exists, but change is constant, and change does not always mean ascension.

Heraclitus' words, "No man ever steps in the same river twice," support the idea that development also involves returning to roots, revisiting known sources. Often, we do not need novelty but repetition, grounding, and deeper understanding.

Aristotle's statement, "Man is by nature a social animal (zoon politikon)," highlights our need for socialization. Understanding others occurs only through encounter, and understanding ourselves through them. In psychology, Carl Jung's concepts of the Shadow and Projection suggest that everything we see in others reflects parts of ourselves.

Jung's archetypes, universal mythological figures, persist in the collective unconscious, representing patterns of human evolution. The human mind instinctively seeks to understand reality and reduce anxiety caused by the unknown. Archetypes integrate the unknown, making it intelligible.

Through relationships, we face emotional vulnerability. We are not perfect or fully healed; life leaves marks. Interactions trigger wounds, healing, and self-discovery. Through encounters, we uncover our shadow, light, and aspirations.

Vulnerable or Fundamental?

The Vulnerabilities of Pseudo-Personal Development

Personal development is a recurring topic in the 21st century. People cling to promises like "manifest," "be positive," and "think and you will become," promoting rapid transformation while avoiding effort, pain, introspection, and responsibility, core elements of authentic development.

People seek solutions but fear commitment. Questions rooted in instant gratification dominate: "How can I heal without pain?", "How long does emotional healing take?", "How can I detach immediately?" Society lacks emotional education. Constant positivity is toxic, leading to repression and denial.

We live in a hyper-stimulated society. Information overload reduces introspection. Studies in the *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* suggest constant stimulation diminishes emotional processing. Research by Brené Brown shows fear of vulnerability stems from fear of rejection and appearing weak.

Happiness

Happiness has shifted from a feeling to a goal. Though deeply internal, it is one of the most sought-after yet hardest states to define. Happiness is subjective and experienced differently by each individual. It is not merely a fleeting emotion but embodies mental and spiritual balance.

Some view happiness as a final destination, career success, money, relationships, while others see it as a series of meaningful moments. Social comparison and external validation reduce authenticity. True happiness does not stem solely from material values.

According to Martin Seligman (2006), happiness consists of three components:

- **The Pleasant Life:** enjoyment from immediate pleasures such as art, sports, and socialization.
- **The Good Life:** fulfillment through strengths, achievement, and personal growth.
- **The Meaningful Life:** happiness derived from contributing to others and the community, the most stable form.

Ultimately, happiness is built gradually through daily choices, gratitude, and honesty.

A Potential Map of Happiness

The human mind easily shifts from feeling to goal, altering the essence of experience. Encountering myths can help us understand that before desire must come the capacity to feel. Life offers no fixed answers—uncertainty fuels desire and evolution.

While external factors influence development, responsibility remains ours. Myths may be stories, but within them lie the clues we constantly seek in our pursuit of a better life.

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Where is the Mind Heading?

Current explorations in the mechanisms of psychology

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Abstract

Our paper investigates some emerging directions in contemporary psychology, marking the historical transition from the behaviorist "Black Box" metaphor to unprecedented cognitive transparency. In our analysis we propose a triple convergence model that reconfigures current mental functioning. The first direction explores the return to the biological, demonstrating through behavioral epigenetics and the gut-brain axis that the mind is fundamentally "embodied", bearing the imprint of biological history. The second direction examines technological expansion, using the concept of "adversarial inference" to explain how the attention economy transforms cognition into a digital "exocortex" vulnerable to algorithmic manipulation. The third direction marks the paradigmatic shift from pathology to neurodiversity, redefining neurological variations as natural adaptations necessary for evolution, rather than deficits. The conclusion emphasizes the necessity of an integrative psychology, where the specialist's role evolves from correction to "niche construction", facilitating cognitive autonomy within a complex bio-digital ecosystem.

Keywords: adversarial inference, behavioral epigenetics, digital exocortex, neurodiversity.

From Behaviorist Opacity to the "Glass Box"

The question "*Where is the mind heading?*" invites us to direct our attention toward the future - toward the trajectory of cognitive evolution and the ways modern psychology seeks to understand how the mind functions. If, in the past, the mind was viewed as a restricted and inaccessible "black box", today it is understood as an active, flexible, and predictive system, capable of interpreting, anticipating, and shaping individual experience. Current research focuses on uncovering internal mechanisms - perception, attention, memory, decision-making, and self-regulation - as well as on the ways individuals interact with their environment and with technology.

This inquiry is not merely theoretical; it is also reflective. In a present (and even more so, a future) governed by technologies that constantly claim our time and attention, the mind becomes increasingly selective. Thus, a fundamental question remains open: is the mind moving toward evolution - toward deeper adaptation and understanding - or toward involution, marked by distraction and cognitive superficiality?

To understand the future, we must also examine and inventory the experiences recorded through the lens of the past. If one were to draw a comparison, perhaps the evolution of psychology can best be described through the behaviorist metaphor of the "black box".

Behaviorist theory held that the mind was inaccessible, directing its focus instead toward observable behavior. Pioneers such as Watson and Skinner demonstrated that humans react to external stimuli and that behavior can be shaped through rewards and punishments. Although this perspective established the foundations of a rigorous, scientific psychology with clear methods of measurement, it deliberately ignored internal mental processes, considered an irrelevant “black box”.

Nevertheless, behaviorism paved the way for the Cognitive Revolution. The transition toward cognitivism emerged as an epistemological necessity, asserting that to understand human behavior, it is not enough to track the stimulus–response relationship. It became imperative to explore the internal processes mediating this relationship: attention, perception, memory, reasoning, and decision-making. The mind began to be understood not as a passive receiver, but as an active system that interprets, anticipates, and shapes experience.

This paradigm shift opened the “black box”, transforming it into a “glass box” in which mental processes can be studied, measured, and incorporated into predictive models. This continuity between past and present provides the necessary tools to explore how the mind adapts to today’s emerging challenges.

Once technology and neuroscience turned the “black box” into a “glass box”, it became evident that the classical model of psychological functioning is no longer sufficient. The thesis of this work is that the human mind can no longer be understood in isolation but as the result of a triple convergence. Today, we witness the expansion of the mind in two opposite yet complementary directions: a return to the biological realm, through the rediscovery of deep connections between genes, body, and psyche, and, simultaneously, a projection into the technological realm, through the externalization of cognitive processes into the digital environment. This tension between the biological and the digital compels us to rethink the very definition of normality, ushering in a paradigm grounded in neurodiversity. In what follows, we analyze these three directions that are reshaping the architecture of the contemporary mind.

Direction I: The Return to the Biological – The Body as an Extension of the Mind

Once technology allowed us to peer inside the “glass box”, it became evident that the Cartesian boundary between mind and body is artificial. While the old paradigm treated the psyche as software independent of its hardware, contemporary research shows that mental processes are *embodied* - deeply integrated into the biological dynamics of the body.

The study “*Embodied metacognition as strengthened functional connection between neural correlates of metacognition and dance in dancers*” by Yang, Yu, Hong, Li, and Li (2024) demonstrates that cognitive functions cannot be understood separately from the sensorimotor, endocrine, or metabolic processes that shape them. This perspective suggests that modern psychology must integrate recent findings from epigenetics and neurogastroenterology, highlighting the ways in which the body, environment, and experience interact to form the mind.

Behavioral Epigenetics: When Experience Rewrites Biology

According to earlier genetic paradigms, DNA was viewed as a fixed set of instructions determining an individual’s biological and psychological traits (Ridley, 2004). Recent research in contemporary psychology, through the lens of behavioral epigenetics, shows, however, that life experiences and environmental conditions can modulate gene expression without altering the DNA sequence itself (Weaver, Cervoni, Champagne, D’Alessio, Sharma, Seckl, & Meaney, 2004). Psychological factors such as trauma, stress, or the quality of attachment influence gene activity through molecular mechanisms such as DNA methylation and demethylation.

The study conducted by Weaver, Meaney et al. (2004) demonstrated that maternal care shapes stress responses in rats. Pups that received intensive maternal grooming exhibited demethylation of the glucocorticoid receptor gene (NR3C1) in the hippocampus, leading to increased receptor expression and the development of more resilient behavior. In contrast, pups that received little maternal care showed increased methylation, reduced receptor expression, and heightened stress reactivity. This provides a solid biological foundation for attachment theories, demonstrating how early experiences shape the development of the emotional brain.

Epigenetic modifications can be transgenerational. The study by Yehuda et al. (2016) on Holocaust survivors identified epigenetic alterations in the FKBP5 gene - implicated in cortisol regulation - in both traumatized parents and their children, who had not been directly exposed to the trauma. These findings suggest that traumatic experiences can leave a persistent biological imprint, indicating that an individual's "mind" does not begin at birth but also reflects the biological history of the family. For the contemporary psychologist, integrating these perspectives becomes essential working not only with present cognitions but also with the biology shaped by past experiences and intergenerational trauma.

Intestine-Creier Axis: Second brain

According to Marano et al. (2023), the Intestine-Creier Axis (Gut-Brain Axis) is the two-way communication between the central nervous system and the enteric system, achieved through the vagus nerve, immune system and metabolites produced by the microbiome. This axis influences cognitive functions, behavior and mood, as Wang et al. (2025) confirms.

Marano & alia (2023) states that about 90% of the human body's serotonin is synthesized in the gastrointestinal tract. This peripheral serotonin, produced within the Intestine axis-Creier, regulates nerve signaling, immune functions and intestinal metabolism, thus contributing to the modulation of mental state and vulnerability to stress. In parallel, Li et al. (2025) shows that bacterial metabolites, such as short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs), influence the expression of serotonin receptors and transporters in the gut and modulate neuroendocrine and immune systems. Smith & Johnson (2024) thus highlights the direct link between the microbiome and the body's neurochemical regime within the Intestine Axis-Creier.

The mind is not exclusively located in the brain, but is distributed partly throughout the body, involving both the digestive system and its microbiome, in the regulation of neurotransmitters and hormones that affect the mental state (Marano et al., 2023; Li et al., 2025). Thus, the biological direction shows us that the mind is distributed throughout the body. But while biology anchors us inward, technology expands us outward, a phenomenon we will look at in the next section.

Direction II: Technologization and the Digital "Exocortex"

If biology anchors us inward, technology extends us outward, forming a genuine digital "exocortex". This externalization, however, comes with specific cognitive costs that contemporary cognitive psychology is actively working to understand.

The Attention Economy and the Predictive Mind

In his study "*Adversarial inference: predictive minds in the attention economy*" (2023), researcher Bruineberg examines how the human mind manages attention within a hyper-stimulating digital world. In this work, the author argues that the problem is not merely the overabundance of information but also the structure of the digital environment itself, which exploits the mind's fundamental cognitive mechanisms. Thus, attention is not a passive filter but an active process of selection based on internal predictions and estimations, through which the mind anticipates and shapes experience, adapting actions to the surrounding environment.

The mind continuously generates predictions about the world. Attention functions as a mechanism for reducing prediction error: we focus on what confirms or updates our internal expectations. Memory does not simply store information; it integrates it into internal models used to anticipate future events. Decision-making involves comparing our predictions with expected outcomes, while self-regulation emerges as an ongoing process of adjusting behaviors and cognitive strategies in response to discrepancies between predictions and reality.

Adversarial Inference: When the Algorithm “Guesses” Us

The central concept Bruineberg introduces to explain our digital vulnerability is “*adversarial inference*”. Digital platforms do not merely provide information; they construct predictive models that *anticipate* user behavior. In a natural environment, the mind predicts the world. In the digital environment, the world predicts the mind. Digital platforms thus build complex predictive models about the user, anticipating how they will act.

Algorithms learn from our behavior (scrolling, clicking, viewing time) and continuously adjust their strategies to maximize engagement, exploiting constant novelty, variable rewards, and immediate access to information. As a result, our minds become continuously stimulated, attention becomes fragmented, and our actions are shaped more by the digital environment than by our own intentions.

From a cognitive psychology perspective, the mind does not passively react to stimuli; it continually generates predictions about the surrounding environment. Here are the key mechanisms involved:

Attention: Predictive models suggest that we focus on information relevant to our goals and expectations. The mind “*prefigures*” what will matter, and attention selects what confirms or updates these predictions.

Memory: We do not simply store information; we integrate it into internal models used to anticipate future events. Our predictions rely on past experiences, and memory functions as a support system for these estimations.

Decision-Making: We choose actions not solely through logical reasoning but by comparing our predictions with expected outcomes. Predictive models help us select the actions that reduce uncertainty and maximize success.

Self-Regulation: The mind constantly monitors the discrepancy between predictions and reality and adjusts behaviors or cognitive strategies to better adapt to the environment.

Drawing from Bruineberg’s core insights, we can emphasize that these mechanisms illustrate a broader process inherent to our interaction with digital environments: our attention, memory, and decisions are shaped both by internal predictions and by external stimuli. This dynamic explains why digital environments can fragment attention or influence behavior. Bruineberg’s research highlights that our attention and actions are not passive reactions but the result of a complex interaction between mind and environment.

Attention Fragmentation and “Salience Hacking”

The most visible impact of this digital exocortex manifests at the level of attention. Cognitive psychology distinguishes between voluntary attention (top-down, goal-directed) and involuntary attention (bottom-up, automatically triggered by salient stimuli). In the attention economy, digital platforms exploit these mechanisms through strategies of “*salience hacking*”, namely the artificial amplification of factors that trigger attentional capture. The persuasive design of applications - acoustic and visual notifications, hyper saturated graphic elements, high-variability animations, or “pull-to-refresh” gestures is engineered to generate heightened salience and induce automatic attentional orientation.

According to González de la Torre, Pérez-Verdugo, and Barandiaran (2024), digital platforms are specifically designed to amplify stimulus salience, using notifications, visual contrasts, and unpredictable interactive effects so that users' attention is captured automatically and continuously.

The *Digital Being* (2024) study shows that these strategies exploit the way the dopaminergic system responds to novelty and uncertainty, with dopamine being released more powerfully in anticipation of a reward than upon receiving it. According to this research, the unpredictable feedback of digital platforms - such as notifications or questions like "*Who liked my post?*" and "*What video comes next?*" - keeps users in a constant state of alertness and encourages repetitive content checking. This dynamic alters the brain's "predictive model": users begin to prioritize the simplified digital environment over the complex real world, explaining the difficulty of disconnecting. The study also shows that constant exposure to short, highly stimulating videos is associated with reduced prospective memory and difficulties maintaining short-term intentions.

The study by Pérez-Verdugo et al. (2025) demonstrates that digital multitasking - now habitual in the use of apps and online platforms - exacerbates attentional fragmentation. Rapid switching between apps, windows, or information streams generates cognitive interference and reduces the ability to sustain focused concentration. Moreover, meta-analyses on digital reading indicate that simultaneous exposure to multiple stimuli impairs cognitive performance and hinders long-term memory consolidation, forcing the brain to process competing information in parallel.

The overall consequence is the emergence of a state of "*continuous partial attention*", in which the mind is constantly oriented toward new stimuli without adequate intervals for deep processing. This chronic hyperstimulation erodes the capacity for deep work, essential for complex problem-solving, critical thinking, and self-reflection.

Externalizing Memory and the Google Effect

Technologization is reshaping memory as well. Psychologists Daniel Wegner and Adrian Ward have described the "*Google Effect*": the tendency of the brain not to store information itself, but rather the location where that information can be found.

Our memory becomes a *transactive memory system*. Just as in a couple one partner may remember birthdays while the other knows how to fix the car, our mind has delegated the function of factual storage to Google or Wikipedia. Although this frees cognitive resources for higher-order processing, the risk emerges when the connection is interrupted or when the algorithm filters the information.

Moreover, Bruineberg suggests that by relying on algorithms to prompt our memories (e.g., Facebook's "*On this Day*" feature), we lose narrative autonomy. We no longer decide what is meaningful from our past; instead, an algorithm optimized for emotional engagement makes that selection for us.

Decision-Making and the Architecture of Choices

The digital exocortex influences the decision-making process. The human mind selects actions not only through logical reasoning but also by comparing predictions with expected outcomes, seeking to minimize effort.

The digital environment exploits this tendency through *dark patterns* and manipulative choice architectures. For example, the autoplay of the next episode removes the *stopping cue*, turning what should be an active decision to continue watching into a passive, implicit state.

Predictive algorithms constrain our decision-making horizon by creating *filter bubbles*. When the mind seeks confirmation of its own predictions (confirmation bias), algorithms amplify this process, delivering only information that validates existing beliefs. Consequently, critical thinking decreases, and polarization intensifies.

The technological trajectory of the mind presents a clear ambivalence. While unlimited access to information and global connectivity offer unprecedented opportunities, there is a risk that individuals become *cognitive slaves* to their digital tools. According to Bruineberg's research and observations on the digital exocortex, in an environment where technology anticipates and shapes mental processes more efficiently than we can observe ourselves, maintaining psychological autonomy emerges as one of the greatest challenges of the twenty-first century. The mind tends toward a fusion with the digital environment, yet the terms of this integration remain negotiated within the *battleground* of our attention.

Direction III: From Pathology to Neurodiversity

The primary trajectory in the reconceptualization of the contemporary mind is not strictly biological or technological, but paradigmatic and social. In a context marked by increasing complexity and diversity, the definition of psychological "normality" becomes progressively more flexible. This reflects a historical shift from the Medical Model, centered on deficits and pathology, toward the Neurodiversity Model, which interprets cognitive and behavioral variations as normal expressions of human differences rather than dysfunctions to be corrected.

Redefining Normality

The concept of *neurodiversity*, introduced by sociologist Judy Singer in the late 1990s, posits that neurological variations - such as ADHD, autism, or dyslexia - do not represent biological errors but rather natural manifestations of human genetic diversity. The fundamental analogy is with biodiversity: just as a stable ecosystem requires genetic diversity to adapt to environmental changes, the human species benefits from the existence of different cognitive styles.

In the rigid behaviorist "black box", any deviation from the average was labeled a "disorder" to be corrected or normalized. In contrast, the contemporary "glass box" paradigm recognizes that differences in neural architecture generate distinct subjective experiences, each with its own specific challenges and advantages.

Implications for the Future of Psychology

Returning to our central question, "*Where is the mind heading?*", one direction is immediately clear: from "healing" to *niche construction*. The role of the psychologist of the future is no longer to force a neuro-divergent mind to behave in a "neuro-typical" way - a process known as masking, which can lead to exhaustion and depression. The new role is that of an environment architect: helping individuals identify their unique cognitive profile and construct a lifestyle - both professional and relational - that is compatible with their "operating system".

This trajectory closes the loop of this work. If biology provides the "hardware" and technology modifies the "environment," neurodiversity acknowledges that there is no single correct way to process this interaction. The mind is moving toward a radical acceptance of its own plurality.

Conclusions: Toward a New Architecture of the Cognitive Future

The analysis presented in this work highlights that the human mind cannot be reduced to a single level of organization or a single explanatory dimension. By integrating findings from epigenetics, neuroscience, cognitive psychology, and studies on interaction with digital

environments, it becomes clear that the mind is simultaneously biologically embodied, technologically extended, and socially diversified.

The return to the biological underscores the *embodied* nature of cognition and the importance of the interaction between body, genes, and life experiences. Technological expansion demonstrates that cognitive processes are no longer confined to the brain but extend into the digital environment, shaped by algorithms and persuasive interfaces. Socially, the shift from the medical model to the neurodiversity paradigm redefines “normality”, recognizing cognitive variations as evolutionary adaptations and resources for functioning within a complex ecosystem.

Therefore, the future of psychology can no longer be reduced to correcting deficits or explaining behavior in isolation. The role of the researcher and practitioner becomes that of a cognitive environment architect, facilitating the individual’s adaptation to the interaction between biology, technology, and social diversity. This integrative approach provides a robust conceptual framework for understanding the contemporary mind and suggests future research directions focused on the interdependencies among the body, brain, digital environment, and social context.

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Is psychology (still) any good?

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Abstract

Amongst the long established sciences, psychology seemingly stands on its own. It is commonly accepted that it originated from philosophy, but its place today in society is uncertain in the sense that there isn't a general consensus on what it exactly is and what is its subject matter specifically. It seems that its subject matter extends mainly into human and social sciences such as sociology, anthropology and law. Its orientations derive from biological sciences such as medicine. Practitioners and scholars alike completely agree, though, on the importance of scientific methods of research and experimentation in all fields of psychology. Even if psychology has a strangely confused identity, it begs the central question of this essay: how useful is psychology today?

Keywords; Utility, society, usefulness, nature, discreet, hidden, well-being, human.

Preamble

Our essay deals with psychology from a utilitarian angle. In other words, we will refer to the social utility of psychology and prove, by explanation and argumentation, whether such a discussion can be supported. Like any text that proposes a discussion approached in the manner of essayistic exposition, we express from the very beginning our intention to deal with the question of the usefulness of psychology in the following way through the constant reference to the social value of the work of psychologists and less to the place of psychology in the pantheon of sciences long accepted as such. Given this projection in the composition of our discussion, we will appeal to some queries that we will have to answer in our essay. These queries are thought out in the economy of distributing text in parts and they play a key role in highlighting ideas, generating a structure and a plan of discussion converging on the main query: is psychology (still) any good?

Concealed character, the nature of psychological work or its essence?

In the following we will explore how psychology has come to be commonly known, omni-present, but seldomly appreciated positively.

A working premise starts from the assumption of a certain difficulty in understanding what psychology is and how it improves the everyday of man. In our opinion, it settles in the collective mind and comes from two directions.³

The first direction is that of the ambiguity of the origins of psychology. The quasi-unanimous acceptance is that psychology has its origins in philosophy, so it can be seen as an integral part of philosophy and from it, it is only autonomous, not a completely independent science. This perspective, however, required an erudite mind, a considerable amount of cultured knowledge. The problem with this perspective lies in the fact that those who are faced with this hypothesis do not benefit from intellectual well-being consistent enough to draw a conclusion. It remains in most cases an unanswered question, most often used only to get drunk with words. Another common perspective is that it has its own origins and its own set of existential norms that define it. In this perspective psychology is a special science, the birth of which is likened to an immaculate conception, which came to be by its own power and exists independently from philosophy or other sciences.

The second direction that adds to the ambiguity of the nature of psychology is that of its conceptual, immaterial nature. The most concrete forms of manifestation of psychology are, in ascending order of materiality, firstly speech and finally writings.

Self-proclaimed hidden character?

Philosophers say that the nature of things likes to stay hidden. This means that at least in order to discover the nature of things, one must undertake research, and in order to understand the nature of things the same man must discern, judge, and pass judgement. From this perspective the character of psychology can only be intrinsically hidden.

From a broader, popular perspective, one might say, the hidden character of psychology has its origins to a lesser extent in that, generally man does not seek to understand the surrounding reality, but accepts the circumstances of life as it seemingly configures itself. At the same time, here I need to refer to the stigma of mental disorders. An irrefutable truth is that everyone likes to be intelligent. Starting from this simplistic axiom it is clear that no one likes to be ignorant. The antinomy between ignorance and wisdom is for everyone a moral precept by which he measures the value of the life he lives.

But in this case, in his individuality, man, accepts that his own life is in his absolute control, is not constrained by the same factors mentioned above that have the power to configure the same life that the same man lives. The desire to be intelligent gives a substantial meaning to the life of man because, among other things, it makes the life he lives to be, in the absolute sense, good, and he thus becomes a worthy man of material well-being, respect from other people and perhaps even divine appreciation and, in extremis, acceptance in paradise. This makes ignorance become a shame in social relations, and in relation to the self an absolute limit. These are the reasons why intelligence becomes the existential status quo of man.

³ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5846864/> - "The problem with the standard conception of psychology as a science of behavior and mental processes is that it has ended up by establishing dualistic ontology and reasoning in the psychological science with feedback from the positivist natural scientific method (Packer 2011; Slife et al. 2012)."

If on a daily basis a person encounters situations which he does not find a rational explanation for, he tries to explain them by any means at his disposal, often irrational. Irrational explanations have a comforting function and are essentially seductive, because they are often metaphorical. This semi-mystical thinking is connected to fairy-tales, to a world whose foundations are laid by the one who thinks in these terms, an oneiric world, in disagreement with the logical/objective reality.

Psychology, through psychologists, seeks to bring in these cases objective clarity to those who judge in a discursive projection that mainly captures metaphorical terms. The primary tool of this work is suggestion. The practice of leading/guiding man to understand the situations he is in and emotionally stabilizing him has, like the knowledge of the nature of things, esoteric character.

In this context, we believe that, tacitly, psychological practice has been involuntarily but consciously attributed a hidden character.

Was accepting this character as being proper to psychological work an effort to integrate itself into society?

In the sense of shame generated by ignorance, in order for psychology to be effective for the individual (efficiency felt as the utility brought to man), it could, without only being possible, be open to anyone, not only to elites (intellectual, financial, religious, academic etc.). This openness is natural to psychology, especially psychologists who understand the social mission they have. The problem with the relationship between psychology and society is that in popular logic ignorance and insanity are often interchangeable labels that any member of society is completely shunned by.

It should be noted that ignorance and madness in this case are both understood and aligned to a common meaning such as a lack of thought, an intellectual deficiency of man. But these characteristics are at odds with man's desire to be intellectually individual. Thus, the possibility of help that psychologists offer to those who need to understand the surrounding reality becomes problematic because the acceptance of this help makes the one who asks for it a man incapable of self-management and especially needy of help. Man puts himself in a position of inferiority towards other people, perhaps even an entire community, by seeking to understand reality accompanied/guided by a psychologist. So, such an approach becomes shameful because it symbolizes the recognition of ignorance.

In this prosaic context, psychologists best understand the need for privacy of those they accompany. Intimacy, especially in the emotional and cognitive sense, in which the clients of psychologists give them access, makes it impossible for them to divulge what they have discovered in the inner forum of another man. Such an approach, to advertise the observed, would mean the denigration of their client. Thus, in order to have a social utility and to be effective in their work, psychologists must accept that their work must be discreet or even secret. That is why I think that psychology has accepted to exist "in the shadows", which is all the easier for it since its material manifestations are minimal and discreet.

Contractual/mercantile finding of souls?

The philosophical premise that psychology is knowledge of the soul gives rise, in the social context, from a utilitarian point of view, to the question of whether through psychology man finds himself with the help of another man? Being about self-knowledge, the activity is eminently intimate and solitary. The inclination to introspection demands, as in the case of knowing the nature of things lucidity, self-mastery, the will to discover and the courage to undertake often profound changes. The depth is connected, it takes place in the world of ideas and it is up to man to integrate them into his inner forum and to respect them daily.

The relationship between psychologist and individual is above all human. Unlike relationships between people in the legal sense, in the psychological sense relationships, including those between the psychologist and the individual are intimate. The collaborative work between the psychologist and the individual brings them closer. This closeness is necessary and beneficial to the relationship between them. The same closeness becomes problematic when the affective bond between the two becomes only intimate and disappears the limit of the professionalism of the psychologist in the deontological sense. In the human sense, intimacy must exist between the two perpetually for the relationship to exist and be beneficial.

At the same time, the exchange between the psychologist who works alongside the individual and the individual who rewards with money the work of the former has the role of objectively regulating the relationship between them. In exchange for a resource currently indispensable to life, money, the psychologist, and the individual put themselves on an equal footing. This exchange we believe is beneficial because it makes the psychologist feel the duty to provide a useful service, with practical purpose, and the individual feels like a beneficiary of a professional service, not a frail man seeking help and comfort.

Therefore, despite the spiritual nature of the work of the psychologist, its payment brings a balance in the relationship between the psychologist and the individual. Something as absurd as money does not prostitute the work of the psychologist, but frames it into a society whose most common medium of interaction is money.⁴

Maximum intimacy of interactions in industrialized societies?

The industrialization of the communities in which people live favors human life in an individual manner, to the detriment of the communion spirit of the community. That is why there is a direct proportionality between the degree of industrialization and the intensity of the work of psychologists. In less industrialized communities, an activity of a similar nature and purpose identical to the psychologist have religious representations of those communities. The frames of reference of religious representatives and psychologists are, however, completely different. Religious beliefs have nothing in common with psychological research into achieving the common goal of the two – domains in the absolute, the good of man.

The ignorance that we talked about in the beginning, in other words, that intellectual/individual incapacity, requires a need for help (perhaps immediately) of a third party, and this is where the psychologist intervenes. In industrialized societies, the inability of critical thinking is publicly reprehensible, and in totemic ones, misalignment with the

⁴ Roberts, R. (2015). *Psychology and capitalism: The manipulation of mind*. John Hunt Publishing.

fundamental spiritual precepts that mediate every aspect of those societies is completely unacceptable.

In both cases, the psychologist by his professional capabilities occupies a position contrary to his quality in society. Individually, members of a community agree that the usefulness of the psychologist is undeniable and necessary. Collectively, however, the same members agree that the psychologist has a marginal utility at best because they believe they are capable of introspection, explanation and emotional regulation without help. This attitude is also related to the discreet/secret character of the work of the psychologist in society, which makes him complicit in the historical stigma that this useless, futile work profession carries.

The inadequacy, of psychological work with totemic societies lies in the fact that psychology scientifically explains the ways in which and the reasons why man lives his life. However, this objective view is contrary to the principle that something already confirmed by faith cannot be demonstrated. Psychology, in a practical sense, has no way of taking place in such a space.

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The Crisis of Interpersonal Relationships

Relationship Fragmentation and the Current Speed of Life

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Abstract

When it comes to discuss about crisis and relationships nowadays, something always completes our answers before any questions. In fact, everyone has more answers than questions upon this topic. However, what does psychology really has to say about it? Sliding from various devices (in Foucault's acceptation of the term), we reveal a multiplicity of meanings of the term "relation". Our intention in this paper is to focus on the path that leads to a possible identification of a "red wire" which may be a cause for fracture in the realm of interpersonal relationships. Also, to find a possible connection between the speed of life nowadays and the paradigm of disease and autoimmunity when it comes to real human connection: waiting, craving for and postponing relationships in the era of the communication technologies.

Keywords: *crisis, relationships, technology, life speed, encounter scenarios, distance, social autoimmunity, social disease / social cancer, social network, reconnection.*

Do interpersonal relationships need scripts?

Sometimes, when we come into contact with others, we carry in our pockets little invisible sketches of how things *should go*. We call them expectations, roles, habits, but, in essence, we can say that they are scripts. Each encounter in our lives shows us something different about the way we use them. We could just as well say that the encounter is what marks our acts, in the sense of attributing a meaning. To try to answer the question posed in our generic, let's imagine some scenarios with the multiplicity of situations from which we could propose ideas.

The first reaction to the idea of writing on this topic was that it is no longer worth addressing: "*human relationships are in sync with the times, this is how normal life goes with current technologies, each new invention has made part of what humanity was before disappear*". The crisis of relationships and the problems of communication in the age of social networks are so often mentioned, that it may seem like a boring topic that no one should revisit. "*People have always found solutions, and now they have even more means to support them*," is a reasonable thought. But there are many moments when we feel diffuse distances from others: daily, small, repetitive and annoying moments of distancing, postponements, whether

wanted or not, accepted or not. In the age of the multitude of technologies that facilitate communication, we end up feeling either rushed, pushed from behind by these technologies or, conversely, even chained by them. Being aware of this, we can begin to delineate contours of the diffuse “nuisance” of a normal day today – that is, a busy day. Below, there are some examples of situations and scenarios, most likely familiar to many people, where we can identify the tension in interpersonal relationships in several planes of everyday life:

For example, an appointment with the doctor. The little script in the pocket seems clear and useful: the patient asks and the specialist knows and guides the healing. However, by the time he reaches the office, the patient feels how the script can break. Sometimes the doctor does not have time and the patient is politely postponed to another date by a robot or an assistant who checks boxes on a form. Other times he may not find the right words, describe the symptoms incompletely and does not reach the healing. The feeling is the frustration that in the era when we have so many variants of technologies, we are still unable to get a consultation or faster healing. Or the person receives an online consultation and wonders if he can rely on a discussion without a physical examination.

On a personal level, a meeting with parental figures can lead to a different atmosphere. Things get even more complicated. In this case the script is old, written before we knew how to read. It is full of unspoken lines, of emotional legacies. It takes time spent together, patience, family stories, entire pages of the relationship have to be written. It is a slow process, if we want it to be authentic. But there is always so much to do in less time, so parents seem the handiest to postpone.

On a professional level, a meeting could happen under the sign of *"performativeness"*. Here the script is useful - its structure keeps the meeting and the discussion in rhythm, gives meaning to the questions, orders the ideas. This script also breaks down, the unexpected appears: a question makes us think, a sincere reaction, a small gesture that transforms the dialogue into something real, alive, unplanned. The initiative for another meeting naturally arises to continue the project, but in the agenda we have no time, not soon enough to maintain continuity. Can the newly discovered “liveliness” of the meeting continue? In the era of efficiency, there is no room on the agenda for spontaneously scheduling a meeting. If it is not urgent, we postpone, too.

And then the question arises: *do we need those scripts or do we just cling to them so as not to feel lost? Why do we feel lost?* Perhaps scripts are just beginnings – guidelines, not walls. They offer us a framework, but true relationships are built in the spaces between lines, where we accept vulnerability, spontaneity, the unpredictability. After all, people are not characters, but presences. And relationships – whether with the doctor, with our parents, or with someone at the office – are truly born only in the moment when we have the courage or the strength to stay outside the script and meet as we are.

And here another question arises: *Do current technologies and speed help us keep the "liveliness" mentioned above? To nourish it, to protect it?*

What are, in fact, the interpersonal relationships?

A big loop opens up before us if we want to understand relationships. What do we actually know so far? The word “*relationship*” can evoke the image of a thread, the above mentioned “liveliness”, as a flexible link, which can be as long as desired in space and time, a cable between two notions. Like in chemistry, with valence bonds, like in physics when we

imagine how electricity flows through cables, like blood in veins or like the light energy between creatures and nature in the Avatar movie. We can feel the relationship as fluid, energy, joy, presence, connection, telepathy, divine spirit, red thread, we can rationalize it, dissect it in words. Or simply experience an eye to eye look. A relationship can be pleasant or unpleasant, in any of these forms. Anything can flow through the metaphorical thread between us, both love and poison.

There certainly are, in any relationship, conceptual projections that we think about, even without wanting to, and through these conceptual projections we accept things that we sometimes reflect on.

Perhaps the simplest examples when we think of relationships are friendship and love, aren't they? Nothing would favor more possible answers than a cascade of interrogations meant to support the question contained in our generic. But are friendship and love simple? Where does one end and where does the other begin? If we looked, of all types of relationships, only at those between men in the Arab Islamic world described in the poetry dedicated to the "ghulam" (الغلام - the young adolescent), where there are poems dedicated to homosexual love for minors, today we would be scratching our heads, and it is only a tiny niche; and we are not talking here about homosexuality in general, or the ancient Romans, or what it is today. By relationships, of course, we cannot only refer to homosexual relationships. Let's see.

Friendship. Plato spoke of it, in Socrates' dialogues about friendships between similar and dissimilar, good and neither good nor bad, Aristotle: "We define a friend as one who desires and does good (...) for the good of the friend, or who desires that the friend exist and live", Cicero with his beautiful definitions: "Friendship is nothing more than a harmony in all things, human and divine, united with mutual goodwill and affection" and Seneca: "Think long about whether to accept someone into your friendship; but, once accepted, accept him with all your heart." Thomas Aquinas said that friendship can be one of the forms of charity, because for him, the supreme form of friendship is that with God and love, that for God. "Charity has the nature of friendship, because through it man is made a friend of God" and when you love God and are his friend, you can manifest charity, generosity, including for enemies. Friedrich Nietzsche, in Thus Spoke Zarathustra, presents friendship as a relationship that should challenge us, not just bring us peace and comfort: "In one's friend one shall have one's best enemy."

Simone Weil, in her essay on friendship, brings a conception of "pure" friendship: "To desire friendship is a great mistake. Friendship should be a gratuitous joy, like those offered by art or life." Closer to the present, in Hannah Arendt, friendship allows people to appear before each other as free and distinct beings, and she goes with this vision to the broader areas of ethics and politics, and Jacques Derrida also speaks of a kind of friendship extended even to a politics of friendship, *La politique de l'amitié* (1994; English translation *The Politics of Friendship*) and goes back to Aristotle to talk to us about politics along with friendship – "Oh, my friends, there is no friend" – to show that the ways in which we define friendship have major political consequences.

Love. As for love, every person in the world knows what they have felt at least once and perceives love in personal ways, and philosophers have outdone themselves in theories. From the ideal platonic love that many understand only as an unfulfilled love, to the forms of carnal love in opposition to the love of God or precisely as the fulfillment of the gifts from the Creator / Gods / Nature, love for children, crazy love, love as perdition, rational, logical or illogical love, the responsibility of love, love opposed to death, love-pleasure, love-

reproduction, assumed or hidden, conscious or not, love-experiment, love as immersion in another being, merging, redefinition, birth and rebirth, feminine love, love for the masculine - throughout the centuries we find thinkers who seem to have analyzed everything possible in the matter of love.

Of course, love and friendship meet. Sometimes they overlap and reach the divinity. Kant speaks clearly about love in friendship; in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, he defines "moral friendship" as "the union of two people through equal mutual love and respect". And Søren Kierkegaard in *Works of Love* distinguishes between Christian love for people in general (*agapé*) and "preferential" love (*eros*) but also friendship in the ordinary sense – and tries to rethink friendship through the commandment "to love your neighbour". Sartre evokes the love that binds, and Erich Fromm brings the idea of active love, sustained practice, not passive, the one that requires discipline, patience and overcoming narcissism. Even love as art - *The Art of Loving* (1956). And from the word "art" the thought can fly in any direction, in any form. Let's fly, then. To a novel.

Literature usually proposes the meaning, the episteme that the reader should discover and understand from its contents. With this idea in mind, we can understand the approaches of some authors who have appropriated, like a philological *topos*, some benchmark themes, the great themes of humanity, which are in fact precisely the main themes of the conjunctural, subjective modes of all interpersonal relationships.

"The 40 Laws of Love", by Elif Shafak, a book of a lace-poetic delicacy, speaks of two souls who met, mystically and lucidly, a love beyond matter between two profound thinkers, a love with eyes that see the invisible, a "seeing", clairvoyant love of intellectual friends. The dervish Shams of Tabriz has the encounter with his spiritual soul mate, Rumi. Shams is killed precisely out of envy for the strength of their friendship, Rumi remains alive, and out of longing he sees his friend in everything that surrounds him and penetrates the spirit of things, becoming a poet-philosopher.

The metaphorical threads of the relationship between Rumi and Shams were so fertile, so full of sap, so thick and elastic that not even death itself could break them when it intervened between them. Almost as one, they represented an essence, a harmony in two bodies, in two minds of a single soul.

Hearing today about such a relationship, even from a novel – *do we still feel attracted to it? Are we still looking for such stories? Can we still find relationships, people to admire in reality? Are we still interested? Do we still want to feel inspired?*

It seems that we live in conjunction with others (to whom we belong and belong to us) or rather in a relationship "lost on the road while going somewhere together". This idea is extremely important, the conjunction, the joining, the path traveled together, in multiplicity. We do not realize when we move away from each other, and when we wake up it is too late.

The examples we started with can be reproduced infinitely by the experiences of any of us and we can understand them through the perspective of Michel Foucault's devices – any social system comes with requirements for each service offered. Our life today is based on (not to say "controlled by") the technology more or less attached to our hands and brains, which we no longer distinguish from ourselves. We can think of the technology that we can call "private", or "small technology" in the house, in the bag, in the pocket, which "makes our life better / easier / more comfortable / modern". The one that has already become an extension of our body and which, not so long in the future, will be part of our body, when a chip under the skin will

be the norm of everyday life. This technology that theoretically helps us to perform our tasks faster but which practically has put new tasks in our hands, because we theoretically have more time. New tasks to be accomplished at a higher speed also because we have faster means, which are placed layer after layer over the "liveliness" in our relationships and suffocate it, dressing our metaphorical threads, the red threads of our relationships, in increasingly thick, rigid crusts and shells, in which the warm and living core is thinner and less alive.

New questions arise. *When did the age of speed begin, pushing with our private lives on fast forward? With the century of speed in the 20th century? Did the optic fiber transpose us into the century of the "speed of light for relationships"?* If there is any difference between the century of speed and the century of the internet, it no longer matters.

Ways of getting closer

If we talk about getting closer, from the very beginning we start from the assumption of a dual trajectory, of a confrontation of two types that encompass us, fragment us and, without wanting to, recompose us. In what way?

First, we already have a new norm in our lives' relationships, intertwined with technology – what is sold to us as “reduced distance”. Let's call it *corporeality*: we consider that we are getting closer to people from thousands of kilometers away, those whom we previously did not expect to see after they left for such distances. Now we expect to see them and we do it every day. Cheap video calls influenced our decisions – and we thought that we decided! – and gave us the courage to leave thousands of kilometers because, anyway, being in the same city, we rarely saw each other. Now we can see and hear each other every day, and with a plane we do it physically.

But then, in the extension to this way of getting closer, the geographical distance has accustomed us to distance, even though we see each other every day. Slowly, imperceptibly, we have become accustomed to concrete distances and give them positive connotations, calling them more and more easily as intimacy, independence, self-determination - like small countries in the big countries. Let's give this new kind of distance a name: "*Distant closeness*". Cold. Repulsive. The subjective distance has increased. The video call has brought us closer by moving us away.

With this small private technology on us, we set off to conquer the cities, the highways. We spend twice as much time in traffic in Bucharest per day as we would spend to get to a town at an over 200 km distance. We are alone in our cars among people alone in their cars next to us. We have normalized being distant from our fellow humans. We think we no longer like closeness.

We love our phones, computers, cars, we love being busy, unapproachable, indispensable, but without obligations. And yet we interact with so many people a day. Employees learn to respond formally to customers, with a cold smile on their faces, robots answer us metallically, clerks scold us at the counter. Much more formalized, to the point of aggressiveness. We see many others on Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, but much less close, intimate, deep, we see portions of their wholes, portions taken out of context or downright falsified. The more people we meet physically or online, the less authentic and profound. The more superficial, the easier. *What a beautiful life modern life is!* Networks upon networks, we post obsessively, we follow compulsively. " *You don't exist if you're not on the networks.*"

We are advised to speak to each person in their own language, assertively and empathetically. We are asked to wear so many different characters that we no longer know who we really are. We adapt and change our speech and personality like clothes. It may seem that today to exist, to be (in) the present, means to do this. This is what the networks demand of us. Now customs demand that we wear ourselves out.

The questions flow. How many more personalities can we have in a day? How much longer can we stretch those characters without breaking?

Current affairs and blurred distancing

Every era comes with its demands and its specifics, this is true. Our era came with social networks and AI.

Relationships today seem more superficial and faster, shorter, maybe more in numbers but less in consistence. We have abandoned the consistency of relationships for speed and numbers, quality for quantity and it turns out that it does not satisfy us. Cases of depression, loneliness, suicides, fears, anxiety, mental illnesses that multiply and are correlated with technology turn all the slogans about the benefits and joys of speed upside down. "*Be closer to the people who matter to you*" becomes "*don't bother meeting them anymore, see an image of them on a screen*".

There is a temptation to say that interpersonal relationships today are no longer a real connection but rather a continuous expectation – of seeing a doctor, of a meeting, of an answer. They are no longer nourishing, they are fulfilled less and less often.

To the extreme level of annihilation.

"I, Daniel Blake", a social movie and a "poetic lace" story, just like Elif Shafak's book, is painfully closer to our "technology-simplified" reality, and it shows us what contemporary automated services and all the "simplification" through call centers, order slips, prioritizations and rules can lead to: they can become the opposite of their purpose. Daniel Blake is a carpenter from Newcastle, Great Britain, who, after a heart attack, tries to obtain social support from the state. The character is looking for a job, needs medical services and collides with rigid bureaucracy. The film is a strong criticism of modern social assistance systems and the way they treat vulnerable people. Daniel Blake is looking for a job, but only because he is forced by the system. Doctors recommend him not to work after the heart attack, but the bureaucratic assessment declares him "fit for work", and in order to receive social assistance he is forced to apply for jobs that he cannot physically do. On the day of the decisive hearing, when he hoped to prove his right to social support, he dies in the courtroom bathroom, after a new heart attack and failing to be assisted by a person at a counter who wanted to understand his situation. The ending emphasizes the human tragedy caused by an inhuman bureaucratic system.

Do we need more than the love of our fellow human beings?

The other without me – the accelerator called AI

I think we already know, without the need to prove it again and again, that meeting the other is not only justified, but it is vital, precisely because technology seems to be taking over the active role in more and more relationships (by bombarding us with messages,

advertisements, products, behaviors, propaganda). A few years ago we were shocked by the internet – we discovered that we no longer had the patience for someone to tell us something too slowly, we started talking with emoticons, inviting each other to dinner on WhatsApp in the same house (that is if we still ate together). Now the attention span is smaller than we thought possible and will be smaller and smaller, especially for written text – we already use minimal reading of “fff” short texts and watch “fff” short and “fff” fast videos, (in Romanian “fff” is the abbreviation for “very very very”, so “fff” appears illustratively instead of “very”) so we don’t have enough time or patience but for a “very very short” anything — I, the author of this text, listen to YouTube and audiobooks at increased, double, sometimes triple speed.

The new speed brought by AI not only further extends the speed of the 20th century, which humanity has not yet integrated, but also makes analysis even more superficial, driving critical thinking away from the vast majority of the masses. Illiteracy has received a platform and huge audiences where anything can be expressed, from ineptitude to aggression. (It is almost pointless to recall the effect of networks in the presidential elections in Romania, in November 2024).

What do we do about speed and congestion?

Confirmation of the crisis?

Let's start with other questions. *Is the crisis a quarrel? A dissension? A character mismatch? Incongruence of agendas? A "leaving" of someone or the relationship at a not very clearly defined moment? A "relationship lost on the road while we were going somewhere together"?*

The fragmentation of relationships in the current speed and crowding of life is a reality and also puts us in front of a paradox: there is a flood of freedoms, responsibilities, we drown in possibilities, chances, opportunities, exercise of rights. We rarely meet with friends, we no longer socialize with colleagues, we do not reach our parents, because by the evening we have to use our freedoms: we patiently go to the bank, to the accountant, we read labels to be informed and documented buyers, we decide what education to offer to children, we speak assertively with civil servants, journalists, doctors, nurses, door-keepers, bosses. We have to go through hours of documentation in fields we didn't follow an education for.

The elderly can no longer help themselves, technology has overtaken them, they have barely learned to open their smart phones. They no longer understand doctors, who hand them mountains of papers to sign, leaving the responsibility of a surgical intervention in the hands of the patients.

How can we find more time?

Inherited speed and metabolic disease

We have called the 20th century the century of speed. In the middle of the last century, Andre Malraux sententiously stated that the 21st century will be religious, or it will not be at all. It certainly seems to us that we have a legacy that is becoming organic, or, more than that, it is definitely projected into a new, defining characteristic, like a brand: the 21st century inherited and hyperbolized speed. Our century seems to be the one in which the oscillation is between being ultra-accelerated or not being at all.

Cancerous tumors grow in the body at a speed faster than the normal rhythm of the organism. So fast that at a certain point they begin to consume the very organism from which they grow until they finally consume themselves. They grow "efficiently", quickly, but they do not bring benefits to the body, on the contrary. The same is true in relationships. Jaques Derrida introduced the concept of autoimmunity, then expanded in the social sciences, political theory and cultural studies.

We have the impression that we reach people from miles away with our screens and applications, that we escape the curse of the romania saying "the eyes that do not see each other, forget each other". But in the evening, after conversations on other continents, when we draw the line, our eyes are red, our wrists are stiff and the house gets turned off like the screen.

Another recognizable situation for our contemporaries: the problem of the relationship with one's own body spread by the criteria of beauty in fashion, television, the film industry and glossy magazines. Just two examples of musical reaction to this scourge in relation to one's own body, one's own identity and self-esteem: P!nk - F**kin' Perfect and TLC - Unpretty - both examples talk about self-acceptance and inner and bodily beauty. In order to "keep up" with the "requirements", millions of people resort to aesthetic surgeries. The dark alternative is suicide, especially among young people, who (how sad!) feel that they have no choice.

Several field and laboratory studies, including one in a supermarket, have shown that people simply cannot choose when they have too many options. Several studies have been conducted on merchandise displayed on shelves, or on the ratio of tastings to purchases in the supermarket, and even on essay topics - and all of them have shown that after a certain point, adding options increases the cognitive cost and can make offers with fewer options more attractive, meaning that the cognitive effort is increasing and the choice becomes more difficult to make. And the product, once purchased, is perceived as increasingly unsatisfactory. This was also true for essay writing, between 6 and 30 proposed topics, choosing the topic and writing itself was more difficult with the longer list, and the quality of the completed essay also decreased. An example of one of these studies: People stop more at a stand with 24 varieties, but buy 10 times less often than at a stand with 6 varieties.

So yes, we most likely have a crisis: the crisis of too many screens that propose to fill our lives and too many possibilities in relationships (real or virtual, or downright fake), just like the choice in front of a shelf with too many options - the customer no longer knows what to buy (products with partially or completely artificial content). We have too many people to compare ourselves to, too many things to buy, too many options for holidays, too many fashion waves, too many new ways of cooking, new obligations, and even freedoms and rights that end up strangling us - we feel we have too little space to enjoy our lives.

Perhaps this kind of crowding has also attracted some of the nostalgia for pre-1989 relationships in our country - just one example: many of today's adults remember their parents' parties in the communist blocs - simple and direct relationships, time spent together, without television, a way of resisting the difficulties, shocks, lacks and countless forms of absurdity of that period.

Has today's technologically mediated communication at unmetabolizable speeds become an autoimmune disease, or a cancer of contemporary society?

The recovered self – the mission of psychology

We are therefore experiencing a crisis of accessibility and too much speed in relation to what a human organism can do. We want or need to do much more than our body can do, to swallow more than our stomach can hold. But in relationships, it is not possible to "buy them all if you don't know what to choose or not take anything at all". Either we swallow several smaller sips (superficial relationships, so that we don't feel like outsiders), or we try to digest larger pieces faster - but speed in metabolism is cancer.

The mission of psychology seems to be exactly this: to take care of the thread between us, to give it substance, to remove the residues and to fill it with ...closeness. First of all, physical closeness. Let's make it a habit, with the help of psychologists, to spend physical time together. To guide us towards this. Let's do things with our hands and together.

Loneliness kills, and these words are not a slogan. All studies on loneliness show this, and now perhaps we should do more studies on loneliness among people, loneliness through the technology of proximity, loneliness in the age of possibilities.

The most visible until recently was the loneliness of the elderly without relatives or who have moved far away. However, the loneliness of children in the midst of their families is becoming increasingly visible. Perhaps the loneliness of free and responsible adults from Foucault's scheme of functioning in devices should be added to the list, adults who have too much to do in exercising rights, freedoms, attributions, and mentioned previously in a few examples. From this point of view, psychology could study and approach solutions for simplifying current life, equipped with technologies that truly create infinite possibilities.

The disparities are so deep that precisely those who would need psychological support do not have it, do not reach it or cannot afford it, and children grow up in an environment that affects their development.

Another direction worth addressing would be how human language and thinking will continue to change – on the journalistic principle of "the media is the message". We have all seen how "TV killed the radio star" and we are finding out how in our lifetime AI "is killing the synthesis ability". We see how "idiots", the uneducated and subversives have access to the public platform, giving strong voices and huge audiences to specific / limited / incapable of extrapolation and synthesis perspectives. It will be interesting to see how this changes public discourse.

Can humans biologically integrate such rapid technological change and its effects on relationships? Psychology needs to find out if it can compensate as a science for the speed of technological change, if it can support people in these changes.

The challenges for psychologists are great – both human and professional. They certainly have more and more work to do, while in their personal space they have the same challenges as their clients.

Conclusion

Have the telephone and social networks really taken over human connection? Have we lost our meaning? Have we derailed as humanity? Is man useless next to the computer? If the machine does the job, can we relax? Is man useless or does he remember how to "dolce far niente" while letting the computer do the work for him?

Between uselessness and non-usefulness, we hope that life will know how to reconfigure the "pause", the void of human usefulness, into relaxation, healing, creation, inventiveness, re-connection.

Let's keep our hope - the apparent hyper-usefulness of the devices that communicate with each other has not stolen our meaning, we just need to build a new perspective, *to give a new meaning to meaning*. We may no longer be interested in the search for meaning, at least not in the way that Rumi and Shams of Tabriz did, spending hours in philosophic dialogue and quoting from great writings, but we can maintain our conviction that meaning is us ourselves. That we can do it for our nourishing benefit – and here polemics may arise: if we do not read and write as before, let us do more physically, to move the meanings of writing into the living meaning of interactions.

We can use technologies precisely to leave us more time and space for real, living encounters.

It is often said of dancers that they are connected by an invisible thread, that red thread of “liveliness” that has followed us throughout this exhibition.

Following this metaphor of the thread between dancers, we can issue invitations to dance. Rather than writing manuals and working thousands of hours to archive dance styles, it is better to just dance. Even if tomorrow we will dance differently. Why do we need to know and reproduce by heart the dances of our ancestors? It is nostalgia, yes, it helps us know our past, but should we let it take over our own dance? *Should we repeat the same dance endlessly instead of dancing our own dances?*

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Resizing the object of psychology and the beginnings of psychoanalysis

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Abstract

I know that I do not know anything, said Socrate and opened the field of assuming "the other knowledge" .. Almost 2000 years later, psychoanalysis revealed the other side of conciseness, which led to amazing and pragmatically discoveries of ourselves. In fact, if there is something common for any branch of psychology that is the self, no different from Socrate, Plato, Freud and others. Our paper makes an inventory of three major theory (Freud, Jung, Adler) pointing out the idea that we need to observe beyond the surface of these theories, the red wire of an individual journey into the field of their research.

Keywords: psychoanalysis, method,

Introduction

Psychoanalysis is both a theory of the human psyche, a therapy of its sufferings, and a way of interpreting culture and society. From the initial meaning of the therapeutic method (used in March 1896), it came to mean the process of investigation, theory, doctrine of interpretation of the human psyche, science whose object is the unconscious psyche. It was founded by Sigmund Freud between 1885 and 1939 and continues to be developed by psychoanalysts around the world. Psychoanalysis designates three things at the same time.

1. A method of investigating the mind and especially the unconscious mind;
2. A therapy of neuroses inspired by the above method;
3. A new stand-alone discipline that builds on the knowledge gained from the application of the method of investigation and clinical experiments.

Psychoanalysis has today become extremely familiar to the public (in the West) after a long period being either rejected or adulterated. However, the success of the 5th decade of sec. XX alienated her, paradoxically, from her essence. Psychoanalysis applied to literature, sociology, anthropology and ethnology, religion and mythology aroused the interest of an audience who had no calling to the clinical sphere.

No other paradigm has revolutionized and created so much controversy at the same time as psychoanalysis did. The current was very widespread throughout the world, only Freud's work appeared in English in 24 volumes and to these are added the names and works of the disciples (and opponents at the same time). Freud was a Jewish neuropathologist and tried to constitute a psychoanalytic movement with the help of non-Jewish specialists to give his orientation more credibility. In this context, he collaborated with outstanding personalities such as Carl Jung, Alfred Adler, Sandor Ferenczi, Wilhelm Reich and others. In the following, we will review the main personalities marked and the ideas introduced by them.

The first to raise the question of inner life in the history of European civilization is Socrates. The existence of the inner life was revealed to Socrates by the inner presence of his „daimonion”, which he called “the inner voice” or „the divine sign”. Starting from this finding, Socrates asks the question of the soul life as a “particular inner state of the man he is obliged to know and cultivate permanently, throughout his life, according to the Delphic precept ” *gnothi sauton*,,(know yourself). For the Athenian philosopher all our knowledge is stored within our soul in the form of reminiscences (anamnesis) of which we have no knowledge and which through an exercise can be brought to the surface, made aware by the individual in dialogue with another.

History and personalities

The Freud Moment

The father of psychoanalysis is Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) but perhaps the most important influence in the emergence of psychoanalysis was the experiences of dr. Josef Breuer of Vienna. Sigmund Freud began his research on psychoanalysis in the 1880s, at the end of a century, in which both Europe and America experienced asylums reform for people with mental disabilities and showed interest in abnormal psychological states, especially for mental disorders. Freud was impressed by the working method of Dr. Joseph Breuer, who encouraged his patients to speak freely about their symptoms.

The period in which Freud became acquainted with the case of Anne O. played an important role in developing his interest in the study of hysteria and the formulation of psychoanalytic theory. To the doctor's surprise, the very act of verbalization seemed to mitigate the violence of these symptoms (although scientists later questioned the permanence of this effect). „Speech therapy“ or „chimney cleaning“, as they called Breuer and Anna O., respectively, seemed to work cathartically producing an abreaction, a removal of emotional blockages, repressed until then, which generated pathological behavior. The two doctors were close collaborators and jointly wrote *Studies on hysteria* in 1895.

For five months that would change his life he studied in Paris with the French psychiatrist Jean Charcot, who was at the height of fame and influence. During this period he advances the hypothesis of sexuality as the cause of hysteria. The ability to bring this conflict into the light of consciousness through free associations and then test its consequences was therefore an essential step, he concluded, on the road to healing the symptom, which could best be understood as an involuntary formation of compromise between desire and defense. He opened a medical office in Vienna that would remain the place where he would receive his patients for almost half a century and began working with hysterical patients, quickly realizing that Charcot's method, hypnosis, is not the most effective. He then used the free association technique and described his method as psychoanalysis.

In April 1886, he described to the Society of Psychiatry and Neurology in Vienna 18 cases analyzed, each of which had premature sexual experiences of childhood. Freud was convinced that these were the etiology of hysteria. The presentation was not at all well received and Freud was accused of pornography.

Freud's reflection on his own self was apparently caused by a significant event that troubled him. In October 1896, his father, Jakob Freud, died shortly before his 81st birthday.

Freud was riddled with emotions that he understood to repress for a long time, related to experiences in the family and his earliest experiences, and tried to discover their meaning with the help of a millennial technique: deciphering dreams. His contribution to the tradition of – dream analysis proclaimed by him as „the royal path to the knowledge of the unconscious“ – was revolutionary, because Freud provided a remarkably detailed explanation of why dreams occur and how they work.

Freud published in 1899 his main work, Dream Interpretation, dated 1900 because the author wanted his great discovery to be associated with the beginning of a new century. It is the first scientific paper dedicated to dream interpretation, constantly enriched in successful editions.

In this impressive work, Freud analyzes his own dreams, presenting the stages of dream elaboration and tries to explain the structure of the psychic apparatus. For Freud and psychoanalysis, the dream is the ultimate path to the knowledge of the unconscious. In 1909 Freud and Jung (then close collaborators) were invited by G. Stanley Hall to give a series of lectures in the United States. The conferences contained the basic ideas of Freud's theory of personality, and the moment marked the transformation of psychoanalysis from a Viennese movement to an international one (Engler, 1999).

Freud continued to develop and revise his psychoanalytic theory until the end of his life, when psychoanalytic concepts were applied and had a special influence on intellectual life. In 1933, psychoanalysis was banned by Adolf Hitler; after Austria was occupied, Freud was forced to flee to England, and in exchange for a special emigration fee of one million pounds he settled in London, where he received a triumphal reception. In 1939, he asked for his suffering caused by jaw cancer to be stopped and he was given an overdose of morphine. He died at the age of 83, and the one who carried on his concerns was his youngest daughter, Anna Freud.

One interesting aspect of Freud's life is that his two half-brothers, Emmanuel and Philipp, were almost the same age as his mother. This unusual situation may be an explanation of Freud's interest in the study of family relations, focused on the Oedipus complex – the boy's early love for the mother.

Among the main works, we mention The interpretation of dreams (1900); About dreams (1901); Fragment from the analysis of hysteria (1901) - the famous case of Dora, the psychopathology of everyday life (1901);

Three essays on sexual theory (1905) – was almost entirely rewritten by Freud and had a bulging effect on all areas of human psychic research; The word spirit and its relation to the unconscious (1905);lays the foundation for the study of the creative process; Remarks on a case of compulsive neurosis (1909); Analysis of the phobia of a five-year-old boy (1909)- in which Freud manifests his skepticism about the application of psychoanalysis in children; A reminder of Leonardo da Vinci's childhood (1910) – although based on facts that have proven not to be real, this volume precedes the concept of narcissism and is also fundamental for those who are interested in sublimation and creativity problems; Psychoanalytic remarks on a case of paranoia (Dementia paranoid) described in autobiographical form (1911); Introduction to psychoanalysis (1917).

Discovering the psychic unconscious and the importance of its analysis in psychoanalytic therapy, Freud developed several methods of exploration. Recall here for a good adequacy that the methods of psychoanalysis are: anamnesis, free associations, interpretation of missed and symptomatic acts, interpretation of dreams and analysis (interpretation) of symbols.

The first thing you do when you go to a psychoanalyst is to remember. Freud used anamnesis by asking his neurotic patients to tell him about the facts and events of the time they got sick. Patients often have clear memories of the time when the first symptoms of which they are currently complaining have occurred, but they cannot link past events to these symptoms. The psychoanalyst links these events to symptoms and clarifies the meaning of the symptoms in the broad context of life of the patients. For psychoanalysis, the symptoms have meaning and significance, elements that contribute to the understanding of the unconscious mechanism of neuroses.

The method of free associations is the essence of therapeutic psychoanalysis. It was based on Freud's belief in psychic determinism that our psychic activity is not subordinate to free will. Everything that our mind produces has an unconscious root that we can reach with the help of free associations, following the pattern "all roads lead to Rome". The theory of psychic determinism is widely debated in Freud's work "Psychopathology of everyday life", where we find many examples of associations related to various failed and symptomatic acts, thus proving that involuntary psychic acts are determined by determined causes. The patient, lying on the couch (a condition that imposes a certain state of relaxation), speaks freely about anything that passes through his mind, without looking for something specific, a subject or a previous theme.

The flow of thoughts is left free and watched without any voluntary intervention. It is important that the critical mind does not intervene to censure spontaneous thoughts. The result of this involuntary speech is a further analysis of the lines of thoughts produced by the mentioned method reveals traumatic events and experiences that are related to the current mental sufferings of the patient. The task of psychoanalysis is to bring these morbid contents to the surface and assimilate them into the conscious mind, which leads to a reevaluation of the patient's practical conduct, of his relations with himself and with the world. Free associations are also used in the interpretation of dreams and missed/symptomatic acts in psychoanalysis.

Starting from the analysis of the Anna O case, which he refers to in his work "Five lessons of psychoanalysis", Freud comes to the following conclusions, with both medical and psychotherapeutic value:

- a) The existence of an unconscious psychism, within which the individual stores his or her own experiences.
- b) The intervention of this sphere called the unconscious, in conscious life in the form of conflicts, complexes, clinical symptoms.
- c) These interventions of the unconscious and the conscious sphere are transformed into behaviors and actions based on the fictitious motivations of the unconscious or its impulses.

Based on these conclusions, S. Freud builds a general scheme of organization of the human psychic apparatus:

- "the id/self, the seat of repressed impulses and desires, acts according to the principle of pleasure
- "the ego/ego, comprising the preconscious and the censorship at the same time, acts according to the principle of reality, is an evaluation service that selects actions rationally to minimize fear and maximize pleasure
- "the ego/superego, encompassing moral consciousness and the ideal ego, functions according to the laws of the primary process

Two pulsed vectors, two primal instinctive tendencies polarize a person's behavior, it is about life, integration, continuity and death, disintegration - Thanatos. Libido, Eros are the energy of life, and are fixed on representations of external objects as a process of discharge, called cathexis, depending on the specificity of the instincts and the stage of development of the individual.

Until 1939, the year of his death in London, Freud will elaborate several works, which extend the sphere of psychoanalysis on the human sciences (moral, religion, mythology, society, family, culture, art, etc.), namely: "Totem and tabu"; "Inhibition, symptom, disease"; "Moses and monoteism"; "Angst and civilization".

The first deviations from the Freudian line, Adler and Stekel, and the suspicion that C.G. Jung will also take the decisive step towards the rift, persuading Ernest Jones to propose the establishment of a group of credible and loyal psychoanalysts around Freud, as a sort of "old guard".

The proposal was made in Vienna, in a discussion with Ferenczi, in 1912. In a letter dated July 30, the same year, Jones also revealed to Freud his approved intention.

In addition to Jones and Ferenczi, the "committee" of loyal supporters admitted Rank, Sachs and Abraham as members. Eitingon became the sixth member in 1919, on Freud's proposal.

The group dissolved 20 years after its foundation.

The Jung Moment

Carl Gustav Jung, one of the most important thinkers of our time, has influenced in depth almost all aspects of modern culture, including medicine, religion, philosophy, literature, art, and, of course, the ever-evolving field of psychoanalysis. Born in Switzerland in 1875, the only son of a poor country pastor and his wife suffering from mental disorders was to become, by the end of his life, a leading personality, his vast work and his teachings becoming known worldwide. Through his pioneering theories of personality and the unconscious, Jung created many terms that today we consider common: archetype and collective unconscious, introvert and extravert, anima and animus, synchronicity and individuality, and even New Age spirituality.

Jung's theory is a complex one, the image of human nature portrayed by him being one of the most complicated by personality theorists. Jung was a complex personality, the details

of his life being often contradictory. Jung's autobiography, published in 1961, does not help much, because it includes, as its author himself testified, a mixture of objective facts and myths. He studied medicine and wanted to specialize in surgery until he found a text from a German neurologist describing psychiatry as invariably subjective, which sparked Jung's interest: psychiatry could provide him with the key to some of the dreams, mysteries, and strange happenings he had been trying to understand since childhood. He began working at a mental hospital in Zurich under the supervision of Eugen Bleuler, a psychiatrist who introduced the term schizophrenia. He later became a lecturer at the University of Zurich and began private practice.

Interest in Freud came after reading Dream Interpretation. After a brief period of correspondence initiated by Jung, they met in February 1907, being very impressed by each other. Their meeting laid the foundation for an intense personal and professional relationship, with Freud seeing an heir in Jung and looking at him with a paternal love. Jung was Sigmund Freud's "heir prince, carefully chosen by the elder father of psychoanalysis to become the first president of the International Psychoanalytic Association in 1910. However, in 1914 Jung abandoned Freud's theory to find his own system of analytical psychology. In April 1914, Jung resigned as president of the association, and in August he withdrew his membership.

As Freud's influence declined over the years, Jung —'s ideas about dream interpretation, about integrating the psyche as the goal of personal development, about the common roots of all the mythologies of — humanity acquired an overwhelming influence.

C.G. Jung reviews psychoanalysis especially on the problem of the unconscious, to which it gives an essential value, but whose content expands it. For him, psychoanalysis becomes an abysmal "psychology, having as main object the unconscious. It cannot only be the exclusive place of sexual pulsation. This is where archetypes, complex states, individual psychological experience, but also complex states or clinical-neurotic symptoms of the individual have their place. The language of the unconscious is symbolic and it is expressed in myths, legends, religions, dreams, art, etc. In this sense considered the problem cannot speak about a single unconscious. It includes several instances: the instinctive unconscious, as the headquarters of the primary impulses; the individual unconscious, as the seat of the individual's personal psychology experiences; the collective unconscious, the repository of all the ancestral experiences of humanity, in the form of archetypes.

The Adler Moment

Jung and Adler's proposed schools of thought differ as a theoretical foundation or work method from Freud's psychoanalysis, and their theories cluster under the term neopsihsanalytic, as they opposed Freud's view of instincts as primary motivators, presenting a more optimistic picture of human nature, considering personality more a product of the environment than of inherited psychological forces.

Because he was particularly interested in the uniqueness of the person, Alfred Adler chose the term individual psychology to describe his conception of human nature. The individual, Adler pointed out, is indivisible and must be studied as a whole, the personality being shaped according to the social environment and the interactions in which he participates. People are social and cultural beings, motivated by social interests. Their essential problems

being of a social nature, sex is no longer the determining factor and consciousness becomes the center of personality. Far from being controlled by forces that they do not understand and control, people try to direct their development and are not bad from nature. The most important motivational force for Adler is the will to power man, sex being a symptom.

The child is not a small sexual animal whose incestuous desires must be repressed, but a small and undefiled organism, whose needs and desires are fulfilled by strong adults who care for him. The child gradually develops a status of inferiority to them and tends to a status of independence. Thus, the focus shifts from biological instincts and energies to the social relationships established in the family where the child grows. Essential conflicts are between the individual and the environment rather than within the individual, and whatever his mistakes may be, they are due to the misconception of life, he can change and be happy, because the past is dead. He graduated in medicine from the University of Vienna in 1895, starting his career as an ophthalmologist, but quickly switched to general medicine. His office was located near an amusement park.

Feeling helpless because he could not prevent death, especially of young people, he switched to psychiatry. He read *The Interpretation of Dreams* and published an article defending Freud's theoretical position. In 1902, he was invited to join meetings that took place at Freud's house once a week to discuss newly emerging psychoanalysis. Freud and Adler collaborated closely, but their relationship was not very close (Freud even once claimed that Adler bored him), but Adler was not really one of Freud's disciples either. After writing several papers on organ inferiority (compatible with Freud's theory), he wrote a paper on the instinct of aggression (which Freud did not approve) and then one on the feelings of inferiority of children, which suggested that the sexual notions of Freud's theory should be taken rather metaphorically.

Although Adler was president of the Viennese Society of Psychoanalysis, he continued his criticism of classical psychoanalysis and eventually cut ties with it, founding the Society of Individual Psychology in 1912. Freud was very hostile to this movement and called Adler a „pygmy” which he, Freud, made great, and Adler did not let himself down, stating that he had not learned anything from Freud; after 20 years he continued to describe psychoanalysis as a mess (Ansbacher, 2004).

During the first world war, Adler served as a doctor in the Austrian army, first on the Russian front and then at a children's hospital. Aware of the horrors of war and the fact that if humanity is to survive it must change its mentality, Adler began to worry about the theory of social interests. After the war he was involved in child counseling projects in the clinics of Vienna. This period included Adler's first efforts in the field of childrearing, education, and other issues of general interest. His fame spread quickly and he was surrounded by students, friends and admirers, which led to Freud's (unfounded) accusations that Adlerian theory is nothing but psychoanalysis to which Adler found a new name.

In 1926 he was invited to lecture in the United States, and gradually spent more and more time in this country. After a series of 56 conferences in Scotland, Adler died in 1937 in Aberdeen following a heart attack. His theory continues to be supported today by the American Journal of Individual Psychology.

Conclusions

The methods of psychoanalysis (free association of ideas, analysis of dreams and errors) mean, despite criticism, a progress comparable to the invention of the microscope in the natural sciences. Of all the psychological schools, psychoanalysis gave the most to think to people in very diverse professions and with different levels of culture.

Psychoanalysis can be considered the first form of modern psychotherapy (also the first unified and coherent psychological discipline), and Freud the first professional psychotherapist. More than psychotherapy, psychoanalysis also presupposes a conception of man - the anthropological side - and of the world - the philosophical dimension.

In the current golden age of neuroscience, an increasing interest revolves around psychoanalysis. After a long period in which science was considered reliable only through the possibility of producing objective data, today the perspective on subjectivity has recently been opened up on several fronts. This generated new interest in psychoanalytic theory. Psychoanalysis was built around subjective experience; the inner world was the object of Sigmund Freud's investigation. Since then, throughout the evolution of many different theoretical and clinical perspectives, a new mind/brain model supports a new epistemology and new forms of treatment.

The psychoanalytic movement initiated by Freud experienced many ideological ruptures and difficulties. Today it is inherited by a number of national or international societies that dispute its primacy.

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