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PSYCHOLOGISATION UNDER SCRUTINY

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Cover: detail from the book cover of *Psychologia: hoc est, De hominis perfectione, animo et in primus ortu hujus, commentationes ac disputationes quorundam theologorum & philosophorum nostra aeatis*, Marburg 1590, by Rudolf Göcke1, known under his Latinized name Rudolphus Goclenius (1547-1628). This book is said to be the first to contain the word "psychology" in print.

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Psychologism, Psychologising and De-Psychologisation

Editorial

Ángel Gordo & Jan De Vos

This issue of *Annual Review of Critical Psychology re*presents a collaborative effort to continue unravelling the modern, and ever expanding, tendency to manage non-psychological issues in psychological terms. The most important challenge, here, lies in probing the boundaries between the non-psychological and the psychological and exploring ways to transcend them.

In the first part of this issue we have gathered those papers that are characteristic of the emergent shift from the critique of the discipline to the scrutiny of psychological culture— defined here as the way psychology has moved beyond the boundaries of academia and professional practice. This also entails a shift away from the analysis of the psy-sciences, particularly their institutional and knowledge-based synergies (psy-complex), to the wider political and economic conditions which enable, and conceal, the naturalization

of their knowledge, practices and the social orders implicit to them (psychologising). The papers in the second part of this issue principally focus upon the move from the mapping out of these interrelated processes, their distinct incipient or explicit presence in the historical liberal-neoliberal continuum, to the articulation of practices geared towards the transformation of psychologised subjects (de-psychologisation).

The contributions in Part I represent a systematic attempt to scrutinize the move from processes of individualization to psychologism in a wide range of social and cultural spheres, with particular attention to disciplinary and legal bases (Álvarez-Uría et al; Rodríguez), vulnerable institutions and subjects (Crespo and Serrano; McLaughlin), and the sociocultural flow of psychologising logics (González; Cohen). As such, these particular papers shed a critical light on the way psychology as a discipline occupies terrains which ordinarily would not be classified as "properly" psychological ones, as well as looking askance at how the psy-sciences have became a hegemonic discourse delivering and investing in ways of looking upon oneself and upon the world. Subsequently, as Álvarez-Uría *et al*. note, this scrutiny involves asking: "how and why some individuals become detached from their social world? What prompts the creation of this inner space? What social groups does the psychologisation of the self mainly affect and why?" Nevertheless, the unceasing search inherent to the psychologised life and 'thought style' also involves "putting social structures and social dynamics between parentheses" which, according to the authors, is "the very condition which ensures the success of professionals in the field of psychology".

Examining this move between psychologism and psychologisation also requires the critique of psychology from within other scientific disciplines vis-à-vis psychology's misappropriation of certain presumably extra-psychological realities, as Rodríguez notes in regard to the reluctance of psychiatry and medicine— at least within the context of the Spanish legal system— to recognise the clinical "nature" of psychology. For its part, González analyses the managing of social differences by means of psychologising them, in turn, concealing sociological phenomena such as stigmatisation, naturalisation, foreignasition and their wider conditions of possibility.

Psychologisation, minimally defined, could also be conceived of as the overflow of psychology and their emerging formations. This overspill of psychology is also exemplified by Cohen who shows the way Buddhism has been incorporated into a psychologised logic, thus opening up space for more "positivistic, neuroscientific and evolutionary explanations for our sense of self and being". This tendency, Cohen pinpoints, follows the emergent search for neural correlates of consciousness which, as the author notes, led to some Buddhist monks to place themselves: "in MRI scanners and ha[ve] their meditative prowess measured and explained in terms of brain structure, function and electrochemistry".

A third psychologising dimension under scrutiny in Part I concerns not only erroneous applications of psychology, but foremost a misuse of psychology. These critiques address the entanglement of psychology with power mechanisms, and the way it helps to turn the political field into a psychological domain apt for psychological intervention—excluding any apparent social or economic aspect of the expropriated arenas. Crespo and Serrano's analysis of the psychologisation of work, in the context of European Union institutions and policies, could be framed in this group of critiques. While discussing the notion of "flexicurity", the authors claim that the psychologisation of work is: "symptomatic of the new employment culture, whose fundamental pillars are the fight against dependence, the achievement of autonomy and the promotion of individual responsibility". Within this individualising framework: "the depoliticization of employment goes hand in hand with the politicization of subjectivity".

If Crespo and Serrano elucidate how political and economic fragility gets transformed into personal vulnerability under current political and economic conditions in the European Union, McLaughlin illustrates the way the institutionalization of vulnerability within social policy, and the adoption of a therapeutic sensibility within wider society, goes hand in hand with the de-politicisation of social struggles (miners in UK) and immigration policy. As part of the therapeutic turn, McLaughlin also details how the overlap of both ends of the left/right political divide has contributed to the replacement of Politics by a "therapeutic politics" (with a small p).

If these three interrelated examinations of psychologisation entail a critique on psychology, then it is clear that there are but two possible conclusions envisioned: It might be argued that, apart from an ill-guided overflow of psychology within science, culture or politics, there can still be a positive place for psychology; or, in contrast, the verdict could condemn psychology as an obsolete theory and praxis that should be eradicated. However, as we learn from the contributions in Part II, such bipolarity may conceal other positions in-between.

This is certainly the case with Van De Veire who, drawing on critical sociological analysis of contemporary psychologically invested culture (Adorno, Lasch), suggests that social conventions and ceremony might protect us from further psychologisation, and prevent us from more direct domination or "naked brutality" because: "the attempt to adapt to a presupposed norm is not the effect of a strong authority; it is the result of a lack of figures that symbolize that authority. Without the symbolic assumption of authority, the subject endlessly speculates about what the Other desires from him— a speculation which is the essence of psychologisation." A similar logic is pursued in Gómez's attempt to: "track down in Badiou's thinking some critical elements for the de-psychologisation of love and sexuality and, at the same time, to make explicit some important strategies that both Badiou and Lacan apply to de-psychologize both philosophy and psychoanalysis".

Psychologisation and, by extension, psychology may be conceptualised as an outcome, a central feature of neoliberalism or, alternatively, as a process rather than a steady condition— insofar as being in a psychologised milieu does not entail being fully psychologised or being the only play in town. The final two papers in this issue pose and debate the issue of psychologisation in these terms. Madsen & Brinkmann argue that psychologisation has become such a pervasive phenomenon that it is practically no longer feasible to speak of psychologisation as: "something distinct from other systems of meaning that can be subjected to critique". The current ubiquity of psychology, the authors continue, makes it harder, "to detect, problematise, and criticise" it and that: "even the questioning of the lack of alternatives itself is a result of psychologisation." Nevertheless, the authors continue, the fact that psychologisation has become a normative theory under neoliberal government means that one should be more optimistic regarding future rebellions against it.

The dispersal of psychological discourse has also legitimized specific notions of emotions and the emotional society as major inflections of current psychologising logics, despite some of the contradictions it leads to. As Marc De Kesel's notes, the discourse on emotions: "acknowledges that, as subjects, we are free and independent […] At other moments, the same discourse acknowledges our freedom to be the product of an objective, determinant logic denying a proper status to subjectivity." In this way, the argument follows, by "listening to our 'emotions', we hear speak our true 'self,' as the pop-psychological credo runs".

By establishing a parallelism between Lasch's cultural critique of psychologisation and the Flemish novelist Paul Boon's recreation of "psychological untruthful stories", De Vos raises the point of whether these kind of cultural critiques and literary strategies demonstrate that the discipline of psychology "is inadequate and structurally failing, or be it that the late-modern human being itself has reached a position beyond the psychological". De Vos contends that these critical attempts, which draw upon psy resources while trying to depart from psychologising logics (or meta-psychologisation), entail accepting that: "late-capitalism is the expropriation of subjectivity […] where the subject is robbed of its subjective abyss, as this is filled by the signifiers, the imagery and the forced upon roles of the psy-sciences, that its subjectivity is 'ghouled' upon by late-capitalism".

In a similar regard, Mentinis considers the pro and cons of the various conceptualisations of psychologisation, whilst analyzing the possibility of a revolutionary psychology by focusing on two forms of psychologisation regarding the Zapatista movement among commentators against and pro it. Mentinis claims that however much connivance it has with neoliberalism: "psychologisation needs to perform continuous operations, not only in order to simply re-establish itself— to make itself present— but also in order to depoliticise and colonise actions that escape it". This processual understanding of psychologisation means that: "there is always something that escapes psychologisation: that there is resistance, and resistance is politics, even when, on occasion, it is mixed with pseudo-

psychological jargon". Mentinis, finally, suggests that the task consists of working towards: "a kind of psychology that de-psychologises itself and aligns with radical politics. This will not be an alternative psychology, nor will it be a new radical discipline; on the contrary, it will be revolutionary psychology as a process, as a radical repertoire of action that aims at the disappearance of psychology in its present form". The key aspect, then, as Mentinis notes, is not simply resisting the psychologist of our own life and position within it, but also engaging in the destruction of certain state structures, or disengaging aspects of life from the state and psy-science's grip.

Are we lost in psychologisation? Is there no outside of psychology and psychologisation? These are questions and dilemmas that are shared by the contributors in this issue, whether they focus on the foundations and exemplifying logics of psychologisation and the legal and institutional bases (Part I), or envisage strategies and actions to render visible the socio-political investments behind psychologisation processes (de-psychologised) as a powerful syntax of neoliberal language (Part II). The debate is still open. Each of the articles in this issue can be classified as an attempt to realize a critique of psychologisation beyond its deadlocks.

PART 1

DISCIPLINARY, LEGAL AND SOCIOCULTURAL OVERFLOW: FROM PSYCHOLOGISM TO PSYCHOLOGISATION

Psychologised life and thought styles

Fernando Álvarez-Uría, Julia Varela, Ángel Gordo and Pilar Parra

Introduction

Today, when the old world which arose from the Second World War is disintegrating and we are once again very much aware of the "social question", i.e. the possibility of our societies breaking up, and of uncertainty and fear, some caring professions, such as medicine, psychology and social work, have come to play an important role in tackling our problems and concerns. A frequent reaction to hostility in the outside world is for people to take refuge inside themselves, i.e. they resort to "psychologisation". This refers not so much to an independent individual, who feels unique and sure of his individuality, or a person with mental problems who goes to a therapist's office, as to "a process of establishing in the interior of the subjective self a kind of underground existence, a soul understood as the source and root of all things, an immaterial vital principle which can be explored and analysed [...] to the extent that the individual's existence is converted into a kind of endless immersion in the depths of the psychological self" (Álvarez-Uría, 2006: 106).

The roots of this process of psychologisation go deep into the characteristic individualism of *homo oeconomicus*, into the person who is a product

of the industrial society. Thus, the development of a psychologised personality appears as the reverse side of a voracious capitalism which turns human beings into goods. In this scenario the search in the depths of the self for a refuge from a hostile world could act as a force to resist the capitalist process of treating people like things. However, this unceasing search also involves abandoning public and social life, i.e. the political space of society as a whole.

Analysing the process of *psychologisation of the self in a society of individuals* thus involves asking ourselves how and why some individuals become detached from their social world. What prompts the creation of this inner space? What social groups does the psychologisation of the self mainly affect and why? And what behaviour, what values and thought styles stem from adopting this lifestyle?[1]

In line with the hypothesis of Norbert Elias (1990/1939) that these processes are not the result of a sudden change in the inner world of the individual, the analysis of these transformations requires us to discriminate between the weight of different institutions and their connection with different processes in the adoption of a lifestyle with differing degrees of psychologisation in contemporary society. To describe some of these interrelationships we considered it useful to analyse, by means of a questionnaire, the *lifestyles* and *thought styles* of students of both sexes studying for degrees in psychology at the Complutense University of Madrid to determine whether the problems of the self[2] influenced their choice of psychology as a career.

When preparing the questionnaire, we attempted to combine Pierre Bourdieu's ideas on *lifestyle* (1998/1979) with those of Mary Douglas on *thought styles* (1998/1996). We consider that the two viewpoints complement and enrich each other, since lifestyles shape thought styles and, in turn, thought styles imply referring to a value system which is manifested in social activity in the form of tastes and consumption, i.e. via judgements concerning values and habits. The close links between the system of social organisation and

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[1] This article is part of the work carried out in a research project (2002-2005) financed by the Spanish Ministry of Education on *La psicologización del yo en la sociedad de los individuos (The psychologisation of the self in a society of individuals)* (Reference SEWC202-014279) and a modified version of two previously published articles: Álvarez-Uría, Varela, Gordo y Parra (2008) y Parra (2007). For other publications produced as part of this research see Gordo (2008), Gordo and Megías (2006), Parra, Arnau, Megías and Gordo (2007) and Varela (2006). On the psychologisation of the social world see also the works by Rose (1990) and Rendueles (2004).

[2] In 2005 a survey was conducted consisting of 83 items to complement field work previously carried out via discussion groups with quantitative analysis. The survey was drawn up and administered to a sample of 412 students of both sexes registered for all five years of the degree course at the Complutense University by the members of the research team: Fernando Alvarez-Uría, Julia Varela and Angel Gordo. Lucila Finkel, lecturer in the Department of Sociology IV, Complutense University, gave assistance and advice on the format of the survey.

the dominant system of categories of thought in a society was established by Émile Durkheim in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1982/1912), but we know little about the correspondence between the socio-professional structure of our societies and the different value systems which coexist with them.

A dimension which is not usually included in questionnaires is the social imaginary of the subjects of the survey, their aspirations, dreams and deep desires, which are to a considerable degree shaped by their working and living conditions, their social position and also by what they expect from their profession. The dreams of psychology students speak not only about their symbolic and cultural capital but also about their material and social circumstances, perhaps more clearly than detailed observations of habits and consumption in mundane day-to-day life.

Pierre Bourdieu (1988/1979) was perhaps one of the first sociologists to refer to strategies of reproduction, practices by which individuals tend, consciously or unconsciously, to preserve or increase their families' assets. These strategies depend on the volume of the three types of capital which constitute a social position: economic capital, cultural capital and social or relational capital.

For her part Mary Douglas (1998/1996] referred to four types of society which constitute a cultural map: firstly there is a hierarchical society which is compartmentalised and competitive; secondly an egalitarian and participative society, thirdly a society of competitive individuals, and fourthly a society of isolated individuals who prefer to avoid oppressive forms of control. Mary Douglas thus established four lifestyles, which she calls *individualist, hierarchical, egalitarian* [enclavist] and *isolated.* In practice these four ideal types, defined by the two axes of participation-competition and individualism-community spirit coincide substantially with the pattern we have proposed for the psychology students, as we shall see below.

However, any profile or categorisation, like that presented here, is still an *ideal type*, in the sense given to the term by Max Weber (1977/1922), so that the prototype of student that we are going to present does not exist. Even though it is our own invention it does not come from nowhere. It has been constructed based on the responses given by the students themselves when voluntarily completing the questionnaire. We thus present an ideal type which has a basis in reality. There is no doubt that not all students will recognise themselves in the figures portrayed here. We will limit ourselves to pointing out some of the main traits found regarding their social origin, socialisation, cultural and political values, and professional profile. At the end of the article we will focus on those students who are most psychologised.

The social origins of psychology students and their families

The average psychology student is a young woman (84.3% of students are women as opposed 15.7% men) and their families come mostly from working-class backgrounds where a certain amount of mobility has been attained through education. The grandparents of the students came to Madrid from rural areas in search of work at the time of the national development plans. Their fathers work full time, most of them being administrative assistants, clerks or middle grade technical staff, followed by manual jobs such as builders, plumbers, etc. Half the mothers are housewives and the other half work full time, the commonest jobs being administrative assistant in an office or in a government department, followed by jobs in the service sector: cleaning, healthcare, looking after children, etc.

The property of the family includes a car and a parking space, a flat and one family in three continues to own a house in their village. A significant percentage also have a second home in the mountains or by the beach (24%). Because of the rapid increase in property prices before the great financial crisis, this makes them feel well off and they are fairly conservative as a result. In fact, the vast majority of students place themselves in the middle class. This is even more evident when the students are asked about their subjective social class as 60% describe themselves as upper-middle class.

Nearly all of their homes contain dictionaries and encyclopaedias but one family in three does not have a library with a minimum of a hundred books, which shows that the cultural capital of a significant percentage of the students' families is somewhat limited. When asked what social mobility they expect to have, compared with the social position of their families, 54.6% answer that they hope to maintain the same social status as their parents, while 42.7% see the profession of psychologist as a clear path for social advancement, even though they are aware of the difficulties involved in finding work after they graduate.

Their ideal family is a modern, democratic family, in which *decisions are negotiated by all its members.* 46% say that they belong to democratic families and almost one third report that in their family *their mother and father exercise authority on a shared basis*. The traditional family, with its strong patriarchal character, is now clearly in a minority. Nevertheless, among these young people there is a strong desire to become independent and have a property of their own. When asked who they would like to live with if they had sufficient means, only 1% say they would live with their parents. The largest proportion (40.8%) would like to live with a partner, and nearly 30% with their husband or wife and children, which implies a strong desire for independence and professional stability, goals which are not easy to achieve given the saturation of the labour market and the current precarious employment scenario.

Nevertheless, these students are aware that we are witnessing a major transformation of the social world and that new forms of family are emerging, as demonstrated by the new law on homosexual marriage approved during the first legislature of the present socialist government. For these young people the family is still "a haven in a heartless world", as it was defined by the American historian Christopher Lasch (1984/1977; see also Sloan, 1996), and even more so, if possible, after the financial crash. Even so, in 12.4% of their families conflict predominates (7.3%) or families have become just a physical space for living together where each person goes their own way (5.1%). Curiously, broken families are over-represented among male students, who are also more highly psychologised.

Culture and social value system

The activities the students engage in apart from studying include, in descending order of importance, walking round the city, smoking, listening to the radio, listening to modern music, watching TV and video films, reading novels, reading newspapers, dancing, doing sports, going out for a drink and going to the cinema. Relatively few do voluntary work, take drugs (70% report that they have never tried them), listen to classical music, attend concerts or go to the opera, play a musical instrument, buy lottery tickets, read poetry, read non-fiction books, read comics, write poetry, keep a diary, go to the theatre, go to exhibitions, travel abroad or go to church. The students could, therefore, be described as modern and "European", coming mostly from lower middle-class families, with limited cultural backgrounds, but motivated by a strong vocation.

In their choice of novels the boys prefer adventure stories, while the girls like romantic literature. And a significant proportion (63%) says that they like horror stories. The films they prefer are psychological dramas and suspense and those they are least interested in are westerns, followed by war films, especially in the case of the girls. Their favourite music is pop, followed by Latin and rock. What they like least is *bacalao*, zarzuela, opera, flamenco and classical music. Their favourite painter is Dalí, followed by Van Gogh and Goya.

Regarding food, the vast majority prefer Spanish cooking, with Italian in second place. "Grandmother's traditional cooking" is popular but so too are tapas and around 2% reports that they are vegetarian, a similar number to those who choose McDonald's-style fast food.

When questioned about their values, the students are in favour of homosexual marriages (81.8%) and even more in favour of divorce (96.6%) and sexual equality (96.8%). They are against the war and subsequent occupation of Iraq (94.2%), in favour of common-law couples (89.3%) and in favour of free sex (85%), the sharing of household chores between

men and women (98.5%), euthanasia (84.7%), and abortion (76.7%). They are massively against the sale of arms (96.8%), compulsory religious education in secondary schools (73.8%) and the financing of the Church by the State (76%). However, a similar number approve of public financing of NGOs.

A majority, albeit smaller, of students (58.5%) believe in a secular society. They are in favour of regulating immigration (82.5%), and when asked about the rights of citizenship of immigrants, specifically their right to vote, 63.8% are in favour. However, 53.2% are in favour of taking measures against illegal immigration.

Students exhibit a high degree of awareness of problems such as terrorism and are in favour of tough measures to combat it. Although a majority (78.2%) are against the death penalty, a high proportion is in favour of life imprisonment for terrorists (74%).

41.7% are in favour of the European constitution, although a substantial number are indifferent (37.1%). Nearly 70% reject the privatisation of public enterprises and they are firmly in support of a social state as 90.5% defend a guaranteed minimum income for all. However, from their responses there is no clear indication what the sources of financing for this income are to be, as 72.6% are also in favour of reducing taxes. 98.3% are in favour of job-sharing and 56% are against cutting back on social policies.

In their opinion the main problem for young people today is housing, followed by unemployment, precarious work, and drugs. Once again their strong desire for independence is confirmed, linked logically to work and housing. When asked what the main cause of common crime is, the majority answer that it is *the environment in which criminals move*, although the girls are more aware of problems in family circumstances, the permissive legal system, exploitation and poverty. To fight crime, which they perceive as the result of a kind of *differential association* of aggressive gang members, they propose combining policies for prevention with custodial sentences designed to provide effective mechanisms for convicts to re-enter society.

What they value most is family life (52.9%), followed by their profession, as social and professional success together with intellectual development come in second. A majority of students also consider society and social issues important, declaring that they are prepared to *work to achieve a fairer society*. However, a significant percentage of students (around 14%) are very interested in discovering their own inner world and below we shall be looking more closely at this group, which we have described as *psychologised*.

Choice of profession and professional socialisation

Slightly over half the students chose Clinical Psychology, followed at a considerable distance by those who decided to specialise in Social Psychology (11.7%), Occupational

Psychology (10.7%), Educational Psychology (3.2%), and Cognitive Psychology (2.4%). Why did they choose these areas? The clearly dominant response is altruistic: *because it lets me help others to solve their problems* (40.4%). The difference between boys and girls in this matter is significant, almost 12 points. Especially in girls, the reason for making this choice correlates with the function most of them attribute to their future profession: *"serving people"* (59.5%). The large group giving this reason is followed by those who say they chose it because they want to *make a contribution to understanding and improving society* (19.4%). This opinion also ties in with the second function they attribute to the profession of psychologist: *helping to build a more democratic and integrated society* (23%). This social, progressive dimension coexists with another which we may call psychological, individualistic and centred on the self, which is the position of around 15% of the students, expressed in the form of a certain personal psychological unease.

It is indicative that nearly twice as many boys as girls state that they chose the profession because *it enables me to know myself better and achieve personal fulfilment*. It is interesting to note that to solve their problems they turn first to their friends, followed by their families, but only 5% are prepared to go to a psychologist. They attribute success mainly to their hard work, motivation and ability to choose (59.2%) and, much less, to their family and educational background (20.9%). Even fewer believe it stems from social relationships (12.9%). Psychology students consider that the main cause of failure at school is the student's lack of commitment to study, another instance of individual explanations being given more weight than social explanations.

This emphasis on individualism and meritocracy could perhaps be explained by the importance they attribute to their own hard work to get to university and pass exams. Most see their studies as a personal promotion from their social origins, which may involve a change in class from their family and cultural background. They sometimes try to compensate for this by asserting the psychological self.

We have already mentioned that most students choose to specialise in Clinical Psychology. For this reason we included in the questionnaire a series of items designed to determine their concept of health, mental illness, psychotherapy and personality. They consider that personality *is shaped by the social conditions in which the subject lives* and that it is also *the result of interaction with others*. Only a small percentage attributes the development of the personality to *systematic work on oneself* (9.2%). They think that the main factor causing mental illness is childhood trauma and lack of affection, followed by a poor social and emotional environment, with hereditary factors in third place. The therapies in which they have most confidence are psychological therapies, followed by traditional medicine. The future psychologists disapprove of self-treatment and self-medication and interference by unqualified individuals, especially faith healers and medicine men. However, nearly 18% are in favour of natural remedies, homeopathy and oriental therapies.

The future psychologists are predominantly rationalists, but some answers reveal the presence of irrational attitudes which clearly contradict the scientific nature of the profession: 36% claim to believe in contact with the spirit world, 33% believe in telepathy, 24% in fortune telling, 23% in the existence of angels, 22% in reincarnation, 23% in chiromancy, and 18% in witchcraft, possibly recalling the rural origins of their parents, 16% in communication with extra-terrestrial life, 9.7% in the existence of devils, etc. A third of the students try to make this type of magical-mythical belief compatible with the scientific thought which characterises their academic discipline.

Their interest in *occult science* and *pseudo-science* not only reflects a certain liking for the irrational but also responds to a need to encompass paranormal phenomena within psychological codes, thus extending the profession's scope of action.

When trying to deal with a something that worries them or a personal problem only 5% of the students would go to a psychologist, although it is significant that the percentage grows as one goes down the social scale, suggesting that students from a more modest social background are the ones who identify most with the profession. The percentage of boys who would go to a psychologist is slightly higher than that of girls, although there are also more boys than girls who try to deal with their problems on their own, this percentage also increasing as one goes down the social scale.

Sociability and authority: the social and political world of the students

Based on a variable for sociability, ranging from individualistic and introverted to sociable and extroverted, combined with a variable for authority, ranging from in favour of established authority to oppose to all forms of authority, we have been able to identify four main groups of students. On the one hand we find two moderate groups who accept the patterns of established culture: the liberal, individualistic and introverted, and the social democrat, sociable and extroverted, both in favour of established authority. On the other hand we have two radical groups which, parodying Mary Douglas (1998/1996), we could say have adopted the negative diagonal: the outsider, individualistic and introverted, opposed to all forms of authority, and the libertarian (we could say communal or social libertarian, to differentiate them from the outsider), who is sociable and extroverted and opposed to all forms of authority.

We use the term *outsider* to refer to the student who lives outside the social scheme and is engrossed in his or her inner world. We can represent the four groups in the following table:

	Established culture	Counter-culture
Individualistic	liberal	Outsider
Communitary	social democrat	social libertarian

The vast majority of psychology students interviewed were sociable and extroverted (63.3%) and in favour of established authority (66.5%) but, while there are more individualists as one goes up the social scale, the number of those who are opposed to all authority decreases as one goes up the social scale.

The questionnaire also asked students to define themselves with respect to the following four lifestyles: *traditional-conservative, libertarian-individualist, competitive-liberal* and *participative-socialist*. The results were as follows: 10.7% of the students, with the percentage of boys almost double that of girls, defined themselves as *traditional-conservative*, 7.8%, with a higher percentage of boys than girls, as *libertarian-individualist*, 13.6%, with a higher percentage of boys than girls, as *competitive-liberal*, and 67%, with a higher percentage of girls than boys, as *participative-socialist*.

The type of capital these students value most is relational capital, i.e. social relations and those with family and friends. In second place is psychological capital, understood as inner wealth. In third place is cultural capital, understood as knowledge and academic qualifications; while in fourth place is economic capital, i.e. money. Altruism can thus be seen to prevail over egotism, post-materialist values over the materialism of money.

The majority of students interviewed reported that they were *open, in favour of negotiation, participation and consensus*, although a small percentage (around 7%) define themselves as *competitive and liberal* and 14% as *defenders of their personal world*.

From the political point of view the vast majority of psychology students state that they are *democratic* and *progressive*. Only 3% define themselves as *conservative*. At the other end of the scale 6% define themselves as *revolutionary*.

When asked about forms of government, 55.6% opt for a republic and 39.3% for a constitutional monarchy. 3%, mostly boys, say that they are libertarian. 2.7% say that they belong to the *radical left* and 45.9% of the future psychologists define themselves as belonging to the *moderate left*. 16.7% place themselves in the *centre* and 8.5% consider that they belong to the *moderate right*. Nearly one in four, 25%, claim that they are not interested in politics and define themselves as sceptical, apolitical or anti-political. However, the majority define themselves as democratic and progressive reformist, believing that *a different world is possible*. Democratic socialism, followed at a considerable distance by republicanism, is their main political preference.

They describe our society as predominantly *closed*, although they are aware that it is complex. They consider that we live in a *democratic* society, but one which is relatively *blocked* and *very wasteful, irrational, quite violent* and *uninformed*, a society which is making *slow progress*. The institution they value most highly is the healthcare system, followed by the education system, social security and public transport. Those they value least include the Church, the prison system, the government, parliament and TV. The police and the justice system fare a little better. For these young people the main problems facing the world are social inequality and war, followed by terrorism. Young people who hope to become psychologists define themselves as pacifists, which may explain why they feel a special admiration for Ghandi.

Politics is thus seen as something linked to the world of their parents, the older generation. It would seem that there are few Utopian solutions left and assertion of the individual, reacting to a world which is a problem, at least allows one to keep alive one's belief in the possibility of autonomy for the self.

In search of a psychological self

Who are the students we have defined as outsiders, i.e. those who are most psychologised, and what are they like? Let us look at their distinctive profile in general terms.

Broadly speaking, these students believe in a meritocracy, in personal effort, in commitment to study, which they see as the best way to avoid academic failure. They consider themselves as being primarily responsible if they fail, but in second place they blame teachers whose teaching is boring and not up to date. They are also the group that most often consider *low self-esteem* as a factor in failure. They are thus the group that assign most importance to individual and psychological explanations of academic success and failure.

In fact, two subgroups, clearly differentiated by their different social background, can be detected behind the common and apparently uniform view of psychology as an ideal way to maximise individual ability: on the one hand we have students from lower working-class backgrounds with few professional qualifications; on the other students from the traditional middle classes with limited financial assets and a strong cultural background. The former come mainly from families with a rural background who immigrated to Madrid in the early 1960s and who are now relatively comfortably off. The latter come from the traditional middle class, with many mothers working in teaching.

Their houses often contain libraries of books but rarely dish-washers. They hardly ever have video cameras but often have computers connected to the internet. The distance between parents and children in this group is enormous and they are also those who most

often *don't know* (or don't answer) when asked to give information about their parents. They are the ones who most often think that the family is a social institution in crisis and constitute a majority of the minority who think that *the family should disappear*. In general terms, the group of psychologised students hope to be more successful in economic terms than their parents when they finally become independent.

Their individualism is clearly revealed in that they are the least willing to live with a group of friends. They prefer to live with a partner or, failing this, with their parents, since, despite the difficulties in their relationship, they have succeeded in coexisting with a degree of independence, possible after overcoming serious conflict. Many of their families have pets, perhaps because they help to compensate for shortcomings in affection. The percentage that defines themselves as individualist libertarians is far greater than in the other groups, being three times as high in some cases.

They would like their homes to be decorated in a mix of styles, although this is the group most often choosing an ultra-modern, avant garde style and the group most frequently using the adjective *fantasioso* (fantasising) to define their lifestyle.

We are dealing, then, with students who are creative, who are dreamers, and who often feel alone and misunderstood. They are the group who most often attend talks and choose to live with no fixed residence. This group smokes the least but they consume the most alcohol and soft drugs. The combined effect of alcohol and soft drugs increases their sensation of being different and marginalised. Their independence leads them to work to have some additional income for their expenses. They are the ones who most often attend concerts of music for young people and most often chat on the internet, which is their main means of communication. They rarely read newspapers or watch television but quite often read crime or adventure novels, poetry and books of essays. They hate the romantic novels which are so popular among the communitary libertarians, with whom they share certain major features and whose lifestyles, in line with their anti-authoritarian radicalism, are similar to theirs in many ways.

They are regular readers of comics. They write poems and very often keep diaries in which they reinforce their feeling of being different. They do the least amount of sports and go dancing the least. However, they like the cinema, especially social cinema and horror films. The films they like most are psychological films with a certain ghoulish element. They hate westerns and musicals. On television a programme they particularly like is *Big Brother*, but they dislike sports programmes and football. They often go out drinking and walking round the city, perhaps because this gives them a feeling of freedom. Their favourite type of music is Latin but they also enjoy hip-hop and rap, folk music and rock. They do not like museums. Their favourite painter is Dalí, followed by Van Gogh, artists who were mad or saw themselves as unique.

When they are faced with a choice of photographs, they are the group that most often reject a mother breastfeeding her baby and most often choose a photograph of the palm of

the hand or a potter working with clay. Their ideas are clearly at the opposite extreme to the traditional family represented by their parents, which they see as a failure. Nevertheless, these students do not feel good: they are the group who most often go to the doctor and the psychologist but least often to the dentist. They cannot stand pain or frustration. They are the group who attend church least, 87% never go. Although a small percentage is religious, their religion is mystical, oriental and somewhat pantheistic.

They dislike travelling round Spain and abroad. We could say that their routines are established by moving in very restricted circles. They sometimes help with shopping but never cook or water plants. As there are no dishwashers in their homes, they are the group that most often wash up, but they help least with cleaning the house. They are also the group that most often say they would like to escape to a desert island, like Robinson Crusoe. In their view, culture must leave a wide margin for free personal development, but their choice of a type of cooking is the most traditional: they opt for the safety of *grandmother's cooking*, as opposed to food which is more exotic or culturally distanced and uncertain. They are the group with the most vegetarians.

In politics a considerably higher percentage than the average defines themselves as republican and libertarian. They identify with the most radical left but are the group least interested in politics. They do not see themselves as represented in the present parliamentary spectrum and 30% describe themselves as apolitical. Together with the anarchists, they identify most with the ideas of the anti-globalisation movements and the slogan "Another world is possible". Their favourite political ideology is *democratic socialism*, followed by *libertarian individualism*.

The institutions most highly valued by these students are the healthcare system, followed by the education system and the courts of justice. We have described them as *outsiders* but they could also be described as *engrossed*, as they seem to be enclosed in an inner world of their own. A curious and apparently contradictory detail is that they value the prison system more highly than other groups but value the church and the police least. They are also those most in favour of the death penalty and most opposed to nationalism. They are most in favour of combating illegal immigration and least in favour of banning uncontrolled drinking in public places.

From these indicators we may conclude that they feel uneasy inside a kind of threatened individualism. They are alone and do not feel protected or safe, only having the assertion of their identity. They thus cling to their perception of themselves as different and, although they do not respect authority, they want authority to provide complete protection from the dangers that surround them.

The *outsiders* are the most secular students, the most opposed to the funding of grant-assisted schools and the most sensitive to social inequality and the threat of climate change. The politician they value most is Ghandi, followed by La Pasionaria.[3] They are also the most ardent supporters of homosexual marriage, abortion and divorce, and most strongly in disagreement with the current project for a European Constitution. They defend the right of immigrants to vote and a high percentage (74.5%) disagrees with the financing of the Church by the State. They are also the group most in disagreement with NGOs and more flexible working practices. They are the greatest defenders of secularism, sexual equality and the liberalisation of drugs.

They come from working-class or middle-class families, who share the belief that work is the basic way to structure an identity. They are sensitive to the problems of poverty and social exclusion and defend the protective role of the social state, although they share an interest in natural medicine and homeopathy with those supporting the counter-culture. In line with certain currents in critical psychology, which would move on from the study of the individual to a marked interest in spiritual topics, they believe most in reincarnation, chiromancy and telepathy. They describe themselves as idealistic, ecological pacifists. They are the least inclined to believe in predestination and life after death, but the most willing to accept communication with extraterrestrial life, possibly because they have difficulty communicating with the inhabitants of this planet who surround them.

Young *outsiders* are not prepared to renounce their self or leave their future in the hands of fortune-tellers. In their lives they give priority to developing *the self-control which allows me to discover my inner self*. They are aware that personal success comes from effort, motivation and the ability to choose, but also from *luck*, knowing how to take advantage of opportunities. Perhaps because they are a little lost in their loneliness, they value relational capital above all, followed by psychological and cultural capital. Economic capital is in last place. They defend their personal world, their atheism, their militant agnosticism. They value their friends highly because they have few. And, despite the conflicts in their families, they also value family life. Most of these young people, aged around twenty, have chosen to specialise in Clinical Psychology. They see mental illness as being mainly the result of *adverse social and emotional circumstances* and believe that the psychologist is above all *a professional who helps others.*

[3] Historical leader of the Spanish Communist Party, who played an important role during the Second Republic and the Civil War.

Cultural contradictions: life and thought styles

If we return to Mary Douglas' classification, the dominant lifestyle among the psychology students we interviewed is *egalitarian* [enclavist], which she defines as "against formality, pomp and artifice, rejecting authoritarian institutions, preferring simplicity, frankness, intimate friendship and spiritual values" (Douglas, 1998/1996: 59). Douglas' thesis is that a type of culture corresponds to each social world, each form of social organisation, so that the different cultures compete with each other in the social space to achieve greater acceptance than the others. However "a person cannot belong to two cultures at the same time for long" (Douglas, 1998/1996: 96).

The students we have called psychologised are referred to by Mary Douglas as isolates and she sees them as culturally close to the dissidents. Merton (1938), on the other hand, calls them retreatists and places them near the rebels.4 When defining their respective groups that are isolated from the social world, neither Mary Douglas nor Merton seem to have perceived the dimension that gives greater weight to the inner world largely because the members of the group cannot easily become part of the social world. However, their analyses are an important part of the basis for our scheme. We could go even further and explain the process of psychologisation as an inverted form of the process of deviation analysed by Merton. It should be remembered that for Merton deviant conduct arises when, given certain cultural goals, such as economic success, individuals do not have the institutional means to achieve these goals and have recourse to irregular methods, i.e. processes of social deviation. In the case of the psychologised students a similar process takes place but one which is inverse with respect to those who behave in a deviant manner. As their cultural goals differ from the goals of the dominant culture and they do not accept conventional methods for achieving these goals, they are *marginalised*, live *engrossed* within themselves and reduced to their psychological self, a self they interiorise and psychologise, giving it limitless depth, creating an abysmal inner world which denies the outside world and replaces it to a considerable extent. Lacking relational and material support, the students lock themselves into their own symbolic and cultural world. Within this process the psychological codes themselves would reinforce a whole lifestyle and thought style.

Robert K. Merton (1978/1938) was interested in showing that some social structures lead people to adopt conformist or non-conformist behaviour depending on whether there

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[4] The American sociologist Robert K. Merton (1938) is the creator of a brilliant description of five different types of adapting to the established culture, which he refers to as *conformist, innovator, ritualist, retreatist* and *rebel*.

is dissociation or not between the aspirations prescribed by a culture and *the socially structured paths for achieving these aspirations*. In the case of the education of the future psychologists, the analysis of their professional socialisation, following the trends which develop as they go from the first school year to the last, shows one important fact: the students become increasingly pragmatic, i.e. more conservative and more individualistic, more retreatist and psychologised. As they come closer to exercising their profession, they try to adapt to the socially dominant image of the helping professional that intervenes in the framework of a personalised service relationship. The *retreatists* are in society but they do not form part of it (Merton, 1978/1938: 96-97).[5] For her part Mary Douglas observes that the number of *isolates* grows as employment becomes more precarious: "if casualization of labour were to increase and temporary staff came to outnumber permanent employees in the population, a higher proportion of the community would be located in that cultural niche" (Douglas, 1998/1996: 187-188). Mary Douglas includes *beggars and tramps* among the *isolates* but also people in high positions, such as the members of the royal family.

However, as we have already pointed out, neither Mary Douglas nor Robert K. Merton perceived the possible role in this cultural setting of psychologisation as a lifestyle and thought style, as an active affirmation of a way of separating oneself from the world and becoming independent of it. Yet, is this separation from the world, putting social structures and social dynamics between parentheses, not the very condition which ensures the success of professionals in the field of psychology, i.e. freeing the social system and the institutions that maintain them from all responsibility for people's psychological problems and suffering? The *outsiders*, while in a minority, point to the advance of a psychological culture extending through society to take in everything from great disasters to minor disturbances of the self. But they also embody the great contradiction which constrains clinical psychologists: they help those who suffer but absolve society from all responsibility for causing this suffering. How can this contradiction be overcome? In the case of the psychology students, there is the possibility of an alliance of the *outsiders* with the *dissidents* and the *social democrats*, which could bring about a cultural change, beginning with a change in the space where future psychologists socialise, the faculties of psychology. In this sense the role of teaching staff would be fundamental. Progress towards a culture of solidarity would not only help to create a climate which brought together the professional socialisation of the future psychologists and the altruism of the students but would also create better conditions for psychological know-how and science to leave the ivory tower

[5] Merton includes the following in this category: psychotics, autists, pariahs, outcasts, vagrants, chronic drunkards, and drug addicts.

in which they seem to have taken up residence. The result would also be closer and more thoughtful links between the future psychologists and the real demands of a society made fragile by the forces of financial capitalism and the crisis in employment.

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Psychologisation processes viewed from the perspective of the regulation of healthcare professions in Spain

Roberto Rodríguez López

Abstract

This study follows on from others based on a genealogical perspective of psychologisation processes and mechanisms (Varela, 1997; Álvarez-Uría, 2005; Gordo, 2006; Parra, 2007; Álvarez-Uría et al. 2008; Álvarez-Uría and Varela, 2009). Our analysis focuses on the impact of the current legal transformations taking place in Spain in public health professions. Firstly, we briefly outline an analysis of the discursive structure of the Spanish social psychology of conflict, as this will help us to describe our understanding of the concept of "psychologisation". The link between both topics will allow us to illustrate the new discipline and legal inflections of those processes.

Key words: Ley de Ordenación de las Profesiones Sanitarias (LOPS) [Healthcare Professions Act], social psychology, psychologisation

Psychologisation: discipline and legal aspects

The so-called Ley de Ordenación de las Profesiones Sanitarias (LOPS) "Healthcare Professions Act" (hereafter LOPS) is an act which was passed in Spain in 2003, and which has regulated professionals in this field, and the activities of healthcare training centres thereafter. The act's importance lies in the strong opposition it fuelled among Spanish psychology practitioners and academics, whose demands are also an important aspect of our analysis to elucidate psychologisation processes in operation. Prior to this analysis, however, we will operationally define our understanding of "psychologisation", which derives, by in large, from a previous study we conducted on the discursive structure of the social psychology of conflict in the Spanish state. For the purposes of this study, citing Parker (2008, p. 74), we understood that we "might assume that those on the more <social> side of the [psychological] discipline would be more sympathetic to social explanations". And in the same way as he did, we saw that "this is not the case".

We identified dynamics that significantly reduced conflicts to mental (and emotional) processes, which individuals use to interpret them. Therefore, conflict was constantly moving towards spaces considered 'psychic' (chiefly perceptive, cognitive and/or communicative), which does not necessarily imply that they are only personal or individual. The insidious side of the psychosocial approach to conflict makes excessive use of replacing certain social problems by the way in which we subjectively internalise or understand them. Material demands expressed in certain social actions can, thus, be redefined as mere psychosocial 'vulnerabilities', and, at the same time, social conflicts themselves are analysed on the basis of interpretative mistakes or communicative deficiencies among the parties. Therefore, the uneasiness that leads to conflict might not be derived from a physically prompted situation (job insecurity, disciplinary measures, low wages, excessively long working hours, etc.) but subjectively created or felt. Consequently, we come across phrases such as: "complaints are *badly tolerated* working conditions" (Munduate and Martínez, 1998, p. 45) regarding the analysis of conflicts at an organisational level. Or, the usual reference in the discipline to the famous UNESCO phrase: "since war begins in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed" (e.g.: Alzate, 1998, p. 78). This phrase provides us with a perfectly clear image of the scope aspired to by the majority of the social psychology of conflicts.

By turning 'psychic' aspects into the privileged space of causality, development and/or elimination of conflicts, social psychology prevents individuals from understanding the historical and political positioning of their own actions. Psychologisation, therefore, is the increasingly widespread recourse to individuals' own internal entity to offer explanations and guide actions in a wide variety of social situations; studying it is thus highly relevant for understanding our social reality. This recourse cannot be viewed as neutral, since it

expands, as required, at the expense of the fragmentation of our social relationships and understanding of the material elements influencing our behaviour. In this respect, it is also important to emphasize the connections between disciplinary discourse and the social or political reality in which it originates or is applied. In our case, the former were legal changes that fully affected the field of psychological practice.

From the discipline-discursive field to the professional field of psychologisation: healthcare psychology

By investigating professional psychology operating within the field of healthcare, we are able enable to observe psychologisation mechanisms in the strategic framework of psychological discipline and legislation.

As we shall demonstrate in due course, the LOPS— which was passed in Spain in 2003— suggests new forms of psychologisation in healthcare and the therapeutic side of discipline. Moreover, its interest lies, not only within the 'psychosocial' subfield, but also within the social "conflict" accompanying this legal transformation in the general field of psychology, prompting a large number of demonstrations and protests by professionals, lecturers, and university students. This 'uneasiness' in the discipline of Spanish psychology was the most intense since the 1980's, when the 'Psychiatric Reform' (BOE –Official Gazette of the Spanish State-, 1986) was passed.

The question about whether psychology is a healthcare profession or not, and whether university psychology courses are healthcare training, reopens the old debate which makes it difficult to insert psychological perspectives into the biological and social community sphere.

The reality of the institutional 'healthcare' field of psychology fluctuates, from a historical point of view, in the difficult space between the biomedical and psychiatric concept of illness, and a more 'sociological' approach, which had been demanded back in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly due to the establishment of anti-psychiatry (Álvarez-Uría, 1983; Álvarez-Uría *et al*, 2008).

We are, thus, dealing with current legal transformations of the regulation of professionals and healthcare training centres, with a historical logic that takes us back to the time of the 'Healthcare Reform' (1986), and the fierce debates regarding the broad understanding of the aetiology of mental health and mental illness that took place in the preceding decades (Desviat, 1994).

An important debate at that time centred on the need to view mental illness from a more social community perspective, and professional conduct as a result. This implied carrying out a fundamental transformation in psychological institutions, shifting attention

from mental hospitals, and, above all, from psychiatric intervention to frameworks which inserted therapy within the community (understood as social, local or sectoral). This was an especially important moment because psychopharmacology was also beginning to be an extremely 'effective' tool in the treatment of mental illness. All these issues shared a common political background: the transition from General Franco's dictatorship to a democracy. Consequently, the 'Healthcare Reform' coincided with the years when PSOE (the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) was in power— 1986 being the year when the party won the elections for the second time running. By this time, the party had also united the vast majority of the Spanish socialist movement, consolidated its abandonment of Marxist theories, and shifted towards a social democratic ideology. Finally, this was also the year when Spain signed the Treaty of Accession and joined the EEC.

Various strikes and demonstrations by mental health professionals (many of whom had joined either the Communist Party or PSOE) demanded the communitarisation of psychiatric care, as a necessary mechanism for state social improvements to be put into practice in this field. But the delay in the process merely highlighted the supposedly progressive tendency of the left party in power. Given this situation, we can also question the extent to which this 'Healthcare Reform', implemented in the *Ley General de Salud* (General Health Act) in 1986, was in fact a legal change that responded to communitarisation demands, or whether it was a break away from effective community mental health treatment dynamics, which had in actual fact been developing during the years prior to it (García, 1995; González Duro, 1987).

This historical overview will help us to properly contextualise the main elements of our analyses, regarding, both, the current situation, and the conclusions we have reached.

A case study: the LOPS

The 44/2003 LOPS (Healthcare Professions Act) (BOE, 2003a), which came into effect on 23 November 2003, and Royal Decree 1227/2003, of 10 December the same year (BOE, 2003b), transformed the legal regulation and authorisation of the various professional fields, and Spanish state and private healthcare centres and services. The LOPS was a direct response to a "situation with virtually no regulations" (BOE, 2003a, p. 41443), which seems to have been the result of the 14/1986 'General Health Act' (BOE, 1986) insofar as it took as its main reference the free practice of healthcare professions, but not their regulation. Concomitantly, it also concerned adaption to the legal framework of the European Community, due to the directives on reciprocal validation among Member States of the European Union of diplomas, certificates, and other degrees for the practice of healthcare professions. Similarly, professional healthcare practice was legally re-

stricted, since the activity conditions were also regulated, and the functional aspects of the various healthcare professions were established, for which they tried to guarantee specific professional training.

Article 2 of the LOPS states two criteria to determine which professions are recognised as healthcare professions (BOE, 2003a, p.41444):

1. Those professions which university regulations recognise as degrees in the health field.
2. Those professions which have an association recognised by the authorities.

According to the first criterion, the following are directly recognised as healthcare professionals: those in possession of a degree in Medicine, Pharmacy, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine; those with a diploma in Physiotherapy, Nursing or Speech Therapy, among others; as well as those with vocational training qualifications in a wide variety of areas, such as Dietetics, Laboratory Clinical Diagnosis, Radiotherapy, etc. Similarly, article 6.3 also recognises those in possession of an "Official Title of Specialist in Health Sciences" as healthcare professionals at a degree level— an area mainly reserved for psychologists, chemists, biologists and biochemists.

Here is where the main conflict generated by the LOPS in relation to psychology lies. Placing a university degree in psychology within the 'Social and Legal Sciences' category, instead of classifying it as 'Health Sciences', means that psychology graduates are not directly recognised as healthcare professionals. They, therefore, made a justified request for a psychology degree to be moved to the Health Sciences category: a 'simple' administrative change that became a central issue given the key role of this classification in the very definition of 'healthcare profession' offered by the LOPS. Otherwise, these graduates would only be recognised as healthcare professionals and be able to practice as such by being in possession of the 'Official Qualification of Psychologist Specialised in Clinical Psychology'. As a result, not only did future psychologists see their possibilities of practising within the healthcare domain reduced, but, in addition, a large number of them, who were already working in this field without any problems, were now thrown into a precarious situation of legal uncertainty.

On the other hand, the LOPS only provided one way to train specialists (in this case, 'clinical psychology' specialists), which "will take place out by means of the residency system in authorised centres" (BOE, 2003a, p. 41449). 'Clinical psychologist' training was, therefore, established by only one legally accepted way: 'Resident Intern Psychologist' training (known as PIR in Spanish). Psychologists (professionals, lecturers, and students) based their demands on the scant number of PIR posts available, and their awareness of the consequences this would have. For example, in 2005, there were 81 vacancies for approximately two thousand candidates (COP, 2005b). This situation was further

complicated by the fact that psychology, as a university degree, had grown tremendously, in terms of the number of both graduate and undergraduate students, since the 1980s. In addition, a large percentage of them— around 65% (Chacón, 2004) — were interested in the specific healthcare training field.

Furthermore, there was the issue of psychology graduates who were already working as professionals in various institutions, whether they provided healthcare or not. Their legal situation was very delicate in view of the centre regulations derived from Royal Decree 1277/2003: if they did not qualify as healthcare professionals, they could even be expelled from Healthcare Centres. A recognition process was implemented for professionals who were already working, and although it did take into account the number of years the professionals had been practising— or their PIR training, or similar—it was criticised for being too slow and excessively restrictive. However, this specialist recognition process emerged as a result of the creation of the 'Official Qualification of Psychologist Specialised in Clinical Psychology' in Royal Decree 2490/1998 (BOE, 1998), and its successive legal modifications, such as Ministerial Order 1107/2002 (BOE, 2002) and Royal Decree 654/2005 (BOE, 2005).

It is important to briefly clarify a couple of issues with regard to the PIR training system. This mechanism was created to allow psychologists regulatory access to providing healthcare in healthcare centres, and it borrowed its main guidelines from the existing systems for doctors, chemists, and biologists (known as MIR, FIR and BIR in Spanish). The first national official PIR vacancies announcement took place in 1993. Royal Decree 2490/1998 (BOE, 1998) was finally passed in 1998, creating the 'Official Qualification of Psychologist Specialised in Clinical Psychology', with PIR becoming the necessary training course to obtain it. The Royal Decree was consolidated in 2002, after the Supreme Court rejected the appeal presented by the Spanish Psychiatry Society, the Spanish Biological Psychiatry Society, the Spanish Legal Psychiatry Society, and the Medical Association General Council. The associations that signed the appeal demonstrate how strong the sense of unity was behind these legal processes. As we will see below, the conflict surrounding the LOPS will better demonstrate this corporate clash.

The psychology sector generally agrees (e.g. González-Blanch, 2009; ANPIR, 2008) that Royal Decree 2490/1998 is one of its most important legal achievements, since it responded to the demands that had started several decades previously, and finally provided the legal integration of psychologists into the National Healthcare System. Both, at that time, and today, the 'Official Qualification of Psychologist Specialised in Clinical Psychology' was/is acclaimed as the gateway for psychologists into the National Healthcare System. However, in the light of the LOPS, it now seems to have become the only narrow concession to have been made to psychology.

As an extensive array of articles and statements document, the years following the LOPS becoming effective were marked by a real social and political conflict of dimen-

sions hitherto never seen within the field of psychology. Similarly, there is a strong accord towards emphasising the eminently critical and fundamental nature of the moment the profession was going through (Santolaya, 2004).

Dissenting voices towards the LOPS began to be raised immediately after the passing of the Act in December 2003; however the general elections on 14 March 2004 delayed the generalised protest of professionals, lecturers, and students, since PSOE—the opposition party at the time, which subsequently went on to win the elections and oust the Partido Popular from power— had promised to modify this Act, which prompted an impasse which would not be settled until November 2004, when everybody thought the promise had been forgotten. It was only then that psychology really started to progress. *Ad hoc* associations (especially 'Group for Psychology and Health') were organised, the student movement sprang into action at various faculties around the country (information talks, manifestos, sit-ins, etc.), autonomous community and state Official Psychology Associations coordinated communiqués, whilst Deans from Psychology Faculties expressed their disagreement in different ways: official communiqués, press releases, specialised journals, etc. Ultimately, these movements culminated in a mass demonstration— around 15,000 people, according to the organisers— on 18 December that same year, which brought together professionals, students, lecturers, and citizens from all over the country.

The current state of psychologisation and its "legalities"

The LOPS is not an isolated event, nor even qualitatively differentiated from the process of legal recognition that has been on-going since the 1970s; psychologists' current demands are very similar to those of the past, and they underline the importance of professional integration into the state healthcare system (Duro, 2004). In fact, the attempt in 1978 to create Clinical Psychology Schools for doctors dependent on the Psychiatry Department of Medicine Faculties (in Salamanca and Valladolid) and on the Clinical Hospital in Madrid, or the aforementioned Supreme Court appeal regarding Royal Decree 2490/1998 made by some psychiatric and medical associations, are part of the same resistance against the professional expansion of psychologists into the health domain.

In this respect, the LOPS' consequences for this particular professional sector did not have to be as catastrophic as psychologists led us to believe. Psychology has developed, and increased, its significance within healthcare since the 1970s, despite lacking important legal recognition. Some even believe that this lack of 'healthcare professional' recognition would not prevent psychologists from carrying out their present practice in healthcare centres (Duro and Martínez, 2004). As far as we are concerned, strong corporatism (psychia-

tric and medical against psychological) defending their own professional corner lies behind all these legal clashes.

However, perhaps the most relevant issues here are the historical transformations of psychologists' discourse of demands, and how they make use of the old debate on the notion of 'health'. Equally important in this regard, is the understanding of the relationship of these variations with the changes that are now taking place at Spanish universities, due to the adaptation to the EHEA (European Higher Education Area).

A key confusion, —which is not groundless— in the LOPS text, has to do with the superposition of 'healthcare' and 'clinic'. It is a recurrent matter in psychologists' demands that this law insists on a bio-medical concept of health instead of a comprehensive bio-psycho-social one. It refers to the traditional WHO definition of 'health', which is a "state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (quoted, among others, in Fernández, 2004, p. 14).

This issue leads us to important differences between the current discourse of psychological protest and 1970 demands, which stressed, among other things, the inclusion of psychology in primary healthcare, and also the differentiation of hospital services when treating mental health. At the same time, these demands derived from a concept of mental health marked by highly comprehensive community-based perspectives, which understood that clinical practice was only one of the many possible ways for psychology to intervene in health. Today, this community-based trend has all but been forgotten, and the political and institutional criticism many participated in has completely disappeared. Although psychologists do still criticise the biomedical model, which is undoubtedly defended by the LOPS, their discourse has now suffered a significant rift, which, paradoxically, was prompted by the fact that the discipline is now more like that model. This is evident, if we take the situation of the clinical psychologists who have gone through the PIR training as an example, and can be espied in the discourse of their most important association: ANPIR (National Association of Resident Intern Psychologists). This group stands in favour of the LOPS, because they believe that this act has emphasised the importance of rigorous training in the way psychology acts within healthcare. They also consider, as do many others— mainly clinical psychologists— that having a psychology degree is not sufficient training for the field of healthcare. For them, the main problem is the scant number of PIR places offered.

The basic issue is not the number of places, but rather having the PIR as the only available mechanism, because it clearly integrates psychologists within the prevailing biologicist model, since practical PIR training is carried out in hospitals and is heavily psychiatric. Having said this, the coming into effect of the 'Official Qualification of Psychologist Specialised in Clinical Psychology could have been not only a considerable milestone in psychology's historical demands, but also its obligatory link with the biological and medical perspective of mental health (Duro & Martínez, 2004). Moreover, the consequences of the

LOPS could likewise increase such adhesion by regulating the private sector as well as the state healthcare system.

This central transformation of psychologists' demands is even more evident when analysing those put forward by Psychology Faculty students, since their main demands are not as linked to the need to reintroduce 'community-based' and 'sociologizing' healthcare advances. Neither do they bring up the necessary debate about the demedicalised concept of mental health; instead, they try to defend their proper clinical training and right to diagnose, treat or even prescribe medicines (Berdullas *et al*, 2005; Muse, 2007; Parker, 2007). Consequently, we should seriously question the *political* nature of this movement, which was obvious in the actions and demands for transformation in the years preceding the 'Reform', since their demands mainly concern the logic of corporate and technical-professional sectors.

University education is especially relevant in this scenario, principally because, as mentioned above, academic syllabuses are now undergoing profound changes since they are being adapted to the EHEA in the 'Bologna Process'. This process, begun in 1999 after European Education Ministers signed an agreement to promote a process of convergence among European university degrees, will, among other advantages, make the exchange of graduates easier. In this new context of university reform, moving psychology degrees from the 'Social and Legal Sciences' classification to the 'Health Sciences' category, is, perhaps, the main demand of those psychologists who understand that a degree in psychology is in fact healthcare training. However, this change, which, given the criteria provided by the LOPS, seemed to be enough to recognise psychologists as healthcare professionals, is not just an administrative change, as some may believe or champion. This change carries with it the demand to adapt psychology syllabuses to a 'healthcare' reality, which again is confused with the 'clinical' sector.

A significant number of clinical psychologists have called for the subjects in the syllabuses to be predominately 'healthcare-clinical', since the obvious disparity of training they offer (psychology of education, social psychology, human resources, etc.) is an argument wielded by the Government itself for not recognising a psychology degree as a 'healthcare' qualification (COP, 2005a). Consequently, the 'achievement' of including the psychology degree within Health Sciences— replete with all the evident advantages this would entail for the professional healthcare practice of psychologists— becomes the perfect excuse to permanently remove the more socio-critical subjects, or those which are not in line with established clinical rules, from the faculties. This is already happening, and the difficulty social or educational psychologists, for example, face in making themselves heard in the main forums of debate on the LOPS is obvious. Moving psychology from its 'Social Sciences' domain to the 'Health Sciences' category, does not just mean turning psychology into a "healthcare" discipline, but also deleting the awareness of the clear social basis of health.

At present, an intermediate route is being negotiated by attempting to recognise a 'Master's Degree in Clinical Psychology", offered in Psychology Faculties, as healthcare training, rather than the degree as a whole. This would, of course, solve the problems of the availability of professional posts for psychologists— derived from the very strict criteria for professional recognition for them— as they would not solely depend on successfully passing the PIR. Furthermore, the hospital-psychiatric 'bottleneck' of this system might be avoided. Nevertheless, it seems clear that it would have absolutely no bearing on the clinical perspective of healthcare. Although it does not prioritise psychiatric training, at least it facilitates highly cognitive-behavioural training, which is the prevailing perspective in Spain. Community and social perspectives are still not included, and neither are other training processes— even clinical ones— which had been supplanted by the university cognitive-behavioural bias. This is the case with psychoanalytic training, which has demonstrated its healthcare capacities, and has been in great social demand all along, regardless of other types of criticism it may receive.

As a result of the above, the LOPS should be understood, in its apparent contradiction, as a manifestation of both the increase and loss of power within psychology. On the one hand, social mobilization allows us to understand the legal process as a reinforcement of medical and psychiatric power in the healthcare domain against the interests of psychology. Nevertheless, the predominant psychologist perspective, after the different alterations it has undergone since the LOPS (Master's Degree, the turning of psychology into a healthcare degree taking advantage of the syllabus changes due to the "Bologna Process", legal regulation of private professional centres, etc.) has reinforced its position as a complement to the medical model, rather than as a real alternative to it. We must not forget that the second criterion for legal healthcare recognition was conditioned by the existence of a professional association recognised by the authorities— an issue without any apparent problems for most psychologists who have a say in the main specialised organisations and media. The aim is to rid the discipline of the various alternative therapeutic options that have arisen in its own field, and which are not involved in the fight for 'scientific' recognition and, hence, do not compete for access to the public professional domain. The importance of this matter shows that this problem is not exclusive to Spain, since it can also be found in other European countries, such as England (Parker, 2008). The English case shows us that disagreements concerning certain categories (in the case of Spain, the 'healthcare' issue; in the case of England, the dispute regarding the social and professional recognition of 'counselling', 'psychologist', and 'psychotherapist) are more than just a titular issue. The recognition that supposedly lay in proven 'scientificity', in some versions of psychological care, was actually finally decided by the state legal recognition of the possibility of professionals publicly offering their services with these labels, so they would have legal and tax protection for their activities.

Conclusion

As we have seen, in social psychological discourses concerning the beginning and resolution of conflicts, the socio-political background disappears. Or, at the very least, it can be left out, as it is the subject of study of other social science disciplines. Consequently, the interest mainly lies in psychic mechanisms through which conflict becomes a matter of perceptions and communications that are rationally mistaken or generate social confrontation.

Nevertheless, we have also seen that the demands of the conflict prompted by the coming into effect of the LOPS, were based on corporate rather than on socio-political questions. Or, phrased otherwise, these demands do not raise the importance of either the debate about the socio-political basis of mental health, or the modification of the institutions or social organisations which could eradicate it. Instead, they prefer to defend the scientific nature of the healthcare — preferably clinical— methods psychology uses, as well as how they adapt to, and are required by, the healthcare domain.

If social psychology no longer needs to refer to the socio-political basis on which conflicts are sustained, could we conceive of a healthcare psychology which asserts the community as the mental conflict resolution ground?

Social psychology will settle conflicts in a psychic space, the *management* place for the way reality affects subjects. Nevertheless, healthcare psychology only sees that space in a tangential manner, since it deals directly with those problems posed by biologicist viewpoints. The terms of the conflict are settled according to the accepted basis of an organicist positivism which, in the light of the 1970 institutional struggles, seemed to have been overcome, or at least critically problematised.

The coming into effect of the LOPS should then be understood in terms of a rebiologisation, which had apparently been overcome, but which, in actual fact, clearly not only affects the medical field, but also psychology and other cultural, and even scientific, fields. Other current transformations in the field of psychology are a good example, such as the proposal to implement the AOTP (Assisted Outpatient Treatment Program) which focuses its healthcare practice on the logic of pharmacologization, and which runs the high risk of the juridification of diagnosis decisions about the mentally ill (Sánchez, 2006). The neurological foundation of the new orientations within social scientific discourse (flux theories, network theories, etc.) could be understood in the same way. If psychologisation is not sufficient to neutralise its social, political and economic principles with action and social reflexivity, then biologisation will, once more, eliminate every trace of them. Understanding today the meaning and social depth attained by the psychologisation process—which has been going on for over a century— implies dealing with the ex-

tent, and specific repercussions, of the perspectives and biologicist mechanisms which are unavoidably related to it.

Furthermore, since the time of the Spanish transition to democracy, psychology has seen its social power increase on a massive scale (Fernández, 2006). Indeed, the number of graduate and undergraduate psychology students has risen spectacularly (González-Blanch, 2004), at the same time as psychology has gained access to an endless number of new professional roles within the fields of business, sport, politics, education, and law. The specific elements of its theoretical analyses have been successfully applied in the field of social sciences. Likewise, the social demands of its interventions, for the most varied of cases, have increased exponentially, displaying clear symptoms of a "pop- psychology" that shows no sign of abating (Caparrós, 2002; Rose, 1996; Varela & Álvarez-Uría, 1986). "Pop- psychology" not only occurs in mental healthcare, but also spreads a psychologised rationality for understanding a huge disparity of socio-political issues: poverty; marginalisation; conflict; social success, and so on and so forth. All this finally leads to political— whether state or not— educational, legal or economic actions, which require the intervention of psychologists— or of some psychological or psychosocial knowledge— in a multifarious range of social domains.

This is how the current controversies concerning the legal-administrative regulation of the educational and professional situation of psychology should be understood. Has psychology properly managed the enormous increase in its practical and professional frameworks? This seems to be a key problem, as it is deeply rooted in the diffuse nature of what is known as 'psychological phenomena', and in the sphere of action where expert knowledge of them enables psychology to put in practice. This is a discipline which has always been implemented and spread as a result of the ambivalence between its 'folk' nature and its struggle for scientific and legal recognition. If, on the one hand, this recognition usually relied on biologizing its theoretical and practical principles, psychologisation and pop-psychology had a huge impact on the demand for its academic training and professional scope. In fact, the latter expanded to such an extent that it was operating without any clear regulation in a vast number of both private and institutional places. The instability and lack of protection of psychological practice in healthcare, could also even be viewed as an inherent element of "psy-disciplines" as a whole (Blanco, 2002), the persistent obstacle to the aim of finding scientific answers for an empty, volatile and constantly changing space.

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The Psychologisation of Work the Deregulation of Work and the Government of Will

Crespo, E. and Serrano, A.

Abstract

Psychologisation is a particular way of constructing the modern individual, for which the technology of a certain type of psychology is essential. Moreover, psychologisation is not only a model for individuals, but also a discursive practice forming and legitimating it. Consequently, individuals can be held responsible for situations out-with their control, in turn, leading to the paradoxical situation whereby a discourse affirms precisely that which it negates. Such paradoxical rhetoric is epitomised in discourse pertaining to the labour market crisis, in particular, we will argue, within the example of flexicurity discourse. This article aims to examine the discourse on flexicurity emanating from one of the most important agencies for the construction, and dissemination of work ideologies, and representations of unemployment in the EU: the European Union institutions. Flexicurity, a mixed notion aiming to reconcile that which appears irreconcilable, is the specific term designating a new political strategy for the management of employment and social security, which, for all intents and purposes, refers to workers' moral duty to participate in the self-regulation of their 'own' life. In this polyphonic production process, antithetical discourses are conjoined in a paradoxical process of meaning. Hence, whilst, at once, being a discourse that regulates will and boosts individuals' capacity to take responsibility for their own life, concomitantly, it also undermines collective resources (both conceptual and institutional), potential mechanisms through which workers could exercise control over the asymmetrical nature of employment situations which make them vulnerable.

Introduction[1]

A central characteristic of modernity, at least as it has been understood in western culture, is the gradual trend towards the subjectivation and autonomization of the individual, in conjunction with the consolidation of a socio-political demand for the individual to become responsible for oneself Although western culture- primarily Jewish and Christian- which is deeply rooted in Greek thought, has, over the centuries, formed a conception of the individual as the centre of moral requirement (Gergen, 1999; Harré, 1999; Foucault, 1987; 1990), modern times, by comparison, have conceptualised the individual in increasingly abstract and secular terms. Indeed, our present epoch is epitomised by a real turn towards the individual and subjectivity, which can be characterised as a process of individualism, or individualization[2].

Concern for the relationship between modernity and individualism has been, of course, a defining feature of critical modern sociological inquiry (Adorno, 1992; Bauman, 2001; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2003; Benjamin, 1973; Fromm, 1974; Habermas, 2008; Jay, 2003). As Giddens (1991:1) says *"Modernity must be understood on an institutional level; yet the transmutations introduced by modern institutions interlace in a direct way with individual life and therefore with the self"*. This idea of the development of modernity being connected with changes in subjectivity, was also researched by Norbert Elias, who entitled one of his best-known works "The Society of Individuals" (and not society opposing or against individuals, as Bauman correctly noted in 2003). Elias returned to this idea in one of his last works "Changes in the I-We Balance" (1990), concluding, that the balance which in the early stages of the development of modern civilization leant towards the "we" side, has now, in the final stages, shifted conclusively to the "I" side.

Individualization is a global process that creates the possibility for new types of individuals to appear. This transformation occurs in a variety of different spheres, and by and large, is typified by, both, a gradual release from community ties, and the production of a new type of individual; one who has rights, who is, in turn, responsible for oneself, and, to a large extent, his own destiny. Within the political terrain, the 'citizen' appears as a new individual, defined through the entitlement of inviolable civil, political and social rights (Marshall, 1998/1950), and by the exercise of freedom (Berlin, 1988/1969; Dumont,

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[1] For this article, the authors have taken into account the conclusions of the project "Qualitative Assessment of Activation Policies: Active and Passive Limits" (R&D&I project of the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science, SEJ2007-64604)

[2] The turn in Kantian epistemology, as the basis of the critique, was considered by Kant himself as a Copernican turn, a radical decentring of the classic perspective of knowledge, and a key term in the process of individualization.

1986). This new individual also becomes increasingly manifest within the intimacy of religion, notably after the protestant reform, as well as in aesthetics (Maravall, 1999).

The individualization process, the gradual autonomization of individuals, whilst, undeniably, having positive ramifications- as evinced in the development of new spaces of freedom, and new networks of solidarity- has not occurred without deleterious effects; in particular, new threats to social subjectivity are a cause for concern, since individualization, for many, can mean pure isolation. As Castel (1995) explicates, there is positive individualism and negative individualism (disaffiliation). Release from traditional social ties can be positive, increasing an individual's autonomy in the management of his own life (as opposed to a collective predestined destiny) in a world in which he has strong links of interdependence, in turn, providing him with a strong sense of security and solidarity. However, one may also experience negative individualism; for example, mere isolation in a network in which the individual does not participate, but, nevertheless, are still held responsible for self-governance. In such instances, individualism becomes political isolation (exclusion of the social relations of interdependence), and, therefore, social vulnerability.

Psychologisation is not, as far as we understand it, equivalent, or consubstantial to individualization. Whereas individualisation is a typical process of modernity, psychologisation, rather, is but one very limited way of *realising* that process of individualization. It is an asocial, or antisocial way of understanding the modern individual. Although individualization is linked to the process of autonomization, and, in turn, to emancipation from community oppression, psychologisation is different; it transforms social problems into individual problems, and personal dilemmas. It is, thus, a specific, systematised practice of constructing the modern individual, for which the technology- to use Foucauldian parlance- of a certain type of psychology[3] has been, and still is, essential.

[3] It is an essentialist and positivist psychology, who's theoretical and ontological premises are founded on a Cartesian myth, according to which, human beings are divided into their observable body located in space, and their intangible internal mind (Crespo, 1995). This method of approaching psychology is based on a "belief in the existence of a reality regardless of the way we access it (…) of their being a privileged method capable of guiding us, thanks to objectivity, to reality just as it is" (Ibáñez, 1996; 329) and a concept of an individual as the "possessor of 'common sense' or 'reason' regardless of their experience" (Elias, 1969/1982).

Psychologisation as Political Production:

From our perspective, psychologisation is a turn in the modern process of subjectivation and autonomization, and, additionally, is archetypal of *one* facet of modern thought (and also *one* type of discursive psychology in practice, which, although hegemonic, is not the only one). It involves, in one respect, an individualization of the social, and, in another, the limited, quotidian contention that the core explaining this individual is psychological processes, understood as processes of an individual, intra-personal and asocial mind.

The psychologised individual is, hence, an asocial individual, for whom the notion of interdependence is secondary. The characteristics- or variables, to adopt the pseudo 'scientific' rhetoric of a certain strand of psychology- determining his behaviour are an effect of exclusively individual processes. As such, explanation of behaviour, and, crucially, the very possibility of intervention and change, occurs merely at an individual level; it is people who ostensibly contain the main determinants of their behaviour and destiny within themselves (attitudes, motivations, values…). This is what has been termed a self-contained individual (Shotter, 1993; 1996), or, as characterized by Norbert Elias (1970) a *homo clausus*. The *homo clausus*- or self-contained individual- is the *homo economicus* of our contemporary socio-political constellation. Indeed, Elias argues that many people feel there is "an invisible barrier [that] separates their 'inside' from everything 'outside' - the so-called 'outside world"' (1970:119). The author considers this is a common, and a necessarily flawed and partial view, one which social sciences, generally, and psychology, notably, have made their own. In contradistinction to prevailing doxa, Elias posits an alternative version of the modern subject, the *homo apertus*, in which the idea of interdependence plays an essential, constitutive role (Newton 1999; Scheff, 2001). In other words, mutual dependence is what makes individual autonomy possible (Ehrenberg, 1995). Psychologisation is not only a model for individuals, but also a discursive practice forming and legitimating it. The discursive practice shaping a moral disciplinary process is constructed as a system of explanations based on attributing causality to events experienced and suffered, and forming unquestioned knowledge.

The attribution of causality is directly connected with the attribution of responsibilities (attributing cause is a way of speaking about attribution of responsibility), and with the legitimation of the various intervention systems. There is a basic distinction as far as the attribution of causality is concerned, which is whether the action can be considered intentional or accidental. The question lies in the fact that certain situations suffered by people, such as, for example, precarity and social exclusion, are transformed discursively by moral discipline into situations which the individual is ostensibly responsible for. Consequently, individuals can then be held responsible for matters out-with their control (i.e. keeping their job), leading to a form of paradoxical discourse affirming exactly what it negates. Or

phrased otherwise, the autonomy and agency of modern individuals is affirmed, precisely as their capacity to control the situation they are suffering is negated[4]. Such paradoxical rhetoric is exemplified in discourse pertaining to the labour market crisis, as will be demonstrated in due course, through our discussion of flexicurity discourse. One important aspect of this paradox inherent within discourse on autonomy and agency, is its weak conceptualisation of the social, through which the personal becomes equivalent to the individual (Butler, 2009). This emphasis upon the individual's responsibilities, not only makes the individual vulnerable, but, moreover, contributes to the depoliticisation of the expression of their unease. Indeed, Ehrenberg astutely observes "it is very difficult to represent the collective in a society where individualization is becoming more pronounced" (1995: 312).

The Psychologisation of Work

The installation of the capitalist production system involved a radical transformation of the existing moral disciplinary system within our societies. The divine manifestation is, after all, patriarchal, and, to a certain extent, human or humanised. God/the father was replaced by the 'invisible hand of the market', since its demands are the result of inexorable laws. The industrialisation process, which would gradually come to characterise the contemporary mode of production, has very precise demands upon the individual, requiring, not only a willingness to work, but also a willingness to be complemented by the machine and rhythm it imposes. The first industrialisation age led to large-scale social and psychological change; poor peasants migrated to the city en masse, thus, becoming proletarianized workers, whereby they were subjected to an intense and difficult programme of psychological discipline. It was a production-oriented disciplinary practice geared towards producing, what Foucault termed, "docile bodies" (Fairclough, 1992:52).

The person who has perhaps best studied this transformational process, of the peasant masses into industrial workers, is Karl Polanyi (2003/1944) in his classic book *The Great Transformation*. Fundamentally, this transformation consisted of converting the workforce into a commodity, governed by some so-called market laws: "but labour, land, and money

[4] The emphasis in this article on the paradoxes which characterise the psychologising discourse of political institutions, in this case, European ones, does not presuppose that workers internalise this dominant doxa acritically. In a recent study on the implementation of these flexicurity-based intervention and guidance devices to combat unemployment, Serrano *et al.* (2010), identify a wide variety of positions users adopt to these devices, which range from doxic adherence to this responsibilising discourse, to the demand for a collectivist representation framework, and include ironic distancing, and the polyphony or cacophonic multiplication of voices.

are obviously *not* commodities; the postulate that anything that is bought and sold must have been produced for sale is emphatically untrue in regard to them." (Polanyi, 2003:122-3). The intention to treat work as a commodity has required, and still requires, the continuous intervention of public institutions, both, to create and maintain it. Since the first industrialisation, this intervention has implied an exercise of coercion, and of physical and moral violence. Such violence was essentially psychosocial in form, since it involved the production of a new type of subject- the industrial workman- and a new type of subjectivity, one which would accept the regularity and rhythm imposed by machines[5]. This transformation of poor peasants into wage-dependent workers was a consequence of complex social engineering, founded mutually upon coercion, through the threat of poverty, and a paternalist moral discourse. Monitoring poverty, and the threat of it as a punishment, was the key element in this disciplinary process of subjectivity. The result of which, was the establishment of new living and thinking habits; work became synonymous with employment, and, in turn, personal dignity, and ethical worth became part of the commitment to the job.

As Boltanski and Chiapello (1999) perspicaciously observe, the establishment of this new order required new ideologies to make not only passive acceptance of the new conditions possible, but also to ensure commitment to the new task to be performed. Inducing such adherence was no easy task, since it involved equating an active life with the typical subordination of salaried work. Liberal discourse- which to a certain extent inherited Enlightenment thought- fulfils this ideological task perfectly, since it emphasises an abstract equality; liberty and autonomy of the individual, naturally moved by passions (individual interest, rational calculation, faith in progress, desire to possess goods, limitless motivation for the desire for earnings and profit, etc.). This discourse is buttressed by a particular conceptualisation of the individual as "a piece of nature isolated and separated from other individuals, and which is driven by its internal determinations" (Bilbao, 1996:78), viewing ordered sociability as the free expression of this nature. The market, therefore, is supported by, and, concurrently, consolidates this ontologizing discourse, since, if individuals are considered free and equal, the only "natural" institution of coordination would be the market (Prieto, 1996).

Moving forward, the capitalist economy of the preceding decades has been characterised by an intensification of moral psychological discipline. Psychologisation, today, is

[5] For Polanyi, as Stiglitz points out, "it is simply wrong to treat nature and human beings as objects whose price will be determined entirely by the market. Such a concept violates the principles that have governed societies for centuries: nature and human life have almost always been recognized as having a sacred dimension. It is impossible to reconcile this sacred dimension with the subordination of labor and nature to the market." (2003: 28).

not so much an issue of passive discipline, but, rather, an intensification of moral self-control. New capitalism is marked by an increased consideration of workers' psychological and moral resources as a key element of productive efficiency; the workforce, essentially, has transformed in discourse into a *human resource*. The discursive moralisation of work is no longer merely a disciplinary discourse identifying salaried work with virtue, on the contrary, the new capitalist discourse, rather, has made it *ethical* to work (Crespo, 2009)[6]. Moral characteristics (attitudes, motivation, social skills and emotional resources…) are thus no longer only considered as prior requirements to work, but as part of work's contents. Or phrased otherwise, such moral characteristics now form, both, part of the qualifications needed to work- sometimes as important as technical qualifications- and, on occasion, as happens with emotional work (Hochschild 1983; Raz, 2002; Garrety *et al.* 2003), they become precisely the main qualification required.

This discourse of new capitalism becomes apparent in many diverse fora. Probably the most expressive, and most studied, is management discourse, since it is, arguably, the most important sphere of ideological production (Fairclough 2000a; 2000b; Muntigl, Weis and Wodak 2000; Alonso 2001; Fernández 2007). With this paper, we are specifically interested in the discourse emanating from one of the most important agencies for constructing, and disseminating work ideologies and representations of unemployment: European institutions.

European institutions' regulating activity in the coactive sense of hard law is minimal, as there is more emphasis on Europeanization processes in a persuasive sense. The government technology illustrating these processes is the, so-called, open method of coordination (OMC)[7], which enables a type of intermediate regulation between legislative regulations, considered inappropriate as they are more rigid, and more flexible forms of regulation (official recommendations, information exchange, identification of best practices, development of structural indicators, joint information, etc.). The idea is to increase the legitimacy of actions at a European level, but at the same time to respect the wide diversity of labour markets in the member states, as well as national regulation systems (Goetschy, 1999). The OMC can be characterised as a "post-regulating" perspective

[6] This moralisation and institutional work on workers' attitudes do not only characterise the 'new capitalism', but they also become a focal point in this stage in disciplinary processes of the workforce.

[7] The Open Method of Coordination was introduced in the Lisbon Strategy to create an open and flexible means of coordination between different levels aimed at solving common problems. This open form of coordination allows for a type of regulation which falls somewhere between more legislation-based regulation, which is considered to be inappropriately inflexible, and more flexible forms of 'soft regulation' (official recommendations, exchange of information, best practice, and national experience, development of structural indicators, joint information).

aimed at establishing procedures rather than detailed and inflexible rules[8] (de la Porte, Pochet & Room, 2001). The interest in studying European proposals derives from the important role these institutions play in the regulation of the social question, particularly, as several authors have noted (Palier, 2001; Walters & Haahr, 2005; Serrano, 2009), in the methods of diagnosing and representing the problem of unemployment in several member states of the European Union (EU).

The Discourse of European Social Policies: From Combating Unemployment to Intervention in the Will of the Unemployed

Presently, we are witnessing the hegemony of new concepts to designate 'lack of work'[9], as well as new ways of understanding legitimate strategies to combat it. A common trait of these strategies is their attention towards the psychological and ethical dimensions of work, primarily, their concern with psychosocial skills (employability) and moral qualities of job seekers, rather than with modifying the structural conditions of the job supply, *per se*, as occurred with Keynesian policies. The spread of a certain vocabulary (employability, partnership, activation, benchmarking, gender mainstreaming, etc.) within discourses pertaining to employment policies (Barbier, 2004; Behning & Serrano Pascual, 2002; Jacobsson, 2004; Serrano Pascual, 2007; 2009) has contributed to this strategy. Significantly, this adoption of the "language" proposed by European institutions, has had an important ideological impact upon the discursive construction of the vocabulary used to refer to unemployment and/or the social exclusion problem, thus, influencing the outline of the main points of contention underlying the debate, consequently determining the way the problem is discursively framed[10].

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[8] This method basically consists of four stages. First, European institutions propose some guidelines consisting of general measures and goals, structured around four pillars, namely, the promotion of employability, adaptability, entrepreneurship and equal opportunities. Secondly, these guidelines are converted by member states into their national and regional policies. The third stage of the process is the establishment of indicators (benchmarking) to enable comparison between countries and identify best practices. Finally, there is a process of evaluation of National Action Plans (NAP), based on these indicators, by European institutions and peer reviewers.

[9] The meaning of the terms used to refer to the lack of work has changed constantly, so this category is not only an object of knowledge, but also of political transformation (Lecerf, 2002). According to this author, the working class has managed to take over the unemployment category to establish a positive distinction among the "jobless", and to give this notion politicizing representations.

[10] We cannot speak of a simple and unilateral process which imposes methods of intervention and vertical representations of the problem. Instead, it is a subtle process with many dimensions, which include the capacity of European institutions, due to the symbolic power they have, of granting more legitimacy to certain political is-

Flexicurity

The concept of flexicurity is the most recent in European rhetoric production. This portmanteau term designates a new political strategy for the management of employment and social security, on the basis of a paradoxical combination of security and flexibility, which, for all intents and purposes, refers to workers' moral duty to participate in the self-regulation of their 'own' life.

Flexicurity is a mixed notion aiming to reconcile that which appears irreconcilable[11]. The main lexemic nucleus is *flex*-ibility, which semantically defines the se-*cur*-ity nucleus. When flexibility refers to unemployment, it is understood as deregulation of contract guarantees, i.e. as a transformation of labour rights. Based on the flexicurity idea, the regulatory framework of the labour market is called upon to be more adaptable to the demands of the economic climate. Blaming high rates of unemployment on an excessively rigid labour market has become an axiom. The provision of security becomes the cause of insecurity in the rhetorical game. Flexibility appears as an all-encompassing demand and temporary hiring euphemistically becomes known as promotion of employment (Baylos, 1996). Consequently, the political regulation of the employment contract, hitherto one of the ways of protecting workers' social rights in the welfare state, paradoxically now turns into the very cause of its vulnerability. According to this type of discourse, legal regulation, rather than protecting workers, makes them vulnerable, since the production of inequalities is governed by the market- which creates winners and losers- meaning that any trace of possible socio-political conflict disappears.

> Inequalities in the sharing of benefits and costs are by-products of market forces, which create winners and losers. With the globalisation of economies, high speed

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sues. The selection procedure of the "problems" which are the object of political intervention is a political and ideologically structured process (Muller, 1990). European institutions give certain views and representation frameworks more legitimacy. This helps society to become aware of certain diagnoses on which the conditions of public intervention will be defined, and supports certain social groups which give voice to these views or representations of the problem. In this respect, the interpretation frameworks that embody the notions disseminated by European institutions not only form the majority of the regulatory structures determining the direction of public policies and the procedures to implement them, but they can also be understood as strategic resources capable of being used by diverse competing social groups to promote their proposals in the political agenda.

[11] The notions of flexibility and security have been constructed in opposing semantic fields. Consequently, flexibility was synonymous with insecurity, and security with rigidity. This semantic opposition and complementariness has also given rise to a political contradiction between the views defending the way the market functions as a criterion of social regulation, and those that call for worker protection. The balance could lean in one or the other direction, depending on the imbalance of forces, but at no time was the antagonistic structure of these semantic fields questioned.

> technological change, industrial restructuring and the dynamics of job destruction and creation, work and the labour market are drastically changing and reshaping the balance between flexibility and security and offering new opportunities to those who are the most employable and adaptable. But they also tend to marginalise those unable to adapt to mobile and flexible work patterns or unprepared to acquire the skills required for new tasks within the knowledge economy (Communication from the Commission, 2001, *Building An Inclusive Europe*).

Security, which is the second lexemic nucleus of flexicurity, and which, in actuality, should be the counterpoint to flexibility, transforms into a psychologising concept. The security of the employment contract, once a social right, now becomes 'self-insurance' or agency, connected with activation and personal employability. In the Communication from the Commission, Towards Common Principles of Flexicurity, it clearly states:

> Flexibility, on the one hand, is about successful moves ("transitions") during one's life course (…) Security, on the other hand, is more than just the security to maintain one's job: it is about equipping people with the skills that enable them to progress in their working lives, and helping them find new employment. It is also about adequate unemployment benefits to facilitate transitions. Finally, it encompasses training opportunities for all workers, especially the low skilled and older workers (European Commission, 2007, *Towards Common Principles of Flexicurity: More and Better Jobs through Flexibility and Security).*

This semantic shift in the notion of security, from the external conditions of security to individual insurance, is symptomatic of the new employment culture; whose fundamental pillars are the fight against dependence, the achievement of autonomy and the promotion of individual responsibility. In view of this conceptualisation of dependence, understood as a pathology of will, and converted into a *public* problem, intervention techniques are adopted which aim at preventing this dependence and promoting self-governance, thus emphasising the therapeutic functions of the welfare state (strengthening self-esteem, facilitating self-analysis, maximising personal abilities).

> Modern social security systems offering adequate unemployment benefits, as well as active labour market policies, are essential components providing income security and support during job changes. Good unemployment benefit systems are necessary to offset negative income consequences during job transfers, but they may have a negative effect on the intensity of job search activities and may reduce financial incentives to accept work. This can be largely offset by setting up efficient job search support and work incentives, ensuring a balance between rights and obligations (…) Active labour market policies, too, have a positive effect on the feeling of security among workers (European Commission, 2007, *Towards Common Principles of Flexicurity: More and Better Jobs through Flexibility and Security)*

Security, within the flexicurity concept, goes hand in hand with a strong call to 'personal responsibility,' in contrast to the safety net of the State-providence (and Keynesian Welfare State), which was founded on the principle of 'collective solidarity'. Unemployment benefits are at the service of employment transitions; these no longer have a main mission to guarantee support in the event of 'loss of means of life', but, rather, to facilitate transitions (*'to progress in their working lives'*).

> Effective active labour market policies (ALMP) that help people cope with rapid change and ease transitions to new jobs (...) By implementing ALMP such as an efficient job search support and good work incentives, jobseekers can be encouraged to find new employment. Job search courses and job clubs have been shown to be among the most effective measures to help the unemployed find a job (European Commission, 2007, *Towards Common Principles of Flexicurity: More and Better Jobs through Flexibility and Security).*

It is no longer only a case, therefore, of knowing how much security needs to be guaranteed in the face of more flexibility; instead, a new dimension is introduced into the debate. It is not a question of *how much* security, but the *type* of security. It is the notion of flexibility that seems to be unquestioned in these discourses. In this respect, there is a new approach at various levels to distribute social responsibilities in the midst of unemployment, placing more and more emphasis on the role workers must play in their own integration process. This notion moves away from the structure underlying the legal regulation of employment. As the employment legislation of the welfare state has allowed two apparently irreconcilable premises of the liberal system to be reconciled, the condition of heteronomy that characterises every salaried situation, on the one hand, and the recognition of the principle of formal liberty, on the other, the transformation of these employment regulation dialectics has radically modified social cohesion. The spread of psychologising frameworks, representing new social conflicts, dissolves the central contraposition of the production system, again reintroducing liberal dogmas of the autonomy of will.

Flexicurity and the Activation Paradigm

Within the flexicurity framework, the function of public authorities is not to regulate employment, nor the market, in view of the indisputable axiom of flexibility, but, rather, to promote self-insurance. The technique that makes this insurance possible consists of the public promotion of activation. New discursive practices aimed at explaining the unemployment situation, and legitimizing interventions to combat it are part of what has come to be known as the activation paradigm; *active* is the new moral slogan, forming the basis of a whole narrative. Three fundamental factors- which differentiate it from the previous

Keynesian model- have been identified at the base of this activation paradigm: firstly, an individualised psychological approach to the problem of unemployment, geared towards modelling workers' behaviour, attitudes and motivation; secondly, an emphasis on employment, i.e. on the economic aspects of citizenship, rather than on political and social aspects; and, lastly, a strengthening of contract ethics, vis-à-vis the private/liberal contract, based on the criteria of reciprocity and merit (Serrano, 2007).

The intervention paradigm not only puts forward renewed intervention instruments[12] (introduction of penalty mechanisms, toughening of rules to access social cover), but also new criteria to justify and legitimate them, in conjunction with a new concept of social rights. The activation paradigm involves significant innovation in the scope of social policies, since, rather than entailing an intervention mechanism *for* individuals, it actually entails one *in* and *on* them, on their personal ethics. Activation requires public authority intervention to, both, mobilise workers, in general, and the unemployed, in particular, and to improve their adaptability. It demonstrates an increasing process of individualization, as the attribution of responsibilities is transfigured to make them more individual, resulting in the reassessment of issues capable of becoming problematic. Rather than acting as a guarantor of social rights, progressively, the state's primary function is to ensure citizen's responsibilities, ethics and opportunities. Reference to collective solidarity is thus being displaced by an increased emphasis upon the individual's responsibility.

> The current economic context reinforces the need for efficient and effective, but especially integrated, flexicurity approaches in all Member States (…) Public employment services will be at the forefront of confronting rising unemployment and need to be better equipped to do so. Adequate social protection systems that at the same time provide incentives to work are necessary to smooth transitions and keep up consumer demand. The following actions are of particular importance in the short and long term: contractual arrangements: reduce segmentation, harmonise conditions for temporary and permanent contracts (…) Modernise social security systems: reduce high marginal effective tax rates on the low paid, boosting demand in the economy and reducing unemployment/inactivity traps... (Council of the Euro-

[12] There is a wide variety of instruments used, both, in national activation strategies, and the ways in which the unemployed are mobilised and penalised (coactive nature accompanying these measures, penalty mechanisms, and the level of pressure and imposition of the obligation to work, the type of option offered, quality of the work offered, connection with the individual's needs, etc., public investment in employment policies (employment expenditure), individualisation of programmes and connection with previous career paths) (Serrano Pascual, 2004) depending on whether a psychologising framework is incorporated in the representation of the problem.

> pean Union: SOC 179, ECOFIN 186, EDU 48, Joint Employment Report 2008/2009: p. 8)

Within this discourse, which condemns dependence, and promotes taking responsibility, the language of *rights*, based on the provision of social security as a collective responsibility, is progressively being replaced by a discourse which espouses an ethics of responsibility, the language of *duties* (Dean, 2004). Given this discursive framework, social intervention has to focus on strengthening agency, i.e. each individual's capacity to act according to the manifestations of their will, meaning that, the welfare states role is to combat dependence, as a situation (and "trap"), and passiveness, as an attitude.

Such policies lead to a dualistic form of pressure: exogenous and endogenous. On the one hand, they influence individuals' behaviour by imposing penalties (for example, limiting access to social protection), but, on the other, they are psycho-political policies aimed at producing *standardised* individuals. Within these practices, dependence becomes pathologised; economic and political problems transform into issues of motives and personal will. Furthermore, the emergence of the socio-political nature of social exclusion and social vulnerability is omitted, as the causal connection that can be established between power relations and heteronomy is cancelled out.

The Paradoxes of Activation[13]

The principle of activation is paradoxical as a result of its discursive location in a space of intertextuality. As a consequence of this polyphonic production process, antithetical discourses are conjoined in a paradoxical process of meaning. In fact, the activation discourse adapts perfectly to both social-democratic and neoliberal registers. This discourse maintains a hybrid position between using registers that activate empowerment frameworks of individuals' vis-à-vis institutions, and, concurrently, the defence of intervention models that lead to the adaptation to market laws, i.e. a coactive externally imposed situation. Activating would thus be favouring personal adaptability, the availability of the individual, and of his *good will*.

This discourse on activation and security coincides and strengthens the moral foundations of the new ways of regulating work. It is a form of consolidating the individual's responsibility, and agency in the face of conditions that the individual cannot, however, change. Thus, despite being a discourse that regulates will and boosts individuals' capaci-

[13] See Crespo and Serrano (2005) for a more detailed discussion on the paradoxes of activation.

ty to take responsibility for their own life, at the same time, it also undermines collective resources (both conceptual and institutional), which could enable workers to exercise a certain amount of control over the asymmetrical nature of certain employment situations which make them vulnerable.

Activation could, therefore, be seen as an instrument of social discipline and behaviour monitoring. Indeed, use is made of the framework evoking dependence to disqualify prior forms of intervention (the state's dependence denotes a moral deficit: passivity). However, this use of the concept represents merely one facet of understanding dependence. The badly termed "passive" policies (social protection policies) were rightly produced as spaces of decommodification, and emancipation from conditions of heteronomy and vulnerability, which typify employment relations governed by market laws. Therefore, whilst the, so-called, 'active' policies make it possible to combat economic dependence (of the institutions, of the family), they can, in turn, promote political dependence (of the market).

The notion of activation explicitly evokes an ontological concept in which the individual would be morally autonomous, self-determined, independent and responsible, as well as governed by free will, i.e. a self-governed individual[14]. There is, however, an implicit mistrust of the true motives guiding the individual, which leave him vulnerable to welfare traps. Consequently, the notion of the individual as morally autonomous is questioned. This concept thus requires "activated" individuals who are economically motivated by positive or negative penalties. It is a "passive" adaptation, which points more towards a reactive capacity; in other words, viewing individuals as motivated by external factors. This discourse of autonomy, mobility, and quality of work is in stark contrast with the coactive instruments that have been established to increase the rate of activity, and to encourage individuals to work. Activation changes are thus to be understood as behaviour monitoring, and as an instrument of social discipline.

The weakening of social security systems, and the ensuing hegemony of one representation of social security, which disqualifies interdependence, explicates the processes that make the worker's position more fragile. This activation discourse is a manifestation of the contemporary fixation of making willpower something problematic, and the *government of will* the space of political intervention. Therefore, individualization, which promotes principles such as activation, is more on a par with the process of becoming fragile than with autonomization.

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[14] The individual required by this discourse is an analytical person capable of weighing up the best alternative in a creative and interdependent context, whilst exhibiting a high level of control over his personal project; ultimately, acting on the basis of his convictions, principles, and own ethics.

Conclusions

The psychologisation of work is a psycho-political process of producing individuals, whose main characteristic consists of the production of a moral discourse aimed at transforming social problems into personal and psychological problems, in addition to transforming their solutions by working on oneself. Such discourse is hegemonic within the field of management, and is supported by concepts that are psychological in origin. In the case of social policies, whose primary purpose was to protect workers from the possibility of unemployment, there has been a pronounced shift from a discourse founded on the notion of rights, to another based on the idea of moral obligation. However, such obligation makes sense as a discourse of psychological realization, in which activity is good, and, above all, passivity is wholly bad. The concept of flexicurity now occupies a prominent position within the framework of the discourse on the activation of workers and the unemployed. The notion of flexicurity naturalises the need for a flexible organisation of lifestyles, and labels worker attitudes that are not in line with it, as problematic. Resultantly, the display of autonomy is conceived as the consequence of successful work on oneself.

This individualising framework omits the importance of interdependence as an inherent factor in agency. Such an omittance is problematic, because, as Durkheim (1982) pointed out, the development of industrial societies, and the division of labour, gives rise to a curious paradox, according to which, the more autonomous individuals are, the more interdependent they are. Or phrased otherwise, the recognition of interdependence is the *condition* of an authentic personal autonomy (Dean, 2004). The autonomy contained in the notion of flexicurity, therefore, refers to a different cognitive framework based on interdependence, and may highlight vulnerabilities, rather than translate into a strengthening of the individual agency.

The reference to solidarity (collective responsibility) as a means of legitimizing public action is being displaced by an increased emphasis upon the individual's responsibility. This emergent call towards self-responsibility legitimates the coactive nature acquired by active programmes in the majority of cases. Its justification is backed by the moral principle derived from the duties each individual (citizen) incurs with the state. It (coactively) calls upon workers' responsibility, whilst allowing employers to demonstrate their moral responsibility "voluntarily" (note how popular "corporate social responsibility" has become). This contrast between the consolidation of coactive elements to regulate workers' will, and the increasing legitimacy of the call upon the good will of the business sector, is not perceived, however, as contradictory, since they stem from two different arguments.

The dissemination of this intervention model involves a regulatory review of the principles that have underlined previous intervention models. A representation of unemployment, or rather the lack of employability ('un-employability') is put forward as an

individual problem, which means that individuals carry the greater burden of responsibility for managing risk (of losing their job, for example), which is considered increasingly unavoidable. This proposed framework for understanding the social question, leads us to conceive of citizenship as a status that an individual has to earn, rather than as an inviolable right. Citizenship is constructed predominantly in individual rather than social terms, and is thus determined by individual behaviour (individual choices and attitudes). With this in mind, the function of the welfare state becomes one of combating dependence. The essence of the social question is no longer workers' dependent relationship with the market, and the issue of dependence upon the welfare state is increasingly viewed as problematic.

Activation policies, and the flexicurity framework, take part in a psychologisation process of employment, through which political and economic fragility transform into personal vulnerability, and the individual becomes the object of political intervention. Consequently, the depoliticization of employment goes hand in hand with the politicization of subjectivity.

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Psychologisation and the construction of the political subject as vulnerable object

Kenneth McLaughlin

Abstract

In this paper I wish to highlight some of the factors that have influenced the widespread adoption of a therapeutic sensibility within wider society, one marked by an increased sense of societal anxiety, vulnerability and estrangement from each other, traditional forms of authority and political institutions. One outcome of the myriad complex dynamics affecting contemporary subjectivity is that therapeutic categorisations and ways of thinking are no longer confined to the clinic or formal therapeutic encounter between analyst and analysand but have permeated popular culture, most notably in Western societies. I wish to consider the wider socio-political context that has influenced the widespread acceptance and adoption of a therapeutic consciousness focusing on the convergence of Left and Right political traditions around apocalyptic thinking, the institutionalisation of the concept of vulnerability and the move from macro to micropolitics. Some implications for individuals, society and politics are then highlighted. My main focus is on the United Kingdom, although I do make reference to developments in the United States of America (USA) as there has been a significant degree of mutual influence between both nations.

Introduction

The expansion of psychiatric and psychological theories and disciplinary techniques has been well documented and criticised from both within the disciplines (e.g. Szasz, 1961; Thomas, 1997; Parker et al. 1995), and also from many observers outwith the psy-disciplines (e.g. Reiff, 1966; Nolan, 1998; Furedi, 2004). Indeed, the influence of the psy-complex can be traced back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with competing theories and critiques offered as to both the positive and negative consequences of such a way of understanding both the individual and collective psyche.

However, despite the often bitter disagreements between psychiatrists and psychologists it needs to be borne in mind that there is also considerable overlap between them. Many psychiatrists, whilst seeing 'mental illness' as primarily medical in nature will also acknowledge the importance of psychology and the environment, with the biopsychosocial model arguably the most common form of intervention today. Psychologists likewise will adhere to the medical model at times, not in a crude biological way but in the tendency towards diagnosis and prognosis. In this sense terms such as the medicalisation or psychologisation of life both imply a process whereby there is a tendency to categorise behaviour and intervene in evermore areas of people's lives. This colonisation of the life-world by psy experts is not the end of the psychologising process as it extends into our very subjectivity and hence how we perceive ourselves, others and the cause and solution for both individual and social problems.

The tendency to pathologise a range of 'problem' behaviours and to use broad indicators to allow more people to fall within such classifications is not a particularly novel development. The 'Child Guidance' movement, formed in Britain after the First World War to work with 'maladapted' children included such characteristics as 'shyness' and 'reserve' as aspects of maladaptation. In addition, it was held that vigilance was also required over ostensibly healthy children as they were considered as potentially being susceptible to mental illness. Other disciplines, such as social work, also embraced elements of psychological approaches, especially in relation to child development and psychiatric social work. Whilst the exact influence of psychoanalytic and other psychological theories within social work practice is disputed (Bree, 1970), they had enough influence for some to question whether such employees were primarily social workers or therapists (Irvine, 1978), and others to argue that social workers were being trained in a manner that precluded any political understanding of their work (Jordan and Parton, 1983).

Despite such criticism the 1980s and 1990s saw a continual expansion of therapeutic initiatives within the broader UK culture such that by the early 1990s counselling was firmly established in general medical practice (Pringle and Laverty, 1993) with half of surgeries employing one by the end of the decade (Eatock, 2000). The Mental Health

Foundation (MHF) published a report claiming that 20% of the UK's children were suffering from a mental health problem (MHF, 1999). Such a figure was an underestimate according to one psychiatrist giving evidence to a Parliamentary Committee who suggested that the true figure was around 40% (Marin, 1996). Neither were such problems confined to children, one media-friendly psychologist being of the opinion that one third of Britain's adult population exhibits signs of psychiatric morbidity (James, 1997).

However, the psychologisation process was not confined to the clinic, surgery or campaign group literature but began to filter through the mainstream media and popular discourse. For example, Furedi (2004) cites research on UK newspapers that charted the rise in usage of such terms as: self-esteem (no citations in 1980, three in 1986, 103 in 1990 to 3,328 in 2000); trauma (from under 500 citations in 1994 to over 5,000 in 2000); stress (from under 500 in 1993 to just under 24,000 in 2000); syndrome (from under 500 in 1993 to over 6,500 in 2000) and counselling (from under 500 in 1993 to over 7,000 in 2000).

This is a quite remarkable expansion in such a short period of time and provides compelling evidence that the language of therapy has now permeated broader culture. It is not that the problems facing us have changed significantly; people still live in poverty, suffer relationship problems and/or breakdown, worry over exam results, lose their jobs, have conflict in the workplace, suffer bereavements and existential angst. However, how we articulate these problems and how they are presented to us in contemporary discourse would appear to have undergone a remarkable transformation in the latter decades of the twentieth century.

Into the twenty-first century and the situation does not appear to have improved. In the US a psychiatrist claims that one in ten nursery children are mentally ill (McLaughlin, 2005), whilst in the UK mental health charities such as MIND routinely inform us that 25% of us are suffering or will suffer from a mental health problem. Therapeutic techniques are now firmly embedded in the education curriculum whether at nursery, primary or high school and are also evident within the university system (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009).

So, when claims are made that contemporary culture is dominated by psychologisation, in which social and existential problems are increasingly viewed through a therapeutic prism, it could be argued that we are merely witnessing the continuation of a trend that was evident to some observers during the early twentieth century and to many during the latter decades of that millenium. It is certainly the case that there is no clean break between the past and the present, no precise date or event that in and of itself marks contemporary psychologisation from its earlier versions. Nevertheless, we can delineate some changes which in interaction with other dynamics mark the present period from the past.

In the remainder of the paper I consider some explanations for this therapeutic turn, examine the overlap of those from both ends of the left/right political divide, look at the way

the term 'vulnerability' has become institutionalised in law and also at the way Politics (with a capital P) has been replaced by a therapeutic politics (with a small p).

Big Pharma and the Psychology Industry

There have been various attempts to explain the therapeutic turn in contemporary society. For example, Dineen (1999) likens what she terms the 'psychology industry' to any other industry in a capitalist market economy. In order to survive it must expand and open up new markets. In this process new problems and 'disorders' are created that necessitate the intervention of the therapeutic professional. So contrary to what we are led to believe it is not the demand for therapy that creates the supply of therapists but the opposite process; the supply of therapists creates the demand for therapy. This is a similar argument to that used by those who implicate the pharmaceutical industry for the rise in prescription medication. Rather than psychiatric medication being developed to treat an existing illness, in many cases the development of the pill precedes the identification of that which it is then said to treat and/or cure; the use of SSRI's (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors) for 'social anxiety disorder' or 'night eating syndrome' and Viagra for 'sexual dysfunction' being some recent examples of where the pill existed long before the discovery of the 'illness' for which it is now prescribed (Lane, 2007; Goldacre, 2009).

In similar vein there are many who blame psychiatric professionals for the exponential expansion of clinical diagnostic criteria. For example, between the first and fourth editions of the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual(DSM)*, published in 1952 and 1994 respectively, the number of pages grew from 130 to 886 and the number of diagnostic categories more than tripled. This led some sceptics to suggest, tongue only slightly in cheek, that at such a rate of growth we can reasonably expect the fifth edition to contain some 1,256 pages and 1,800 diagnostic criteria (Blashfield and Fuller, 1996). With the fifth edition due to be published in 2012 we will have to wait before finding out the exact contents. However, early evidence suggests that the trend to categorise evermore behaviours within its pages will continue, with reports suggesting tortured discussions amongst those preparing *DSM-V* as to whether such things as overuse of the internet, 'excessive' sexual activity, compulsive shopping and apathy should be contained within the parameters of clinically diagnosable mental disorder in the next edition of the manual (Lane, 2009). And whilst there has been some debate in wider society about the validity and/or expansion of the concept of post-traumatic stress disorder

(PTSD), with a recent BBC *Panorama*[1] programme detailing the expansion of the concept from extreme experiences (for example, war situations) to the more mundane (for example, minor traffic accidents, work stress). At the end of that edition of *Panorama*, presenter Jeremy Vine said the APA was looking at tightening up the diagnostic criteria for PTSD in *DSM-V*. Time will tell if he is correct, but he is obviously unaware of post-traumatic embitterment disorder (PTED), an illness said to afflict those who remain bitter or aggrieved for too long about a past wrong, and which some psychiatric professionals wish to be included in the new manual (Linden, 2003). One can only imagine what would have happened if this diagnosis was around during the year long British miners' strike of 1984-85.

A more materialist analysis is given by Cloud (1998), who claims the rise of the therapeutic to be 'a political strategy of contemporary capitalism, by which dissent is contained within a discourse of individual or family responsibility' (p.xiii), although she also accused some Marxist and feminist thinkers and activists of colluding in this process by advocating a 'politics of self-expression', a 'revolution from within'.

The insights afforded us by a critical analysis of the role of 'Big Pharma', the psychology industry and the workings of those responsible for compiling the 'official' list of 'mental disorders' can be extremely helpful. However, there is a tendency to reify such players, attributing to them omniscient powers with which they beguile a passive populace. Neither individual psychologists, biomedical pill pushers nor an all powerful psychology or pharmaceutical industry can account for the above trends. They are certainly influential players, but people are not mere objects into which professional explanations and treatments can simply be poured.

It was this to which Szasz was referring when he argues that the classification of people into diagnostic categories requires three different types of persons: the classifier (doctor/therapist), classified (patient) and, importantly, 'a public called upon to accept or reject a particular classification' (Szasz, 1991, p.53). At various times we play all three roles; we classify people, we are classified and we are members of a society in which some classifications are viewed more positively than others. However, as Szasz points out we can accept or reject this process. The issue then is if such explanations are more accepted today than in the past then what is it about contemporary society that has allowed such ideas to gain such a strong foothold in society? These are the questions addressed in detail by Nolan (1998) in the USA and Furedi (2004) in the UK, both of whom argue, *inter alia*, that we are witnessing a redrawing of the relationship between the state and the individual,

[1] *Panorama* is a current affairs television programme broadcast in the United Kingdom by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

particularly as old sources of moral authority are increasingly seen as discredited or irrelevant to present day circumstances.

In addition, heightened anxiety in society at the loss of older sources of authority, particularly when new ones have yet to appear and/or gain widespread acceptance, can leave people more susceptible to individualistic, psychological interpretations of life's problems. To expand on this further I wish to look at the influence of some political developments in the cultivation of the psychologically vulnerable subject.

Left and Right; Unite and Fright

Growing up in Scotland during the 1970s it was not uncommon during any visit to a city or town to see men wearing boards and carrying placards proclaiming 'The End Is Nigh'. Considered rather eccentric at the time and people to be avoided, they would not be out of place in many contemporary political movements. Today, society is no longer primarily concerned with attaining something 'good' but with preventing the worst. This anticipation of something going wrong at a later date is what Beck (1992) calls the 'Not-Yet-Event as stimulus for action' (p.34) or what Sontag (1989) termed 'Apocalypse from now on'. The individual in such a society is viewed as more object than subject, increasingly powerless in the face of omniscient and omnipresent malevolent forces. This symptom of cultural and indeed political malaise in Western society was highlighted by Sontag (1989) in relation to the panic about AIDS in the late 1980s but which also has relevance to today's myriad scares. She perceptively noted 'the striking readiness of so many to envisage the most far-reaching of catastrophe' (p.4).

If the population is more anxious and susceptible to therapeutic explanations for the problems of life today then another factor to consider is the extent to which the politics of fear have played in the creation of such a situation. Indeed, it is remarkable how many opposing political traditions and social groupings share a common tactic of propagating fear and anxiety in the population. The neo-cons in London and Washington highlight the danger of fundamentalist terror and 'rogue' states, the remnants of the left and new environmentalist groups highlight the danger of such things as climate change, global warming and genetically modified crops. According to Clare Short, former cabinet minister in the Labour government and current MP, 'Very soon, human civilisation will collapse and human life become unliveable' (Short, 2009, p.65). Whilst few would consider Short on the radical wing of progressive politics, her claim resonates with the wider proclamations from those who do claim the radical mantle. Campaign groups of various hues warn us *inter alia* of the dangers of climate change, genetically modified food, embryo experiments, domestic violence, child abuse, predatory paedophiles, bird flu, swine flu, bullying,

AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, and numerous other threats to our well being from the food we eat, our sedentary or hectic lifestyles, to name but a few. Trade unions frequently warn us of the threats we face from 'bullying' or 'stress inducing' managers and colleagues. A walk around any university campus in the UK will find an array of posters warning students of the potential dangers facing them on and off campus. University life, once a time of engagement with ideas, of intellectual stimulation, the first step towards adult independence away from the parental gaze, of making mistakes but learning from them, could now be reasonably perceived by students as a place where if not their life, then certainly their health was at serious risk.

For these campaigners we are all assumed to be vulnerable due to our powerlessness and/or lack of awareness of the dangers we face. The expansion of the concept of vulnerability has been well documented (e.g. Furedi, 2004; Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009; McLaughlin, 2008) and can be further illustrated by looking at the way it has become institutionalised within social policy. In the process, evermore people have become officially vulnerable and in need of protection.

A preoccupation with psychological vulnerability is not the only area where there is convergence between erstwhile political opponents. The tendency to use psychological terminology is not confined to those of a conservative nature seeking simple explanations for the complexity of human subjectivity. On the contrary to criticise the therapeutic turn can lead to accusations of being a right winger unsympathetic to the psychological suffering of the distressed. Also, those who consider themselves left wing are not averse to using the language of psychology against their opponents; terms such as 'homophobia' and 'Islamophobia' are often used to describe those who harbour a dislike or prejudice towards homosexuals or those who follow the Islamic religion. The implication is that such an attitude is 'irrational' which can overlook the historical, ideological, political and social factors in which such attitudes developed. Indeed the tendency to portray your political opponents as mentally ill is not new. It is well known, and been roundly condemned, that the former Soviet Union classified opponents as suffering from mental disorder. In effect, dissent was pathologised; failure to follow the political orthodoxy ran the risk of psychiatric diagnosis and incarceration. However, such a move is not confined to erstwhile Stalinists. In similar vein, some environmental campaigners seek to label their opponents as mentally irrational, suggesting that climate change deniers or sceptics are suffering from a psychological illness. For example, in March 2009 the University of the West of England at Bristol held a conference on the psychology of climate change denial. The news release advertising the conference opens with the axiomatic statement: 'Man-made climate change poses an unprecedented threat to the global ecosystem', and that the conference will consider the possibility that those not subscribing to this view are suffering from an 'addiction to consumption' (UWE, 2009, online).

The reification of the vulnerable adult[2]

The past fifteen years has seen a remarkable expansion in the number of people, children and adults, who are now officially classed as vulnerable. According to the *Every Child Matters* (DCSF, 2003) policy document there are approximately eleven million children living in England, between 3-4 million of whom are considered to be 'vulnerable', although the term is not defined. I wrote to the Department of Children Schools and Families (DCSF) to ask how they had defined 'vulnerable' and on what basis they could make such a claim, and was informed in reply that they had used 'a broad definition of vulnerability including vulnerability through living below the official poverty line' (personal communication 31/3/09). At a stroke a significant proportion of the nation's children were now officially vulnerable. However, it is in relation to the perception of adults that the construction of vulnerability and its expansion is most instructive and can be illustrated by detailing the changes in legal definitions of what constitutes someone as a 'vulnerable adult'.

In 1995, the Law Commission proposed the following definition:

> … a "vulnerable person at risk" should mean any person of 16 or over who (1) is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness *and who* (2) is or may be unable to take care of himself or herself, or unable to protect himself or herself against *significant harm* or *serious exploitation*. (Law Commission, 1995, my emphasis)

It is clear from this definition that vulnerability to risk is not automatically assumed to flow from the specific categories mentioned. In addition, even being at risk of harm or exploitation is not sufficient for the label of vulnerable to be applied; the harm must be significant, the exploitation serious. No doubt such a high threshold was used to withhold services from people who needed it, but it also reflected a view that to be vulnerable was not considered the norm. This definition was adapted by the Lord Chancellor's Department in 1997 with 'vulnerable person' being replaced by 'vulnerable adult', and the word 'serious' was dropped to have a similar threshold for harm and exploitation, both being required to be 'significant'. This definition was adopted by most local authorities.

A mere three years later, the policy guidance document *No Secrets* (DH, 2000), whilst keeping the 1997 definition elaborated on what constituted 'community care services' 'to include all care services in any setting or context' (para.2.4). However, the same year the

[2] This section is developed from material discussed in my article 'Control and Social Work: A reflection on some twenty-first century developments', *Practice*, vol.22, no.3, pp.143-154, 2010.

Care Standards Act 2000 expanded the definition to a quite considerable extent. A 'vulnerable adult' was now:

> (a) an adult to whom accommodation and nursing or personal care are provided in a care home;
> (b) an adult to whom personal care is provided in their own home under arrangements made by a domiciliary care agency; or
> (c) an adult to whom prescribed services are provided by an independent hospital, independent clinic, independent medical agency or National Health Service body.
> (Care Standards Act, 2000, part VII, 6)

Gone is the need to belong to a specific category of service user, as is the need to be at risk of any form of harm or exploitation, never mind of a significant degree. Simply to use one such service now automatically classifies you as a vulnerable adult. Whilst such a move was likely made with the best of intentions there is a sense that not only do they view such adults as lacking resilience they also view those charged with caring for them as a source of risk.

The trend to further expand the categories of the vulnerable continued, culminating in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (section 59, subsection 1), which views a person to be a vulnerable adult if they have attained the age of 18 and he or she:

> (a) is in residential accommodation
> (b) is in sheltered housing
> (c) receives domiciliary care
> (d) receives any form of health care
> (e) is detained in lawful custody
> (f) is by virtue of an order of a court under supervision by a person exercising functions for the purposes of Part 1 of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 (c.43)
> (g) receives a welfare service of a prescribed description
> (h) receives any service or participates in any activity provided specifically for persons who fall within subsection (9)
> (i) payments are made to him (or to another on his behalf) in pursuance of arrangements under section 57 of the Health and Social Care Act 2001 (c.15), or
> (j) requires assistance in the conduct of his affairs (s.59(1))

This is quite a remarkable expansion, especially when you consider that health care means receiving 'treatment, therapy or palliative care of *any* description' (s.59(5), my emphasis), whilst any provision of assistance by virtue of age, health or any disability also renders the recipient amongst the ranks of the vulnerable (s.59 (5)). As many disabled people require some form of assistance, to varying degrees and lengths of time, this legislation effectively equates disability with vulnerability. It is also worth noting the equating of being in

'lawful custody' with being a vulnerable adult, which amounts to a sort of therapeutic exposition of criminology. In addition, included under the category 'in lawful custody' is any;

> detained person (within the meaning of Part 8 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (c.33)) who is detained in a removal centre or short term holding facility (within the meaning of that Part) or in pursuance of escort arrangements made under section 156 of that Act. (s.59, s.7, d).

The terrain of the immigration debate has, in many respects, coalesced around vulnerability; the extent to which the asylum seeker has suffered physical or psychological harm having great bearing on whether their application to remain in the UK is successful or not. Whatever the outcome, the border authorities are presented as protectors of the vulnerable asylum seeker; either allowing them to stay in view of their trauma, or taking care of them during the removal process.

From Politics to politics

The changing debate around immigration is instructive in how Political issues (with a capital P) have been downgraded and replaced by a psychological approach, dominated by the micropolitical (politics with a small p). Those who wish to be granted rights of residence are obliged to adopt the role of traumatised victim. This presentation of the damaged self can be a pragmatically chosen identity by those seeking to remain in the country, as they seek to overcome the legalistic hurdles that prevent the free movement of people across national borders. However, as macropolitical issues are downgraded the subject of immigration is increasingly viewed as a non-political issue; the need for heavily restricted national borders becomes almost naturalised and the removal process becomes an instrumental one disconnected from issues of social justice.

This process of the de-politicisation of immigration policy and practice and its repositioning as a psychological issue casts those subject to immigration control and detention as vulnerable victims requiring protection and care whilst awaiting removal from the country. The asylum seeker is here constructed as automatically vulnerable with the border control agencies (who include psychologists and social workers) presented as their benefactors.

For Žižek (2009) the Included v Excluded distinction (in this case 'British citizens' and 'asylum seekers') is the universal political issue of the age, and one which necessitates the political efforts of anyone who considers themselves progressive today. He notes how walls are being built both literally and metaphorically around whole sections of society,

for example gated communities for the rich, slums for the poor. The issue of immigration control clearly separates the included from the excluded, and even those granted permission to stay can find themselves still excluded, viewed as a contaminant which society has to absorb. The process of psychologisation in interaction with wider political change can lead to 'the universal political issue of the age' being reconfigured as one of individual distress.

This insight into the implications of the downgrading of Politics (with a capital P) to a psychological culture that focuses on the micropolitical or interpersonal realm can help explain the cultural currency with which such a discourse has permeated contemporary society. The argument for free movement across national borders is rarely heard today, not least due to the collapse of left wing politics, certainly within the UK. The defeat of working class organisations can also help explain the rise of the sick worker as 'collective action' is increasingly replaced by 'individual inaction' such as going off sick or receiving counselling (Patmore, 2006; Wainwright and Calnan, 2002). Indeed, in terms of the way that macro-political problems are more likely to be recast as micro-psychological issues, and collective solutions to give way to individual solutions the role of the trade union movement in the UK is instructive.

Wainwright and Calnan (2002), in a detailed account of the rise of the phenomenon of 'work stress' regard the defeat of the miners' strike of 1984-85 as a pivotal moment, a defeat which effectively marked the end of the working class as a major collective political force in the UK. They note how the signs, slogans and representations changed during the course of the dispute:

> At the beginning of the dispute the miners were confident of winning: placards and badges made assertive militant demands: 'Coal not Dole', Victory to the miners'. But by the time of their eventual defeat the mood and the slogans had changed: 'Dig deep for the miners', 'Don't let them starve'. Rather than the image of the self-confident, politically conscious rank and file militant, the striking miners had become victims and charity cases (p.140).

This is not to criticise the miners, who throughout the dispute faced the full force of the capitalist state (police brutality; media bias; withholding of benefits etc) with tremendous courage and resistance. However, for many reasons it soon became clear that the prospect of success seemed remote. In the process a once strong and collective body was recast as vulnerable victims in need of individual protection.

In the wake of this defeat there was a refocusing by trade unions on how they articulated workplace conflict, increasingly representing the individual rather than the collective worker, with a focus on issues of health and safety at work. However, this came at a price; the adoption of a therapeutic discourse in which workplace conflict was recast as a health issue, and the rise of the discourse of 'stress' was a key outcome of this. In the process the

individual worker was reduced to a passive object at the mercy of a toxic environment that was hazardous to his or her health, often due to 'bullying' by management or colleagues (McLaughlin, 2008).

The rise of the term bullying, once almost exclusively confined to the school playground is indicative of the psychologisation of the workplace and the vulnerability with which employees are held. 'Workplace bullying' is now seen as a major threat to the health of Britain's workforce. Whether it is peer bullying or bullying by management towards staff, there is a growing consensus that there's a significant problem in the workplace. The Trades Union Council declared 7 November 2007 as 'National Ban Bullying at Work Day'. It also established a 'Commission on Vulnerable Employment' that defined 'workers in vulnerable employment' as those experiencing poverty and injustice resulting from 'an imbalance of power in the employer-worker relationship' (TUC, 2008, p.3). The Universities and College Union (UCU) have distributed posters which are displayed around campus informing us that 'Bullies Are a Workplace Hazard'. Staff common rooms have posters warning that there is 'No Entry For Bullies' (McLaughlin, 2009). No doubt such posters are displayed with the best of intentions. However, by equating problems in the school playground with those in the workplace the trade unions infantilise the workforce and view its vulnerability as axiomatic. Similarly, Nashra Mansuri of the British Association of Social Workers equates adult bullying with child abuse, which explicitly treats all of us as overgrown schoolchildren (McLaughlin, 2009). Indeed, some argue – without a hint of embarrassment – that workplace bullying is 'the second greatest social evil after child abuse' (Field, 1996, p.1).

The employer-worker power imbalance is not a new development. What is relatively recent is the way the workforce is considered weak, at risk and in need of help. Increasingly, as Ecclestone and Hayes (2009) argue, 'The workplace is no longer seen as the battleground between "capital" and "labour": indeed, it is more accurate to say that the class war has become the "couch war" with both sides [employers and trade unions] trying to help employees onto the therapy couch' (p.105). The suggestion of then government minister Norman Tebbitt in 1981 to the unemployed that they get on their bikes and look for work was criticised at the time for individualising a structural problem.[3] Today, it would be more likely to be seen as insensitive due to an assumption that such individuals

[3] Tebbitt actually said, in response to a question asking if the inner city riots of the time were not linked to rising unemployment, 'I grew up in the '30s with an unemployed father. He didn't riot. He got on his bike and looked for work, and he kept looking 'til he found it'. The common interpretation of this was that he was telling the unemployed to get on their bikes also.

could do so unaided by professional expertise. The equivalent injunction to the unemployed today would be to 'get on the couch and be helped to look for work'.[4]

Conclusion

The consequences of the continual expansion of psychologisation are severe, both from an individual and wider political perspective. For the individual he or she can be portrayed as a vulnerable subject in need of expert professional help, creating dependency on an external authority. It can also resign them to coping with rather than transcending their difficulties. The turn to 'experts' can also undermine the more informal resources of support available within communities and lead to a passive relationship to state authorities (Nolan, 1998). It also has consequences for the democratic process. The more we are portrayed as vulnerable, sick and irrational the more the process of democracy is undermined. The concept of democracy rests on the assumption that we, as rational agents, elect and hold parliament to account. If, on the contrary, we are classed as irrational, as suffering from myriad mental disorders that limit our capacity and responsibility, then the basis of democratic accountability is seriously compromised. Instead of 'we, the people' holding the state to account, the state takes on the role of doctor caring for a vulnerable and irrational electorate.

Of course, the idea that Western parliamentary democracy is truly democratic does not stand strong scrutiny. Many would agree with Chomsky's (1999) observation that 'it is only when the threat of popular participation is overcome that democratic forms can be safely contemplated' (p.69). This common view of the more radical Left, that parliamentary democracy pacifies the masses was expressed by Trotsky and has been articulated more recently by Žižek (2009) who points out that in a democracy we are all kings,

> … but a king in a constitutional democracy, a monarch who decides only formally, whose function is merely to sign off on measures proposed by an executive administration. This is why the problem with democratic rituals is homologous to the great problem of constitutional monarchy: how to protect the dignity of the king? How to

[4] It is worth noting that behind such public rhetoric it was actually that Conservative government that introduced the offer of counselling for workers facing redundancy. Widely criticised at the time it is something that is increasingly utilised by both employers and employees.

> maintain the appearance that the king effectively makes decisions when we all know this not to be true? (p.134).

However, at the present time the way the problem of democracy is often articulated is not that it is illusory, but rather that the populace are not rational enough to make the appropriate choices in terms of voting or political and personal action. Those who vote for the right-wing British National Party (BNP) are frequently presented as lacking the intelligence to vote the correct way, being mere dupes of BNP propaganda. In relation to lifestyle an oligarchy of health, therapeutic and scientific 'experts' purport to inform us of the error of our ways, whether in the wrong choice of food, wrong or inappropriate ways of thinking or feeling, or failure to grasp the global consequences of our 'addiction to consumerism'. For example, referring to the latter leading British environmentalist George Monbiot favours government repression via totalitarianism as the answer to the problems of capitalist consumption (Monbiot, 2008). As Heartfield (2009) points out such 'radicalism' is against, not with, the masses, and that 'what Monbiot means by "the problem of capitalism" is not the limits it puts on working-class living standards, but rather the growth in those living standards' (p.46).

The process of psychologisation shows no sign of abating at the present juncture. Therefore, there is certainly a need for a critical challenge from within the disciplines of the psy-complex. Such a critique of the many problematic aspects of contemporary clinical theory and practice can highlight areas of concern without negating those aspects of practice that can be beneficial to those experiencing mental distress and who could benefit from professional intervention. However, that on its own is insufficient, and in many respects secondary to the need to challenge the colonisation of the wider social body by a therapeutic culture. If, as I have argued in this paper, the main driver for the acceptance of the therapeutic ethos lies in wider social and political change, then it is there that the main battle needs to be waged.

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Beyond Psychologisation: Individual and Collective Naturalising Stigmatisations

Rafael González Fernández

Introduction

Naturalising stigmatisations are never spontaneous, fortuitous, accidental, or inexplicable. This is based upon the hypothesis that stigmatisation is always the result of an especially active, intentional psychosocial process (i.e. a *stigmatising purpose*), in which insults, and the obligatory accompanying negative stereotype, are a substantial component of the various *stigmatising attribution* discourses.

Stigmatised individuals and groups can belong to radically different stereotyped categories, which become a homogenous psychosocial *unit* due to coincident defining attributions or 'labels'. In this context, naturalisation introduces biology as an explanation which encourages labelling, whilst, concomitantly, furthering the development of a powerful *statistical stereotype*.

For example, they say that blind people are usually selfish and mistrustful; heart disease patients are impatient and controlling; black people are lazy and sexually hyperactive; women are psychologically more unstable than men, and so on and so forth.

All such definitions are based upon stereotypical generalisations of excessively simplified reality, and are, therefore, incapable of highlighting the important differences which would no doubt become evident if a comparison was done between individuals homogeneously classified with the same categorising label. In this respect, many of these stereotypical generalisations also contain, what Jones and Harris (1967) call, a *fundamental attribution error*, which entails explaining a person's behaviour only in terms of internal, dispositional factors, without taking into account the influence of external situational or environmental variables which, inevitably, also impact upon human behaviour.

In my opinion, the 'fundamental attribution error' is a paradigmatic example of how psychologisation manifests itself in everyday life, and in conjunction with the stigmatising purpose, is *the* fundamental basis for explaining how virtually all naturalising stigmatisations, both individual and collective, arose and spread.

Stereotypical Functions of Naturalising Stigmas

A decade after the publication of Erving Goffman's (1963) *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, European social psychology warned against the huge social, political, and economic consequences of naturalising attributions. As Moscovici noted:

> … it is, for example, entirely different to deplore the weak profitability of work in developing countries and attribute it to inhabitants' redhibitory laziness, rather than the consequences of malnutrition, malaria, or economic exploitation. On the one hand, causality justifies stagnation, on the other, it urges change" (1975, p. 79).

Stigma, whether highly visible or not, will be more credible and lasting, the more unanimous and documented the set of 'data' and 'tests' are which expertly define, describe, and explain the abominable characteristic features of the stigmatised people(s). According to Goffman, we construct stigma theories and ideologies "*to explain his inferiority and account for the danger he represents"* (1963, p. 15). Naturalisation phenomena, therefore, consist of stereotypical processes of technical attribution, which are usually developed by a multifarious range of interpreters (ordinary people, amateur publicists, even professional scientists) to *justify* the discriminatory treatment suffered by stigmatised groups and individuals (Allport, 1971), who, ultimately, are kept at a level of moral and/or socio-political *delegitimation* by negative stereotyping (Bar-Tal et al., 1989).

Social psychologists, who have investigated these issues, have cautioned that any stereotypical and naturalising categorisation stigmatises 'the others', painting them as wholly *different* beings to ourselves, and, thus, *far removed* from the groups we belong to— groups which serve as our racial, cultural and moral reference (Rothbart & Taylor, 1992). Difference and remoteness, Ashmore and del Boca (1981) assert, strengthen each other dynamically via three complementary functions that uphold collective stereotypes: simplifying and streamlining the perception of reality (e.g. "all black Africans are dirty and not very trustworthy"); defending our ego and self-esteem (e.g. "as a European, I am superior to any African"); and maintaining the socio-economic status quo (e.g. "I pay my African maid half what I would pay to a European one"). The complexity of the dynamic relationships among these three functions becomes even more acute if we manage to introduce a historical perspective— an approach which social psychological research, habitually confined to the narrow and urgent 'here and now' scope of laboratory experiments, has rarely dared to consider.

Collective Stigmatisations in Situations of Social Conflict

Exotic difference, its *remoteness*, and its potential *danger* are variables which are, very often, defined in terms of biological *naturalisation* of numerous human groups whose cultural features are *determined* by *anthropological* factors that are very difficult to modify. The stereotypical processes typically accompanying naturalising attributions normally eliminate every type of statistical distinction, cancelling out exceptions that may shape reality more precisely. Consequently, Jews are attributed with, among other facial stereotypes, a hooked nose which physical anthropologists call an *Armenoid nose*. However, under no circumstances is it a prototypical feature of the presumed *Jewish race*, since, anthropometrically, they share the same features as the *Palestinian race*. As Lea (1983) notes, the evidence of such ambiguities forced the Spanish Inquisition, in the middle of the 16th century, to rule out the possibility of accusing someone of being Jewish based exclusively on *external traits* (such as their nose) or on generic behaviour (such as avarice, or the compulsion to save). In actuality, the only effective way of knowing whether a person was Jewish was to mark them in a visible manner (a red hat, the yellow star of David), which identified them as a member of a stigmatised social category, one whose members were mostly identical (from a physiognomic point of view) to the members of the stigmatising group.

Social stigmatisation, based upon facial features, is still on-going and can be observed directly in cosmetic surgery clinics. For instance, on 4 August 2008, the Madrid newspaper *EL País* published a report by the journalist Jaime Prats, entitled: *Hundreds of immi-*

grants are going under the scalpel to erase ethnic features. The aim is to have an operation to be closer to the ideal of Western beauty. Notwithstanding the story of Orly Cuzco, who spent €4,200 on rhinoplasty to erase the 'Inca features' from his nose, Prats also documented high number of blepharoplasties (i.e. eyelid surgery to make the eye shape rounder) — an operation undergone by citizens of Asian origin to make them 'look European'.

In the case of black people and American Indians: the naturalising attributions to *biologically* explain their presumed inferior intellect, and, at the same time, their ostensibly greater sexual exuberance and work shyness (in comparison with *white* people), are still upheld to this day by certain famous psychometrists.

The Bell Curve was published in the United States in 1995, and its authors (the psychologist Richard Herrnstein and the political scientist Charles Murray) maintain the immutability of IQ (intelligence quotient) and some inevitable class inequalities based upon differences in intelligence: the 'cognitive elite'; the 'cognitive middle class'; and the 'underclass'. The latter group is characterised by: poverty and marginalisation; a propensity for drug addiction and violent crimes; an inability to maintain stable families; and the pleasure of living off state benefit institutions without working (Herrnstein & Murray, 1995, p.526). Defending the convincing hypothesis that a low level of intelligence can cause irresponsible maternal education, high levels of unemployment, and make poverty irreversibly worse, Herrnstein and Murray, at no point, suggest the possibility of unemployment, poverty, and a deficient education being responsible *for* a low IQ. Indeed, as the anthropologist Marvin Harris perspicuously remarks:

> IQ, high or low, cannot explain the presence of unemployment, unrewarding jobs, poverty and crime. Low IQ *can* explain why certain kinds of people are more likely to get laid off during a downsizing than others, but, crucially, it *cannot* tell us why the downsizing and layoffs take place. Is it because the IQ scores of the CEOs suddenly drop (or suddenly rise)? (Harris, 2000, p. 89)

Furthermore, as demonstrated by the psychologist James R. Flynn, analysis of the IQ scores of US army recruits over the past decades has demonstrated a three-point improvement per decade in both black and white recruits— too fast an improvement to be down to genetic mechanisms alone. Flynn proposes that: "if blacks in 1995 had the same score as whites had in 1945, it is likely that the average black environment of 1995 was equivalent in quality to the average white environment of 1945" (Harris, op. cit. p. 96).

Distance, and the perception of all kinds of differences, makes it easier to view enemy groups as immoral (Staub, 1989). Evidently, the *delegitimizing functions* of negative stereotypes will become more easily acute in those social situations where social groups compete with each other, and/or come into conflict directly using violence.

Consequently, in the case of a *legitimate* war (which is how *defensive* wars are considered) the stigmatising naturalisation of the enemy is always an essential step prior to their systematic and complete annihilation. Whether it be 'Virus' or 'plague', 'infection' or 'gangrene', no matter what: the 'surgical' cure must be necessarily energetic, radical, and definitive. Whilst the *adversary* can be treated with human equality— with due precaution, of course— it is totally impossible to agree upon any kind of negotiation with the political *enemy* that would lead to a peaceful coexistence; rather, they must be annihilated— just as they would, no doubt, in the event of their own triumph eliminate ourselves. Destroying the enemy is thus an all-out-war against someone who is basically *alien*, *distant*, and *different* to us at the same time— a *non-us*, who, in short, is *anti-us*.

For example, in May 1923, in one of his first anti-Semitic speeches, Hitler said that "The Jews are undoubtedly a race, but not human. They cannot be human in the sense of being an image of God, the Eternal. The Jews are the image of the devil. Jewry means the racial tuberculosis of the nations". Moreover, in 1942 during a meal he was having with the architects of what he would call the 'final solution', Hitler said:

> "The discovery of the Jewish virus is one of the greatest revolutions that has taken place in the world. The battle in which we are engaged today is the same sort as the battle waged during the last century by Pasteur and Koch. How many diseases have their origins in the Jewish virus!... We shall regain our health only by eliminating the Jew" (quoted in Fest, 2005, p. 305).

This medical/surgical metaphor was also used against the enemy by the devout Bishop of Vic, Joan Perelló, during the Spanish civil war, who said that a scalpel was needed to cure Spain: "A scalpel to drain the pus from Spain's entrails, truly corrupt in its brain and heart, in its ideas and customs" (quoted in Beevor, 2005, p. 609). In addition, Captain Gonzalo Aguilera— the 17th Count of Alba y Yeltes and one of Franco's press attaches— said, in his statements to Peter Kemp, that:

> "in healthier times… plagues used to cause a massive death toll among the Spanish... They are a race of slaves… They're like animals, you know, and they are not likely to rid themselves of the virus of Bolshevism. After all, rats and lice carry the plague... Our programme consists of exterminating a third of the male population in Spain. That would clean up the country and we could get rid of the proletariat" (Kemp, 1957, p. 49-50)

In the event of an out-and-out war against a foreign enemy invading our country, or whose country we invade— naturally, as long as it is a highly justified 'preventive' attack— the naturalisation process usually consists of: globally and irreversibly *dehumanising* the opponent; *animalising* him (i.e., considering him as a *beast*, the red beast, the Nazi beast); or *savagising* him, by comparing him with *savages* (i.e. the subhuman components of primi-

tive *hordes*, of *masses* totally ungovernable by reason or mercy, who instinctively lean towards assassination and pillaging, lack humanitarian feelings, or an ability to empathise with their victims) — as evinced in the case of the *Marxist hordes* of the Spanish civil war. Terrorist movements also practise this systematic, semantic dehumanisation of their victims, as a strategy to avoid any possible compassion. For instance: "the new left terrorists used to call their 'capitalist' and 'imperialist' adversaries 'pigs' and 'monsters'"; the Spanish police are 'dogs' to ETA militants, although they use the Euskera word 'chakurra'; Islam's enemies are also frequently branded 'dogs', 'apes', or 'beasts'; for Bin Laden, the United States represents 'the snake's head'; and, according to Neo-nazi rhetoric, immigrant citizens are 'apes', 'rats', and 'parasites' (de la Corte, 2006, p. 247).

At the level of propaganda, a substantial difference between 'us' and 'them' has to be demarcated precisely when distributing responsibilities for war, whose commencement, as Lord Ponsoby recommended, must always be attributed to 'their' ambitious aggression, which 'we', in turn, must defend ourselves against with all the moral energy provided by the right to a legitimate defence. Naturally, 'they' will always be the ones who wanted the war, 'they' who deliberately commit the most terrible atrocities against 'us' (and we are only responsible for a bit of 'collateral damage', as involuntary as it is inevitable), and, finally, 'they' who use weapons prohibited by international agreements, and so on and so forth. 'Our' cause will, of course, always be 'sacred', protected by God, and receive militant and enthusiastic support from international artists, intellectuals and politicians; 'they, on the other hand, will become more and more isolated, until they are completely cut-off, and defeated politically and militarily (see Rúas, 2004).

In this regard, Eidelson and Eidelson (2003) point out how the in-group's feeling of moral superiority (i.e., their 'privileged' identity traits 'envied' by 'others') always includes the constant reference to suffering an extremely dangerous state of 'defencelessness' and 'vulnerability' when confronted with a threatening, unjust, evil, and dishonest enemy, who can never be trusted and who must therefore be faced energetically, and, if possible, with weapons in hand, so as to prevent a 'worse situation' and/or the 'aggressions of the past'.

In civil wars, the naturalisation process of the enemy (of 'them' who are, when all is said and done, our compatriots) usually places especially energetic emphasis upon the *foreignisation* of the adversaries, who, to distance them psychologically from 'us', are accused, for example, of being: 'Hitler's or Mussolini's hit men'; 'Moscow's agents'; or, more generically, unpatriotically becoming instruments of 'Judaism', 'international masonry', 'Islamic terrorism', or 'capital power', and so forth. In any event, the animal, the foreigner, the virus, the beast, the faceless enemy, or the nameless adversary, are dehumanised and delegitimized categories towards whom it is far easier to behave violently (Meier, Hinsz & Heimendinger, 2007).

In the circumstances of not being able to locate a foreign agent: when, for example, the enemy is totally 'interior' (as occurs with active political dissidents), stigmatisation is almost always based upon moral degradation. Consequently, guerrillas and insurgents are redefined as 'gangsters' and mere 'highwaymen' (as they were during General Franco's dictatorship in Spain), in much the same vain that the Cuban regime states with scorn, via the official newspaper *Granma*, that their prisoners of conscience (such as Orlanda Zapata Tamayo, who recently died in a Havana prison after a prolonged hunger strike) are common criminals who "usually adopt a political profile when their criminal references are already extensive".

We already know that the first acts of more or less organised violence against 'internal enemies' are usually perpetrated by groups of young people in paramilitary style hierarchical structures, with easy access to weapons, alcohol, and drugs (Tilly, 2003; Mann, 2005). This was observed in Soviet Russia, Nazi Germany, the Spanish civil war in 1936, and, naturally, in the recent civil wars in Rwanda, the Congo, and the former Yugoslavia. First, the enemy was depersonalised and, then, eliminated in view of the indifference of the passive spectators who were direct witnesses of the various tragedies.

From Insult to Self-Blame: the Naturalising Psychologisation of Self in Daily Life

Slander and insults, as a recategorisation strategy, are always the first steps in the stigmatising naturalisation strategy in daily life. Indeed, as the historian and sociologist Didier Eribon warns:

> What the insult tells me is that I am an abnormal or inferior person, over whom someone else has power, and, above all, the power to offend me. The insult is, therefore, the means by which the asymmetry of individuals is expressed, between those who are legitimate and those who are not, and who are vulnerable for the same reason. Which means that the insult is also far more than that. It also has the force of a constituent power. Because personality, personal identity, the most intimate awareness, are manufactured from the very existence of this hierarchy, and by the place we occupy in it, and, therefore, by the glance of the other, the 'dominant one', and the capacity he has to degrade me by insulting me, letting me know that he can insult me, that I am an insultable person, and insultable ad infinitum. Consequently, I have been made to be what I am by these words of stigmatisation which others may direct, or throw at me, at any time, in any circumstance, including when I least expect it (1999, p. 55).

The problem, then, is that naturalising attributions often achieve stigmatisation based upon the language with which scientific arguments— which are ostensibly politically neutral, and which have few connections with insults— are expounded. This is typified, for instance, in gynaecological considerations of a woman's body as a 'factory' or a 'machine' wholly dedicated to reproduction, in which biological phenomena, such as menstruation and menopause, are described semantically in terms of 'losses', 'waste', or 'release' of hormones and 'detachment' of tissue— as if menstruation and the menopause consisted of pathological phenomena of bodily 'waste'. However, it was psychology professionals who linked scientific terminology with the stigmatisation of women, using naturalising constructions such as 'pre-menstrual tension' or 'premenopausal deficit' (Gergen, 1991). Many other similar concepts, which have been part of our everyday vocabulary for several decades, are used to stigmatise people diagnosed with a multifarious range of 'conditions', such as: 'addictive personality'; 'chronic anxiety'; 'mid-life crisis'; 'hysteria', 'anorexia' or 'bulimia'. Many such attributions have, indeed, been ripped out of their clinical context and brandished arbitrarily and insensitively in quotidian discourse by the vast majority of the population (Gross, 1987).

Cruel naturalisation levels reach their apex, however, when stigmatising psychologisation diagnoses the cause of several types of illness based upon psychosomatic attribution. In many of these cases, the patients' self-stigmatisation is reinforced by the adverse categorisations that society paints some of these complaints with, many of them incurable and fatal.

As occurred in the past with syphilis, today, suffering from AIDS, among other diseases, involves suffering a double process of individual and collective stigmatisation: standing out as a member of a *risk group* (collective stigma) which suffers from an infectious disease, typical of people *punished* for having had too active a sex life (individual stigma). Disease, stigma, and punishment are almost always inseparable elements in the social recategorisation of a person diagnosed with AIDS. As Susan Sontag warns:

> The illness flushes out an identity that might have remained hidden from neighbours, job mates, family, and friends. It also confirms an identity, and, among the risk group in the United States most severely affected in the beginning, homosexual men, has been a creator of community as well as an experience that isolates the ill and exposes them to harassment and persecution" (Sontag, 2003, p. 152-153).

The idea of *illness as punishment* always involves blaming the cause of the patient's affliction upon their own behaviour and lifestyle: lung (or oesophageal) cancer punishes the hardened smoker; people who do not ingest enough fibre develop colon cancer (and haemorrhoids), and so on and so forth. However, the main re-categorisation that the image of stigmatised sick people has undergone is the increasing acceptance of psychological explanations for illness. A century and a half ago, tuberculosis was considered as a romantic

illness which passionate, sensual, rash, and sensitive souls were prone to. However, as we know, tuberculosis was actually caused by Koch's bacillus— not by a romantic temperament, extreme slimness, or the compulsive reading of Goethe's *Werther*.

When Dr. Waksman's tetracycline started to cure tuberculosis, asthma was defined as the typical affliction of anxious and dependent people (Alexander, 1950). Based upon similar naturalising attributions, subjects with type A personality (Friedman, 1969) are 'blamed' for the proliferation of heart disease— as if they deserved this punishment for their behaviour. Similarly, people still claim that there is an 'ulcer personality' (even upon discovery that the cause of a peptic ulcer lies in a bacteria that was unknown until recently, the *helicobacter pilori*) or a 'repressed', 'not very spontaneous', and highly 'frustrated' type C personality, typical of cancer patients (Temoshok, 1987). Many of these oncology patients, according to authors such as Groddeck (1970) and Matthews-Simonton (1988, 1993), could ostensibly cure themselves if only they had enough 'willpower', 'expressed their anger openly', or 'detailed their feelings of failure'. These are disgraceful and useless assertions which, both, belie ignorance of medical science, and make the patient and their psychosocial environment responsible for their afflictions. "Psychological theories of illness," Sontag insists "are a powerful means of placing the blame on the ill. Patients who are instructed they have, unwittingly, caused their disease, are also being made to feel that they have deserved it" (op. cit. 82).

Shameful diseases notwithstanding, self-stigmatisation is often closely linked with the attributions used to explain, at least in part, other adverse events a person suffers; as in the case of sexual attacks, when the woman is accused of having some responsibility (or even blame), to a greater or lesser extent, for her own rape. "She was asking for it", "it was always going to happen to her one day", "she dressed too provocatively", "she's a provocative flirt, and she's met her match", are just some of the phrases occasionally used by the victim's own friends and family to *justify* a rape— this is especially true when the victim and abuser know each other (Bell, Kuriloff & Lottes, 1994). The stigmatisation of a rape victim is, in short, a means of explaining the 'dangers' represented by an 'independent' woman's sexual autonomy. This independence is, has been, and will be considered from a traditional male perspective as a *risk situation* which the woman is incapable of managing effectively. The usual consideration, even in court sentences which have absolved rapists who have confessed, is that a man 'sexually excited to the extreme' is, normally, biologically and psychically incapable of 'stopping his urge to have intercourse— an urge which the woman is, naturally, 'responsible' for.

The socio-historical analysis of rapes committed in times of war, prove that, except in exceptional cases, they are usually perpetrated as: a militaristic tactic aimed at demoralising the enemy; a method of counter-insurgency; or as a male ritual to reinforce belonging to the group. Rapes are not considered, in hardly any of these cases, as 'spontaneous accidents' committed by 'isolated groups' of uncontrolled individuals. When the Japanese

troops took the Chinese city of Nankin on December 13, 1937, the invading army's commanding officers gave precise written orders for the soldiers to rape as many women as possible, in order to 'demoralise enemy resistance'. There were 200,000 rapes in just one day, and a similar number of men were shot at the same time. Similarly, in May 1945 when Berlin was taken, the Soviet army was encouraged by their superiors to 'sully the racial pride of Nazi women' (the declaration was written by Ilya Ehrenburg), stating that large amounts of vodka would be given to the troops who participated in the over 100,000 rapes committed as a 'war tactic'. In our present epoch, the supply of alcohol to encourage systematic rapes (not spontaneous, nor accidental, and isolated) has been witnessed in the wars of Yugoslavia, whilst in the Rwanda, Congo, and Sierra Leona conflicts, psychotropic and other drugs were distributed among child soldier rapists (Boudry, 2009).

In times of peace, cruelty and psychological aggression are also organised in a premeditated and effective fashion against those people previously defined as psychologically 'distant' and 'alien to us'. Psychiatric naturalisation, and attributions of mental illness towards work colleagues, is one of the most effective strategies of harassment at work—especially when the victim has shown some small sign of eccentricity or nervousness (Leymann, 19996). As Lemert (1977) said over thirty years ago, most paranoid behaviour detected by company psychologists, rather than being due to mental illness, could more readily be explained as the inevitable consequence of a process of consciously programmed information isolation, actively maintained by the bosses and colleagues of the 'victims', who, little by little, and often in a very subtle or 'invisible' manner, actually end up becoming mentally ill (González, 2006). Both the invisibility and subtleness of this kind of aggression makes it difficult for outside observers to notice, and, above all, makes it impossible for the victim to locate the source of his problem, and to react quickly.

Collective Violence: the Definitive End of the "Amorphous" and "Disorganised" Mass

Specialists in mass behaviour have managed to demonstrate how intolerant feelings and collective violence use the powerful capacity of destruction, usually attributed to uncontrollable masses, since their members hide behind the spread of responsibility, and the anonymity which the crowd provides. In fact, contemporary social psychology has for decades been analysing the behaviour of crowds as a normal (i.e. *not pathological*) phenomenon regulatorily coordinated by active leaders who promote, and consciously strengthen the 'us-them' divisions (Tilly, 2003).

In both natural observations of episodes of violence which occur on public highways, and laboratory-controlled experiments, crowds are analysed, today, as groups inte-

grated by a, more or less, broad number of individuals, usually far better organised than the first writers about masses, such as LeBon, realised. In the vast majority of cases, the members of these presumably amorphous and disorganised masses share not only the same social identification, but also the emergent norms which are adopted and upheld in a relatively orderly fashion vis-à-vis 'the others' (Mann et al., 1982; Reicher, 1982; 1996).

Furthermore, it appears that groups usually behave much more violently than individuals when, both, the emergent norms, and leaders define the aggressive conduct as *legitimate* and *morally appropriate* (Rabbie, 1989). This is what usually happens — both at an individual and group level— when the aggression is defined as *self-defence* (i.e. as an instrumentally *suitable* response to an attack perceived as *unjust and illegitimate*) (Brown & Tedeschi, 1976; Eidelson & Eidelson, 2003).

Collective violence cannot therefore be attributed exclusively to a series of amorphous phenomena typical of the disorganised mass (with the exception, probably, of panic behaviour in a situation in which there are no effective escape routes, identified as such, by the mass trying to flee). On the contrary, the vast majority of collective violence phenomena (ranging from a fight between football fans at the gate to the stadium, to a civil war) imply a *selection of opportune victims*, as well as a *prior design* of the violent action which will then be performed in public in a coordinated fashion by its most visible protagonists. Once the violent action has been triggered, the spread of responsibility and anonymity must be understood as complementary motivational variables that facilitate the onset of this violent action, but are not behind its intentions and aims. Believing that violent individual or collective behaviour is *always* a spontaneous, and *always* an inevitable phenomenon is, without a doubt, the most dangerous manner in which psychologisation can manifest itself.

The human being is characterised by being the only animal guided completely consciously and rationally by *purpose* (i.e. by future-oriented goals and objectives, by *theories* on himself, and on individuals, groups and categories of people with whom he has a relationship) (Epstein, 1973). As the writer Victor Frankl said on the final page of *Man's Search for Meaning*: "the human being is not yet one more thing among others; things determine each other, but man is ultimately self-determining. What he becomes, within the limits of endowment and environment, he has made out of himself. In the concentration camps, for example, in this living laboratory, and on this testing ground, we watched and witnessed some of our comrades behave like swine while others behaved like saints. Man has both potentialities within himself; which one is actualised depends on decisions, but not on conditions" (1962, p. 128).

In this respect, mere stigmatising psychologisation, regardless of its extent, can rarely serve, by itself, to understand and explain collective phenomena as devastating as a civil war. Besides geopolitical considerations, which I am not going to address here, the talk is usually of: old, unresolved conflicts (such as in the case of former Yugoslavia); of ex-

treme situations of violence and poverty (which is how African conflicts are usually explained); and even of the existence of an 'aggressive' temperamental element (which, at the time, they wanted to use to understand the Spanish civil wars). In all these particular cases, we fail to recall that there were political leaders incapable of effectively handling a series of conflicts which increased day by day, gaining momentum in dangerous spirals of violence. We also fail to recall that all parties (black and white, left and right) put their youth into paramilitary organisations, who, suitably armed, were the ones at the centre of these increasingly aggressive and uncontrolled spirals of violence. In short, we fail to remember the inaction and absolute lack of efficiency of the governments involved, the division of the army, and, of course, the indifference or fear of the countries that could have intervened on time to extinguish the first fratricide flickers.

Conclusion

The above précis has attempted to demonstrate that no naturalising stigmatisation occurs spontaneously; rather, it needs stigmatising agents (specialists or amateurs), and a stigmatising purpose.

In this respect, I believe a decisive variable is the increased dissemination of certain clinical concepts amongst the general public. The terms used by doctors and biologists are always more *plausible*, as, indeed, scientific language is more *credible*. Consequently, aforementioned concepts spread faster among laypeople, although they become distorted at the same time. For example, a 'womanising' politician (as the Prime minister Lloyd George undoubtedly was) would nowadays be accused of being a 'sex addict' (just like John Fitzgerald Kennedy, who, decades after his death, has been definitively diagnosed as a sex addict).

The dissemination of technical concepts in popular discourse depends on the level of visibility of the stigmas they define. For instance, whereas a century ago the terms 'consumptive' and 'syphilitic' were a common insult for thin people (even if they did not suffer from these diseases), today, the concepts 'anorexic' and 'bulimic' are used more often as insults for thin or overweight school-age children.

On other occasions, the success of a naturalising label, or the popularisation of a certain clinical term, is simply due to it becoming 'fashionable' for demographic reasons. For example, today, due to the growing age of the European population, society tends to define almost all dementias suffered by the increasing number of older people as 'Alzheimer's'. A biological, medically 'normal' or 'natural' phenomenon, such as senile dementias, are thus all given the same label, Alzheimer's— unquestionably one of the 'fashionable diseases' of our times.

In general, biomedical naturalising labels appease the consciences of people close to the stigmatised individual. As such, the grandfather suffering from dementia is no longer an old man who can be looked after by his children; on the contrary, because he is 'sick'— having been diagnosed with a serious illness with a German name— he must be interned in an appropriately skilled nursing facility. Along the same conscience-appeasing lines: a child who psychologists diagnose as 'hyperactive' is always 'ill', as opposed to being the 'bad-mannered and aggressive' result of ineffective socialisation by negligent parents. It is now believed that schools, rather than families, are exclusively responsible for educating children, unless of course they are 'hyperactive', in which case psychologists take over. In any event, parents' responsibility will always be of little significance.

Lastly, it is worth noting that naturalising stigmatisations are especially effective at backing new 'subtle' or 'modern' forms of sexism. For example, today, nobody disputes that a woman can be a magnificent architect, surgeon, or combat pilot, but certain subtle manifestations of 'male chauvinism' still continue to attribute possible 'vague' behaviour problems to their 'obvious hormonal differences', which can either be understood as an irrelevant biological variable or as a factor that can potentially distort a woman's psychophysical performance.

In times of peace and political prosperity, subtle, invisible, and, naturally, politically correct stigmatisations will continue to grow at the same rate as the technical designations designed to label new 'pathological' behaviour, such as 'addiction' to sex, work, or excessive physical exercise. I suppose that all these pathologies must be true if the experts say they are. However, I fear that someone may easily stigmatise me if I state that I feel discreetly attracted by a girl who is younger than myself, if I do not go on my summer holiday to finish writing a book, or if I am disciplined about doing the gymnastic exercises I have been prescribed for my backache. It is not, therefore, very encouraging to know that the next DSM includes dozens of 'new' psychological pathologies. I assume that none of us will have much trouble recognising ourselves in one of them.

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From the Bodhi tree, to the Analyst's couch, then into the MRI scanner: The Psychologisation of Buddhism

Elliot Cohen

Introduction

Over the past several decades there has been a steadily increasing fascination with Buddhism on the part of Western (mainly American and European) Psychologists which has now transformed into nothing less than a wholesale assimilation of the various Buddhist traditions. It is important to acknowledge that this fascination has been reciprocated by many leading Buddhist Masters, most notably the Dalai Lama, who actively encourages ongoing dialogues between senior practitioners of Tibetan Buddhist and Western

Psychologists and Psychiatrists.[1] I would like to begin this paper with a clear and concise declaration:

> The Buddha was not a Psychologist.

This is not because practically all forms of mainstream Western Psychology posit the ontological entity of a Self; whereas Buddhism consistently teaches that this Self is ultimately to be realised as unreal, illusory and the source of all our ignorance and suffering (Rahula 1997). This Buddhist, experiential insight (*anattā*- 'no self' or 'not self') has actually proved to be very attractive to some Psychiatrists, Psychologists and Psychotherapists (Epstein 2001, Blackmore 2003, Brazier 2003) and appears to fit in well with contemporary, fashionable postmodern discourses concerning the centreless self (Sarup and Raja 1996, D'haen and Vermeulen 2004); where identity lacks any core or essence.

To those readers whose primary disciplines are Religious Studies or Comparative Theology the introductory declaration may appear to be accurate simply because Buddhism is understood to constitute a living religious tradition; with all the accompanying beliefs, rituals and liturgies that one might expect to find within such a tradition. It is also important to reflect on Buddhism's ancient Indian origins as a mainly (although not exclusively) monastic movement that consistently stressed renunciation of worldly ways, pleasures and pursuits2.

The gradual transformation of Buddhism from a religion into a secular philosophy and Psychology is partly what this paper intends to highlight, explore and critique.

This is not for one moment to say or to suggest that there is nothing of great interest or value to Psychologists and Psychotherapists within the Buddhist teachings; rather this paper intends to reveal and critique some of the ideological mechanisms by which cultural and spiritual contexts have been severed or silenced in the name of authenticity and purity (or more correctly Western fantasies concerning these properties). In short, this paper intends to demonstrate how and why Buddhism has been assimilated into the Psy-Complex (Hook 2004).

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[1] For examples of these dialogues the reader is encouraged to visit the website for the Mind Life Institute http://www.mindandlife.org/

[2] A consistent feature in the earliest Buddhist scriptures contrasts the merits of *Pabbajja* 'Going forth' into the 'homeless life' compared with the ordinary, spiritually limited, life of the householder.

Reflexive Statement

This paper has emerged over the last decade in response to my own study and practice of Buddhism [3] coupled with my Psychological training. To clarify, I am writing as both a Psychologist and also as an authorised teacher/practitioner of Buddhist meditation. My own, ongoing, internal dialogue between these traditions has been externalised for the purposes of this paper; contextualised within the broader fields of Psychology, Psychotherapy and Buddhology, and further informed by critical sensitivities and reflections.

Why Buddhism?

For over a century Psychology has commonly modelled itself on the natural sciences and whether one's approach was Psychoanalytic, Behaviouristic, Humanistic or (the current and most popular) Cognitive Behavioural there has been a strong undercurrent of atheistic or agnostic thinking that has traditionally underpinned, informed and guided these approaches. Even more contemporary Transpersonal and Integral Psychology movements often find themselves needing to assert their right to explore spiritual experience outside traditionally accepted nomothetic epistemologies and their accompanying methods (Braud and Anderson 1998); redefining validity in more subjective/experiential terms and taking more hermeneutic approaches to what commonly constitutes 'significance' (as opposed to statistical significance; a p-value less than 0.05).

Buddhism is most commonly portrayed by sympathetic Western Psychologists as being an atheistic (or at least agnostic), 'rational'[4], science of the mind; not concerned with God, gods/goddesses or supernatural beings, rites, rituals; requiring neither faith nor any deep lifelong commitments. Whereas the traditional 'Abrahamic' faiths are, by contrast, typically presented as being irrational, Theistic, dogmatic, ritual obsessed and hopelessly outdated and ill suited to the contemporary needs and questions of humankind[5]; in this manner Buddhism very much becomes an 'alternative' religion. These contrasts arguably have their origins in the work and thought of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Whilst Schopen-

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[3] *Theravada* Sri Lankan and Thai forest tradition, *Nyingma* and *Kagyu* schools of Tibetan Buddhism, Chinese *Ch'an* and Pureland Buddhism with *Fo Guang Shan*)

[4] In a rather reductionist, positivistic sense of the word

[5] For a powerfully argued and poetically engaging challenge to this familiar criticism the reader is advised to read Michael Fishbane's (2008) *Sacred Attunement: A Jewish Theology*

hauer famously declared that Buddhism constitutes 'the finest of all religion', Nietzsche asserted that:

> Buddhism is a hundred times more realistic than Christianity- it has the heritage of a cool and objective posing of problems in its composition, it arrives *after* a philosophical movement lasting hundreds of years; the concept 'God' is already abolished by the time it arrives. Buddhism is the only really *positivistic* religion history has to show us. (Nietzsche quoted in Batchelor, S. 1994 p.265)

Both philosophers were to employ Buddhism, ideologically, as some form of exotic, Far Eastern Other[6], to invoke whenever and however it suited their particular aims and ends; both created a Buddhism in their own image; both are also foundational thinkers (if not always visible) within the Social Sciences.

Schopenhauer and Nietzsche were to begin something of a Western tradition, or more appropriately a reinvention of tradition[7], wherein Buddhism is stripped of its religious, cultural and historical context and transformed into a form of secular positivism. Rather than being acknowledged as a Western transformation this is frequently presented a being a restoration of an original, or purer, form of Buddhism (Sharf 1995).

The demythologising of Buddhism[8] also has its roots in the Theosophical Societies work in Sri Lanka during the late nineteenth century[9]. Theosophy itself consisted of a potent and popular mix of Orientalism, Spiritualism and Pseudoscience (Washington 1993). Of particular importance were the activities of the American co-founder and president of the movement, Colonel Henry Steele Olcott, who helped to initiate a national restoration, revival and reinvention of Buddhism in one of its traditional homelands (Washington 1993, Gombrich 2002).

The Sri Lankan Buddhist revival presented a challenge to the previously successful Protestant (Christian) missionaries but also adopted some of the latter's theological forms to create what Professor Richard Gombrich chooses to term 'Protestant Buddhism' (Gombrich 2002, p.174). The role of Western born converts to Buddhism who commonly served as prominent teachers within both the monastic and lay Buddhist communities has also had quite a significant impact on the common forms Buddhism (in both the East and, more particularly, the West) has taken; particularly in regard to the increasing importance

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[6] This may justifiably remind the reader of Edward Said's (1979) critiques of Orientalism

[7] To consciously contrast with Hobsbawm and Ranger (1992) *Invention of Tradition*

[8] To be specific *Theravada* Buddhism (literally meaning the way of the elders), the oldest surviving Buddhist tradition

[9] It may interest the reader to reflect on the fact that one of the oldest Buddhist Societies of Europe, the UK's own Buddhist Society (founded in 1928 by Christmas Humprheys) grew out of the Theosophical movement.

and involvement of non-monastic (non-celibate) Westerners who were to establish and emphasise important new roles for the Buddhist laity as teachers and representatives of the Buddhist tradition (Gombrich 2002).

The manner in which Buddhism came to be represented, consistently played down or edited out the more fantastical aspects of the Buddha's beliefs and actions and highlighted parts that fitted in with more modernist attitudes and aspirations. One striking example is the frequent use of and reference to the *Kalama Sutta*:

> Now, Kalamas, don't go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture, by logical conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probability, or by the thought, 'This contemplative is our teacher.' When you know for yourselves that, 'These qualities are skillful; these qualities are blameless; these qualities are praised by the wise; these qualities, when adopted & carried out, lead to welfare & to happiness' — then you should enter & remain in them. (Thanissaro Bhikkhu 2010)

This short *Sutta* is still consistently presented as being one of the central, defining teachings of the Buddha; the teaching that differentiates the *Dharma* from all other 'belief' systems. Gombrich (2002) reflects that this verse appears attractive to Westerners due to its apparent promotion of 'religious individualism' (p. 72), whilst Buddhist monk and acclaimed translator Bhikkhu Bodhi offers an honest reprimand:

> On the basis of a single passage, quoted out of context, the Buddha has been made out to be a pragmatic empiricist who dismisses all doctrine and faith, and whose Dhamma is simply a freethinker's kit to truth which invites each one to accept and reject whatever he likes. (Bhikkhu Bodhi quoted in p.248)

One might also reflect on the choice to typically translate the Buddha's *Bodhi* or 'awakening' as his 'enlightenment'; which itself evokes discourses associated with eighteenth century Europe's aspirations towards an age of reason; the valorisation of the Baconian method and the planting of seeds of anti-religious, secular sentiment that has flowered today in Richard Dawkin's (and others) doctrine of Scientism. Indeed, much of the Buddhism that is familiar and propagated in the West may justifiably be understood as constituting various forms and expressions of a relatively recent Buddhist modernism (McMahan 2008).

Who, what and where is the Buddha?

In the year 2000 I was employed as the researcher for a BBC Everyman landmark documentary titled '*Life of the Buddha*.' One of the first tasks I was asked to accomplish by the producer was to somehow 'separate the man from the myth'[10]. This was, in theory, to be done through relying primarily on archaeological evidence and searching for any historical sources that would lead 'us' towards something approaching a biography as opposed to a hagiography. This was an impossible and unreasonable request as clearly the man was the myth and the myth was the man.

From the beginning it was clear that they did not desire the fully enlightened prince turned renunciant, 'teacher of gods and men' but rather an ordinary man who abandoned his family in the quest for spiritual truth and who died (in his eighties) due to food poisoning in *Kushinagar* (some 2,500 years ago).

The earliest surviving Buddhist scriptures, the *Nikayas*, consistently present the Buddha as a omniscient, superhuman being, an unparalleled teacher, performer of various miracles and supra-divine saviour (Masefield 1986); liberating sentient beings from the otherwise unending cycle of birth, sickness, old age, death and rebirth. Additionally, when these scriptures are read against the backdrop of the existing Brahminic traditions one sees that much of the world-view of the Buddha and his disciples was often quite typically Hindu[11]; including belief in the cosmic law of *Karma*, a whole host of both seen and unseen supernatural beings (including vast hierarchies of Gods and Goddesses) and a deeply held belief in afterlives.[12]

Although the attitudes concerning the honours and worship due these various supernatural beings may be contrasted between Brahmanism and Buddhism, the belief in their actual existence was never contested or denied. It also becomes immediately clear that the Buddha is not described as being God or any kind of god (in any of the Buddhist scriptures) precisely because he is deemed as being far above and beyond such categories, and not being due to any secular leanings possessed by his disciples; in this way one may justly argue that Buddhism is not atheistic but rather supra-theistic. As the monks and laypeople may be heard to chant daily, in the *Theravadin* tradition (the oldest surviving school of Buddhism) the Buddha is understood to be and related to as *Sattha deva manussanam* - 'teacher of Gods and Men' (Rhys Davids and Carpenter 1967, p.76)

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[10] This arguably constitutes something of a modern obsession as the History and Discovery Channels frequently commission documentaries whose contents concerns the 'search' for the 'historical' Moses, Jesus etc.

[11] Used in the broader sense of being native to India

[12] 'Reincarnation' in Hinduism and the more complex 'Rebirth' in Buddhism

A popular *Dharmapala* (Dharma protector) *Mahkala*

As Buddhism travelled beyond India and the new Mahayana schools[13] rose to prominence to China, Japan and Tibet, a whole pantheon of Buddhist Deities were to appear and the Buddha himself was to be multiplied into five supra-divine forms (Bechert and Gombrich 1984).

To fit within Western world-views these various deities can be, and commonly are, transformed via psychologisation or metaphorisation into different states of mind rather than actual beings.

Following the Buddha's enlightenment (described in the *Ayacana Sutta*) when he is doubting whether or not to preach and share his salvational truth (his *Dharma*) he is entreated to do so by a Brahmā (a powerful and senior Hindu-Buddhist deity). When this scene is metaphorised and psychologised it becomes stripped of its more cosmic and supernatural context and internalised so that the Brahmā is not really a Brahmā at all, but rather the Buddha's own conscience or compassionate nature.

A similar process may be observed within Tibetan Buddhism which has a multitude of terrifying looking protector deities who are there to guard and preserve the integrity of the particular tradition, its teachers and practitioners.

In Martin Scorsese's (1997) Tibetan epic *Kundun*, there is a revealing scene where the young Dalai Lama is afraid to sleep and asks one of his attendants the name of one of the particular protector deity pictured near his bedside. Her name, it transpires, is *Penden Lhamo* and she is the Dalai Lama's personal protector. The young boy then asks a very strange question (perhaps revealing the scepticism of the Hollywood screenwriter, Melissa

[13] *Mahayana* literally translates as the great or greater vehicle

Mathison, rather than a young child raised and steeped in Tibetan cosmology) "Is she real or pretend?" to which the attendant immediately, twice replies "She's real, she's real.

The Western practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism may well struggle with recognising these various deities as being 'real' in any 'objective', living sense, and the Western Psychologist (if he/she considers them at all) will quickly reduce them into safer categories such as 'archetypes', 'objects' or the mere means to a Psychological end as part of a visualisation practice:

> Many times I have heard a Westerner ask a Tibetan Rinpoche, "are the deities real or are they archetypes?" Every time the master has answered that the yidams, the protectors and the deities are as real as we are." Just as we exist so too do they exist. (Lama Palden Drolma 2002, pp.2-3)

And as Westerners begin to explore Buddhist teachings concerning emptiness (*Shunyata*), most commonly encountered in the 'Perfection of Wisdom Sutras' (the shortest and most popular being the 'Heart Sutra'), these ontological questions concerning 'what' or 'who' exists, become ever more complex and ambiguous, opening up to any number of interpretations (Hopkins 1996).

In John Snelling's (1994) bestselling introduction to Buddhist teachings (recommended reading from the UK Buddhist Society) one encounters a classic example of the Psychologisation of the various heavens and hells of Buddhist cosmology as encountered in the depictions of the wheel of life (the six realms of existence). There is little doubt that almost all ancient and most modern (Sri Lankan, Burmese, Thai, Chinese, Japanese and Tibetan) Buddhists accepted, and would continue to accept and believe in the actual existence of hell realms[14], populated by those who didn't appreciate the Karmic consequences of their actions and intentions in former lives. Yet Snelling, like many Westerners, finds the 'reality' of hell realms difficult to accept, according to either faith or reason, and so begins a hermeneutic process of metaphorisation, individualisation and psychologisation:

> What are we to make of all this? Is it merely the product of dark and superstitious minds that we, children of a more 'advanced' age illuminated by the light of modern science, might safely cast away…
>
> That having been said, many people find that the notion of being caught up in vast cycles of painful coming-into-being and ceasing-to-be across untold aeons evokes a strange resonance in the psyche. And is this really so surprising? It has taken the

[14] There are traditionally sixteen hells in Buddhism; eight hot and eight cold. The most feared being the *Avici* hell.

> evolutionary process millions of years to create human beings, and we carry in our genes the imprint of all the struggles that organic life has undergone in the process. We have in a sense died with the dinosaurs ; we have struggled to get up from four feet onto two; we have preyed and been preyed upon, struggled and failed, and succeeded too- but the weariness!
>
> And in the contexts of our present lives, have we all not, experienced innumerable forms of suffering: loss of fortune, separation from loved ones, sickness, betrayal, disillusionment, confusion? Perhaps too at moments of extreme distress, we have known what it is to be in hell? (Snelling 1994, p.49)

On one hand the author is unwilling to dismiss outright the 'superstitious' teachings concerning hell, but then the presence of the inverted commas suggest that our age is not as 'advanced' as it perceives itself to be; and so there follows an evolutionary discourse which concludes with the relocation of the hell realms from any supernatural realm to our own private minds and personal experience.

The wheel of life

Perhaps the clearest example of the Westernisation and demythologisation of Buddhism can be seen in the work of the former Buddhist monk[15] and now contemporary Buddhist scholar, teacher and bestselling author Stephen Batchelor. In his recent autobiography 'Confessions of a Buddhist Atheist', Batchelor (2010) recounts his gradual movement away from Tibetan Buddhism towards Zen Buddhism, and eventually reformulating his own version of the Buddhist teachings[16]. At one point, recounting a period (in the 1980s) preceding his

[15] Originally of the Tibetan *Gelugpa* Tradition (the same tradition as the Dalai Lama).

[16] Without, to his credit, seeking to create a new school or new religious movement.

departure from his Tibetan teacher he expresses a vision which he was soon to successfully realise:

> I saw myself, arrogantly perhaps, as a participant in a groundbreaking experiment to redefine traditional religious thinking in a way that transcended sectarian identities. This experiment was neither Christian, Jewish, nor Buddhist: it was an attempt to humanise and secularise religion, to free it from the prison of metaphysics and supernatural beliefs, to allow it speak out in a lucid, impassioned and committed voice. (Batchelor 2010, p.59)

It is telling that the sole, selected endorsement displayed on the back sleeve of Batchelor's (2010) autobiography (titled 'Confessions of a Buddhist Atheist') comes from the prominent atheist Christopher Hitchens.

In what became Batchelor's (1997) defining thesis, '*Buddhism without Beliefs: A Contemporary Guide to Awakening*', the Dharma (Buddhist teachings) was to be stripped down to its 'essentials'. An agnostic attitude towards rebirth, karma and all metaphysical axioms was encouraged, and the Buddha was consistently portrayed as a human teacher who had more in common with the great continental philosophers (in particular the existentialists) than with any religious mystics, gurus or miracle workers. As the book begins to conclude:

> An agnostic Buddhist vision of a culture of awakening will inevitably challenge many of the time-honoured roles of religious Buddhism. No longer will it see the role of Buddhism as providing pseudoscientific authority on subjects such as cosmology, biology and consciousness as it did in prescientific Asian cultures. Nor will it see its role as offering consolating assurances of a better afterlife by living in accordance with the worldview of karma and rebirth. (Batchelor 1997, p.114)

Batchelor is perhaps an extreme example of the Westernisation and secularisation of Buddhism, but he is also an extremely influential spokesperson for Buddhism in the West. But before individuals begin to hurl accusations of 'cultural imperialism' it is important to recall that in every age when Buddhism has been imported into a new land it has been painstakingly translated and transformed into forms that are more 'indigenous', recognisable and palatable to the host country; one example is Buddhism's arrival in China, its meeting with Daoism and the emergence of *Ch'an* (*Zen*) Buddhism[17] (Bechert and Gom-

[17] One may also reflect on the transformations of Buddhist iconography from a Buddha with 'foreign' Indian features to more Buddhas and Bodhisattvas with more recognisably Chinese features.

brich 1998). What is perhaps novel is that the translation and transformation is now occurring within predominantly secular, modernist contexts.

One might also consider the broader context (macrosystem) of neoliberalism and the role of market forces. Carrette and King (2005) consider the psychologisation of religion as being a part of the privatisation and commodification of spirituality. In this way spirituality, under Capitalism, becomes yet another product to consume, a label to wear and to display. To this end 'Capitalist spirituality' (Carrette and King 2005, p.17) is revealed as yet another mode of having that fools itself into believing it is being (Fromm 2005); whilst the more general tendencies towards positivism and the increasingly overt denial of metaphysical realms or possibilities ensures that one remains firmly embedded within the material world, with all its material concerns and relations.

Buddhism as psychology

Although not exhaustive, it is my hope to provide several striking examples and accompanying reflections that illustrate something of the recent history concerning Buddhism's successful integration and assimilation into mainstream Psychology.

When Dr Karen Wegela (2009), writing for *Psychology Today*, identifies the Buddha as having been 'An Early Psychologist' we need to recognise how this increasingly commonly accepted idea has come to gain credence. This assertion can (and often does) allow modern Psychologists to anchor their particular truth claims within an exotic Eastern antiquity. Perhaps this might also reflect the Psychologist's desire to share, or take part, in an ancient lineage?

Off the couch and under the tree

> We live and practice in a psychoanalytic universe in which Buddhist teachers are in therapy, psychoanalysts meditate, and spiritual seekers simultaneously pursue contemplative paths and analysis. (Rubin in Safran 2003, p. 387)

The 1939 German edition of D. T. Suzuki's *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* contained a glowing forward written by C. G. Jung. Within the broader Psychoanalytic movement we may consider the dialogues between Erich Fromm, Zen Buddhist teacher and author D. T. Suzuki and Richard De Martino which led to the publication of *Zen and Psychoanalysis* in 1960. This work represents one of the first serious attempts to effectively blend Buddhist teachings with Psychoanalytic thought.

The popular and prolific (Japanese born, English speaking) D. T. Suzuki remains one of the most significant figures in the propagation of Zen Buddhism in the West. It is also important to recognise that the Zen Buddhism of D. T. Suzuki (2002) is one that has been mostly stripped of most of its rituals and liturgies and is commonly represented as an atheistic, anti-doctrinal Psychology of awakening[18]; a Psychology that immediately appealed (and continues to appeal) to Westerners.

In fact, quite early in his writings, Suzuki had explicitly reimagined Buddhism as being the precursor to Western Psychology:

> It is wonderful that Buddhism clearly anticipated the outcome of modern psychological researches at the time when all other religious and philosophical systems were eagerly cherishing dogmatic superstitions concerning the nature of the ego (Suzuki 2000, p. 40)

The most common introductory description of 'Orthodox' Zen Buddhism in Western publications remains that of 'a special transmission outside the scriptures' (Dumoulin 1979, p.16), and is commonly coupled with illustrations of the Ch'an (Zen) Patriarch *Huineng* tearing up the Buddhist scriptures. The Zen of West is one of antinomian iconoclasm and these characteristics were to be further emphasised and articulated by popular writers on contemporary Spirituality and Zen such as Alan Watts (1990). Watts (1961) was also a key figure in some of the more popular efforts at mixing Western forms of Psychology and Psychotherapy with 'Eastern' approaches (namely Buddhist and Daoist).

These seemingly anti-religious sentiments would seem to dovetail well with Freud's well documented anti-religious sentiments (Ward 1993); which were most typically directed against the 'Abrahamic' God. As Freud had comparatively little to say concerning the lesser-known Eastern religions, Buddhism (in its modernist form) became an acceptable area of both study and practice for spiritual seekers within Psychoanalytic movements.

It is only relatively recently that scholars of comparative religion have initiated serious scholarly attempts to challenge and correct the popular Western image of the Zen Buddhist as being something/someone akin to the Nietzschean *Übermensch* and restore him/her to their cultural and spiritual context (Heine and Wright 2007). One need only visit any Zen temple in Japan (and there are many to choose from in *Kyoto*) to see how formal, organised and ritualised daily life is and how central various rituals, liturgies and chanting services are.

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[18] This becomes more understandable when one considers that D. T. Suzuki had been a student and admirer of Paul Carus (2009).

The Freud Museum's (1993) publication, titled 'Is Psychoanalysis another Religion', included several prominent Psychoanalytic thinkers, practitioners and historians reflecting on Freud's attitudes towards religion and spirituality. In addition to several pictures of Buddhas and *Bodhisattvas* (awakened beings), one of which included Julia Kristeva photographed besides a bust of Shakyamuni Buddha[19], is an article by Nina Coltart. In the article Coltart writes that the Buddha was 'an excellent Psychologist, and knew a great deal about the unconscious mind' (Coltart 1993, p.25). That same year Coltart (1993) published *How to Survive as a Psychotherapist*, which included several flattering comparisons between the Buddha and Freud (p.112). For some contemporary Psychoanalysts, Zen Buddhist meditation remains an acceptable way to explore the Unconscious and to bring hitherto unknown or unacknowledged (repressed) desires and material into consciousness awareness (Cooper 2004), thus appearing to reformulate the Buddhist enlightenment as being the realisation of Freud's summation of the purpose of Psychoanalysis; 'Where Id was there Ego shall be.'

Unlike many others however Coltart demonstrated more religious sensitivity, reflexivity and criticality as she advised against the practice of Buddhist meditation outside its intended spiritual context and continued to quote from John Welwood's (1985) work *Awakening the Heart* where he cautioned:

> The Psychologising of Eastern of Eastern contemplative disciplines can rob these disciplines of their spiritual substance. It can pervert them into a Western mental health gimmick, and thereby prevent them from introducing the sharply *alternative* vision of life they are capable of bringing us. (Welwood quoted in Coltart 1993, p.26)

Buddhism and Cognitive Therapy

If the Buddha is to be characterised as a Psychologist then it would logically follow that his teachings themselves constitute a form of Psychology or Psychotherapy. As new Psychological trends appear so the ways that the Buddhist teachings are utilised and transformed increase and become ever more varied.

With the advent of Cognitive Therapeutic approaches (Beck 1991), the Psychological nomenclature moved away from the 'Unconscious' and towards talk of 'underlying me-

[19] Though the article itself concerns Christianity

chanisms' (Persons 1989, pp.6-8; Grant et al 2008, p.54), with the emergence of a more technologically loaded language; most closely resembling information processing theory. Psychological experiences were now reduced into flowchart form processes and it appeared that Psychology's journey towards becoming a natural science was nearing completion.

Perhaps it has been partly an attempt to move away from the overtly dehumanising language of earlier forms of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) that visible and influential alliances have been forming over the past decade between CBT and Buddhist mindfulness meditation.

Mindfulness meditation is common to all forms of Buddhism meditation but is perhaps most commonly associated with the *Theravada* and *Zen* (*Mahayana*) traditions of Buddhism. It was arguably the Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh's (1991) book *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, first published in 1975, that brought this term into popular parlance.

Mindfulness may take many forms; traditional sitting meditation, walking, or any daily activity (making the bed or washing the dishes). It is more accurately understood as being the cultivation of a gentle, spacious attending to one's being and a wakeful awareness of all one's doing. Its most familiar form involves mindfulness of breathing; wherein one gently rests one's attention on the rise and fall of the breath (a meditative method that has its origins in the earliest Buddhist scriptures; *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*). The original purpose of cultivating mindfulness was to reach full and complete awakening; to completely transcend ignorance, hatred and craving; to put an end all suffering and anguish.

More recently the term mindfulness has been coupled with Cognitive Therapy to become the hybridised 'Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy' (MBCT). In my recent edition of the Guildford Press' catalogue for 'Clinical Psychology and Psychiatry 2009' over a page and a half was dedicated to new books on MBCT; with their front covers evoking scenes of the Far East; lotus flowers or small stacks of smooth stones suggesting Zen minimalism.

Kabat-Zinn's (1990) *Full Catastrophe Living* was one of the first popular (bestselling) efforts to bring mindfulness into a clinical/medical setting (at the University of Massachusetts Medical Centre) and use it primarily as a treatment for stress and stress related illnesses. As the back sleeve of the book promises and encourages:

> This book will enable you to develop your own stress management programme. It provides easy-to-follow meditation techniques, a detailed eight-week practice schedule, dozens of success stories, plus the latest research findings. Discover how mindfulness will help you cope with a range of problems: medical symptoms, physical and emotional pain, anxiety and panic, time pressures, relationships, work, food, and events in the outside world. (Kabat-Zinn 1990)

One can immediately appreciate and see how mindfulness has now been reformulated into a form of managing symptoms, coping strategies enabling adjustment to stressful situations and circumstances. Mindfulness is transformed from a cultivation practice that leads to full awakening, in the original Buddhist sense, into yet another coping mechanism for dealing with the stresses of modern life.

When mindfulness is utilised by Psychiatrists and Clinical Psychologists it becomes a treatment for depression and reducing relapses (Williams, Teasdale, Segal, Kabat-Zinn 2007).

Although these are all praiseworthy and noble goals, they do appear to ignore some of the central teachings of the Buddhist religion. Western adaptations of mindfulness are being used to reduce our stress, to make us less depressed, more fulfilled and happy (the Dalai Lama and Cutler 1998) but are rarely requiring us to make the necessary and demanding life changes that Buddhism originally required. Buddhism becomes part of a secular quest for happiness, but few Psychiatrists and Psychologists appear to appreciate that even the Buddha's understanding of happiness was radically different from theirs.

The Buddha and his Dharma (teachings) addressed 'suffering and cessation of suffering'. He consistently taught that the pursuit of happiness based upon people's erroneous and unawakened view of world, their craving for sensory delights and distractions (with their various accompanying pleasurable, neutral or painful sensations) was at the heart of our collective problems (Rahula 1997).

The Buddha taught that in the eyes of the awakened the very things we consider to be the sources of our happiness are actually the very sources of our misery as it says in the *Saddhamma-maniratana*, 'Gemstones of the Good Dhamma':

> What others call happiness,
> the Noble call pain;
> what others call pain,
> the Noble call happiness.
> Behold this Dhamma hard to comprehend
> by which the dull are utterly baffled. (Dhammika 2009)

Not surprisingly the forms of Buddhism which appear to be most popular in the West have little to nothing to do with renunciation and more to do with embracing life and seeking personal fulfilment. Buddhism appears overwhelmed by the Western sense of entitlement to happiness irrespective of our moral conduct. Whereas mindfulness in the Buddhist tradition was always within the context of commitment to a moral way of life (most

commonly, for the layperson, the five precepts *pañca-sikkhāpada*[20], the moral/ethical dimension of being is seldom addressed by Psychological texts concerning mindfulness.

Indeed Western adaptations of mindfulness often appear independent of any ethical requirements; rather emphasising an amoral immediacy of being; free of any religious or cultural 'baggage'. Both Proudfoot (1985) and Sharf (1995) have previously revealed and critiqued the Western privileging of 'experience' as a rhetorical technique intended to downplay the importance of religious institutions and contexts.

Whilst seductive, this transformation arguably does a great disservice to, and distorts, the original purpose of the *Dharma* (Buddhist teachings), and reduces the practice of mindfulness to a rather self-centred pursuit; less concerned with making us into better human beings and more concerned/obsessed with allowing us to have better (more 'real'/intense) experiences. The recent offering of mindfulness based sex therapy (MBST) programmes[21] and CDs (including a forthcoming title *Buddha in the Bedroom*) was perhaps an inevitable consequence of this particular form of adaptation.

Buddhism and Consciousness Studies

Susan Blackmore's (2003) *Consciousness: An Introduction*, whilst entertaining certain intriguing philosophical possibilities and problems, typically tends towards more positivistic, neuroscientific and evolutionary explanations for our sense of self and being. Despite these leanings Blackmore is quite open about her practice of meditation in the Zen Buddhist tradition (although making it very clear that she does not consider herself to be a Buddhist); a practice which she occasionally teaches at Buddhist centres in the UK.

Blackmore's recent publication (2009) *Ten Zen Questions* reinforces the popular Western perception of Zen as an atheistic, humanistic, science of mind and consciousness. The questions are loosely based on the *Rinzai* sect of Zen's practice of meditating on *koans*[22]. The purpose of the *koan*, as popularised by D. T. Suzuki, is to move the meditator beyond her intellect (her words) and attempts to 'solve' or 'answer' the 'problem' in the 'correct' manner and allow the meditator to have a direct 'experience' of being (*Satori* in Japanese); in contrast Blackmore's text reads as an ongoing internal monologue; phenomeno-

[20] These include the precepts of not taking life, not taking what is not given, abstaining from sexual misconduct, not speaking untruths, and abstaining from intoxicants which cloud the mind.

[21] Based in Los Angeles, Califronia. The current programmes can be accessed through the Website at http://mindfulsextherapy.com/default.aspx accessed 29/04/10

[22] Popularly presented as seemingly impossible questions e.g. 'What is this?' Or the infamous 'What is the sound of one hand clapping?'

logical reflections leading on to existential insights which in turn initiate even more questions:

> Who is asking the question? I am. I am sitting here looking at the wet flagstones outside my hut. Let me investigate this instead. Who is looking at the stone? This is easier. I can see the stone over there, flat and grey with ups and downs and puddles where the rain collects, and wet leaves stuck here and there. Now who is seeing all this? There is no escaping the flagstone. There it is. And there is no escaping the fact that I am looking from over here. There is perspective: a viewpoint. Were I to look from somewhere else it would look different. Were someone else looking from over there they would see it in a different way. From here it looks like this. Right – so now I can draw a line between there and here. Over there is the flagstone. Over here is me. And who is this? (Blackmore 2009, 'Question Three')

Blackmore's Zen Buddhism, and its familiar resonance with some schools of continental philosophy[23], may be understood more clearly when we consider that three of her main Buddhist references in *Consciousness: An Introduction* are from Stephen Batchelor's writings.

However Blackmore would be the first to recognise that these first person accounts are not deemed sufficient, authoritative or comprehensive enough (by mainstream Psychology) to allow us to understand what consciousness is, and so researchers will commonly seek to root their phenomenological reflections in 'hard science'; following the lead of neuroscientist and practitioner of Tibetan Buddhist, Francisco Valera (Blackmore 2006).

The recent resurgence of interest in Consciousness and the search for neural correlates of consciousness has led to some interesting and slightly surreal events. On several occasions now Buddhist monks (mostly from the Tibetan tradition) have willingly placed themselves in MRI scanners and had their meditative prowess measured and explained in terms of brain structure, function and electrochemistry (Goleman 2003). In this way Neuropsychology continues the process of demystification, as the Buddhist brain is gradually catalogued; moving from the cultivating the Dharma to increasing dendritic connections (Austin 1999; Hanson & Mendius 2009).

One may also consider, and perhaps gain a greater comprehension of, this emerging trend by considering Brockman's (1996) discussions concerning the 'third culture'. Brockman observes that scientists have become an intellectual vanguard in Western societies and an economic force to be reckoned with (Shaffer 1998); despite the best efforts of

[23] In particular the Phenomenological and Existentialist movements.

1960s counter culture to resist technocracy (Roszak 1995) and its accompanying epistemological hegemony.

Typically third culture Scientists address and posit answers to questions that were previously deemed to be the sole domain of theologians and philosophers. As Natural Science approaches are asserted as being the sole benchmark of validity, attempts are made to either process and reduce spiritual experience through an instrumentalist incarnation of science (as has previously been demonstrated) or to attempt to relate scientific worldviews, insights and discoveries to ancient spiritual teachings and religious scriptures. One popular attempt at the latter was Fritjof Capra's (2000) bestselling 'The Tao Physics'[24] which had the subtitle of 'an exploration of the parallels between modern physics and Eastern mysticism'. One critical issue with this kind of approach is that it appears to only validate religious worldviews in proportion to these perceived 'parallels'; so that religion is deemed relevant and 'rational' only to the extent that it can be made (or be made to appear) to conform to currently popular scientific worldviews and methods. In this way religion may be seen as a mere primitive precursor to scientific discovery; surviving only by emulating and associating with the dominant positivist paradigms; Buddhist meditation is not valued or validated on the basis of 2500 years of carefully recorded experiential evidence[25] but rather on the comparatively recent experimental findings that brain activity is being measurably affected[26].

It is therefore important and timely, although not without controversy, to consider whether this new trend may in time lead to a shift in 'spiritual authority' from the *Lamas*/*Rinpoches* (the Masters of the Tibetan tradition) and *Roshis* (the Masters of the Zen tradition) to the Psychologists and Neuroscientists; as the ability, and accompanying authority, to recognise those who are 'awakened' moves away from a more traditional teacher-disciple relationship and begins to resemble a more medicalised form (doctor-patient); with awakening virtually taking on the appearance of a diagnosis. If awakening becomes authoritatively associated with particular brain states, then it may well prove difficult for the formerly valued intuition of the Buddhist Master (traditionally based on metaphysical wisdom and accompanying powers) to compete with the new data provided by the constantly evolving technologies of neuroimaging.

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[24] First published in 1975

[25] Or an unbroken lineage of masters

[26] Most commonly observed changes in alpha brainwaves and release of beta-endorphins etc.

Cohen, E. (2010) 'From the Bodhi tree, to the analyst's couch, then into the MRI scanner. The psychologisation of Buddhism.'

Concluding Thoughts

I recently returned from visiting the Hossō Zen temple (in *Nara*, Japan), whose the Abbot Tagawa Shun'ei (2009), recently wrote a book introducing the *Yogācāra* school of Buddhism. This particular school, commonly referred to as the 'mind/consciousness only' school, is presented as having anticipated many of the greatest insights of Western Psychology from the existence and dynamics of the Unconscious[27], to more cognitive aspects and approaches, but is deliberately differentiated from more genetic/biological approaches:

> Yogācāra Buddhism argues that all causes are to be found within "transformations of consciousness", and phenomena are reduced to being "mental factors". As long as our understanding of Yogācāra is based on this, seeds and human genetics are beyond comparison. Human genes are transmitted from parents to their children, and fundamentally consist of matter containing manipulative potentiality. Physical genes cannot be equated with the mental-energy seeds that impregnate our actions into the deep mind of the store consciousness. (Shun'ei 2009 p.133)

After defending and reasserting a Buddhist metaphysical position, there follows a reiteration of the Buddhist belief in rebirth and past lives, until the abbot concludes:

> Buddhists who live in ages henceforth will continue to debate advanced findings made by researchers in the life sciences. But if we make these correspondences based on a superficially felt sense of similarity, we will accomplish nothing but the invitation of useless confusion. We should instead hold firm to the Yogācāra position that reduces all things to mental factors, examine the differences closely, and then establish any correspondences to be made based on that. (Shun'ei 2009 p.134)

Tagawa Shun'ei appears to be setting out conditions and establishing boundaries wherein a dialogue of equal partners can take place, between his particular school of Buddhism and the 'Life Sciences'. But this becomes near impossible when the very Scientists are already, themselves, practitioners and propagators of (or sympathetic towards) more modernist forms of Buddhism. The 'dialogue' moves away from the traditional curators and

[27] Which is related to the ***ālaya-****vijñāna* or the 'store consciousness'. This is part of the subliminal mind which houses the memories and seeds of actions from this life and countless previous lives. For an insightful exploration of this concept discussed in relation to Psychoanalytic and Analytical Psychology the reader should consult Jiang (2006).

lineage holders of the various age-old Buddhist traditions and towards being an internal dialogue taking place within the minds and writings of Western practitioners.

It is now hopefully clear that the process of Psychologisation and individualisation had already occurred sometime prior to the later claims and assimilations of Psychoanalysts, Cognitive Therapists and Neuroscientists. Indeed Modernist Buddhism lent itself to such Psychological forms and interpretations, actively inviting comparisons that will legitimise its status as a scientific, positivistic religion, whilst simultaneously appearing to have recovered, or rediscovered the original Buddhism.

When one considers what the various goals of Modernist Buddhism are they appear quite distinct from, and modest in comparison to, the radically transformative paths and transcendent aspirations of earlier Buddhism. When coupled with Western Psychology and Psychotherapy, Buddhism typically becomes an aid to having more intense experiences, more awareness of and control over one's emotions and cognitions or a way of attaining relief from stress or mental anguish. The highest aims of Modernist Buddhism appear to be limited to various forms of Psychological adjustment and it has to be recognised that these are simply not comparable to the original Buddhist goals of liberation and awakening (Welwood 1983)[28] [29].

As Psychologists and Psychiatrists re-interpret, rewrite and popularise the Buddhist teachings[30] they themselves are becoming the new secular ministers and missionaries of Modernist Buddhism.

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[28] The reader may find Jack Kornfield, Ram Daas and Mokusen Miyuki's discussion 'Psychological adjustment is not liberation' in chapter 3 of Welwood (1983) to be particularly pertinent.

[29] For examples of political and social forms of liberation/emancipation within a modern Buddhist framework one may consider the life and work of Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (Jaffrelot 2005).

[30] Commonly containing forewords written by the Dalai Lama, or in the case of Jon Kabat Zinn the Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh.

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PART 2

DE-PSYCHOLOGISING POLICIES/POLITICS

The Rational(e) of an Emotional Society: A Cartesian Reflection

Marc De Kesel

Surely if entrails have any prophetic force, necessarily that force either is in accord with the laws of nature, or is fashioned in some way by the will and power of the gods.
Cicero, De divinatione II, xii, 29

What is in a word?

'Emotions in a rational society'. It could have been the title of a publication ten or twenty years ago. In that time, civilization was considered to be 'over-rationalized' and our lives objectified down to the most precise detail. The general complaint, then, concerned the lack of room for feelings, emotions, and other kinds of human subjectivity. Things have changed radically since then; indeed, today we are told to live in an 'emotional society'. The central problem, today, concerns how difficult it is to find *objective* coordinates. Visual culture unremittingly seduces us with a profusion of images, corporate culture opts for highly estimated emotional intelligence, and art requires an empathic

approach. Down with rationality's hegemony; down with the dictatorship of *hard* facts.

Has the tide radically turned? Has the authority of rationality and facts been replaced by one of feelings? Have we finally learned to live at the level of our emotional intelligence? One does not have to look far to see that the ostensive shift from rational culture to today's emotional society did not provoke an earthquake. Is the shift truly greater than one more superficial effect? And if this is indeed the case, what is the promotion of an emotional society really about? My thesis is that, behind this semblance of transformation, things remain essentially unchanged; moreover, the terms 'rational' or 'emotional society' are principally used in order to keep something unsaid, hidden, repressed. In what follows, I try to uncover the repressed, as well as the motives underlying this repression.

What, for instance, does a term like 'emotional society' tell us? And what does it keep untold? What does it say by not saying it? The term does not tell us that society *is* emotional. It tells us that society *says* to be emotional. 'Emotional society' is thus a *reflexive* term: it refers to the *discourse* people reproduce when talking about themselves and about what *they* consider to be their culture, society, and world. The 'emotionality' the term denotes concerns discourse: it is, thus, there, and not in society itself, that feelings and emotion are highly rated. The terminology of this emotional discourse stems from various sources, in which psychology takes a prominent place. As the discourse says, emotions have their rights, and society must respect these rights. Emotions, therefore, must be given an objective status. Henceforth, whilst they are difficult to fathom and often appear irrational, they are a fact, and as such, they must be accorded an objective place within today's society.

By characterising our society as emotional, we not only express our right to have feelings and to allow them in the public sphere, we, in fact, take for granted that feelings have *already* conquered that right— that this right *already* belongs to the objective reality—, and, as such, must be taken into account, even when they are not still fully able to defend themselves in the court of rationality. The emotional has a place of equal value, and the time has now come for the rational to be taken to emotionality's court.

So, the popular reference to 'emotional society' hides a subtle shift: 'emotions must be given room' has silently transformed into 'emotions are a fact'. And, once again, this is not a shift in the facts themselves, but; rather, in the discourse. It is a matter of saying or, more precisely, letting things be understood *without saying it in so many words*. It is included in the term's simple suggestion. Mainstream psychology is one of the disciplines to back this up: emotions, for which the rights are claimed, are presented as if no longer requiring such a claim. Or, phrased otherwise, they are 'facts' in the very claim they should be respected as facts.

The term 'emotional society' is thus underpinned by reason and a rationale— in addition to a *ratio* and, more specifically, a *modern* ratio—, for the latter has its rationale to

promote certain terms; for instance, the rationale to keep modernity's fragile condition in balance. 'Emotional society' is one of the tools that serve this purpose.

But, first, what is modernity? What characterizes modern rationality in such a way that emotions and passions can function as its symptoms?

Modernity ...

Modernity names the paradigmatic discourse expressing the way West-Europeans have related to reality in the preceding four centuries. Although pioneered in the 17th century, this discourse has developed in such a way that it still supplies the 'grammar' of today's *common sense*.

By 'paradigmatic discourse', I mean '*the set of misunderstandings through which we understand one another*'. It is the lexicon of 'big words' immediately understood by everyone on the simple basis that everyone supposes them understood by all others— whilst, in fact, no one has any full comprehension. Who we really are, what it all matters, why things are what they are: on such questions— as banal as they are abysmal— nobody really has the answer. However, everyone acts as if all the *others* have some answer; and even if each one of us personally has doubts about these supposed answers, they operate nonetheless as a common point of reference. They provide the coordinates of a discourse in which everyone can make themselves understandable. It is, thus, a misunderstanding on the basis of which we can understand one another. A misunderstanding crystallized in a little textile of big words: this is the ground on which a collective identity, a culture, a 'time', is based.

The big words that characterised the Middle Ages were 'creature', 'grace', '*natura*', '*supranature*', and the biggest and most central of all: 'God'. Nobody knew precisely whom or what God was— the cleverest philosophers of the period were acutely aware of that—, but, at the same time, nobody doubted that the very foundations of our reality were buttressed by the very term itself. At that period, the basic sensitivity was one of servitude and dependence; you understood yourself as wholly dependent upon what the surrounding creature— subordinates, your equals, your lord, and, finally, God— was giving you. During the wars of religion in the 16th century, this scenario of big words became the site of social, political, and cultural struggle. Within only a few generations, that scenario lost a significant amount of public support, which, in turn, led to the emergence of a new consensus, one based around the axiom that people should no longer militarily fight one another in the name of a God, or for any other religious reason. Henceforth, people should be free to believe in whichever God or Non-God they prefer; social and cultural order, then, would no longer be subverted by religion or faith— or so it was commonly assumed.

The 17th century witnessed the inception of the idea that man does not live off of his dependence on the surrounding creature— a dependence which, ultimately, refers to the godly Creator. From now on, man understands himself as *in*dependent and free. Not in the sense that he claims to be himself the creator of all that is; but in the sense that it is from that perspective that he now relates to reality, including God. He is himself the starting point of that relation, and for that he needs but himself. He is free to doubt whatever he can. It is precisely in that doubt, that man discovers his true 'self', i.e. that which, in the very moment of radical doubt, reveals itself as mere certainty: his thinking and doubting 'self'. This is the 'method' through which René Descartes proceeded to conceive of the 'free self' as the new 'ground' of certainty founding our relation to reality; it became the new 'episteme', a new 'misunderstanding through which people understood— and still understand— one another'. [1]

This episteme was a rational one. Rationality made modern man sure, not only about the foundation of his knowledge lying within his own thinking— his subject—, but also about what that knowledge says about the outside reality— its object. It allowed him to prove that his free perspective was sufficiently consistent so as to have a reliable grip on reality. This made the difference with respect to passions and emotions. 'Passion' derived from the Greek word 'παθειν' — 'pathein': meaning to be moved, touched, affected; which is also the meaning of the Latin word from which 'emotion' derives. Collectively these terms thus refer to a semantic field of words meaning 'being touched or affected from outside'— a meaning contrary to the free independence of the modern inner 'self'.

The modern, Cartesian subject cannot understand itself as dependent on such affection. It owes to itself a methodical doubt about it, and, on that basis, must submit all affection to its regime of self-assured certainty. Within Cartesian logic, there is no space for an *original* affection, i.e. for an affection that moves the free subject on the very level of its foundation.

Nonetheless, Descartes's oeuvre simultaneously testifies to an interminable struggle with the issues of passions and emotions; it is no mere accident that the last of his writings is precisely about the affections and passions of the 'soul': *Les passions de l'âme* (1649).[2]

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[1] The term 'episteme' is used in a Foucauldian sense; see for instance Michel Foucault (1966), *Les mots et les choses*, Paris: Gallimard, p. 13.

[2] René Descartes (1988), *Les passions de l'âme*, précédé de *La pathétique cartésienne* par Jean-Maurice Monnoyer, Paris : Gallimard; (1990), *Passions of the soul*, translated by Stephen Voss, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company. Descartes developed the ideas for his theory of the passions in an intense exchange of letters with the Elisabeth van de Palts, a German princes living in the same Dutch region as he did. For the edition of the original text, see: René Descartes & Elisabeth van de Palts (2000), *Briefwisseling*, ingeleid door René Gude en vertaald door Jeanne Holierhoek, Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek.

From a Cartesian perspective, the title is rather provocative, and even contradictory. For Descartes defines the 'soul' (*l'âme*) as the agency which does not obey any affection or passion: it is a doubting, thinking agency, and, therefore, an autonomous, and free one. Resultantly, anything that tries to touch or affect it is always already touched by the doubting act of that soul, by its thinking. The affection is, thus, either rejected or incorporated within the realm of the soul's 'clear and distinguished ideas', illustrating its untouchability and freedom. Even in the case of rejection, there has never been any real affection or touch.

However, Descartes's oeuvre nevertheless ends up telling us that the soul *is* affected and moved, and that the soul, for its part, moves and causes affects. The idea that the body is moved by the soul is a real problem for the Cartesian system. For if body and soul are truly two different kinds of reality— two radically separate substances, as Descartes 'proved'—, how can they relate to one another on a fundamental level? How, for example, can the cause of action in one substance lay in the other one? In contradistinction to Aristotle, who defines the soul as the animating force of the body, and the body as that which is animated by the soul, for Descartes, body and soul are two radically separated ontological entities. Even the most quotidian human activity participates in two worlds. This appears to contradict even our most trivial experience. For example, *wanting* to drink a glass of water and *deciding* to reach my hand in the direction of that glass, has nothing to do with that mechanical body of mine being thirsty, moving my hand in that direction, taking the glass and bringing the water into my mouth.

Within the Cartesian system, God is supposed to act as a bridge between soul and body, between the logically free world of the *res cogitans*, and the logically determined one of the *res extensa*. Without saying it with so many words, Descartes's investigation of the "passions of the soul" is in pursuit of a better conceptualization of how the two radically different worlds can go together. Yet, any sound solution for that problem failed to come. How could it? Once I start thinking (read: *doubting*), the mere fact of my thinking already proves that it is free and beyond any determination, and, thus, has nothing in common with the outside reality I think about, and which obeys laws of strict determination. This fact doesn't prevent this dualistic vision of man and world, however, from being utterly indefensible. Descartes himself felt that, but was simply unable to find a valid alternative.

Many after Descartes have tried. One of them made history, proffering a paradigm today's sciences still respect. In 1748, Julien Offray de La Mettrie published a philosophical essay entitled *Man a Machine* (*L'homme machine*)[3]. It conclusively resolves the problem

[3] Julien Offray de Lamettrie (1996), *Man a Machine* and *Other Writings*, translated by Ann Thomson, Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press.

of Cartesian dualism by denying the status '*res*' or 'substance' to one of the two elements, more precisely, the *res cogitans* (the soul). Anything Descartes ascribes to the freely thinking and willing subject is to be considered as genuinely characteristic of the *res extensa*, La Mettrie argues. Man's subjective dimension is but a dimension, not a proper and independent reality. It is to be reduced entirely to his objective dimension, which is more than just a dimension: it is its sole, ontological substance. Thinking and willing, much like passions and emotions, are but *bodily* reactions. Erroneously, they are taken for capacities of a supposedly independent soul. Eventually, science will have progressed to such a degree that they will become analyzable as 'reaction formations' of the brain or the neurological system.

The arguments of La Mettrie's thesis, however, are untenable, if only because all evidence is situated in the future. *Once* science *has* progressed, we *will* notice that all we have attributed to the free human mind can in fact be ascribed to the body. Although a purely hypothetical— and invalid— argument, It nonetheless has become universally accepted, becoming, during the 18th and 19th century, the paradigm of modern 'positive' sciences, and, in the 19th and 20th century, of the human and social sciences as well. Indeed, they, too, pretend to be *objective* and to operate exclusively within the one and only substance of the *res extensa*: the word of material objectivity.

Contrary to what— with La Mettrie— we would like to believe, the problem of Cartesian dualism is far from being resolved. Although the 'objective' sciences declared the subject to be non-existent, the latter was only reduced to a kind of zero-degree; it may have been deprived of all content, but its place remained intact.

The blind-spot of a science reduced to objectivity is, in fact, the place of its subject— a place, moreover, that is indispensible for its scientific character. Objective science presupposes a pure and empty point situated unambiguously *outside* its object. Only from such point can the object be empirically observed in a 'neutral and impartial' manner. The objective gaze, that has become the scientific paradigm, is supposed to be neutral and value-free; it is a point of view emptied of all 'subjective' interests. But it is not itself an 'objective' point, i.e. a point belonging to the realm of science's object. It is precisely in this 'point' (of view) that the Cartesian subject survives, a subject that still implies an unbridgeable gap separating it from its object— from the world outside.

If, within the Cartesian system, God was the bridge between soul and body, the task to bridge the gap between an emptied subject and the world outside can be said to have been taken up by the psy-sciences. Resultantly, it is especially within psychological research that the new 'episteme' can be clearly discerned. For if one wants to conduct psychological research on a group of people, one does not ask each of its members what makes them a group. Science requires an objective approach. Yet the point from where such objective research operates is to be located *outside* the object of investigation. The behavioral scientist occupies a position behind a mirror that, from behind, can be looked through. This

way, he can observe without being observed himself. The place he occupies does not thus belong to the domain of his object. This place is that of the Cartesian subject reduced to its zero-degree. The 'partition' or 'wall', behind which he observes his scientific object, inevitably installs the dualistic separation introduced by Descartes.[4]

This Cartesian caesura is still the central problem of our modern episteme, unable as we are to find a valid alternative to it. It is the hidden demarcation line crossing our world, which, concomitantly, binds us to, *and* separate us from, the world. Hidden *behind* that line, we are able to relate to the world in full freedom and do with it as we like. It is this invisible limit that makes modern technical power so limitless. Unbound to the world, we are able to behave as if we are its sovereign master. The toll of that position, however, is that the world is now entirely at our disposition, regardless of whether our intentions are good or bad. The global nuclear threat strikingly illustrates how far our bad intentions can go. Able to manipulate the world in such a way that, in a few moments, it can be bombarded back to the Stone Age, man has to realise that, in the development of his modern power, he has left himself outside. His modern subject position has given him an infinite power over the world, but not without radically alienating himself from it. It is, both, modern man's euphoria *and* his trauma: it makes him immune to a forever doubtful world without foundations nor limits, and, therefore, gives him a quasi omnipotent power over the world; but since, in his quality of subject, he is located *outside* the world, 'subject' is also the name of what escapes this omnipotence, and becomes the latter's victim.

… & emotions/passions

The Cartesian caesura thus names the trauma modernity rests— *and* shakes— on; it is what forms *and* deforms, constructs *and* deconstructs it. The discourse about passions and emotions, that accompanied modernity from the outset, must be considered from within that perspective. From Descartes to Spinoza, and then Damasio; from Bossuet's sermons *against*, to Saint-Just's exaltations *pro*, and the intimidating fascination controlling today's media: each generation has been characterised by its own discourse about passion and emotion. For each generation, in its own specific manner, had to avert and repress the traumatic caesura upon which modernity rests upon. And since no repression is ever perfect, in some way or another, any form of repression inevitably lets out its trauma; resul-

[4] Psychologisation, then, can be said to be the process of the modern subject adopting, not only the terminology of the psy-sciences, but, also this observatory position behind the screen; the point from where one's gaze looks upon reality, including his/her reality as subject.

tantly, new tricks and ruses must be perennially invented in order to reinforce or reinstall repression.

Initially, it was only God who, in the Cartesian system, bridged the two worlds that methodical doubt had separated. Things changed when Descartes focused his philosophical reflection on passions and emotions. Within this affective realm, it was obvious that the two worlds were deeply interconnected with one another, and that the caesura splitting body from soul was, thus, far less radical than hitherto believed. Did the passions not make it abundantly clear, therefore, that the soul moves and feels the body, and the body moves and feels the soul? That is what Descartes had sought to approve, but he did not succeed in discovering a valid solution for the problems raised by his dualistic paradigm.

In La Mettrie's thought, too, the passions delivered the first genuine arguments for the solution to the problematic Cartesian split. For what else could they do other than demonstrate that *everything* is a matter of bodily affection, including the free act of thinking and willing? La Mettrie presaged that one day this would be proven scientifically. La Mettrie's use of *future* tense unintentionally reveals the point from which his 'scientific' gaze operates— that it is situated *outside* that which his science is talking about. It represses— whilst simultaneously hinting at— the traumatic caesura separating the subject from the object it deals with.

La Mettrie's solution has set the tone up till now. If we want to talk scientifically about emotions, then we should reduce them to objectively measurable processes. Indeed, over the preceding decades, this discourse has only become stronger. Feelings have become visible— and, thus, observable—, we are told, as evinced in brain imaging technology which produces colorful images of brain lobes operating. In such images, you are supposed to see what happens when you feel, want, or think. And without realizing it, you understand: I see myself feeling, wanting, and thinking. Feelings have therefore become explicable: 'look' at 'ancestral facts', so goes the sermon of the evolutionary psychologist, and you see that it is your genetic material, in its search for an optimal way to guarantee the self-preservation of the human species, which guides you in your passion for your lover.

Are these the feelings that an 'emotional society' defends and promotes? Are they to be recognized in their quality of 'objective' values and facts? In actual fact, the 'emotional society' defends and promotes the opposite as well— i.e. that emotions and passions do not need any rational legitimization to be recognized as 'objective facts'. Emotions and passions, so the argument goes, owe their right to exist to the fact that they speak for themselves, and give a more direct expression to what people really think in all freedom. Their 'objective' quality is not due to the fact that they are scientifically or rationally declared, as such. Emotions are what they are, whatever science may think of them; they must be taken for granted without any scientific legitimization.

Only now does the place, and function, of emotions within late-modern ideology become clearer. Our current episteme concomitantly produces two contradictory axioms; the ideological aspect concerns the fact that the simultaneity of the contradictory axioms escapes our attention. On the one hand, we talk of emotions as things about which objective knowledge is guaranteed, and whose objective foundations can be scientifically known. This is the La Mettrie-side of our epochal discourse on emotions; they illustrate that all is objective, and that the subject, as such, is merely 'subjective'— which is to say that it is a kind of 'ghost' in the machine, and thus unreliable to build solid knowledge upon. On the other hand, however, we find the same scientific discourse coexisting with that other omnipresent discourse which promotes the freedom and independence of that very subject, proffering it as lord and master of himself, and as 'free entrepreneur' vis-à-vis the entire universe. Psychologisation, as the process through which the modern subject adopts both the terminology and the discursive position of the psy-sciences, testifies in an exemplary manner of this double bind. Here, emotions allow the subject to speak and behave as if it is not at all reducible to objective facts; or, phrased otherwise, as if it sovereignly determines, by itself, who it is and what it wants to do with the surrounding world. Here, emotions are supposed to express freedom: primarily, because they express 'themselves' and, in turn, express the subject's 'self' in a much better way than the rational spinning, in which it so often gets lost.

'Emotions', on the one hand, are symptoms of the determined, objective base upon which the human being is founded. On the others hand, they are promoters of man's free subjective foundation. Within our epochal discourse, by means of which the 'emotional society' conquers today's world, both axioms coexist unproblematically; the contradiction between the two remains simply unnoticed. It is with this 'unheard-of' that we meet the core of today's *episteme*, the hidden kernel of the 'misunderstanding through which we understand one another'. Our discourse on emotions, paradoxically, presents two opposing viewpoints: it acknowledges that, as subjects, we are free and independent— that, in what we feel, we really know who we are and what we want—, whilst, at other moments, the same discourse acknowledges our freedom to be the product of an objective, determinant logic, thus, denying a proper status to subjectivity.

The signifier 'emotions', therefore, simultaneously promotes a denial *and* an acknowledgment of a fully free subject; or, in Cartesian parlance, it keeps on promoting both *res extensa* and *res cogitans*. It, thus, still performs the old Cartesian caesura; albeit, by explicitly not showing nor telling it, but, rather, by repressing both, by leaving both unsaid. Consequently, it reproduces the untenable, and never resolved, dualism to which we owe both our limitless technical power and tragic impotence to master that omnipotence.

Through listening to our 'emotions', so the pop-psychology credo goes, we hear our true 'self' speak. On occasion, it tells us that the world is an open project offered to our unlimited freedom; on other occasions, the same freedom is subjected to rigorous dissec-

tion in which we read its determinants— as, in a way, the Roman augurs did when they read the vicissitudes of the empire and its emperor in the uncovered intestines of birds plucked from heaven. Between the freedom from whence we speak, and the freedom whose determinants we lay bare— i.e. between the brain enabling us to submit the world to our freedom and the brain laid bare by brain images— there is an unbridgeable gap. The focus upon emotions that has perpetually accompanied modern discourse— regardless of whether they were used pro or contra determination— renders that gap unnoticed and, thus, functioning. The 'affective' discourse is the central axis in psychologisation and runs rampant in an 'emotional society'. It covers its bets and so keeps hidden that it must bet at all. Since La Mettrie, the Cartesian gap separating us from reality has become invisible and, therefore, functions all the more efficiently. The veil obfuscating that gap is woven by our discourse on emotions: emotions which we either let prevail over the rational discourse, or make it obey that discourse; both procedures are at the service of the same repression.

Watching television, one is acutely aware that in the course of one hour we can go from watching a certain Governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger, employ unbridled freedom for merely emotional reasons to go straight for his goal, to enjoying a rational dissection of that very freedom, bringing it back to necessary determinations. For every talk show that provides a platform for 'irrational' emotions, there is a documentary stunning us with a hyper-rational discourse about the same emotions. Both go hand in hand in order to repress the same traumatic caesura. Yesterday's 'rational' society and today's 'emotional' one are thus hand in glove.

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‘Sincerely Yours.’ – ‘What do you mean?’ Psychologisation as a symptom to be taken seriously[1]

Frank Vande Veire

Convention as protection against psychologisation

“Only if two people carry out reciprocally ‘successful’ acts of attribution can any genuine relationship between them begin.” This is what Ronald Laing argues in *Self and Others*.[2] People entertain all kinds of inadequate thoughts: thoughts about others; thoughts about what others think about them; and thoughts about how others think one is thinking about them, and so on and so forth. Based upon such psychological speculations, they invent all kinds of strategies for dealing with others. For example, a little boy is punished by his mother for having done something wrong; he knows he is supposed to show

[1] This article is part of a research project financed by the “Associatie Universiteit Gent” http://www.augent.be

[2] Ronald Laing, *Self and Others* (Harmondsworth: Tavilock, 1961), p. 174.

to her that he regrets his bad behavior, and that she wants him to *really* regret having done what he did. Laing formalizes the boy's thought process as follows: I think that she thinks that I really feel sorry, because 'I know how to *look* sorry', while, in actual fact, I do not feel sorry at all. Whilst it is possible that the mother believes in his little theater, it is also possible that she thinks: 'he thinks that I think that he really regrets what he did, but I am not buying it.'

Laing analyzes the whole situation as if it plays on the level of (pre)conscious manipulation, based upon what someone thinks about what the other thinks. From this perspective, it is conceivable that the mother forgives her son for being a pretender (only feigning his regret), or that she gets angry enough to pressure him into showing *real* regret. In the latter case, she perhaps realizes that this is counterproductive because, in actuality, she would only be compelling her son to feign even more. Any which way you scrutinize it, this case looks peculiarly unfortunate; for in neither instance does the rebuke of the mother succeed.

The aforementioned scenario is a *psychological* situation involving two subjects, each of whom are speculating about the other's inner thoughts and motives. The basic assumption underlying this analysis, is that the boy knows what he feels/thinks—namely, that he is not guilty—and that it suffices to act *as if* he feels guilty so as to please his mother (be it out of love, or to ward off her anger). As such, it is as if he just meets her expectations in an external, 'strategic' fashion. Understood in this sense, it is possible that his mother does not believe in what he feigns— his speculation about her belief thus being wrong— but that she just accepts this as it is. In that case, their relation at that moment is not, in Laing's terminology, a 'genuine relationship' because it is based upon false assumptions.

Yet one possibility which has not been taken into account, here, is that the mother accepts her son's demonstration of regret despite *knowing that it is feigned*. Such an eventuality is possible, because she 'speculates' that her son is far more engaged in the game he plays: in other words, that he more strongly identifies with his feigned, 'insincere' regret than he can imagine. Such 'speculation' on the part of the mother, however, cannot be regarded as one more psychological (meta)speculation; on the contrary, it puts an end to speculation. The mother 'knows' her son is not merely feigning: that is to say, she unconsciously presupposes that he only *feigns to feign*. In that sense, she does not take Laing's basic assumption for granted— namely, that there is a cell wherein the individual knows what it thinks or feels (wherein her son knows that he does not feel any regret). The mother's 'knowledge' is thus not a speculation about her son's 'state of mind'. Rather, she has faith in something he does not know about: that he likes to think that he merely feigns his excuses, so as to deny that they are serious, and that he really feels sorry. The faith of the mother, here, may be called a non- or pre-psychological faith.

'I know how to *look* sorry*'*. This is how Laing formulates the secret, and rather naughty, thinking of the boy. Indeed, we can imagine how the boy ironically exaggerates his

excuse. This exaggeration makes his feigning reflective. Moreover, his (m)other is involved in this reflection: it is not just that *he* is conscious about his feigning; he also wants his *mother to know that he is feigning*. It is, of course, easy to interpret this as a cynical turn of the screw, by which he shamelessly wants to demonstrate the fraudulence of his regret. Whilst, psychologically at least, this might be correct, on another level, it may be that through putting on the ironic or cynical face to manifest his disengagement in the moral rule, he effectively makes this rule his own— he *subjectivises* this rule. Or, phrased otherwise, by manifesting his distance towards the rule, he demonstrates how he does not make an excuse like some sort of stupid automaton, but, rather, that this excuse is *really his*. By expecting that his inner distance towards the moral rule would be recognized by the person who embodies this rule, he betrays the fact that he takes the rule seriously— that he is really engaged in it. And this is what escapes psychology – this means: the boy's behavior can not be accounted for in terms of (pre)conscious speculations about what his mother thinks and his consequential manipulative strategies.

What in general escapes psychology is the way that all speculation about what others think or feel, about the image one thinks the others have of him, and how to adapt to this image (or how to break with it in an attempt to be one's 'true self'), are only possible when there is already a symbolic pact. The speculation in the inner self is always preceded by an engagement embodied in a signifier, such as: 'I'm sorry'. This 'merely' formal, external engagement is the condition of all 'sincerity' or 'truthfulness'. Consequently, psychologisation is unleashed, to the extent that expressions such as 'I'm sorry', or 'please excuse me', lose all symbolic efficiency. In turn, people don't stop speculating about what others really think and feel about them, they feel captured by these speculations and want to adapt to them, or perhaps contest them—which no less mitigates their dependence.

Another of Laing's examples— which, incidentally, he formalizes to the extreme— is that of the king and his flattering courtier. Also, in this case, the basic assumption is far from evident: namely, that of a king who 'wants someone to be frank and honest so that he can really know what the other thinks of him'. Acquiescing to the king's wish, the courtier says "I can't flatter you' and, of course, hopes the king believes him; but the king, once he is alone, is cynical: 'he thinks he can take me in with that old trick."[3] Here again, Laing advances a too-abstract opposition between being honest and lying, between authenticity and conscious feigning—as if honesty and authenticity can be identified with the real feelings you know yourself feeling by yourself.

Slavoj Žižek attacks this way of thinking in his interpretation of the passage in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, from the *Noble-minded consciousness* to the *Language of Flat-*

[3] Ibidem, p. 178.

tery[4]. The noble-minded courtier is totally, 'honestly' dedicated to his king, whom he identifies with the common Good. In that sense, he is totally alienated. But something new happens when the courtier starts to *flatter* his king. The daring point Hegel makes here, is that this flattering, which is usually considered as a particularly unethical activity, obtains an ethical stance. In the gestural and discursive ritual of flattering, the servitude of the courtier becomes self-reflective. It is thus no longer just a medium to 'express' his consciousness, but it takes 'for its content the form itself, the form language itself is' as Zizek quotes Hegel. With flattery, the alienation that is proper to language is assumed as such. The noble-minded servant as soon as he starts talking, cannot but betray his sincere convictions and feelings. It becomes insincere and idle to deny that insincerity: to say, for instance, what Laing's courtier says: 'I can't flatter you.' Even his personal awareness of the fact that his air of sincerity towards the king is only feigned, is false— as if, in silent dialogue with himself, the courtier would not be the victim of his own feigning, would remain unaffected by the external ritual in which he is involved. This belief in the sincerity of one's own intention comes down to 'narcissistic vanity' (Zizek). That is why the courtier, if he wants to be sincere, has to assume his flattery as being more truthful than his innermost psychological convictions. Recognition of the fact that my truth lies in the empty ritual, is an ethical act of heroic renunciation.

Thus, on the level of the psychology of conscience, flattery can be a desperate or cynical strategy of survival and manipulation. But behind the back of the flattering subject— for Zizek this is the meaning of Hegel's 'cunning of reason'— flattery forges a symbolic pact. Flattery can be regarded as a sacrifice, wherein the subject is emptied by releasing itself from his naïve, immediate servitude to his Lord, as an incarnation of the Good. So when Laing's king expects 'sincerity', he actually expects sincere *lying*—flattery delivered from the illusion of still having real convictions.

Both the disobedient boy and the courtier are more sincere in what they feign, than in what they think they do (*not* feeling regret, *not* flattering). Their inner feeling, or perspective about what they think they do, is not the truth of their action or discourse. This truth lies in the superficial ritual of flattering, or in the feigned, even cynical, grimace of the boy. Both are truthful in a way that escapes psychologisation, that escapes all (pre)conscious thinking about what the other thinks, and every self-reflective consciousness about what they are up to.

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[4] Slavoj Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London/New York: Verso, 1989), p. 210-12.

The decline of the art of sincere feigning

In his *Minima Moralia*[5], Adorno has some captivating remarks about the truthfulness contained in traditional manners, and about the consequences of the decline of these manners. Fragment 20 speaks about how in the modern era, relations between people are no longer mediated by courteous manners that symbolize the hierarchical relations between them. Modern relations are considered to be ‘pragmatic’. As Adorno posits:

> The practical orders of life, while purporting to benefit man, serve in a profit economy to stunt human qualities, and the further they spread the more they sever everything tender. For tenderness between people is nothing other than the awareness of the possibility of relations without purpose, a solace still glimpsed by those embroiled in purposes; a legacy of old privileges promising a privilege-free condition. The abolition of privilege by bourgeois reason finally abolishes this promise too . . . . That, instead of raising their hats, they greet each other with the hellos of familiar indifference, that, instead of letters, they send each other inter-office communications without address or signature, are random symptoms of a sickness of contact. Estrangement shows itself precisely in the elimination of distance between people. For only as long as they abstain from importuning one another . . . is there space enough between them for the delicate connecting filigree of external forms in which alone the internal can crystallize.

So, the idea is that ritualized expressions between people, although remnants of the hierarchical and unjust relations of the past, remain a model for ‘tenderness’, in the sense that these ‘useless’ formalities weave a ‘filigree’ between people, wherein their respect— that precedes every psychological feeling of respect, or lack thereof— for one another is objectified. When this curtain of objectified respect is torn away, the result is not more authentic, genuine contact, on the contrary: “behind the seeming clarification and transparency of human relations that no longer admit anything undefined, naked brutality is ushered in”, Adorno argues in the same fragment Once communication between people becomes purely pragmatic, functional, or so-called ‘emotionally honest’, they become violent, in the sense that they ‘no longer admit anything undefined’, and thereby neutralize the otherness of the other.

In Fragment 16, ‘On the dialectic of tact’, Adorno develops a similar, though more complex, argument. ‘Tact’, as we know it, is a phenomenon of bourgeois culture. It occurs

[5] Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. by E. F. N. Jephcott, (London: Verso, 1978)

when the "forms of hierarchical respect and devotion developed by absolutism, divested of their economic foundation and their menacing power, are still just sufficiently present to make living together within privileged groups bearable". So, tact is the form in which conventions of respect survive in a "fractured", inevitably "parodic" way. Tact is sober, purified convention, undone of its "ceremonial moment", "emancipated from all that was heteronomous and harmfully external". In that sense, tact is more flexible: it can be attuned to "the specific character of each specific human relationship".

We can already surmise that Adorno does not have much faith in this humanism. Ceremonial convention at least constitutes a generality that transcends the mere individual, and this generality is the condition of a game of "knowing deviations". Stripped of its ceremonial component, Adorno posits, tact "confronts the individual as an absolute". When, for instance, there is 'no rule to indicate what is and is not to be discussed', then "the question as to someone's health . . . becomes inquisitive or injurious, silence on sensitive subjects' empty indifference".

As long as convention preserved its ceremonial, blindly respected character, it neutralized suspicions about indifference or curiosity. In such an instance, ceremonialized tact was, as it were, 'objective', not dependant on the intentions of the individual. Without ceremony, people no longer feel protected from the obscene curiosity of the other, or from the possibility that convention is used as a cold mask behind which people can secretly weigh their chances. Resultantly, convention, no longer respected for its own sake, becomes an empty form used by the individual to manipulate others. Adorno concludes: "To write off convention as an outdated, useless and extraneous ornament is only to confirm the most extraneous of all things, a life of direct domination".

Accordingly, as in Fragment 20, the idea is: the decline of ceremonial conventions, as inevitable and necessary it may be, has to this point made human relationships more inhuman. Emancipation ends up in 'direct domination' and 'naked brutality'. But why should the withering away of the ceremonial conventions that govern human relations, lead to a world of barbaric domination and manipulation?

Let us take a closer look at one of the most basic forms of convention: the rules of politeness. Žižek puts it as such: "When, upon meeting an acquaintance, I say: 'Glad to see you! How are you today?', it is clear to both of us that, in a way, I "do not mean it seriously" (if my partner suspects that I am really interested, he may even be unpleasantly surprised, as though I were probing at something which is too intimate and of no concern to

me— or, to paraphrase the old Freudian joke: “Why are you saying you’re glad to see me, when you’re *really* glad to see me?!”)’.[6]

In polite conversation, the interest people take in each other is always somehow feigned. The polite ‘How are you today?’ only establishes a kind of pact between two people, in so far as no serious, sincere answer is expected. One is reminded of the ‘ambiguity’ detected by Heidegger as one of the main characteristics of everyday ‘chatter’. This ambiguity amounts to the fact that the question ‘How are you today?’ can fall under the suspicion that, it is either *too* serious, or that it is *not* serious at all. The suspicion concerns either an *excess* of interest or a *lack* of it. The two forms of suspicion can both be deduced from a slightly different version of Žižek’s paraphrase of the Freudian joke: ‘Why are you asking how I am, when you’re *really* interested in how I am?!’ The first form of suspicion can be formulated as: ‘by casually asking me how I am you are hiding from me that you are really interested in my deepest inner being!’ But the opposite is also possible: ‘your “how are you?” is too polite, and hides a more profound lack of interest. If you were really interested in me you wouldn’t just ask me, as everyone else does, how I am?’

The crucial point, here, is that, although ‘How are you?’ can raise suspicions in the addressee, the function of this kind of ritualized expression is to neutralize all kinds of distrustful speculations. This ritualized and thus *feigned* character of interest should relieve the addressee of suspicions of obscene nosiness (‘why does he want to know about me?’), or of cold indifference (‘does he even want to know anything about me?). The function of the impersonal ‘How are you?’ is to neutralize the obsessional anxiety for too close a proximity, as well as the hysterical complaint about the detachment of the other. In that sense, politeness, as an ‘a priori form’ that rules human relations, frees the subject from all psychologising reflections about the enigmatic desire of the other.

What, then, is precisely Adorno’s problem with the ‘tact’ of the bourgeoisie? When tact is no longer sustained by any ceremony, but, rather, adapts itself ‘realistically’ to every specific situation, the polite ‘how are you today?’ becomes ‘inquisitive or injurious’, and silence becomes ‘empty indifference’. This is not to suggest that Adorno is nostalgic about old ceremonial forms of politeness rooted in feudalism. Indeed, in Fragment 121, he argues that those who cling to a ceremonial culture cut off from its feudal origin pretend reconciliation between spontaneity and cultural form, which cannot be anything but false in the modern age. In this regard, he refers to the work of Proust, wherein those who keep adhering to ‘the cult of a formal lifestyle’ are not aristocrats but snobbish parvenues. The

[6] Slavoj Zizek, The Plague of Fantasies (London/New York: Verso, 1997, p. 11). In the joke mentioned by Freud, one Jew asks the other: 'Why are you telling me you're going to Kracau when you're really going to Kracau'?'

simulation of aristocratic detachment is an 'ostentation' by which one wants to be one of the happy few.

To emphasize more strongly the relevance of ceremonialized linguistic utterances for 'intersubjectivity', let us take a closer look at the often cited quote by Lacan on symbolic messages: "*You are my wife* - after all, what do you know about it? You are my master - in reality, are you sure of that? What creates the founding value of those words is that what is aimed at in the message, as well as that which is manifest in the pretence, is that the other is there qua absolute Other. Absolute, that is to say he is recognized, but is not known. In the same way, what constitutes pretence is that, in the end, you don't know whether it's a pretence or not".[7]

So, when I say: 'You are my master', I *recognize* you as my 'master' without it being necessary for me to know much about you— not even about the qualities that make you a master. When I address a person as a 'master' he becomes an enigma, an 'absolute Other' for me. In his symbolic position as 'master', he is discharged from the obligation to prove his mastery, to reflect on and to show 'what it really means' to be a 'master', just as the woman addressed as 'my wife' is delivered from wondering what this could mean. Signifiers, such as 'master' and 'wife', are there to remove these ontological questions. They deliver us from endless self-reflection and moral self-examination. They deliver us from psychologisation. It is the Other — the big Other as symbolic universe — and not the concrete person who is addressed, that is saddled with the question about what it means to be a 'master' or a 'wife'. This means that it is presupposed that 'it is known', that 'someone knows' what it all means. Or phrased differently, the master is split: as concrete other, he is an unfathomable enigma, but as the embodiment of the signifier 'master', he is the one who is supposed to know— he stands for the Other who knows. The function of the signifier is to repress the fact that there is nobody who knows that the master— as concrete person— is also an enigma for himself. So the subject, engaged in the signifier 'master', *feigns* to have faith in his master. This feigning, however, is not psychological: it is an objectified feigning. The subject has no substance, no certainty about itself as a (thinking, feeling) Self, apart from this feigning. In this feigning, the subject is more engaged than it can imagine: this is how Lacan can say that the subject always *feigns to feign*, just as Zizek can say that the mystery of politeness lies in a 'sincere lying'.

When the subject declares 'you are my master', the duly heralded person is not my mirror-double whom I *psychologize* about, whose thoughts and motives, behind his function as a master, I can always more or less guess, because "after all he is a human being like

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[7] Jacque Lacan, *Seminar, Book III: The Psychoses* (*London: Routledge, 1981*), *p. 48.*

me".[8] Rather, the person I call my master is in discontinuity with me. My relation with him is doubly asymmetrical: he incarnates a super-individual generality, as well as an impenetrable otherness. He is, in fact, addressed as 'master' precisely to conjure that otherness. Psychologisation occurs when this signifier loses its symbolic efficiency and the other becomes uncannily close. More precisely, psychologisation is an attempt to ward off this uncanny proximity of the other by reducing him to 'someone like me'— in which case, the otherness behind the signifier is humanized. As Adorno posits in the fragment on tact, there is "the demand that the individual is confronted as such, without preamble, absolutely as befits him". Considering him as my equal, I can thus speculate about his desires, about how he thinks about himself, about his 'self-image', about the image he has of me, about the image he has about the image I have of him, and, of course, in a mood of 'critical self-reflection', I can wonder whether these thoughts are not wrong, whether they are not 'mere projections'— which would mean that I am, ultimately, groping in the dark. In short, I can entertain the kind of ruminations Laing analyzes to explain the misunderstandings between people. I can also proceed down the road of endless introspection: why do I need this other as master? Why this dependence? Did I choose him, or was it the other way around?

To repeat our point: the signifier 'master' is invented to stop these introspective and projective ruminations by introducing a Third between people. This Third has a depsychologising effect because it makes people *feign* knowledge about how things are between them, and to thereby accept this means; in other words, *repress* their fundamental lack of knowledge. This feigning introduces a frivolous emptiness between them that makes communication bearable. Engaged in a fiction of mutual understanding, they no longer have to worry about what 'real', 'concrete' others expect from them. The repetitive use of the expression 'you know (what I mean)', confirmed by the addressee's nodding, is a typical symptom of the fact that nothing is known, and that their understanding is, in fact, sustained by a structural lack of understanding.

Returning to Adorno's critique of the deceremonialized bourgeois form of tact: this 'sober' form of tact that approaches the other in a personalized way, 'absolutely as befits him', pretends to have some 'concrete' knowledge about the other, averse to prejudice or feigned respect. For Adorno, such pretence comes down to an obscene and violent reduction of the otherness of the other. One feigns *not* to feign, which cannot be but false, and with this so called 'authenticity', the respect is lost that is still there when tact lacks the ceremonial aspect that keeps the other at a distance. As long as tact is somehow ceremo-

[8] In our saturated psychologised culture, this is, of course, the function of the interview: you learn to know the 'real person' behind the politician, the writer, the artist, etc. The interest in the richness of the 'emotional person behind the social mask' is, in fact, a defensive strategy of reduction.

nialized, the feigned, anonymous character of knowledge about the other is signified as such.

Psychologisation finds its counterpart in 'interactionist' social psychology, focused upon 'interpersonal' relations. This particular strand of psychology systematically underestimates the involvement of a Third— as the big Other— in any relation between people. In 'revisionist' psychoanalysis and ego-psychology, such as that of Karen Horney, Erich Fromm, Abraham Maslov, Carl Rogers and Ronald Laing, the Third is reduced to an artificial role assumed by the subject, a 'social mask' concealing his 'true self' — as if symbolic identification is something you can just strip off when you no longer need it to conceal your weakness, uncertainty, etc.[9] Symbolic identification is regarded as a secondary operation of an already existing subject, an operation with which it adapts itself to what it imagines is expected by the group. For Freudian psychoanalysis, on the contrary, identification constitutes the subject.

Demystification and Anxiety

It is fascinating to note, how in 1979— thirty-five years after Adorno wrote the first part of *Minima Moralia*— Christopher Lasch developed a similar argument regarding the modern decline of ceremonial conventions; only Lasch does not speak about the passage from pre-modern, feudal culture to modern bourgeois culture, but, rather, about the passage from "its paternalistic and familial form to a managerial, corporate, bureaucratic system of almost total control'"— a transformation that, by the way, is also considered by Adorno, and the whole Frankfurt School, as having a massive effect on the structure of the modern psyche. Moreover, Lasch does not talk about relations in general, but about relations between the sexes. "It has been clear for some time that 'chivalry is dead'", he declares:

> "The tradition of gallantry formerly masked and to some degree mitigated the organized oppression of women. While males monopolized political and economic power, they made their domination of women more palatable by surrounding it with an elaborate ritual of deference and *politesse*. They set themselves up as protectors of the weaker sex, and this cloying but useful fiction set limits to their capacity to exploit women through sheer physical force. ... Polite conventions even when they

[9] See Russell Jacoby, *Social Amnesia: A Critique of Conformist Psychology from Adler to Laing* (Brighton: Harvester, 1977).

> were no more than a facade, provided women with ideological leverage in their struggle to domesticate the wildness and savagery of men. They surrounded essentially exploitive relationships with a network of reciprocal obligations, which if nothing else made exploitation easier to bear. ... The decline of paternalism, and of the rich public ceremonial formerly associated with it, spelled the end of gallantry. Women themselves began to perceive the connection between their debasement and their sentimental exaltation, rejected their confining position on the pedestal of masculine adoration, and demanded the demystification of female sexuality".[10]

Lasch's conclusion is clear: the end of ceremonial politeness and courtesy, although remnants of an era of institutionalized inequality and repression, in no way put an end to sexual repression; as he notes: "Denied illusions of comity, men and women find it more difficult than before to confront each other as friends and lovers, let alone as equals. As male supremacy becomes ideologically untenable, incapable of justifying itself as protection, men assert their domination more directly, in fantasies and occasionally in acts of raw violence".[11] The conclusion is, formally at least, the same as that of Adorno: the relationship between the sexes, once it is no longer mediated by ceremonial chivalry— including a false idealization of woman as compensation for her repression— ends up in 'domination asserted more directly'. As Adorno said, it is either: 'Direct domination', or 'naked brutality'.

For Lasch, this 'immediate', 'open' or 'direct' domination does not appear to be a simple regression to uncivilized, 'bestial' forms of domination. Rather, its structure is complex: "'The demystification of womanhood' goes hand in hand with the 'desublimation of sexuality'". Together with the 'old-fashioned' forms of chivalry, the 'institutionalized segregation' between the sexes is gone. "Men and women now pursue sexual pleasure as an end in itself, unmediated even by the conventional trappings of romance".[12]

The problem, however, is that despite this demythologizing of woman and sexuality in general: despite, in other words, this kind of 'sober' hedonism that seems to rule our world, sexuality has become, more than ever, the reign of an uncontrollable, frightening otherness that awakens the fantasy of losing oneself. According to Lasch, the institutionalized separation between the sexes, and the conventional rituals that regulated the encounters between them, made it possible "to acknowledge sexual antagonism without turning it to the level of all-out warfare".[13] Or, phrased otherwise, this antagonism was sublimated.

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[10] Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism. American Life in an Age of Dininishing Expectations* (New York: Warner Books, 1979), p. 323-24.
[11] Ibidem, p. 324.
[12] Ibidem, p, 326.
[13] Ibidem, p. 331.

The loss of segregation and chivalrous politeness, together with the feminist discourse about the liberation of feminine sexuality, awakens the myth of the devouring, insatiable woman— the whimsical *belle dame sans merci*.

We could speak, here, about the 'antinomy of sexual revolution'. On the one hand, the chivalrous forms of respect are outdated and hypocritical; on the other hand, contemporary 'directness' and promiscuity is frightening and unsatisfying. The 'solution' to this antinomy is highly symptomatic: Lasch calls it the flight from feelings, emotional detachment; sex without desire to possess the other, without jealousy, and, thus, without the passion that makes you dependant on the other.

Lasch conceptualises two versions of this flight from feelings. The first one is that of pure sex: sex radically divorced from love or affection; a strategy in which drugs often play a large role. The second is a defensive strategy which consists of considering the other— woman— as an equal with whom you can come to a mutual understanding. You can come to know what she— the other— wants: recognition, tenderness, stability, trust, etc. This amounts to the humanization or, more precisely, the *psychologisation* of woman. From an uncanny creature with an unfathomable desire, she is transformed into a human being who is supposed to communicate her needs. The question 'What the hell do you want?' is thus transformed into: 'Probably you want this and this and . . . Shall I help you with that?' In this strategy, woman— just as man— has to accept "sex as a 'healthy', 'normal' part of life," and not 'dirty' at all— a worldwide idea propagated by therapists, teachers, progressive preachers, (neo)Darwinists— while for Lasch, this humanist idea is an alibi to "divest sex of the emotional intensity that unavoidably clings to it". Of course, this humanist approach pretends to criticize the 'depersonalization' of sex, and wants sex to be combined with feeling, but, for Lasch, this well-meaning and often therapeutic talk, in the sense of 'don't be afraid of your feelings, dare to show them, etc.' "gives ideological legitimacy to the protective withdrawal from strong emotions".[14] The apostles of healthy, non-possessive, 'realistic' sex betray this with their skepticism towards *fantasy*. Their suitably Rousseauian adage is: sex is something you *do*. Good sex delivers you from the ridiculous, unrealistic fantasies you may have about *it*, and about the opposite sex. Healthy sex is sex that is 'cleansed' of all kinds of conscious and unconscious associations. Ultimately, the humanisation/psychologisation of sexuality ends up in the desexualization of sexuality.

There is yet another defensive strategy against the danger of sexual passion, and the fantasy it awakens. It is, in a way, the counterpart of psychologisation, an extreme reaction against it. It is another solution for the antinomy: 'how can I engage in demystified

[14] Ibidem, p. 340.

sexuality while avoiding the fears related to it?’ For girls and women this antinomy takes the form of: ‘how can I engage in the promiscuity that is socially expected of me without losing respect?’ The ‘solution’ is a compromise everyone immediately recognizes: cynical detachment from the promiscuity one feigns to practice. Lasch refers to the well-known cinematic fantasy, paradigmatic of the thirties and forties, “in which a beautiful girl dances with a chorus of men, favoring one no more than the others”, remarking that “this expressed an ideal to which reality more and more conformed”.[15] Women have to make clear that the promiscuity they are involved in is not serious, that it is only feigned; promiscuity is accepted when it is presented as a theatrical game with no real engagement.

So, what remains after the breakdown of formal, conventional engagement is cynical detachment from personal engagement. When the objectified feigning of ceremonial courting is no longer available, one can only protect oneself against the danger of passion by theatrically emphasizing that one’s passion is feigned. Without convention, we do not get passion unbound. On the contrary, love becomes a competition in aloofness. This competition, which is obviously an attempt to manipulate the emotions of others, betrays the anxiety that dependence on the other can awaken.

Lasch touches upon the question of frigidity that sometimes lurks behind “coquettish display of sexuality”.[16] In fact, he should say: behind a coquettish display of *disengagement* in the game of seduction certain women play. This amounts, again, to the *feigning to feign* that, according to Lacan, only human animals are capable of: a woman is capable of feigning her detachment from the sexual game she plays, not to conceal that she is, after all, really passionate, but, rather, to conceal that she is only *feigning* to feign that what she feigns is *real*— that she has no sexual feelings indeed.

Many animals can conceal the truth behind lies, but only man as symbolic animal can *lie the truth*. This structure of lying the truth is what is forgotten in psychological theories that presuppose an opposition between: truth and lie; between expressing ones true self and theatrical feigning; between spontaneous expression and sterile convention; and between authenticity and alienation. Consequently, psychologisation always falls prey to, what Adorno called, the ‘jargon of authenticity’.

The flight from feelings, described by Lasch, is of course concomitant with a desire for ‘real’ feelings. The problem with Lasch's ‘narcissistic personality’ is that feelings are only experienced as ‘real’, insofar as they are confirmed as such by others. He is obsessed by the impression he makes on others. To paraphrase Baudelaire’s famous one-liner on the dandy: the narcissist lives and dies in front of the mirror . . . of the other’s gaze. There-

[15] Ibidem, p. 327.
[16] Ibidem, p. 329

fore, he is a master in skeptical, ironic, and cynical self-observation, self-reflection, and self-criticism. This self-reflection is sterile because it is motivated by the feeling that he never perfectly falls together with what he imagines is considered as perfect by others. The narcissist is the champion of pseudo-insight concerning himself: of calculated seductiveness and nervous self-deprecation. Hence, he is haunted by a feeling of unreality and emptiness; not because he has lost his 'true self', but because his subjectivity is not sufficiently supported by the objectified feigning modeled on traditional conventions. These conventions automatically create a distance, not only between the subject and the others, but also between the subject and its own affects, all the while repressing consciousness of this distance. No longer sustained by these conventions, the subject becomes obsessed by questions: what do I really feel? Do I feel anything at all? These questions are mediated by other questions: what am I supposed to feel? What do others want me to feel? These 'others' are, of course, an imaginary Other to which the subject tries to adapt, and about whose desire it never stops speculating. It is this imaginary Other who is our master when, today, we talk about the importance of 'group dynamics', of 'communicative skills', and of 'flexible adaptation', and so forth. This is the reign of psychology: how can I learn to anticipate what is good for the group, anticipate what it expects from me so that, armed with that information, I can best serve my own interests? What is, in the given situation, the best way to combine looking out for my own interest and that of the group? The reign of psychology is thus the reign of a calculated adaptation, integration, and socialization. Moreover, it appears to be the reign of egoistic self-interest, but this self-interest runs amok, ultimately working against itself, because it is under the spell of this imaginary Other whose recognition it desires.

The disavowed element, here, is the symbolic pact that precedes every conscious, calculated speculation about, or anticipation of, what this imaginary Other demands from the subject. The pact that the subject seals with the symbolic Other is blind and unconditional; it not only precedes all egoistic self-interest, but, also, every concern about how to please others. When I say 'You are my master', I am not searching for the recognition of a particular person. Recognizing a particular other as stand-in of the symbolic Other, I pose myself as recognized by that Other— who is everyone and nobody. My recognition is one without knowledge and, in that sense, is 'blind' and unconditional. This means that it needs to be sustained, neither by any knowledge about the Other's mastery nor by an 'authentic' feeling of him being my master. And, moreover, when somebody says to me 'How are you?', this utterance is only symbolically efficient in so far as I do not feel obliged to take the question seriously. In other words, I spontaneously interpret it as an empty sign of recognition that I am not obliged to fill with knowledge, nor by the feeling I may have of being recognized by him.

The Over realism of the Stars

The crisis of the unconditional symbolic pact in modern society is linked with a crisis of the figure of the master. A master whose authority is seen to be conditional is no longer a master; rather, he is only accepted as master when he proves to be a skilled expert, a clever adviser, a caring companion. Yet the problem with the symbolic master is that, while his function can be disavowed, it cannot be cancelled; he always returns. This, without doubt, has political-ideological relevance. To illustrate this, we can refer to Adorno’s analysis of *astrology*, a domain wherein, as he says, “one can analyze the chemistry of mass movements as in a test-tube, in small doses and at a moment that it has still not taken the form of a threatening violence”.[17]

Adorno followed the daily astrology column of the Los Angeles Times for four months in the winter of 1952-53.[18] Like all astrology columns today, the writer addresses subjects who are supposed to be exclusively concerned with what is in their ‘concrete interest’. The advisers in the column never transcend in any way the logic of common-sense (i.e. of ‘well-understood self-interest’ (99)). And what is supposed to be of interest for the readers are their ‘relations’: in other words, their place in the social network. From that perspective, they are constantly incited by the columnist to take decisions that can increase their popularity, their esteem, or radiance in the eyes of others. They are advised to be aware of, to reflect on, and take care of their position in the network, and to develop strategies to ameliorate it. In Fragment 3 of *Minima Moralia*, Adorno writes: “Today it is seen as arrogant, alien and improper to engage in private activity without any evident ulterior motive. Not to be ‘after’ something is almost suspect. Well, the profile of the public addressed in the astrology column is that of a subject who is always after something, and the column stimulates him to be constantly aware of what he wants exactly and suggests the best strategy to get it. “Be considerate of others ... Work all questions out in cooperative fashion ... Contact all possible and forcefully state your own desired aims in a charming manner ... Discuss the future with practical friends ... Act!’” (70)

Adorno observes that the readers of the column are again, and again, stimulated to reflect on themselves, adding that “psychological self-reflection is transformed into a tool furthering adjustment” (90). “The column consists of an incessant battery of appeals to be

[17] Theodor W. Adorno, 'Theorie der Halbbildung', in: *Soziologische Schriften I* (Frankfurt a.m.: Suhrkamp,1972), p. 148 (own translation)

[18] Theodor W. Adorno, 'The Stars Down to Earth', in: *Soziologische Schriften II, Zweite Hälfte* (Frankfurt a.m.: Suhrkamp, 1975). From here on all pages referred to in the text refer to this volume.

'reasonable'" (46). Adorno speaks of "over realism" (19), a compulsive "overemphasis on realism" (54), this 'over-' clearly pointing to an *excess*, to something symptomatic.

The repetition of the advice to be reasonable, to take all the small things of life in hand, to constantly reorganize one's relationships with the purpose of improving one's situation, betrays the fact that, on a fundamental level, the addressee has nothing under control at all. In other words: the advice to manage his own life in a rational way, to strive—putting it in Freudian terms—for the ideal compromise between the pleasure principle and the reality principle, is there to conceal the fundamental irrationality of the system in which the addressee lives and works (54). The incentive to 'be active', to 'take decisions', obfuscates the fact that the subject is a rather powerless element in a complex, bureaucratized system. This fundamental fact, however, is only readable in the rather uncanny premise of the column: namely, that an unknown agency, who by his knowledge about the stars and their influence on our lives, is legitimated to give tips about how to do the right thing (34). It is essential that the source of this knowledge about the stars— and the way they determine the lives of the readers of the Los Angeles Times— is never made explicit. "The writer [of the column]", Adorno remarks, "leans on his distinctly magical and irrational authority which seems to be strangely out of proportion with the common-sense content of what he has to offer". Whilst his discourse is that of a popular psychologist; the source of all his practical advice "remains entirely abstract, inapproachable and anonymous" (24). This source is never mentioned, let alone its 'rationality' explained. It remains a presupposed, empty reference, yet, typically, readers of astrology columns accept this, taking no interest in the clarification or justification of the 'scientific' system the columnist is supposedly relying upon.

For Adorno, there is no doubt that this obscure and blindly-accepted logic of the supernatural reflects the 'opaqueness and inscrutability' of social life under the capitalism of the big concerns:

> "In as much as the social system is the "fate' of most individuals independent of their will and interest, it is projected upon the stars in order thus to obtain a higher degree of dignity and justification. At the same time, the idea that the stars, if one only reads them correctly, offer some advice mitigates the very same fear of the inexorability of social processes the stargazer himself creates" (25).

So, the stars, wherein the fate of everyone is inexorably inscribed, form a reified, unrecognizable expression of the way people are powerlessly delivered to the power society exercises upon them. The unquestioned rationality of astrology obfuscates the irrationality of the social system. People seem to prefer the thought that their lives are determined by the stars, over acknowledging that they have to endure the intense pressure of society; the inhumanity of the Cosmos is thus more bearable than that of humanity itself. The latter, once translated in the former, is endowed with a metaphysical dignity and inevitability.

Playing with the idea that their fate depends on the position of the stars seems a defensive strategy people use to push away their latent insight into their real dependence, and the consciousness of their own complicity along with it (41). Imaginary supernatural dependence doubles for, and conceals, real social dependence; it conceals it by doubling it.

For the modern, 'sober' readers of the Los Angeles Times, their faith in a supernatural instance can only be preserved as long as its 'rationality' is not made explicit thematically, but only secretly taken for granted. This rationality is incarnated in the 'impersonal and thing-like' agency of the columnist, who is extremely discrete about his occult insights (24). He just bombards his readers with practical conclusions that appear to be nothing more than rather small-minded advice about how to get through the day. The paradox, here, is that the only thing the reader learns from the merciless determinism of the stars, is what appears to be the opposite of all determinism: the idea that "all problems due to objective circumstances such as, above all, economic difficulties, can be solved in terms of private individual behavior or by psychological insight, particular into oneself, but also into others" (44). The columnist's knowledge about the immovable logic of the stars surreptitiously legitimates his advice to people to take their life in their own hands. In other words, behind the 'it all depends on you' lurks an 'everything is already decided'. Here, Adorno states, the psychologising jargon of the columnist works as a 'social drug' (44). It thus seduces people with the idea that, when they reflect seriously on what is of real importance for them, and about the intentions and skills of their colleagues, superiors, friends and families, and when they draw from it the right conclusions, 'everything will be fine'. Yet the uncanny thing is that this pragmatic psychology of well-understood self-interest is sustained by an unconditional surrender to a supernatural power. The 'sober' pragmatism of self-interest, wherein everything is conditional, has the propensity to run amok, since it is colored by a disavowed absolutism.

In that sense, the astrology column could indeed reveal to us— 'as in a test-tube'— something essential about the transformation of the figure of the master in our permissive and pluralistic society. In astrology, the position of the master is filled in by nobody. The columnist is a sober, humble adviser who gives tips to his readers about how they can make their life more comfortable. In that sense, he is akin to a friend, an empathic, 'humanist' psychologist, worried about the happiness or 'well-ness' of the public.[19] Of course, the truth or reliability of his 'sober', 'realistic' advice is founded upon the presup-

[19] Adorno devotes several pages to the frequent reference made in the column to 'friends' who appear to be some kind of benevolent superiors. Yet they are not father figures, but, rather, stand-ins for the collective. 'They represent his [the addressee's] supposedly well-understood self-interest in a chemically pure form.' (99) They are his Ideal Ego. In that sense, they can be considered as representatives of the columnist himself. Hence, the reader gets caught in a tautological loop when the columnist tells him that he has to listen to people like him, who will tell him to be aware about what is in his interest, and to act accordingly.

position that he is the medium of an absolute Power nobody can escape. But this does not make him a master yet. As noted earlier, according to Lacan, affirming 'you as my master' comes down to unconditional recognition, without knowledge. This logic of symbolic engagement breaks with the obsessive speculations about what the other expects from me. What he expects is as clear as it is senseless: to be recognized as 'master'. The columnist, however, does not claim to be recognized as such; he remains in the background as a sober adviser, as the self-effacing medium of cosmic knowledge. Therefore, unconditional submission to a person named 'master' apparently shifts to the conditional, self-interested submission to the concrete advices of a benevolent expert — apparently, indeed, because this conditional submission only works against the background of an unconditional submission to an obscure Power that is *real*, and that is represented by a nameless voice. It is a shift from a master that is *recognized* but *not known*, to an anonymous Thing that is only *implicitly recognized* and that is *known*— be it only by an anonymous expert.

From the perspective of Adorno's critique of astrology as ideological phenomena, the well-understood self-interest, that serves as the 'realistic morals' of modern society, is essentially false, and therefore needs, as a metaphysical backing, the support of an almighty agency. Under capitalism, so-called self-interest is the way subjects compulsively adapt to an irrational totality, and in that sense, the ideology of self-interest works against *actual* self-interest.[20] Because the subjects somehow suspect that their striving for self-interest is self-destructive, they need the supplement of astrology. Astrology, in turn, provides them with the phantasmagoria of a cosmos that is good for them, as long as they submit themselves to its logic. But the only thing they are allowed to know, and want to know, about this logic is that it asks them to seriously take care of their self-interest, thus endowing its counterproductive logic with a metaphysical aura. The escapism in the 'occult' directly leads into the world that it wanted to escape: *the stars down to earth*...

From the perspective of Lacan's transcendental theory of the subject, the logic of rational self-interest is not just disturbed by the irrational, totally 'administrated world', but is structurally deregulated by a symbolic agency that interrogates the subject, extorting from it an unconditional identification. The identification with, and attachment to, a signifier transcends the logic of self-interest. That is why neither ordinary politeness, nor denominating someone as 'my wife' or 'my master', can ever be reduced to a strategy used by a subject for its own purposes.

The question here, however, is that of modernity, which is that of the crisis of the symbolic function linked to the rise of all sorts of utilitarian, pragmatic, hedonistic and related ethics. Astrology appears to be a symptom of that crisis. In a world wherein the symbolic

[20] Adorno speaks of 'that overdeveloped and self-destructive shrewdness of self-interest'. (19)

figure of the master is in decline— according to Adorno and Lasch, due to the bureaucratization of society— in a world of advisers, companions and managers who never stop caring about us, the non-recognized master returns as the obscure power of the stars. Adorno interprets the 'unbridled strength of the absolute power' of the stars, as a completely depersonalized and desexualized version of the figure of the omnipotent Father, who is cruel and vengeful. This figure, who appears in more 'specialized' astrological publications in the guise of 'fantasies about world destruction and ultimate doom', is the threatening, malevolent aspect of the stars concealed behind the modest idea "that the stars, if one only reads them correctly, offer some advice" (25-6).

In Lacanian terms: the disavowed master-signifier reappears as the dark master of the universe who pulls the strings of our lives. Yet the two aspects of the stars are intertwined. For the ordinary reader of astrological columns, the malevolent side of the stars appears in the compulsive character of the incitement to: make decisions; maintain one's relations; to make the best of every day; to think seriously about one's career, etc. It is this excessive demand for sober self-management, this 'over realism', that betrays the fact that the stars are not just on our side. This over realism is symptomatic: as a defense against irrationality, it embodies this irrationality. A central aspect of this over realism is, of course, the already-mentioned lack of interest in the knowledge behind the columns. This indifference thus points to an "absence of ultimate 'seriousness' (17) when it comes to belief in astrology. Therefore, the 'believers' do not openly admit their own belief, but, rather— as modern, skeptical subjects— maintain an ironic distance towards it. Why this systematic lack of scientific engagement in a system from which they nevertheless accept practical advice?[21] The structure of this strange, paradoxical behavior is quite the obverse of Catholicism; the catholic openly engages in ritual symbols that affirm his belief, so that his daily life is not governed by his God. The very ritual that symbolically expresses his belief, in effect, keeps his belief at a distance; it is as Other that he believes. On the contrary, the consumer of astrology columns does not engage in rituals or symbols that refer to a transcendent agency, but his daily life is nevertheless under the spell of an agency that constantly urges him to make the best of his life, to meet the norm of what is considered as a

[21] This seems to be the structure of modern 'atheism', at least of its Protestant version: 'Don't talk to me about God, just tell me what he advises'. The structure of Catholicism, rather, is the opposite: 'Let me worship God, so that I can forget about his advice.' The indifference to the scientific foundation of astrology by most of the column readers also forms a contrast with the 'scientification' of Christian faith that we meet in the theory of 'intelligent design'. It is of course true that the 'scientific' theory of intelligent design only makes sense for those who have no real scientific interest— for those who already believe. The question that arises, however, is: why, then, are they so focused on scientific proofs? They need science as an alibi to cover the irrational leap faith has always been— the *creo quia absurdum* of Christian religion. The invocation of science betrays a lack of faith, a shrinking back from an unconditional symbolic engagement in faith. The absolute certainty that the fanatic expects from science, is a symptom of the incapacity to believe.

happy life. The indifference and ironic distance taken towards astrology as a science, anxiously pushes away the suspicion that the pragmatic advice given by the column is not really sustained by rational knowledge, but by an irrational agency, a cruel Superego that is never satisfied, towards which one is always guilty—guilty of not being happy enough, of not having really satisfying relations, etc. Or, phrased otherwise, when the objectified feigning or symbolically uttered belief cannot protect the subject against this Superego, it can only maintain a distance towards it by adopting an attitude of indifference or irony, and by the compulsive consumption of advice.

For Adorno, the cruel Superego is the representative in the subject of the irrational kernel of our over-rationalized society ('verwaltete Welt'), and he who has the courage to focus on this dark side keeps alive the utopian promise of a society which would really be rational. From a Lacanian perspective, however, this Superego can never be neutralized. Yet the critical stance of the Lacanian approach consists in the idea that the (post)modern discrediting of symbolic authority tends to enforce the impact of the Superego on our lives. The shift from obedience to the master, to just taking into account advice based on knowledge, tends to obfuscate the Father figure that is always there; for instance, under the guise of the stars that compel us to be realistic.

The crucial point is that the attempt to adapt to a presupposed norm is not the effect of a strong authority; it is the result of a lack of figures that symbolize that authority. Without the symbolic assumption of authority, the subject endlessly speculates about what the Other desires from him— a speculation which is the essence of psychologisation. The voice that speaks in the astrology column pretends to possess scientific knowledge about this desire and to be so kind as to translate this knowledge about the 'inscrutable and inexorable laws' (52) of the cosmos, into practical advice: '

> Your own day to take those beauty treatments, get haircuts, do whatever increases your personal charm and sense of well-being'. 'In P.M. arrange cleaning, laundry, clothing, furnishing, diet problems' (53) ...

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Je te mathème! Badiou's De-psychologisation Of Love

Carlos Gómez Camarena

To Angélica Márquez Osuna, because my life is not the same after my (dis)encounter with you.

"The relative poverty of all that philosophers have said about love, I am convinced of that, is because they have tried to explain it through either psychology or theory of passions".
–Alain Badiou, Conditions

Introduction

If one requires a concretised exemplar of the extent of psychologisation within contemporary society, one need only take a quick peruse around airport book stores. The surfeit of self-help literature that one finds there are invariably about sex and love, and are full of advice, hints and tips to ameliorate the quality of our relationships and, of course, maximize our sexual pleasure. The underlying assumption of such pop-psychology is that the secret to our happiness relies on an individual core of our personality; it is precisely such a

supposition which constructs our sense of being an individual with interiority. A key point to consider is that, for psychology, thoughts, feelings, mental processes, or the deepest core of our individuality—such as sex, spirituality, or desire— are what fill this so-called individual interiority.

For the purposes of this paper, I define 'psychologisation' as the process whereby a sense of individual interiority— where all the secrets of humans reside— is constituted, but also as an analytical framework through which to explore and explain wider social phenomena. So, for example, one can be said to be engaging in a process of psychologisation every time we explain a variety of phenomena—poverty, love, criminality, happiness, or the decline of literacy, and so on— through recourse to internal processes of individuals. Interiority, identity, and mentality are the most espoused mantras of this psychologisation process and its manifold agents of neuroscientists, economists, philosophers, and psychoanalysts, all of which engage in, what Stavrakakis calls, 'psychoanalytic reductionism'[1].

Within the psychologised milieu of our everyday lives, there has been an emergent group of cultural theorists, and others, who have sought to problematise this assumption of an individual interiority, explaining the emergence of this sense of interiority—our sense of being a self, an individual, or having a core which defines us— as a discursive epiphenomenon. For example, it is typical of critical psychological work to approach the field of psychology through recourse to cultural or discursive explanations, supplanting concepts which resemble, and presuppose, some sort of interior essence, and explaining the emergence of these concepts in terms of historicity or social constructions.

I would argue that pop-psychology explains love and sexuality merely in its psychological dimension. However, much work within critical psychology is also inefficient, for that matter, as it so often reduces love and sexuality to issues of gender, or, using Foucault's genealogical method, explores our relations with our bodies and how our sense of self is constructed— or, in Foucauldian parlance, 'technologies of the self'.

My objectives, here, are two-fold: firstly, I aim to extract specific, critical elements from the corpus of Alain Badiou which I contend are expedient for de-psychologising love and sexuality; secondly, I want to make explicit important strategies, inherent in the work of both Badiou and Jacques Lacan, for de-psychologising philosophy and psychoanalysis.

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[1] "Psychoanalytic reductionism is the study of socio-political problems (such as attributing war to outbreaks of repressed aggression, the Russian revolution to a revolt against 'the national father image' and 'German National Socialism' to a paranoid culture, that is to say, treating 'society as a patient' having a collective unconscious or superego and suffering from a psychological disorder) has deservedly given psychoanalysis a bad name among historians, sociologists and political scientists" (Stavrakakis, 2002: 1).

Lacan: Affects and Sexuation

> *"The sexed being of these not-whole women does not involve the body but what results from the logical demands of speech".*
> *–Jacques Lacan, Encore*

Assuming that the very core of our being is inhabited by feelings and affects, psychology, in turn, employs them as a compass through which to orientate research, clinical practice, and the construction of its body of knowledge. Love and sexuality, then, are classified as essences amongst other feelings. In order to maintain this idea, psychology must make a clear-cut distinction between feelings and thoughts, as though they were different entities— such as, for instance, when somebody explains that a patient suffers from 'over-rational behaviour' repressing his/her 'most inner feelings'.

In contradistinction to mainstream psychology, cultural or historical approaches conceptualise affects— or the very opposition between what is rational and what is emotional— as social or linguistic constructions. Amongst this multifarious range of approaches, Lacanian psychoanalysis posits a truly alternative theoretical framework through which to conceptualise affects; it is because of the radicality of this framework that Badiou draws upon Lacan's ideas to develop his own thought concerning love. Indeed, I would suggest that Badiou's cogitations on love are anchored in Lacanian psychoanalysis: principally, Lacan's conceptualization of affects and sexuality. It is to this that I now turn.

Affects

The dispute between Jacques Lacan and his pupil André Green is well known. The former Vice-President of the International Psychoanalytical Association (API), André Green, reproached Lacan for not sufficiently considering affects in the psychoanalytical clinic (1999: xv): "It soon became evident to me that Lacanian theory was based on an exclusion, a 'forgetting' of the affect".

Lacan immediately answered this objection. In his *Seminar X* (2004), entitled *On Anxiety*, Lacan states that all affections deceive, since they either belong to the imaginary or the symbolic; the only affection that does not deceive is anxiety, since it points to the presence of the *real* (found in the *objet petit a*). But what does it mean that all other affections deceive? The answer is extremely important for any attempts towards the de-psychologisation of psychoanalysis. When we face emotions and feelings, such as fear, sadness, hatred, enthusiasm, indifference, boredom, happiness or bitterness, we cannot, as psychoanalysts, be certain that these affections do not deceive. This is because, simply put, these affections are signifiers that replace, or stand-in for other signifiers and, thus, in

these affections there is a process of condensation or displacement— metaphor or metonymy, according to Lacan; ultimately, these affections don't mean anything on their own or without the signifier chain (Johnston, 2009). Or, said otherwise, affects do not guide clinical practice, and they do not have any clinical or analytical effects if we communicate them to the patient. The latter remark refers to the fact that, in all affections, except anxiety, the symbolic dimension—of the signifier— prevails. To think feelings as signifiers is what distinguishes psychoanalysis, not only from a psychological perspective, but also from cultural or historical discourses.

Compelling the analysand 'to feel in a more profound way' or 'to be in touch with their most sincere feelings', is contraindicated as an intervention by the psychoanalyst. But once again, why? Because at the very moment you invite the analysand 'to get in touch' with their feelings and emotions, you immediately move to the imaginary register. Within this register, humans search for unity, coherence, completeness, wholeness, empathy, and meaning, in everything we say. If the imaginary register is encouraged, the analysand will, ultimately, end up identifying herself with the analyst and, thus, will be nothing more than a copy of what the analysand believes the analyst wants her to be. The following quotation should make this point clearer:

> This obviously implies that the analyst is an actor or actress who plays a part which does not necessarily convey his or her 'true feelings'. The analyst is not 'authentic', not communicating his or her deepest beliefs and reactions to the patient as one human being to another. The analyst may find a patient unpleasant and annoying, but what use is it to let the patient know this? The patient may very well react to an expression of the analyst's antipathy by leaving analysis altogether, or by trying to make him –or herself- pleasant and interesting to the analyst, censoring certain thoughts and feelings which he or she thinks might annoy the analyst, instead of getting down to true analytic work. Counterproductive reactions to say the least! (Fink, 1997: 5)

What the analyst seeks to do, then, is move from imaginary transference to symbolic transference (Fink, 1997: 33). Symbolic transference implies that the analyst no longer deals with an 'I' or a 'you', but, rather, that the work is done through language— without supposing any agency of self, being either 'I' or 'you', thereby rejecting any interiority— and, therefore, the relation becomes impersonal: it is no longer about an analysand and an analyst, but rather an analysis, as such. However, to work with language— on the side of the symbolic— is not the same as discourse analysis; rather, this form of analysis focuses upon ruptures in language— symptoms, dreams, slips, bungled actions, and so on.

One must note that the imaginary register promoted by 'interpersonal relations' and 'contact with our feelings', leads us to the belief that there is an 'interior self' which must, and can, be known, a sensation of 'mental profoundness' which, in turn, leads to the pe-

rennial search for an 'identity'. In direct contrast to cultural and historical approaches, within mainstream psychology identity is not socially constructed, but, rather, an interior mentality or a *cogito*[2]. Interiority, identity, and mentality are all words that psychologising discourses exalt. Against this theoretico-political doxa, Lacan proffers a subject who is formed by her bonds with others (fellow beings), through her relationship with the Other (language, law), or in an impersonal word which is organized through the clinical dispositive of the couch. If subjects—not individuals— establish their bonds with others— one of the possible meanings of the Oedipus complex—, and the unconscious is structured as a language, there is, thus, no room for any interiority, mentality or identity. This position explains Lacan's theoretical alliance with Claude Lévi-Strauss' structuralism: structural anthropology is a form of de-psychologising psychoanalysis (Lacan, 2006a). This notion of 'deep feelings' and its relation to the 'I' or 'self' as an agent, hegemonic within mainstream psychological research, has been the source of sustained polemics from a number of critical psychologists, such as Ian Parker (2007: 115-7) and Jan de Vos (2009: 229, 239).

What does this mean in terms of affect, however? Affections are not something individual; such a conception has its origin in mental depth, in hormones, in neurotransmitters, or what was learned culturally. In psychoanalysis, by contrast, affections may be conceived of as structural places. A useful way of explaining this is to think of people as chess pieces on a board: their 'identity' or their 'feelings' are wholly dependent upon what

[2] We could even think, in a reductionist manner, identity through recourse to Lacan's triadic registers that structure the subject's life-world: psychological/biological (imaginary: identity is a substantial ego or self); sociological/cultural/anthropological (symbolic: identity is a social construction by historicity or language); and the psychoanalytic (*real*: identity is a paradoxical category because it produces a double movement, one of a constant negotiation of the construction of identity, and the other of a constant impossibility to produce a definitive identity since there is a void at the core of identity; identity never coincides with itself). We can classify this as reductionist because the sociological and psychological focuses also involve imaginary, symbolic, and *real* dimensions, as psychoanalysis also articulates these three registers. When we speak about the *real* as something which is removed from any relativism (a limit, as something that breaks all types of discursivity, as a subtraction, or an impasse) we are not confirming a non-historical truth, but, rather, confirming that the *real* is unique to each discourse and that is why there is no room for an unlimited relativism. Or, phrased otherwise, there are multiple gaps that are subtracted from any sociological/cultural/anthropological explanation, and relativism cannot escape from this. If it has been possible to equate these impasses to truths, it is because, today, as both Lacan—while distinguishing truth from knowledge— and Badiou state: truth is neither an identity nor a presence. Today, truth's statute against this unlimited relativism— and any other dogmatic position— is plural, subtractive and never identical to itself (Badiou, 2009: 113-4). This new conception of truth is compatible with the statement that every culture and every historical period has its truth, that is to say, impasse points or emptiness. What we don't have is full discourse or wholeness. We will say that in Lacanian psychoanalysis, sex and death are truths, places of non-coincidence and breaking points of any discourse. To see more on this discussion between historicism and psychoanalysis, see Žižek (2001) and Copjec (1996).

position the pieces occupy on the chessboard, and the prevailing rules of the game. Jealousy, fear, or shame, then, would thus indicate, both, a relation towards others, and a position within the overall structure. Our position within the structure, and our relations to others, becomes clearer through analysis of the speech of the analysand. For example, envy is not something I 'feel', in the sense that I desire to possess characteristics that someone else possesses— to do so would be to imply that the other person is an 'individual' who owns, in her interior and the depths of her 'psyche', particular characteristics; rather, envy is looking at the Other (someone in the structural place of the Other: God, Mother, Father, etc., that is to say, the one who incarnates the Other), looking at another of my fellow-beings (Copjec, 2004:160). After all, Cain did not kill Abel because he had something that he didn't have, but because God was looking at Abel and not him. The first manner of thinking is psychological (imaginary), and the second is psychoanalytical (symbolic). Jealousy, shame, fear— among many other affections and emotions— can, therefore, be conceptualised in a structural fashion without recourse to concepts such as mentality, identity or interiority[3]. Moreover, and for precisely the same reason, within Lacan's theoretical edifice, hysteria, or obsession, is not some mental disturbance which resides in the depths of the unconscious, but, rather, a structure— a position in relation to others, and the Other.

Simply put, whereas psychology examines feelings within the existential domain of the imaginary register— in other words, as entities inside the self, emanating either from the deepest recesses of the mind or from biological instincts—, cultural and historical perspectives analyse feelings from within the symbolic register. The most important difference between Lacan's theory and other approaches is that the former takes into account the dimension of the *real*. What is the *real*, for Lacan? Certainly, the dimension of the *real* is not equitable with reality in the quotidian sense of the word. On the contrary, the *real* is that unknown which exists at the limit of the socio-symbolic universe, that which is subtracted from the imaginary and symbolic dimensions: it can neither be grasped by the imaginary nor represented by the symbolic. What in this world can neither be represented by signifiers nor comprehended by the image? Sex and anxiety, among other things, are paradigmatic exemplars of these kinds of 'feelings' which lie beyond the imaginary and symbolic dimensions. Putting aside anxiety, I now want to develop this idea of sexuality vis-à-vis the Lacanian dimension of the *real*.

[3] For a very interesting approach to comedy, see Zupančič's *The Odd One In* (2008).

Sexuation: There is no such thing as a sexual relationship

To explain the origin of exogamy, Freud, in *Totem and Taboo* (1913), invented the well-known myth of the primordial horde. The story is as such: before the law was established, the father of the primitive horde could dispose, without limits, of all women of the clan, since no law forbade it; hitherto, the only existing law was that of the strongest. The children of this clan, deprived of women, agree to murder the obscene father, and to eat him in a ceremonial dinner. So no figure could occupy his place in the future, the brothers instituted the law to seek women from other clans. Whereas, previously, the patriarch prohibited through force, after his death, it is prohibited by law.

This myth may be read in Lacanian terms: the primal father, he who has access to an (impossible) absolute pleasure—or *jouissance* in Lacanese—, returns transformed as the founder of the law, the symbolic father. This obscene monster, then, becomes a celestial divinity. Lacan formalized this myth through logics, in turn, transforming the myth into a logical structure. In order to do so, Lacan uses Bertrand Russell's logic of the types in his theory of sexuation in order to be subverted. It is beyond the remit of this paper to explain in greater detail how Lacan developed this idea in his seminar entitled *Ou pire…* (Lacan, 1971-1972); other authors— including Lacan— have covered this extensively (see Copjec (1996; Fink, 2002; Dhar, 2009). For my own purposes, I will focus upon the following chart:

Masculine Side	Feminine Side
(1) There is at least one X that is not submitted to the phallic function	(3) There is not one X that is not submitted to the phallic function
(2) All X's are (every X is) submitted to the phallic function	(4) Not all (not every) X is submitted to the phallic function

What does phallic function mean here? Phallic function means having to renounce a mythical pre-symbolic *jouissance*— a complete, yet entirely impossible, pleasure. The Phallic function is an epiphenomenal effect of being a speaking subject, of being traversed by language. What do these four propositions mean? The second formula (2) means that all men are submitted to the phallic function. If 'X' is a man (no matter what body s/he possesses) then 'X' is submitted to the phallic function. Moreover, if 'X' is a man, it is precisely because a symbolic father deprived him from absolute *jouissance*, which is why formula (2) is based upon an exception: there is at least one 'X' that is not submitted to

the phallic function; this is formula (1). The 'X' man from formula (1) would be the mythical father from Freud's myth of the primitive horde, the obscene father, and founder of the law, who, mythically speaking, possessed all women. But this man, this 'X', must be excluded from the law he founded. It may be noticed that these formulas are *logical* functions.

Formulas (3) and (4) correspond to women. Formula (3) means that there is no woman (whatever body s/he possesses) who is not submitted to the phallic function. On the woman's side, then, there is no exception; there is neither a primitive mother from the primitive horde nor a law founder. Consequently, the phallic function does not separate the woman from the mythical *jouissance*, because the existence of such impossible *jouissance* is a fantasy borne from masculine logic. The fact that the *jouissance*, which masculine logic fantasizes about, is impossible doesn't mean that it doesn't have effects on the logic itself. Women must not sacrifice this *jouissance* to attain the symbolic fictions or their entry into the system of language. The consequence of this is formula (1): not all women are submitted to the phallic function. But this doesn't mean that exceptions might not exist. In the case of feminine logic, the submission to the phallic function is *undecidable*: it is included and, concomitantly, not included in it; resultantly, the phallic function neither forms a consistent set nor does it define women in a universal way. This is why Lacan famously stated that "THE woman doesn't exist", because the article 'THE' supposes a totalisation; but, as aforementioned, universalization is not valid in relation to women. To be a man or a woman, thus, implies two different positions of a speaking being submitted to language. This shift offers us an alternative framework through which to think identities: through Lacan's *real* register. Or, phrased otherwise, there are two forms of failure in the constitution of any identity: on one side, identity is impossible since it exists at an impasse of self-reference (feminine side); on the other, identity is impossible since every universal faces the impasse of the exception (masculine side). Any identity—gender, nationality, race, class, etc.—, therefore, encounters two impasses: either the impossibility of any universal by the exception/exclusion; or the impossibility of any consistence by the self-reference dead-end[4].

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[4] "This psychoanalytical definition of sex brings us to our third set of questions, for, defined not so much by discourse as by its default, sexual difference is unlike racial, class, or ethnic differences. Whereas these differences are inscribed into the symbolic, sexual difference is not: only the *failure of its inscription* is marked within the symbolic. Sexual difference, in other words, is a *real* and not a symbolic difference. This distinction does not disparage the importance of race, class, or ethnicity; it simply contests the prevailing theoretico-political doxa that sexual difference offers the same *kind* of description of the subject as the others do. Nor should this distinction be used to isolate considerations of sex from considerations of other differences; rather, it is always a sexed subject who assumes each racial, class, or ethnic identity" (Copjec, 1996: 2007-8). Sexuation, then, is the core which renders impossible any identity by means of exception or inconsistence (by means of a self-reference impasse).

'The' man does exist, even though it shouldn't be *the* man: we should exclude the man that exists (he is the father of the horde) so human society may exist. There *is* masculine identity but it must be expelled. Yet there is no feminine identity because the woman does not coincide with herself. In the man there is exclusion; in the woman there is scission (or a split).

In men's logic, there is a meta-language (a language that can name another language from above), or there is a law that expels itself from the domain it legislates. In feminine logic, it is the self-reference— to name herself, to know herself, and so forth— which is forbidden, and this is why the woman is consistent; but in being consistent she sacrifices completeness. If self-reference is accepted and completeness denied, it implies the inconsistency of the whole. Being a woman or a man are, ultimately, two ways of finding oneself at an impasse, a breaking point, an impossibility. Women's logical side means that one must choose between consistency (excluding self-reference), or wholeness (by means of being an inconsistent set). But, similarly, these are two forms of doing something with these fractures and impasses— that is to say, there exist two types of failures.

Things should hopefully be clearer at this juncture: 'whole', within feminine logic, does not mean complete, but, rather, consistent; whilst incompleteness in masculine logic appears to be symbolized by the existence of the exception— formula (1). In contrast, the completeness within feminine logic is written through the denial of the exception— formula (3).

So, we have two logics which in no way are complementary. One could even say that the masculine solution— the exception of an element— is a form of avoiding the impasse of the feminine undecidable. It is therefore possible to say that, for Lacan, the *real* has two faces: on one side, it refers to the 'X' one sacrificed when acceding to the symbolic order; on the other side, it refers to the impossibility of the symbolic itself— the aporias originated by the self-reference. Consequently, this means that any approach concerning the category of identity must necessarily end in these sort of dead-ends. This is problematic, not only for cultural/sociological/historical/anthropological theories of identity, but, also, because it marks the end of any relativism, since nobody can deny these impasses. Truth, in this case, is not a presence but a subtraction.

The truth in masculine logic is established by exception: when speaking one forgets behind what is said[5]. A famous example of this is when Epimenides says: "Cretans are always liars", whilst forgetting that he is also a Cretan. His truth is thus possible due to the impasse of the exception. The truth in feminine logic is given by inconsistency: the truth

[5] This phrase refers to Lacan's *L'étourdit*: "That one might be saying remains forgotten behind what is said what is heard" [« Qu'on dise reste oublié derrière ce qui se dit dans ce qui s'entend »] (Lacan, 2001b: 449).

appears in the disagreement between the said and the saying; it is there where the feminine truth dwells (at the very impasse). Masculine subjects, then, erect their position on authority (based on the exception), whilst feminine subjects position is based upon the absence of a meta-language (based on inconsistency). What doesn't exist, in either one, is completeness or consistency.

Significantly, then, every discourse— including logics[6]— finds either its breaking point or its impasse. But there are only two types of impasses: exception or inconsistency. If the discourse is knowledge, then the impasse is the truth. As aforementioned, this truth is subtractive; it appears as absurd or meaningless, as Copjec notes:

> Sex is the stumbling block of sense. This is not to say that sex is pre-discursive; we have no intention of denying that human sexuality is a product of signification, but we intend, rather, to refine this position by arguing that sex is produced by the internal limit, the failure of signification. It is only there where discursive practices falter-and not at all where they succeed in producing meaning-that sex comes to be (1996: 204).

Sexuation, in Lacanian theory, also implies a radical questioning of dogmatic positions that state that sexuality is something natural and biological, whilst differing markedly from culturalist, social-constructivist, or relativist positions. In this sense, the distinction that Copjec makes between psychoanalysis and deconstruction is an interesting one:

> It's no use preaching deconstruction to psychoanalysis because it already knows all about it. Bisexuality was long a psychoanalytical concept before it was ever a deconstructionist one. But the difference between deconstruction and psychoanalysis is that the latter does not confuse the fact of bisexuality-that is, the fact that male and female signifiers cannot be distinguished absolutely with a denial of sexual difference. Deconstruction falls into this confusion only by disregarding the difference between the ways in which this failure takes place. Regarding failure as uniform, deconstruction ends up collapsing sexual difference into sexual indistinctness. This is in addition to the fact that, on this point at least, deconstruction appears to be duped by the pretention of language to speak of being, since it equates a confusion of sexual signifiers with a confusion of sex itself (1996: 216).

Sexuality, then, is the result of a logical failure, a position which sets apart Lacan's theory from psychologisation since sexuality is no longer some sort of substance which resides within any interiority. What I would emphasise in relation to this albeit brief précis of

[6] For more on these logical impasses as encounters with the unsymbolizable r*eal*, see Dhar (2009) and Hook (2009).

Sexuation, is the radicality of Lacan's decision not to enter into sexuality via the biological or the cultural, but, conversely, through failures, contradictions, and violations of logic. Let us remember the etymology of the word sex. In Latin, sex (*sexus*) comes from the verb *secare*, which means to cut, to separate or to divide. Sex is, therefore, that which cuts in two without any possibility of re-union (Neill, 2009). This separation is not, according to Lacan, only *between* man and woman, but, more radically, a division *in* man (impossibility of a whole without exception) and a split *in* woman itself (impossibility of consistency without scission) [7]. Sexuality also refers to the impossibility of the subjects to obtain a total and definitive pleasure, which although only existing in a mythical way— as *jouissance*—, nevertheless, still has considerable effects upon the subjects' life.

I now want to elucidate some of the strategies that Lacan uses to de-psychologize affects and sexuality. One of these strategies is to opt for considering these dimensions through language. Whilst, for Lacan, affects may very well deceive, they are nevertheless still signifiers and, thus, through analysis of an analysand's speech we can ascertain what position they occupy in a structure, and, hence, de-psychologize and de-biologize affects.

When Lacan tries to think sexuality, he chooses logics. But he doesn't enter into logics in just any form; instead, he looks at those places where logics strike upon some contradiction. This is similar to the approach that Lacan uses when he deals with language. Stating that the "unconscious is structured as a language", in itself, doesn't tell us very much, unless it means that the analyst hears not only the language itself, but also the *contradictions* of said language— where the patient's moments of truth are found—, as well as the subject's position within the speech, or how the analysand changes some details of her narrative; otherwise, psychoanalysis would be no different to discourse analysis. We must say, then, that Lacan's strategy to de-psychologize—avoiding the infertile paths of identity, mentality, and interiority— is the use of formalizing knowledge: linguistics; logics; and topology (Gómez, 2009). However, when he uses these formalizing disciplines, he

[7] Alenka Zupančič repeats this point but in a different- and more interesting- way (2003: 147-8): "One should not understand this in the sense that 'man' is Achilles and 'woman' the tortoise (the unattainable, opaque, enigmatic, inert being that man can approach only at infinity, without ever actually being able to reach her, or to coincide with her). Rather, 'man' and 'woman' are two different Achilles, whereas the tortoise is the 'object' through which they try to relate to each other (*objet petit a* in the case of a man, and Φ in the case of a woman). 'Man' is the Achilles who can never catch up with the tortoise, since, when he reaches the tortoise's point A, the latter is already at point B; and, when he reaches her point B, the tortoise is already at point C, and so on. In short, he keeps pursuing the metonymic object of his desire. 'Woman', on the other hand, is the (Lacanian) Achilles, who can do nothing but pass the tortoise, and who, so to speak, passes it already with the first step, relating to it from the initially double or split standpoint of the Other (i.e. from the standpoint where 'woman' is already and initially not-whole, where she is the Other as the irreducible difference of the same). Hence we are dealing with two different differences: the irreducible difference of (or to) the Other (the 'masculine' position), and the irreducible difference within the Other (the 'feminine' position)".

doesn't think of them as coherent structures; rather, he searches the place where these structures collapse.

This strategy of analysing failures through formalizing knowledge appears to be related to the Heideggerian critique of metaphysics. We mustn't forget that, for Heidegger (2000), philosophy committed a cardinal mistake in "the oblivion of the question that interrogates for the being"; that is to say, when philosophy asks itself about the nature of being, it answers with an entity or a thing. Heidegger's philosophic project was to 'do' philosophy without falling into this mistake, which he termed the 'metaphysics of the presence'. In order to accomplish this, he had to criticise the idea of presence, essence, and identity. Lacan followed this intuition, applying this critique of metaphysics to reframe psychoanalysis. What Lacan didn't want was a 'metaphysical psychoanalysis' or an essentialisation/substantialisation of any of his concepts. That is why he struggled with the ideas of identity, mentality, and interiority through the application of formalizing knowledge, an alliance with philosophy and, of course, a reading of failures and inconsistencies, as opposed to coherence and unity— a strategy which Lacan considered an inherited gesture from Freud. To sum up, then, Heideggerian philosophy, formalizing knowledge, and Freud, can be considered as Lacan's tripartite alliance against any psychologisation of affects and sexuality.

It is Lacan's radical reading of sexuation and affects that propels Badiou's cavalcade towards a theory of love applied to philosophy.

Badiou: De-psychologisation of Love

> *"It may seem out of the ordinary to make Lacan a theoretician of love, and not of the subject or of desire. It is however from the angle of the innovations in thinking which deal with it, that his undertaking is an event and a condition for the renaissance of philosophy. I moreover know of no theory of love having been as profound as his since Plato's".*
> *–Alain Badiou, Manifesto for Philosophy*

> *"Love is instead what makes truth of disorder, which is why it is the bearer of that which is indelible in the event".*
> *–Alain Badiou, Logics of Worlds*

In his *Manifesto for Philosophy* (1999), Badiou states that philosophy is only possible if it meets four conditions: art, politics, science, and love. Philosophy does not generate truths; rather, it must humiliate itself in front of these truths, which are not presences, nor do they have a referent in reality. By subtractive truths, Badiou is referring to that which rips through the present constellation of knowledge within these four fields. Badiou names this

truth which pierces established knowledge, 'Event'. When this event is carried out to its last consequences, reshaping everything hitherto known in that particular field (politics, art, love, science), it is called "construction of the truth."

In order for philosophy to be reborn, then, it is necessary for it to be exposed to the most radical knowledge of its time. Accordingly, Badiou believes that there are radical elements within Lacan's theory of sexuation. For the French Philosopher, philosophy has stagnated because, by in large, its cogitations on love have been framed by theories based upon passions, or a psychological approach to it. Buttressed by Lacan's theory of sexuation, it is no exaggeration to state that Badiou strives to reflect upon love via an expulsion of psychology and any theory of passions from its territory, in turn, opening up new possibilities through which to think about love.

Love theory

For Badiou, love, first, implies an encounter, an event. This encounter is an event *between* a subject and another subject, a strange 'X' which is impossible to discern. This 'X' works in a very similar fashion to Lacan's *objet petit a*, which is not the *object* of desire but, rather, the object that *causes* desire. The love encounter between two subjects is, thus, only possible because of the emergence of an indiscernible object that causes desire. This 'X', although functioning in a similar way to *objet petit a*, is not the same; it is rather a 'logical operator'[8]. This is why we should name this event by saying— in the case of love events— the statement: "I love you". As we name this strange 'X', a truth construction process begins. As aforementioned, an event occurs, for Badiou, when knowledge is perforated by a truth; this event in the field of love is the emergence of a strange 'X', of a love encounter. Resultantly, it is possible to formulate the following equation: event = love encounter = emergence of a strange 'X'.

The emergence of truth through the love encounter— through this 'X'— is called an event, and the construction of this truth is precisely called love. This is why it is necessary to refer, once again, to the distinction between knowledge and truth. In the case of love, knowledge is the present life conditions of each subject. In this manner, a love encounter pierces a hole within the certainty of the present life conditions of each subject; in other words, after a love encounter— the emergence of a truth— neither of the subjects can continue their lives in the same manner as before. Each subject has present life conditions

[8] (Badiou, 2009b: 190) "Desire is captive not its cause, a cause that is not the body as such, and still less the 'other' as subject, but that is not an object the body bears, an object before which the subject, in its fantasmatic framing, comes forth (*advenir*) in its own disappearing. Love obviously comes within the defile of desire but it *does not have the object of desire as its cause*. Two activated by love, which marks bodies *qua* materiality, can neither elude the object cause of desire, not arrange itself with it".

(economical, cultural, psychological, psychical, social, historical, existential, and so on), which make them what they actually are. The love encounter displaces and smashes these present conditions, causing the identity of each one of the subjects to explode. Truths, as events, are not possible without knowledge— or present conditions—, but these truths are subtractions, impasses, dislocations, or the emptying of the present conditions, or the knowledge where truth takes place. In Badiou's own words:

> "Love is that scene in which a truth proceeds, a truth about the sexuated positions through a conflict of knowledges for which there can be no compensation. This is because truth is at the crux of the in-known (*in-su*). Knowledges are veridical and anticipatory but disjunct" (2009b: 194).

An event can never be foreseen; nor is it discernable from within the present conditions— or situation in Badiouian parlance. The love encounter emerges as a rupture, and must be named: 'I love you'. This statement, 'I love you', is a wager with no guarantees, because from within the present situation, there exists no knowledge which can guarantee whether this 'I love you' will last or not. This wager without guarantees is related to the Lacanian barred Other— in the sense that there is no signifier which can name the lack within the Other. Consequently, every first enunciation of the phrase 'love you' is a bet without guarantees, a wager that is undertaken in the belief that it will last forever; in other words, this sentence witnesses a bet for eternity in the present[9], in as much as two lovers are not able to conceive of each other without the other, and, thus, will say in that moment: 'what would my life be without you'? Once the dices are thrown, then, love, in a retrospective manner, becomes reality. Here, temporality functions in an *après-coup* way; or, phrased otherwise, it is the temporality of future perfect (*future antérieur* in French): once it is mentioned then *it will have happened*. The fact that a love encounter cannot be predicted, and that it breaks with a given situation[10]— regardless of whether it is produced through wagers in a retrospective temporality—, are characteristics that separate this love event from any psychological vision. How does psychology explain love? There would, perhaps, be a development of love, and one would find within their mind, within the personal history of each one of the lovers, their neurotransmitters, their 'pathologies', the conditions which makes this love encounter anticipatable, thus, concomitantly, changing the status of this love, as since it is predictable, it can no longer be an encounter.

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[9] (Badiou, 2000: 82): "Every love is eternal, and the enunciation of a phrase like 'I love you' is very profound truth. Even if 15 days before is false."

[10] (Badiou, 2009b: 187): "Love is *what makes truth of their un-binding (dé-liaison)*."

In order to think this difference, let us imagine two kinds of love counsellors. On the one hand, if there was a psychological love counsellor who would give her opinion on love affairs, she may say: "it is important to know one's partner more, and later evaluate the advantages and disadvantages that this relation will bring to us; one should avoid risks, and then decide if one wants to begin a relation". On the other hand, a Badiouian love counsellor may say: "even if you have all the information relating to your partner, nothing will guarantee the success or the failure of this relation; it is simply a matter of betting. Do you love your partner or not? If your answer is yes, then take a leap of faith and you will see"! What guides the latter counsellor is a separation between truth and knowledge.

After naming the love encounter, the building process of this truth begins and, in this fashion, truth presents itself as subtraction. How can this truth be built if it's subtracted? The truth is to sustain and persevere in the Two. This Two is the precise split between man and woman— the sexed couple that is *not* necessarily hetero-sexed; that is to say, the disjunction between two subjects. This Two is the space that exists between one subject and the other, a space that can never reduce itself to zero without collapsing love. Badiou, as we already know, takes this idea of sexuation— man and woman are two forms to deal with a lack— from Lacan. The Two, then, is the difference that supports a love relation.

In this manner, there would be three situations where this Two would lose its capacity to build a truth, all of them expressed through numerical terms (2009c):

a) First position, classical love: the two of love is really a 'one' plus another 'one'. Love would be a fiction of a relation, the addition of two solitudes, and the refuge of an unfathomable individuality. This is the classical pessimistic vision: all of us make believe that we love; love is a fake, it is the reduction of love to eroticism. The numericality for this love is 1+1.
b) Second position, romantic love: love is the step from Two to One. Love is the fusion of two halves that find each other again. Love would be the abolition of difference, the breaking up of the subject, and the fusion of an 'I' into the 'you'. It is a romantic vision where love is an exception in society. Romeo and Juliet against the world. Its numericality is 1.
c) Third position, family love: Love is the step from Two to Three. Love is the emergence of the family, the adding of a good third, or the birth of a child. It is a vision where love is the instrument of society itself; eroticism is thus the delicious pill for the emergence of a child. The resulting number of this relation is 3.

In summary: a classical pessimist vision, a merging romantic vision, and a family productive vision. There is a game, a drama, and a reality. Badiou believes there is a fourth possibility, but it implies sustaining a lack or a failure in the relation of the Two from the disjunction[11]. It is *a question of building a relation from this very difference*. It is, once again, a bet on the impossibility of a harmonic relation. Badiou affirms that love, as a construction of the truth of the Two, is *to experience the world from this very difference or disjunction*. The contrary position would be that each subject lived looking merely at each other without experiencing the world.

In concrete terms, what is love as a construction of the truth through this Two? What does 'experience the world from the difference' mean exactly? What it means is that love is built from the differences where a man and a woman find each other. What are these differences? Some of these differences arise from their condition: age, culture, family, way of being, nationality, and so on; others derive from their decisions: a trip, having a child, deciding not to have one, moving from their house, pondering over what to do with a shared friendship, and so forth. Other differences present themselves by accident and are wholly unexpected: an accident, an illness, winning a scholarship to study abroad, receiving an inheritance, unfaithfulness, a death, and so forth. Through each one of these differences, the couple must decide, with every decision, in turn, building 'point by point' (Badiou and Truong 2009) the truth of love: "Love is nothing other than an exacting series of enquiries into the disjunction, into the Two" (Badiou, 2009b: 189). This implies that, decision by decision, point by point, the consequences of this Two are explored; you never know, from the beginning in the love encounter, up to where and how much this Two can build.

Neither of the two (sexed) subjects may experience what the other experiences on her/his side: "I shall object to the notion that it is possible, in love, for each other of the sexes to learn anything *about the other*. What is possible is to experience the world from the difference. But this Two form the experience of the world and the construction of this truth of the Two would not be possible (nor bearable) without sex" (Badiou, 2009b: 193); rather, "only love exhibits the sexual as a figure of the Two" (Badiou, 2009b, 191). The ferocity of sexuality is due to the promise of union between both sexes, and the pleasure that is generated from the encounters. However, if the sexual encounter between two subjects delivered complete satisfaction, the possibility of desire between the couple would

[11] (Badiou, 2003: 55): "It remains that love is the only available experience of a Two counted form itself, of an immanent Two. . . Neither absolute transcendence, nor the Trinitarian doctrine. It is from this point of view that one can see to what degree love is atheistic. Because atheism is, in the end, nothing other than the immanence of the Two. Love is atheistic in the sense that the Two never pre-exists its process."

cease to exist. This explains how such a colorful and intense emotion as love is not a matter of affects, but a feeling that we experience due to structural effects— thus putting aside any temptation to conceive of love or sexuality through a psychological framework. Desire is the difference between our expectations of this promise of a total encounter, and the actual resulting encounter itself— which is always greater or lesser, but never exact. This passion for wanting to obtain total pleasure can be termed impossible *jouissance*. As noted, going beyond this *jouissance* destroys desire. We must remember that, for Lacan, desire is a form of defense against this overflowing *jouissance*[12]. The impossibility of union between man and woman is, then, at the same time, the possibility of love[13], which is a symmetrical formula of this other: identity in the *real* register is paradoxical because the impossibility of a total identity is also what makes it possible. Furthermore, Badiou affirms that "the misunderstanding of the object supports the lack of rapport" (2003: 51). Evoking Lacan's (1998: 163) famous statement, love in Badiou's thinking is thus the passage "from impotence to impossibility" (Lacan, 1998).

The strange 'X' as an object that causes desire[14], the hope of reaching total *jouissance* as a way to complete myself with the other, and the necessary accompanying dissatisfaction which re-stimulates my desire, are the sexual elements within love. There is no possibility of building love without sexuality; however, if sex is present alone it destroys love. Adrian Johnston makes this point astutely by paraphrasing Lacan (2005:71): "The amorous *is not* without the sexual", but not the other way around. The central point within all these discussions is that sexuality is a matter of logical structure (as a structural impossibility of reaching total pleasure) and not a matter of a psychological interiority, a biological impulse, or a hormonal passion.

At first sight, Badiou's theory of love appears conservative since, in contradistinction to the Deleuzian vision of the multiplicity of pleasures, the myriad of genders, and the deregulation of sexuality, it keeps the traditional separation of man/woman intact. Moreover, his theory could be criticised on the grounds that it is romantic and idealistic, because, in reality, 'we are all selfish', or because 'issues of love are more complex'.

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[12] (Lacan, 2006b: 696) "But it is not the Law itself that bars the subject's access to *jouissance* –it simply makes a barred subject out of an almost natural barrier. For it is pleasure that sets limits to *jouissance*, pleasure as what binds incoherent life together, until another prohibition–this one being unchallengeable– arises from the regulation that Freud discovered as the primary process and relevant law of pleasure".

[13] (Badiou, 2003: 45): "We would assert that, initiated in a purely descriptive excess, love is not less coextensive to its duration. Which means that it must attach itself to the construction of the scene of the Two, while its paradox is that the sexual disjunction is simultaneously its material and its obstacle".

[14] (Badiou, 2003: 43): "A real Two, since what composes it is only, by itself or in its being, a non-rapport which agitates the lure of the object".

In the first place, one could not characterise Badiou's theory as romantic and idealistic, for the simple fact that Badiou doesn't believe that love is an ideal— a dream that must be followed, an idea that must be reached—, but, rather, a wager without guarantee in the here and now, an axiomatic principle that assumes the consequences of taking a position. Nor can it be said to be romantic, as it doesn't aim for the merging One, or the Three of the family; on the contrary, for Badiou, love is a complex, accidental, and turbulent path that is built upon assuming risks and making efforts, without any sort of pedagogy or prior instructions. This is why Badiou contends that love is threatened by what he calls "the coaching of love" — an expert who exorcises risks and dangers— whose principles are: "find love without taking chances"; "be in love without suffering"; "fall in love without *falling* in love"; "avoid risk in love"; "live without violence or sexual harassment from your partner", and so on and so forth (Badiou and Truong, 2009: 13-4). For our French philosopher, such an idea of love is emblematic of the prevailing *zeitgeist* of "zero collateral damage" (Badiou and Truong, 2009:14), of the rampant struggle against insecurity (in which all others are turned into suspects waiting to harm us, especially figures such as terrorists and immigrants): "The securitarian love, as everything whose norm is safety, is the absence of risks for s/he who has a good insurance, a good army, a good police, a good psychology of the personal *jouissance* and all risk for s/he who is in front of her/him. You will notice that it is commonly said that 'things are done for our commodity and for our security'" (Badiou and Truong, 2009: 16).

Apropos the charge that Badiou's conception of love is conservative, one may retort that the multiplication of desires and the deregulation of sexuality are, in fact, perfectly compatible with the present capitalist system: "Today the erotic scepticism lacks critical power… I believe that nowadays it rather serves the trade destiny of society, just look how sexuality is today systematically related with merchandise" (Badiou, 2009c: 105). This criticism is, in part, no doubt a consequence of Badiou's critical approach to Deleuze's philosophy (see Badiou, 1999)[15]. Furthermore, Badiou also believes— without his position becoming remotely conservative— that this Deleuzian-esque conception of sexuality as a multiplication of desires actually destroys love, because what keeps both sexuality and love alive is the desire of desire, never the *jouissance*; as Badiou notes: "The *jouissance* is the internal limit of love" (2000: 86), and if we cross that limit, love vanishes. *Love is a structural effect*, and for that very reason, if *jouissance* fills a gap in the structure, love disappears. The Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek finds a diagnosis of this problem within the literature of French writer Michel Houellebecq:

[15] For similar criticism of how Deleuze is now used as a conservative philosopher rather than a critical one, see Žižek (2003).

> Houellebecq depicts the morning-after of the Sexual Revolution, the sterility of a universe dominated by the injunction to enjoy. All of his work focuses on the antinomy of love and sexuality: sex is an absolute necessity, to renounce it is to wither away, so love cannot flourish without sex; simultaneously, however, love is impossible precisely because of sex: sex, which 'proliferates as the epitome of the late capitalism's dominance, has permanently stained human relationships as inevitable reproductions of the dehumanizing nature of liberal society; it has, essentially, ruined love'. Sex is thus, to put it in Derridean terms, simultaneously the condition of the possibility and the impossibility of love (Žižek, 2008: 35-6).

Reckless sexuality and the imperative of *jouissance* are, then, part of the current ideology, as Žižek notes:

> Traditionally, psychoanalysis was expected to allow the patient to overcome the obstacles which prevented him/her the access to normal sexual satisfaction: if you are not able to 'get it', go to the analyst who will enable you to get rid of your inhibitions. Today, however, we are bombarded from all sides by different versions of the injunction 'Enjoy'! From direct enjoyment in sexual performance to enjoyment in professional achievement or in spiritual awakening. *Jouissance* today effectively functions as a strange ethical duty: individuals feel guilty not for violating moral inhibitions by way of engaging in illicit pleasures, but for not being able to enjoy. In this situation, psychoanalysis is the only discourse in which you are allowed not to enjoy –not prohibited to enjoy, but just relieved of the pressure to enjoy (2007: 56).

Referring to this passage, it is clear that one of the most important values operating within our psychologised society is the imperative to be happy. This obligation of happiness is not that different from the societal imperative to Enjoy: if someone is not happy, she should feel guilty. The same may be said, mutatis mutandis, for sex: if you don't have an active sex-drive, it is you who is at fault. According to Badiou, love as a construction of the truth of the Two, of the difference of the love encounter, is a radical alternative, both, to the conservatism of love as a family, which is the base of propriety and selfishness, and to sexual 'neoliberalism', and the societal command to enjoy. For Badiou, sexuality as cynicism is also a form of moralism:

> "Of course, there are also Lacan's considerations, which I rely on—save to contest his complicity with the moralizing pessimism which suspects that love is nothing but an imaginary supplement for sexual dereliction" (Badiou, 2009a: 530).

Mathematics of love: the strategy of de-psychologisation

> *"But in the end I stand, in some isolation it seems, between psychoanalytic pessimism, on one hand, and neo-religious recuperation, on the other, while*

> *maintaining (as they both do) that to think love is a major task, and a difficult one. What sets me apart from the first is that I think it is entirely inexact to treat love as though it belonged to the order of failure; from the second, that my approach to love is not at all spiritual, but formal. What we need to invent is something like a mathematics of love who only envisages a universal erotic order"*
> *–Alain Badiou, Logics of Worlds*

In the same way that Lacan uses logics to remove any vestiges of thinking sexuality as substance, Badiou takes one step further in his approach to conceptualizing love. For Badiou, as aforementioned, all unfortunate perspectives on love— cynicism, securitarianism, romanticism, and so on— are effects of the same primary mistake: considering love as substance. Badiou's strategy is clear: mathematize love, because the more you formalize love the more you de-psychologize it. Nevertheless, the path of mathematization, in the last instance, will lead our philosopher to a confrontation with Lacan. This dispute centers on logics, mathematics, and ontology.

Underpinning Badiou's conceptualization of love is a mathematized formalization, developed in two of his three great works (*Being and Event*, *Logics of Words*) and in two further articles entitled "The Scene of Two" and "What is love"? The French philosopher recognises that formalizations used by Lacan are expedient for thinking of love beyond the imaginary register, and, thus, setting itself apart from any psychologisation process. The instant love is conceived of through logics, or, more precisely, through logical dead-ends and impasses, it no longer appears as a vital intensity or a colourful explosion of emotions[16]. This is possible given that the conditions of emergence for such thought were already inherent within Lacan's thinking— affects are positions in a structure, and sexuation is a matter of logical impasses. This is precisely how Badiou aims to 'go further' in thinking the subject of love, noting that: "no theme requires more pure logic than that of love" (2009b: 183). One should stress, here, that such thinking does not deny there are no emotions or feelings in love; rather, what it means is that, like affects in Lacan's thought, feelings and emotions do not form an essential component of love, but are merely structural effects of love. As Badiou states:

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[16] "Several years ago, I was interviewed as part of an assemblage dedicated to the theme of sexual difference. My title had been: 'Is love the place of a sexed knowledge?' A broadcaster had followed the published articles of this gathering. He was enraged about what I had said, finding it intolerable that one would associate austere formulas with the marvelous experiences of love. The provocative point on which the broadcaster concluded was: for me, it was not a matter of saying, "I love you" (*je t'aime*), but rather, "I matheme you" (*je te mathème*) (Badiou, 2003: 43).

> The mixture of long interlaced chromatic melodies and vibrant evocations exhibits love in its excessive truth, in what it says about the power of the Two beyond the self-regarding enjoyment of each and every one (2009a: 32).

Even though Badiou accepts, in principal, the idea of the logical impossibility of a structure, the material upon which Badiou's and Lacan's respective structures are made from differ markedly. As Badiou posits, for the French psychoanalyst— Lacan— the nature of the structure is linguistic, whereas for our philosopher the structure is ontological (2005). This means that the failure and the logical impossibility at the heart of Badiou's theoretical edifice are also ontological: there is something in ontology that does not work well, and it is precisely in this place where the event appears. This has consequences for how we think of, both, the matheme, and the subject in Badiou's theory. For Lacan, the matheme concerns the *real*, but the *real* is non-ontological, or as Lacan puts it: "the status of the unconscious is ethical and not ontic" — here, we must understand 'ontic' as a substantialization of being (1998: 34). In Badiou's thought, the matheme concerns the *real* of ontology which is multiple and subtractive, and for this reason, 'ontological' does not mean substantialization. For Lacan, the subject is a subject of language, and although it has a very specific object as a correlate (*objet petit a*), this object is an effect of language, or a remainder of the subject of language— once the subject is traversed by language, the result is a remainder). For Badiou, on the other hand, the subject is *possible* due to a failure in the ontological structure— i.e., the subject is a *subject of the event*. Ultimately, this means that the forcing of a truth, and its subsequent construction point by point, decision by decision, produces, as an effect, a subject:

> The subjective effect here is that we must supplement the situation for the event which it contains, perhaps, to become manifest to begin with . . . A subject, hence a politics, is the in-between of an event to be elucidated and an event that elucidates. It is that which an event represents for another event (Badiou, 1985: 101).

This last remark is crucial because it represents two different ways of approaching the *real*, a point of divergence in the respective itineraries of Badiou and Žižek, and also between philosophy and anti-philosophy (Badiou, 2005: 434). For Badiou— and philosophy— there is a *beyond the real* which can be confronted through 'forcing', a mathematical technique that implies the way a new set can be constructed from a generic set (a multiple without ones)[17]. For Lacan— as well as for Žižek, and anti-philosophy— the way to

[17] "For a truth to take place, therefore, something has to pass through the impasse. 'If, as Lacan says, the *real* is the impasse of formalization', then, Badiou suggests, 'we will have to venture that formalization is the impasse of the *real*', which reaches the existing states of things and its immanent deadlocks: 'we need a theory of that

approach the *real* is through the analytical act, an act that changes the very coordinates of the socio-symbolic order. For other anti-philosophers, the act is political, aesthetical, or even mystical (Bosteels, 2006: 168; Gómez, 2010: 5) [18]. But this also means that there is a link between anti-philosophy, formalization, and access to the *real* [19].

Although this dispute is a logical consequence of Badiou's decision to go further down the formalization path— the same path chosen by Lacan—, it is necessary to understand that this dispute opens up a fruitful debate about the function of formalization within philosophy, psychoanalysis, and other sciences. For instance, when any knowledge— be it philosophy or psychoanalysis—addresses the central concept of bio-politics: if we choose the formalization side, we are on Badiou's side; whilst, if we opt for the vitalist side, we are on the same side as Negri, Esposito, Deleuze, or Agamben. What are the philosophical, political, epistemological, ethical, and aesthetical effects of choosing formalization? And in the event that we opt for the formalization side, is it better to grasp it on the logical or the mathematical side? This decision may well decide whether a particular philosopher or psychoanalyst would be an anti-philosopher, or whether she defends either the ontological side or the relativistic side of logics.

Returning to our discussion, Badiou's amorous subject is thus only possible because of an ontological fracture. This ontological lack or failure presents itself in the Two: the lack subtracted from ontology in the form of the Two. We know this because the matheme (the mathematized formalization) is a way of touching the ontological *real* (which is not presence, but subtraction and multiplicity). We know, from Lacan, that the matheme is a letter, with the letter being the littoral between the *real* and the symbolic; that is to say, the letter touches the limit of the *real*.

Nevertheless, as in Lacan's theory of sexuation, this ontological lack of the Two is treated in a different way by the feminine subject than by the masculine subject. Man and woman, according to Badiou, have nothing to do with any biological substance or with culture. When the masculine subject states: "what will have been true is that we were Two

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will pass through the *real*, that will pass through the formalization. Here, the *real* is not only that which can be missing from its place, but what passes with force'. Surely, anchored in the *real* as a lack of being, a truth-procedure is what gives being to this very lack. Pinpointing the absent cause of the constitutive outside the situation, in other words, remains a dialectical yet idealistic tactic, unless and until this evanescent point of the *real* is forced, distorted and extended, in order to give consistency to the *real* as a generic truth" (Bosteels, 2006: 141).

[18] For further explorations of this issue, the reader should read chapter 2 of Briefings on Existence—approaches to ontology are mathematical and phenomenological are logical— (Badiou, 2006a), and Badiou's (2006b) article entitled: "The formulas of *L'étourdit*".

[19] One must remember that Lacan briefly suggests to the analysts of his School, Vincennes (and later Paris VIII), that they train themselves not only in linguistics, logic, or topology, but also in anti-philosophy (Lacan, 2001a: 314). It is striking that anti-philosophy is aligned with three formalizing knowledges. The only step further that Badiou has to make is to posit this debate on the edge of ontology.

and not at all one", the feminine subject affirms: "what will have been true is that Two we were, and that otherwise we were not" (Badiou, 2009b: 194). The method of facing the construction of this Two is different, and it is not possible to share the experience of each one of the sides; rather, it is only possible to share the very split which separates them, the way they share together the world as difference: the feminine statement aims at being, as such, whereas the masculine statement targets the changing of the number, the painful fracture of the One by the supposition of the Two. For this reason, Badiou concludes: "to love well is to understand poorly" (2009b: 195).

Conclusions

"Love what you will never believe twice".
–Alain Badiou, Theory of Subject

In order to construct a different way to think about love, it was necessary to take a grand excursion so as to expel any vestiges of psychological premises. Subsequently, I attempted to elucidate, and develop, the specific strategies used by Lacan and Badiou to de-psychologize love and allow us to conceive of it in another fashion. This included: mathematization; the subtractive as a logical impasse; the wager without guarantees, and its importance for the construction of love; and the use of the three Lacanian registers— imaginary, symbolic, *real*.

On the one hand, Badiou invokes Lacanian psychoanalysis— in turn, radicalizing and going further than his master— to perform an inventive analytical procedure: thinking love vis-à-vis sexuation. On the other hand, Badiou subverts the Lacanian subject: for in contradistinction to the Lacanian subject— which is based upon ruptures in language—, Badiou's subject is reliant upon ontological inconsistencies and impasses.

The purpose of this paper was to explicate how Badiou draws upon Lacan's anti-philosophy to drive his inquiry into new de-psychologising territories, and create innovative strategies of de-psychologisation. In doing so, I explored the terrain of love through an engagement with Badiou's strategy of formalization and, finally, considered how these insights could be considered together to produce political effects.

This latter point is important because it stresses how the de-psychologisation of love is a political task; however, in order to commit this political task, it is necessary to use formalizations. Formalizations have political effects because, ultimately, they offer us a different way to approach metaphysics. This mathematical apparatus, through which Badiou 'thinks about love', was built by Badiou not only to eliminate the traces of any metaphysics of the presence, but also to lodge the unpredictable, which appears as a rupture in the midst of ontology. As I have demonstrated, when love is thought of in terms of affections,

intensities, an effect of biology, or by cultural determinations, it drowns the possibility of any innovation, in turn, preventing the emergence of a new subject. In conclusion, then, I contend that the de-psychologisation of love at the hand of Badiou's philosophy has an important, political aim: to save humans from freezing in the waters of a given world.

23rd September 2010

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The Disappearance of Psychologisation?

Ole Jacob Madsen & Svend Brinkmann

Abstract

The term psychologisation refers to psychology's variegated imprints on late modern Western society. In this paper, we argue that over the last few decades, psychologisation has become such a pervasive phenomenon that it is almost no longer possible to speak of psychologisation as something distinct from other systems of meaning that can be subjected to critique. We draw on the French contemporary author Michel Houellebecq's novel Whatever that examines the personal consequences of living under an individualised, psychological regime. To be a human being today is first and foremost to be a psychological being. A comparison of several influential critics of therapeutic culture leads to a seemingly recurring theme— the loss of alternatives— which now seems to have become a reality. Psychologisation has, therefore, disappeared in the sense that is has evolved into a monotheistic ontology of late modernity.

Keywords: Psychologisation, psychological space, therapeutic culture, irreversibility

Introduction

The notion of psychologisation literally means: 'to make something psychological'. Psychologisation implies that moral, political or social categories are willingly, or unwillingly, reduced or transformed into questions of psychological factors (e.g. well-being or self-development). Psychologisation is usually linked with the exponential growth of psychology throughout the 20th century. Jan De Vos, for instance, defines psychologisation as: "the phenomenon of how the psy-sciences became a hegemonic discourse delivering particular signifiers and discursive schemes for looking upon oneself and upon the world" (2010, p. 1).

Originally, the notion of psychologisation stemmed from a debate in the nineteenth century, concerning, in particular, the field of logic, and involving early academic psychologists such as Wilhelm Wundt on one side, and philosophers like Edmund Husserl and Gottlob Frege on the other (Kusch, 1995). Frege and Husserl reacted to the psychologism expressed, for example, by John Stuart Mill, who argued that logic "is a part, or branch, of Psychology; differing from it, on the one hand as the part differs from the whole, and on the other, as an Art differs from a Science" (1979, p. 359). The problem, as Frege and Husserl saw it, was that we in fact evaluate our psychological operations, the ways we think and reason, in the light of logic, so it seems impossible to study logic as a branch of empirical psychology. Logic is a normative and deductive discipline, concerned with how we ought to think, whereas psychology, at least as conceived by Mill and later empiricists, is a descriptive and inductive discipline, concerned with how we *de facto* think; thus, Frege and Husserl deduce we cannot understand one in light of the other.

Frege and Husserl reacted to psychologism, not just in logic narrowly conceived, but, more broadly, in theories of meaning, truth and epistemology (Mohanty, 2003). For example, both argued that meanings are not psychological entities "in the head", but are ideal objects that transcend the subjective life of persons (p. 117). Meaning is thus not a psychological notion, but a normative notion, connected to epistemological notions such as logic, knowledge and truth. A further reaction concerned a whole naturalistic outlook on the world, which, as Emmanuel Levinas once put it, "places subject and object in the same world, which it calls nature, and studies their relation as a relation of causality" (1973, p. 15).

Today, there is a similar worry among critical academics that the biological parts of psychology, in particular, promote a naturalisation that might change what it means to be human. Evolutionary, neuroscientific, and experimental psychologies take part in seeking to map the human mind in ways that, in many respects, resemble the pioneering psychologists' dream of psychology becoming an exact science like the natural sciences— espe-

cially physics— concerned with studying causal relations between individual minds and the world.

Psychologism was originally a normative theory that held the view that the operations of the mind were best explained by causal factors, whereas psychologisation was a descriptive notion meant to capture the increased presence of psychology within Western society. However, under neo-liberal governance, psychologisation appears to have gone back to its normative roots— albeit in a new sense: according to the prevailing psychologised mentality, we simply ought to think about our lives, and explain human action, in terms drawn from an individualist psychology (we will provide an example that explains what we mean by this in due course).

The question of psychologisation can be related to the question of empowerment. Returning to De Vos's analysis, we can say that psychologisation must be seen as part of the modern Enlightenment idea that information and knowledge bring empowerment. The downside, according to De Vos, is that psychologisation also brings derealisation and an absence of desire. The capability of psychologisation to give meaning to everything means, in the long run, a loss of meaning. The psychological enchantment of the mind that followed the scientific disenchantment of the world, wears out and risks leading us to a more thorough and depressing disenchantment. This paradoxical effect can be understood through Lacanian theory: psychologisation appears to lead to less and less mystery outside the self, hence the individual loses interest (desire) in the on-going world. The result of all this is that the psychologised subject is left without any firm ground to stand on. The contemporary epidemics of psychological problems may be a result of being made ill by a psychologised and medicalised society, which promises happiness and well-being (De Vos, 2008). This paradox can be explained through psychologisation. De Vos describes this situation in terms of the *a priori* psychological subject— the child of the Enlightenment is a reflexive subject by definition. Its job is to be more assertive, develop its personality, enhance its coping capabilities, and strengthen its social network.

Psychologisation can thus be used as a cluster-term that addresses psychology's place in today's power-nexus, in connection to other processes such as medicalisation, humanisation, sociologisation and depoliticisation—we will expound upon these connections forthcoming. Traditionally, psychologisation has been examined in a critical context: typically the author pinpoints and criticises negative consequences of psychology's increased presence and impact in almost every walk of life— from macro-systems in the public sphere to the tiniest recesses of the private sphere. This means that the critiques of psychology over the last half of the 20th century are as varied as psychology itself. For instance, sociologist Eva Illouz (2003; 2007; 2008), who has analysed therapeutic culture, claims that the critique of psychological culture now exists in such a wide variety that it literally covers the whole sociology, and critique, of modernity. Illouz lists the following themes: "bureaucratization, narcissism, the construction of a false self, the control of

modern lives by the state, the collapse of cultural and moral hierarchies, the intense privatization of life caused by capitalist social organization, the emptiness of the modern self, severed from communal relationships, large-scale surveillance, the expansion of state power and state legitimation and 'risk society' and the cultivation of the self's vulnerability" (2008, pp. 1-2). Nevertheless, Illouz (2008) also argues that, even if all of the critics of the psychological discourse agree that it has 'triumphed', there is still little knowledge concerning *how* and *why* it has triumphed. A study of the nature and consequences of psychologisation could therefore be said to cover this unknown territory.

The related notion of medicalisation has historically received much more interest than psychologisation, probably because of the much longer history of medicine as a science and profession. Medicalisation means that more sick people receive help, at the same time as more healthy people are perceived as sick (Lian, 2006). Arthur Barsky (1988) calls this *the paradox of health*: the more disease we can cure, the unhealthier the population becomes. The same critical concern applies to psychologisation apropos well-being: more people get help, at the same time as psychological diagnoses, such as depression and anxiety, become ever more common. As we increasingly come to talk about life issues and problems in psychological terms, the more depressed and anxious the population becomes. Of course, it is no simple matter to decide if the psychologisation of society can be said to cause a happier or unhappier population; indeed, this in itself is a question that may reflect a psychologised society.

Houellebecq against psychologisation

Towards the end of Michel Houellebecq's first novel *Whatever*, the main character, who is suffering from depression, is finally admitted to a psychiatric institution. Here, he receives therapeutic treatment, first by a psychiatrist and then by a psychologist. The psychologist records their conversations, as she is compiling data for a thesis on anxiety. The narrator agrees to participate:

> Naturally, I said yes. I rather liked her chapped hands, her bitten nails, as she pressed *Record*. Nevertheless, I've always hated female psychology students: vile creatures, that's how I perceive them. But this older woman, who looked like she'd been through a wringer, face framed by a turban, almost inspired my confidence.
> At first, though, our relations were not easy. She took me to task for speaking in general, overly sociological terms. This, according to her, was not interesting: instead I ought to involve myself, try and 'get myself centred'.
> - But I've had a bellyful of myself, I objected.

> - As a psychologist I can't accept such a statement, nor encourage it in any way. In speaking of society all the time you create a barrier behind which you can hide; it's up to me to break down this barrier so that we can work on your personal problems (Houellebecq, 1998, p. 145).

This paragraph from Houellebecq's novel effectively illustrates the problem often referred to as psychologisation, and, simultaneously, the difficulties associated with raising concerns over its consequences; indeed, trying to stop talking about psychologisation is becoming ever less possible and meaningful. The problem in *Whatever*, and in our culture in general, is that the psychologisation of society is leaving no vocabularies or alternative discourses untouched by psychology. Not wanting to talk about our problems in a personal, psychological language means to stop being human in a 'normal' way. Indeed, not wanting to talk about the self in psychologised ways can be conceived as a psychological problem in itself, thus meriting psychological analysis as such. This applies, both, to the nameless protagonist in Houellebecq's text (to whom we return below) and to critical researchers writing on the topic of psychologisation. How did it come to this? And, moreover, is this something that warrants extensive concern, particularly in these tumultuous times with important global issues at stake, such as the financial and climatic crises?

In the paragraph cited above from Houellebecq's *Whatever*, the psychologist encourages the patient to psychologise his problems. Or, phrased otherwise, it is part of the treatment process that the patient accepts that his problems are psychological, and can be stated in psychological terms. Thus, the barrier protecting the patient from the world must be broken down. However, the narrator of the novel tries to resist such psychologisation. In line with the book's author, he prefers a sociological or cultural anthropological perspective on his problems. Human problems, such as depression, arise, according to Houellebecq, not from individual psychodynamics as such, but from the wholly marketised consumer society, saturated as it is with demands for new, unique, and passionate experiences that few people can live up to. Ultimately, we learn from Houellebecq, living in this society leads to exhaustion, bitterness and hopelessness. In this kind of society, psychology is simply part of the entertainment industry, selling self-development to consumers who crave new experiences and evermore intense relationships, particularly concerning sex. In other words, psychology is presented as a symptom of society's problems, rather than as part of their solutions.[1]

However, the psychologist in the book is not convinced and does not give up so easily. After listening to a short text written by her patient, she tries again:

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[1] For a more detailed analysis of Houellebecq's possible contribution to the social sciences, see Brinkmann (2009).

> But I'd prefer that you spoke directly of your problems. Once again you're being too abstract.
> - Maybe. But I don't understand, basically, how people manage to go on living. I get the impression everybody must be unhappy; we live in such a simple world, you understand. There's a system based on domination, money and fear – a somewhat masculine system, let's call it Mars; there's a feminine system based on seduction and sex, Venus, let's say. And that's it. Is it really possible to live and to believe that there's nothing else? Along with the late nineteenth-century realists, Maupassant believed there was nothing else; and it drove him completely mad.
> - You're mixing everything up. Maupassant's madness was only a classic stage in the development of syphilis. Any normal human being accepts the two systems you're talking about.
> - No. If Maupassant went mad it's because he had an acute awareness of matter, of nothingness and death – and that he had no awareness of anything else. Alike in this to our contemporaries, he established an absolute separation between his individual existence and the rest of the world. It's the only way in which we can conceive the world today (Houellebecq, 1998, p. 147).

Through his narrator— who most likely is modelled on the author's own biography— Houellebecq gives us a precise description of what it is like to live in a psychologised world. Guy de Maupassant, who is referred to in the conversation, was himself an early observer of nineteenth-century psychologisation and followed Charcot's lectures at the *Salpêtrière*. According to the narrator in the novel, Maupassant "had an acute awareness of matter" and of the separation between individual existence and the world. This, itself, is a quintessentially modern, psychologised form of awareness, generated historically by the dual rise of mechanistic science and subjectivist psychology. Before modernity, whether in law, art, politics, religion or philosophy, there was a concern with "the total drama of all reality" — to borrow a phrase from Whitehead— a concern that later yielded to the contemporary psychological "preoccupation with the individual subject of experience" (Whitehead cited in Brown & Stenner, 2009, p. 14). The modern period, Steve Brown and Paul Stenner argue, cannot be adequately comprehended "without recognition of the seemingly infinite value it accords […] to the individual human psyche" (2009, p. 14). This modern development was partly a consequence of the emergence of the modern physical sciences, which had promoted their "methodology (of atomism, mechanism, and quantification) to an exclusive ontology", and psychology, accordingly, "was a pretty obvious mistake just waiting to happen— an essentially derivative science modeled on physics, yet having as its subject the very realm that physics rendered utterly obscure" (Costall, 2004, p. 184). In modern times, when nature became reduced to bits of Newtonian matter with nothing but 'primary qualities' attached, a new space had to be created for values, purposes, intentionality, and norms; this new space became the psyche. Modern psychology thus

became the science of everything that scientific materialism could not explain, which, as it happens, was almost everything about human beings, including meaning, morality, and, more or less, life as such. This meant that psychology became, not just the science of everything human, but also a prism for experiencing life; or, as Houellebecq tells us: "the only way in which we can conceive the world today". Human life was thoroughly psychologised. Today, as a consequence, psychology— broadly defined as the study of what it is to be a person— is everywhere (Brown & Stenner, 2009, p. 5).

Mark Jarzombek (2000), an architect who writes about the impact of psychology on modern art, similarly talks about the "everywhereness" of psychology within Western culture. He argues that psychology is for the modern age what 'perspective' was for the Renaissance: something, which, after its emergence, has left no aspect of our world untouched. The West has been thoroughly psychologised, he argues, and psychology's main field of operation has not been "in the controlled environments of the scientific laboratories of Wundt and Lipps, but in the more free-wheeling discursive practices of philosophers, historians, avant-garde artists, cultural reformers, and politicians" (Jarzombek, 2000, p. 16). This is currently a familiar line of thinking, expressed, for example, in Roger Smith's (1997) thesis that modern societies have become Psychological Societies. In such societies, according to Houellebecq's literary analysis, there are two main symbolic systems that govern the ways that humans understand themselves and each other: Mars and Venus, competition/aggression and sex/intimacy; both systematically linked to an individualist psychology and consumer capitalism. This, in any case, is the main message of the book *Whatever*: "in societies like ours sex truly represents a second system of differentiation, completely independent of money; and as a system of differentiation it functions quite as mercilessly" (Houellebecq, 1998, p. 99). The original French title of *Whatever*, is *Extension du domaine de la lutte*: literally, "the extension of the battle zone", with the battle zone being the sphere of the market, extended from economical transactions to human life as such, including the soft, intimate sides represented by 'Venus'.

Houellebecq gives us literary descriptions of the despair that may strike humans who live in the battle zones of Psychological Society. Like a postmodern Sartre, Houellebecq presents the downside of an existential psychologism, of perceiving the world in a way that reduces it to the experiences of individuals, of the realisation that meanings, values and purposes are subjective, psychological properties, which, therefore, could be completely different. This recognition of contingency, however, does not afford Sartrean existential anxiety as a way to resolutely take responsibility for life, but, rather, depression— arguably the predominant social pathology of postmodern consumer society. Depression, according to one recent sociological analysis, is a real risk when individuals are "psychically overburdened by the diffuse but widespread demand that they must be themselves" (Honneth, 2004, p. 475). This, more than anything, is a demand that was articulated by

twentieth century humanistic psychology: be yourself — yet engage in constant change, development and lifelong learning (Brinkmann, 2008).

At this stage, it is possible to draw a distinction between *psychologising* and *psychologisation*. Psychologising used to be a way of depoliticising social antagonism, but now psychologisation is connected to a *de facto* depoliticisation: "Psychologising was about making the socio-economic and political aspects invisible, psychologisation is about making itself invisible: it is a theoretisation which asserts itself as a pure and direct reality, turning everybody into a psychologist" (De Vos, 2008, p. 11). Psychology's effects have shifted into a new dimension and made itself even harder to detect, problematise, and criticise. It thus qualifies as a process of depoliticisation, which, as philosopher of science Sandra Harding purports, is something that in its very nature is immanent, and to a large extent hidden: "In contrast to "intrusive politics," this kind of institutional politics does not force itself into a pre-existing "pure" social order and its sciences; it already structures both" (1992, p. 567).

Christopher Lasch (1976) famously wrote about *the culture of narcissism*: the therapeutic outlook, having drawn religion from the American consciousness, now threatened politics as ideology's last place of refuge. De Vos (2010) maintains that Lasch's fundamental insight is that the psychological and subjective dimension already had infused the public sphere. Resultantly, when the late-modern citizen thinks politics, she thinks in already established psychological terms and structures. Psychology has become society's only compass. Christian Klesse (2007) points out that the psychologising process has itself become normative today. If so, one must ask whether the notion of psychologising, under neoliberal governance, has come full circle: from originally being the antithesis to normative logic in late 19th century debate on psychologism, to functioning as a sociological process that described psychology's increased presence in society from the 1960's, before ending up as a highly effective governmental strategy, that is normative in the sense that it provides people with clues about what they *ought* to do.

The notion of psychologism — the normative ideal that phenomena are best explained psychologically — is often linked to the *neoliberal project*, which holds the conviction that optimal conduct is obtained by letting people govern themselves. Here, the psy-sciences, and psychology, have predominantly developed through powerful institutions because of their capability to penetrate into the private sphere, making it both governable and part of individualised freedom. Psychology has become the preferred method of neoliberal policy makers, and society en masse, to explain an individual's destiny in society. Psychologisation should therefore be identified as an ideological tool or apparatus. However, it too often operates under the ideological radar as neoliberal government's foremost structuring principle of individual autonomy. As a consequence, psy-expertise inhabits the role of the souls' foremost expert. The old saying: "Those who can heal can also make sick" appears long forgotten.

Through an examination of relationship manuals aimed at gay men leading non-monogamous relationships, Klesse (2007) has studied how governmentality is conducted. Rather than drawing upon ethical justifications, the manuals tend to provide explanations that focus on the self in a psychologising language such as: lack of personal maturity; the absence of a capacity for healthy intimacy; and inability to care in responsible ways for oneself or one's sexual health. Therefore, the author can rightfully claim that these manuals, both, represent, and work through individualising and psychologising discourses. This, again, represents one of the efficient strategies neoliberal governments use against their citizens. Foucault's concept of governmentality means that these governmental tactics do not necessarily come across as an intrusion into the private lives of homosexuals, but, conversely, function more as a life-strategy, one that suddenly shows itself as a strong will, within these communities, to copy heterosexual relationship rights and bonds.

A central feature of sociologist Nikolas Rose's (1996; 1999) *oeuvre*, concerns how psychology came to shape the modern self. Although Rose never uses the phrase psychologisation directly, his documentation of how psychology makes up late-modern life nonetheless provides an important documentation of the various forms it takes. Rose's proposal is that the psy-sciences — psychology in particular — have made us who we are today. The psychological self is how subjectivity, freedom and autonomy are conducted under neoliberal government in all Western democracies. This is a fact we cannot reduce to a classical false/truth understanding of ideological processes connected to exploitation or reification, but is rather an unavoidable consequence of modernity's development along individualised and psychologised lines, which has contributed to the making (up) of the modern subject. This means that subjectivity is constituted on a level under public and critical awareness that reacts against ideologies and even psychologisation. In this sense, the term psychologisation is almost losing its meaning, because we are no longer able to imagine ourselves, society and politics without psychological categories.

But the pressing question that is left unanswered is: What are the human consequences; what are the possible effects of psychologisation for society? Traditionally we are used to thinking that more psychology means better care for the individual. Indeed, if we take health-politics into account, we would find that the psychology profession, in addition to different interest groups and care groups for people with mental health problems, and politicians and policy makers, all agree that mental diseases are an exponential problem in modern day society. Hence, we therefore need more psychologists, more research, and more money spent on building the required apparatus that can help people. Interestingly, 'the official version' of the ever increasing need for psychology, unlike psychologisation, which fully, or partly, implies that psychology itself might be part of the problem, leaves out psychology's own role. Psychology comes into the picture when the 'problem' is al-

ready framed in its vocabulary; therefore, the only relevant question seems to be how psychology can best be of help.

To live with psychologisation

A way to operationalise the status of the psychologised society is to ask whether its inhabitants are happy. Needless to say, perhaps, such operationalisation is always already psychologised. Still, studies of happiness in Western countries have shown an increase in the decades following World War II, but the rate seems to be flattening out in recent years. In fact, happiness is not the first term that comes to mind if one were to describe the sad and impotent universe Houellebecq depicts in his novels. Houellebecq's novels show us what happens 'after the party'; or, in other words, what happens when everything is won, and we no longer have anything to strive for. As we recall, the nameless protagonist of *Whatever* suffers from depression. His state of despair is, arguably, the result of loneliness. The novel portrays the sad lives of lonely men who are cut off from the world of intimate relationships. As we saw above, Houellebecq identifies *economic liberalism* (Mars) and what he calls *sexual liberalism* (Venus) as the two fundamental doctrines in a consumer driven culture that leaves the social world a battle zone of individuals, regardless of age and social class. The protagonist and his colleague Raphaël Tisserand are both winners in the economic realm, but, nevertheless, losers within the sexual territory.

However, to explain *Whatever* solely as a story about modern loneliness would perhaps be to play straight into Houellebecq's fundamental critique of individualised Western liberal democracies. In the conversation with the psychologist, the protagonist claims that Maupassant's madness is similar to the modern individual's discontent, resulting from the loss of an awareness of something other than nothingness and death. The separation between self and the rest of the world, that Maupassant was forced to acknowledge, has become democratised in the modern world. The nameless character therefore represents modern man's metaphysical and transcendental yearning that cannot fully be dealt with in psychological-emotional terms. The novel ends with a paragraph supporting this interpretation:

> I feel my skin again as a frontier, and the external world as a crushing weight. The impression of separation is total; from now on I am imprisoned within myself. It will not take place, the sublime fusion; the goal of life is missed. It is two in the afternoon (Houellebecq, 1998, p. 155).

What Houellebecq raises, here, are concerns regarding the chances of the individualised Psychological Man to connect with something outside himself. Early in the novel Houel-

lebecq tells the story of the Bretonian cow who, in certain periods during a year, desires to be 'filled up'. Of course, this means that the cow has a natural instinct for coitus and insemination, but it can also be read as a fable about the nature of existence for man, who has a longing, not only in sexual terms to be filled or fill, but to connect to something outside one's own nature. Houellebecq appears to be saying that, both, casual sexual encounters and monogamous relationships are the only remedies in our culture to achieve this longing for something outside ourselves. But neither offers any relief of the individual transcendental yearning.

The nameless protagonist's only real friend is a priest whom he occasionally sees. On their last encounter the priest has become depressed. We learn that he got mixed up in a relationship with a woman. Even though he didn't act on this, he was tempted and this leads him to a crisis of faith where he declares that: "The closure is lost". Hence, in our secular age, religion, which historically played the part of connecting people with something outside themselves, no longer has as strong a grip as it used to on the believers, and even the propagandists.

This is similar to French philosopher Dany-Robert Dufour's (2008) critique of what he calls "the new servitude of the liberated in the age of total capitalism". In his study, Dufour argues that the neoliberal project not only must be understood as an ideology, but also as a way of thinking that is rapidly changing the very nature of human character. Neoliberalism brings with it desymbolisation, which means that the subject must ground itself upon itself, rather than in relation to a third part (the Other) — as has historically been the case. Resultantly, neoliberal subjects are increasingly cut off from the bonds to traditional authorities, giving them— for better or for worse— more freedom.[2] For many in the West, this extensive freedom is unbearable, and therefore responsible for much human suffering. With this in mind, Dufour argues that the substantive increases of psychological disorders— such as depression— in the Western world should be understood not only as a positive sign of better methods and means, but, rather, as psychological damaging consequences of the neoliberal project, itself.

Concern for the (im)possibility of modern man to connect to something outside of himself, is, itself— as the reader may well have noticed— a therapeutic concern for the well-being of modern man. The critique of modern day psychologisation, is, alas, motivated by a broader psychological concern. Fighting fire with fire, whilst an effective strategy, nev-

[2] Whether neoliberalism and the consumer culture in general really provides the individual with more freedom is of course highly disputed. Many contemporary cultural critics will, for instance, object and argue that neoliberalism and consumerism's "freedom to choose" is a narrow and trivialized understanding of freedom.

ertheless shows how difficult, if not outright impossible, it has become to escape the psychological as our common reference point. For are we not humans with certain needs?

In other cultures, the creation of something perceived as being outside human control was thought to be divine. It was, both, outside the human sphere, and, concomitantly, created for man's sake. A culture that didn't understand itself through psychologised terms, paradoxically, was representative of a somewhat more healthy psychology. Psychology functions most effectively when it is indirect and works through another instance of authority, and is not the goal in itself. Psychology and man appear to be in need of something else to draw on. Ironically, Sigmund Freud— the father of modern psychology—wrote in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* that, for the organism, a lack of contact with the Other leads to death, as a result of suffocation on one's waste products.

Reversing psychologisation?

If we want to ask whether psychologisation can be resisted, we need to raise the question of whether an opposite process can be effectuated in society. The opposite of psychologisation, often associated with individualisation, is, perhaps, sociologisation:[3] the process and wrongdoing of making something originally individual and personal into a collective affair. In relation to this, it is noteworthy that Houellebecq's intellectual hero is Auguste Comte, the inventor of classical positivism, and like Comte, Houellebecq resists psychologisation by analyzing it sociologically, by way of Comtean 'social physics'. Houellebecq more or less echoes Comte's verdict that psychology can never attain the status of a genuine science, but must forever remain, in Comte's words, "the last transformation of theology" (1830, p. 20). Famously, Comte argued that human knowledge passes through three different stages: the theological; the metaphysical; and the scientific or positive stages. In the first theological stage: "the human mind directs its researches mainly toward the inner nature of beings", rather than "abstract forces" (the metaphysical stage) or "the connection established between different particular phenomena and some general facts" (the positive stage) (1830, p. 2). But, in Comte's eyes, psychology— along with theology— belonged to the first stage, by explaining the observable via recourse to mysterious and unobservable (mental) mechanisms and entities. Comte presaged behaviourism in his

[3] It is possible to argue that sociologisation does *not* represent the possible reversal of individualisation and psychologisation, since all these concepts are academic terms and products. Perhaps radical movements with their foundation in collective thinking and solidarity across its members are more antithetical and ultimately a more fruitful way of reversal.

view that: "direct contemplation of the mind by itself is a pure illusion", and "the human mind can observe all phenomena directly, except its own" (1830, pp. 20-21). Like Comte, Houellebecq believes in the power of 'social forces'— or laws of 'social physics' in Comtean parlance— that govern human lives under conditions of advanced consumer capitalism (Varsava, 2005). Social forces and conditions, rather than individual psychological properties, explain human behavior: "Like Zola, Houellebecq places his characters in certain social contexts and then portrays their reactions to various stimuli" (p. 153). In the novel *Atomised*, Houellebecq lets the main character Michel reflect upon the life of his half-brother Bruno:

> Was it possible to think of Bruno as an individual? The decay of his organs was particular to him, and he would suffer his decline and death as an individual. On the other hand, his hedonistic world view and the forces that shaped his consciousness and his desires were common to an entire generation (2001, p. 212).

Evoking Comte, what we need in order to understand human life— including the psychologisation of human life— is physiology (charting bodily needs and desires) and sociology (analyzing social forces). Houellebecq is thus interesting, and dangerous, for psychologists because he poses a challenge, which, although formulated through literary novels, threatens the explanatory power of psychological science: What if we can explain human behavior entirely by looking at how historical forces (capitalism, consumerism) shape social situations, which in turn determine human behavior? What need do we have, then, for a mentalist and individualist psychology? Houellebecq's answer is: *none*. Not that his books are devoid of psychology; on the contrary, they are full of psychology. Pop-psychology, in particular, is prevalent: such as, for example, in the pervasive self-realisation discourse that some of the characters have tapped into; but, crucially, this functions mainly as a form of secular religion that provides entertainment and a possible intensification of pleasure for the people involved— not unlike Comte's verdict that psychology represents the last transformation of theology (see also Kvale, 2003). Psychology has no explanatory power, but must itself be explained by its historical situation. Instead of individualist, psycho-religious explanations of human behavior, what we need in order to understand human life, Houellebecq argues, are careful descriptions of the concrete situations in which humans act, and of the historical conditions that shape these situations.

What, then, of Houellebecq's Comtean dream of another society, founded on science? Can science, positivism, and genetic engineering function as surprising avenues towards emancipation in our consumption driven society? Houellebecq's dream, of a more scientific language of the self, fits in with the biological turn that one can understand as a logical consequence of the mind-blowing field of biotechnology, and all the scientific possibilities it has opened up in recent years. But psychologisation has nevertheless something that other processes lack. Both medicalisation and sociologisation are impersonal

processes. Reducing the individual to the sum of his genes or neurotransmitters, or deducing him into social structures and thereby erasing his unique individual signature, won't wash with people's desires. Psychologisation is the only process that literally takes *care* of the individual. Not being personal, as observed in the aforecited paragraph from Houellebecq, is not being human.

Furthermore, it appears that even the recent biologisation of life— fuelled by neuroscience, genetics and biomedicine— operates on ground already well laid out through psychologisation. In his latest book on *The Politics of Life Itself*, Rose contends that the deep interior psychological space, through which human beings came to understand themselves in the first half of the twentieth century, "has begun to flatten out, to be displaced by a direct mapping of personhood, and its ills, upon the body or brain, which then becomes the principle target for ethical work" (2007, p. 26). In spite of this process, Rose argues that the dynamics and structure of human development remains largely unaffected by the discursive shift from "the inner self" to "the brain", from psychotherapy and self-development books to Prozac and Ritalin. Like the psychologised ideal of becoming oneself, the recent "somatic ethics", with its idea of "the neurochemical self", is bound up with psychologised ideas about self-fulfilment, an "ethic of authenticity", and a "realization of the true self" (2007, p. 100). Thus, for example, children are given medication for ADHD, not to suppress their personalities, but in order for their true selves to emerge.

Although, with a few exceptions, the concept of psychologisation is associated with something negative and critical in relation to psychology's wanted or unwanted consequences, psychology's hugely influential position within Western culture must stem from the fact that it contributes positively to today's society. The idea that psychology represents humanisation is perhaps the most central of all underlying beliefs concerning the essential mandate it has received. An illustration of this, today, can be found in the way criminals are treated with rehabilitation rather than punishments, in addition to the fact that their misconduct is often understood as deriving from a damaged childhood, rather than an evil will, for example. Consequently, the way we treat abnormality has simply become more humane. For instance, people suffering from dyslexia 50 years ago were seen as unfit for higher education, or simply stupid or retarded, whilst, today, it is understood and treated as a disorder that should not hinder dyslectics doing whatever they want to do. Against particular cases like this, it is hard to take the position that psychology has led to worsened conditions for its subjects *per se*. The question now concerns whether the downside of psychologisation is vastly exaggerated? Is it, in fact, much better than the reputation which precedes it?

In order to raise a critical examination of any system of meaning, it is necessary to have at least one other system of meaning to draw upon. The main problem when confronting psychologisation, is the lack of a point beyond, or outside, the psychological reality in which the research and critique is fundamentally embedded (De Vos, 2008). The same

dilemma has been raised within the study of medicalisation. According to Robert Nye (2003), investigations on the long-term development and present effects of medicalisation, specifically concerning the allegedly suspicious close alliances between medical power and the state, leaves a lot to be desired. Investigators frequently find, in the modern welfare state at least, no genuine cause of concern. Therefore, Nye (2003) poses the question of whether we must imagine that the neoliberal criteria of citizenship has come full-circle, and that we have internalised its duties and responsibilities through good health, or whether we have simply overestimated the historical development and current dangers of medicalisation. Of course, another perspective is to say that it represents a problem if it is no longer even possible to raise the question about psychologisation— psychology's negative consequences— in a meaningful way? This aspect has been addressed by scholars writing on the nature of the therapeutic framework and psychology's special logic, ever since Wittgenstein remarked on Freud and psychoanalysis:

> Analysis is likely to do harm. Because although one may discover in the course of it various things about oneself, one must have a very strong and keen and persistent criticism in order to recognize and see through the mythology that is offered or imposed on one. There is an inducement to say, 'Yes, of course, it must be like that.' A powerful mythology (1966, pp. 51-52).

The problem Wittgenstein raises in this insightful passage concerns the mythological nature of psychoanalysis. Within the field of folkloristics, a myth is conventionally defined as a sacred narrative that explains how the world and humankind came to be in their present form. We interpret Wittgenstein, here, to prophetically see the dangers inherent within the logic of psychoanalysis, and, later, psychology in general. It can potentially explain everything; it is psychology's very nature to be capable of transforming almost any field into psychological categories and language. And, potentially, we are all under its spell, as we come to say: 'Yes, of course, it must be like that'. This worrying tendency, which Wittgenstein addressed just before therapeutic culture had its formidable outbreak in the latter half of the 20th century, has since become a central concern in some of the most influential works on therapeutic culture and psychologisation over the last decade (Rose, 1996; 1999; Illouz, 2008).

There is no alternative to psychologisation

Perhaps the most important critique of psychologisation is the tendency to exclude the possibility of discussing its negative consequences and the impossibility of raising alternatives. Indeed, Foucault famously said, that it is of the greatest importance for the social

critic to know that one can think differently (Zondervan, 2005).[4] This is no longer the case, at least according to the analysis we have provided above.

> On the very last pages of two of Rose's works on psychology (1996; 1999), he closes by discussing the possibility of escaping the psychologisation of society, and, in turn, inventing different selves that are not made up of psychological knowledge and language. Rose (1996) describes the psychological self as a subjective space that attracts as many burdens, anxieties and divisions as it inspires projects of emancipation. Could it have been different? Rose's answer is, theoretically speaking, 'yes', but, realistically, 'no': We can perhaps, begin to discern the cracking of this once secure space of interiority, the disconnecting of some of the lines that have made up this diagram, the possibility that, if we cannot disinvent ourselves, we might at least enhance the contestability of the forms of being that have been invented for us, and begin to invent ourselves differently (Rose, 1996, p. 197).

Interestingly enough, the final sentences of Rose's last book, which is explicitly concerned with psychology and the shaping of the self throughout the 20th century, also addresses the same concern. This implies, perhaps, that it is the most important question that simultaneously lacks any proper solution. This is understandable because it concerns a reconfiguration of the question of freedom that does not prefigure the psychological subject, and his forced project of administering this freedom through his ability of self-realisation:

> For in the choices one makes, and in the obligation to render one's everyday existence meaningful as an outcome of choices made, one's relation with oneself is tied ever more firmly to the ethics of individual autonomy and personal authenticity. To question the costs of this is not to deny its benefits nor to suggest the possibility of a form of existence which can radically escape from the nexus of power and subjectivity in which the very possibilities of contemporary experience have been formed. But it is to pose, at least as an experiment for thought, the question of what an ethic of existence might be that did not refer itself to that psy shaped space which has been installed at the heart of each modern individual. Could one not imagine another kind of freedom, whose ethics were resolutely 'superficial'? An ethics whose vectors did not run from outer to inner, and did not question appearances in the name of their hidden truth, but which ran across the outsides, between, among persons, where subjectivities were distributed, collective and oriented to action? An

[4] "There are moments in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all" (Foucault quoted from Zondervan, 2005, p. 90).

> ethic, that is to say, that did not seek to problematize, to celebrate or to govern the soul? (Rose, 1999, p. 272)

The difficulties concerning the processes of individualisation and psychologisation— as Rose is no doubt fully aware— will increasingly strengthen as societies more and more rely upon, and organize themselves around, the principle of the self-governed individual.

Illouz (2008), who, like Rose, takes an ambivalent stance toward the consequences of the therapeutic ethos upon Western culture, describes her position as an *immanent critique*. This implies that her approach to the therapeutic culture is pragmatic: psychology has arrived at its current situation not only through institutionalisation, but also because it helps people 'do things' — such as cope and resolve practical questions. But, even if we can find good reasons for therapeutic culture, such as, for instance, that it upholds and contributes to individual freedom and autonomy, it also, undoubtedly, has some worrying features. As the very last sentence of Illouz' book reads: "In the therapeutic ethos there is no such thing as senseless suffering and chaos, and this is why, in the final analysis, its cultural impact should worry us" (2008, p. 247).

This provides another perspective on Rose's thought-experiment. The lack of alternative signs in a thoroughly psychologised society and culture seems to be worrying in itself. Illouz, here, writes in the context of Weber's theory on theodicy: clinical psychology is the first cultural system that really disposes of the problem of theodicy (Why do the innocent suffer and the wicked prosper?), that religious systems have struggled to solve. The aim of religions has been to justify both suffering and good fortune — one has to feel that one deserves it in comparison with others (Illouz, 2008). This, according to Illouz, is the most powerful form of preservation of the status quo there is; a system that perfectly explains everything, leaves no room for non-explainable suffering and chaos that might start a new grand narrative, and, hence, no chance of a revolt.

Postmodernity has been called the period of 'the loss of absence'. Everywhere one looks, global capitalism appears to fill every space and sphere of difference, and commodify it (McGowan, 2005). The Other loses its allure for the individual, according to Lacanian theory, which means that the individual in consumer-society— like the men in *Whatever*— are doomed to be enclosed in themselves like no other Self in the history of man. And is not the number of the beast psychologisation? For when empty spaces no longer exist, as Illouz remarks is the case within therapeutic culture, the space for the Lacanian *object petit a* (a 'radical extraction' which is not an *actual* object, nor can it be attained, but, nevertheless, works to activate desire's interest), and for desire, closes up, leaving the subject alone and isolated with himself, uninterested and unable to connect to the Other (McGowan, 2005). After one hundred and fifty years of psychologisation something is perhaps lost on the way. The modern subject is literally left with something to be desired.

Conclusion

We saw above how the psychologist in Houellebecq's story accused the nameless protagonist of creating a barrier between himself and the world. But the nameless character's problem is precisely the lack of connections with this world and something *other*; what can psychology possibly prescribe which would help him in this instance? Wouldn't it simply prescribe more of the same, and more of himself? A more existential view of the patient in question would reflect on his loss of transcendence: "Is it really possible to live and to believe that there's nothing else?" Maupassant went mad, according to the nameless protagonist, because of his awareness of this, "he had no awareness of anything else" (Houellebecq, 1998). He was thus foresighted enough to understand that the age in which he lived was the coming of a time without hope. The only solution, then, was to establish a separation between oneself as an individual existence and the rest of the world, as Maupassant did. Today, Houellebecq maintains, it has become the only possible way of conceiving the world. Will this eventually drive us all mad?

But, once again, we find ourselves talking in psychological terms: invoking happiness, madness, the prevalence of psychological diseases, and self-aware modern subjectivity. Perhaps even the questioning of the lack of alternatives itself is a result of psychologisation. Perhaps the fact that psychologisation has gone full circle: from a normative theory; through to a sociological fact; and, finally, to a normative theory under neoliberal government, means that one should be more optimistic regarding future rebellions against it. But, just as likely, psychologisation might simply be remembered as a normative theory without any debate. For, indeed, who was the oppressor or wrongdoer here again? Are we not victimised in an on-going Stockholm-syndrome-esque situation? And there was psychology, once again… Perhaps, rather than Wittgenstein, it was the poet W. H. Auden who understood the impossibility of rejecting psychology already at the time of Freud's death, which for psychology was its coming of age, when he wrote:

> to us he is no more a person
> now but a whole climate of opinion
> under whom we conduct our different lives
> Like weather he can only hinder or help (2007, p. 109).

Although this paper has provided more questions than answers, this is our metatheoretical conclusion: even the critical tools themselves are psychologised. Therefore, our examination of psychologisation can best be surmised in the old saying: resistance is futile. As authors of this text, we are, of course, in no privileged position to make claims about how the paper should be interpreted, but, personally speaking, we don't support this conclusion. What we have called the possible disappearance of psychologisation, only

means that critique is made more difficult, and, thus, that this task is more important than ever. Social criticism has always been difficult. But, as philosopher Michael Walzer (2002) has pointed out, it is absolutely necessary for the critic to believe in some sort of utopia (possible better outcomes) in order to go on. One utopia depicts the psychological subject as a subject with critical potentials. As people have acquired psychological modes of self-understanding, including the capacities to reflect and evaluate life possibilities, they may put these acquired skills to use in criticising debilitating conditions, including those conditions under which their psychological self-reflective skills were cultivated and disciplined in the first place. A version of this argument was put forward by Foucault, who thought that "new human capacities may come into existence as effects of forms of domination, only to then become bases of resistance to those same forms of domination" (Foucault cited in Patton, 1998, p. 71).

In the famous, and endlessly repeated, last interview given by Heidegger to *Der Spiegel*, published in 1976, he said that philosophy, or any other purely human reflection— which surely includes psychology— is now unable to effect the current state of the world, which is why "only a god can save us", in Heidegger's memorable words. Heidegger, too, saw the need for something *wholly other* that we have also addressed in this text. The additional question we have raised is simply: Do we really want to be saved from humanisation and psychologisation? Certainly, there should be a space for critique and utopian thinking; but rather than being saved from psychologisation, shouldn't we be worrying about being saved from global warming, flooding, and hunger? Nature— and her Carbon gases, waters and sun rays— may be that 'wholly other', which forces us to reconsider our ways of life and possibly de-psychologise our relationship to the world. Should we thank *God* for the financial and climate crises?

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Beyond Psychologisation: The non-psychology of the Flemisch novelist Louis Paul Boon

Jan De Vos

Abstract

Is not the most intriguing aspect of psychologisation seems to be that every critique threatens to bounce back in some kind of meta-psychologisation. Although in this day and age and age it seems highly unlikely to repeat the popular anti-psychiatry movement of some decades ago and to get an anti-psychology movement on the tracks, it would leave us immediately stranded in some kind of essentialization of the human being and its life-world. Are we thus lost in psychologisation? Is there no outside of psychology and psychologisation? In the following I will focus on the novel *De Paradijsvogel* (The Bird of Paradise) of the leftist Flemish novelist Louis Paul Boon. I will briefly juxtapose it with Christopher Lasch's seminal critique in his book *The Culture of Narcissism* and search for the germs of a *non-psychology*: which is, a critique on psychologisation which transcends the pitfalls of meta-psychologisation and reopens the path of an ideology critique, the latter seemingly having become impossible too

Introduction

In *The Culture of Narcissism*, Lasch is primarily concerned with identifying the fundamental shift in late-modern subjectivity; a shift he defined as *economic man* giving way to *psychological man, the final product of bourgeois individualism*. He writes:

> The new narcissist is haunted not by guilt but by anxiety. … His sexual attitudes are permissive rather than puritanical, even though his emancipation from ancient taboos brings him no sexual peace. … [The narcissist] demands immediate gratification and lives in a state of restless, perpetually unsatisfied desire (Lasch, 1978, p. xvi).

For Lasch, the days of classical psychology, of the good old hysteric or the firm obsessional neurotic, are over. The post-war consumerist society produces other clinical pictures. The new *pathological Narcissus* attempts to fill his existential emptiness in a hedonistic pursuit of enjoyment, and by mirroring him or herself to the celebrities of the entertainment industry. This critique of personality and cultural critique echoes the novels of the leftist Flemish novelist Louis Paul Boon (1912-1979). Many of Boon's characters can be said to be, in Christopher Lasch's terms, "pathological narcissists" who even doubt the reality of their own existence.[1] Probing post-war society, the novels of the leftist Boon constitute an important critique of culture, presaging many of Lasch's arguments and observations. One of the most pregnant examples is offered by his 1958 novel, *De Paradijsvogel* (The Bird of Paradise), subtitled *A tale of amoral times*. One of the central protagonists in the novel is the platinum blond movie star Beauty Kitt who lives in *Hemelland*. Beauty Kitt clearly refers to Marylyn Monroe, while *Hemelland* stands for Hollywood. The novel might be regarded as a critical view not only of post-war America but also of its global impact, as American culture proved to be the stowaway in the Marshall plan-dollars which were pumped into Old Europe. Boon's novel was thus an early cultural critique of the *society of the spectacle*, as Guy Debord later termed it (Debord, 1994).

Boon considered *De Paradijsvogel* one of his more important novels—ironically, referring to it as his dissertation. As the fool tells the truth by breaking his jests, it is perhaps worthwhile, then, to take Boon's claim seriously and juxtapose it with Lasch's book, especially the latter's deadlocks. Lasch depicts the narcissistic personality against the background of the emerging therapeutic culture of the period. He shows us how the increasing

[1] "The new narcissist is haunted not by guilt but by anxiety. He seeks not to inflict his own certainties on others but to find a meaning in life. Liberated from the superstitions of the past, he doubts even the reality of his own existence." (Lasch, 1978, p. 23)

psychologisation of post-war society serves to remediate an inner emptiness, loneliness and inauthenticity. However, in the process of crafting this Olympic, Archemedean vantage point upon the new narcissist, Lasch has no recourse but to use psychology. Or, phrased otherwise, in order to criticise psychologisation, Lasch himself has to psychologise: resorting to Freudian terminology, and padding us out with phallic breasts, vagina dentata, and castrating mothers (Lasch, 1978, p. 203). It is at this precise point that the cultural critique of Lasch threatens to succumb to meta-psychologisation (De Vos, 2010).

But Boon, too, knew his Freud; indeed, he even called him one of his favourite writers (Leus & Weverbergh, 1981, p. 133). The novel *De Paradijsvogel*, therefore, cannot be seen apart from this influence. Boon writes:

> The bird of paradise symbolises nothing more or less than the phallux. I wanted to show in this book that our whole society, our religions, and our cult of filmstars is but the celebration of this phallux. Yes, even that God is the phallux (Leus & Weverbergh, 1981, p. 130).[2]

In the following, I will attempt to answer a double question. First, is Boon able to realise his explicit rejection of the psychological novel or must we contend that the spectre of meta-psychologisation still haunts *De Paradijsvogel*? And second, has Boon truly left behind the sharp economico-political critique of his earlier novels, and turned instead to the exploration of the *condition humaine* and its existential vicissitudes?

Beyond psychology

In the same way as Lasch's narcissists doubt their own existence, Boon's characters are painfully aware of their own emptiness. Mr. Wadman for example, the second central character in the novel, who turns out to be a psychopathic murderer, explicitly testifies to this lack of substantiality: "I actually lack personality" (Boon, 1999, p. 15). Beauty Kitt embodies this psychological emptiness, too, insofar as she is always on the verge of losing her posture and her public appearances and utterances are carefully staged by her manager. One of these "Kittisms", as the press calls them, is the casual announcement of her future epitaph: "Beauty Kitt, Blond, 37-23-27," the ciphers standing for her body measurements (Boon, 1999, p. 82). Boon's quip, written in 1958, is very close to the 1961

[2] Boon wrote this in a letter to Julien Weverbergh. Both Prof. Kris Humbeeck as Prof. J.M.G. Muyres (both via personal communication) suggest that "phallux" is Boon's contraction of phallus and Phoenix. The meaning of the latter will be clarified below.

Clairol hair-dye publicity add mentioned by Tom Wolfe in his famous article *The Me-Decade*: "If I've only one life, let me live it as a blonde!" (Wolfe, 1976). In both accounts one cannot miss the deadly dimension of the narcissistic stance: being without personality, or without a psychological 'filling', is being already dead.

However, if Boon depicts his characters as lacking personality, this does not mean that they have no content on the level of their history. One can even argue that they are attributed genuine Freudian family plots. Only, this background does not produce a substantial subjectivity. Despite their romanesque psycho-biography, both Mr. Wadman and Beauty Kitt remain in a certain sense de-psychologised. Mr. Wadman's father is, for example, depicted as an authorial and very puritan man who condemns his son's weaknesses. Furthermore, this typical patriarch has his, equally typically, peculiar Freudian proto-perverse symptom; although he was an architect, he has the strange inclination to pass himself off publicly as a medical doctor. Wadman's mother is described as a "strange community animal" and Wadman depicts his childhood as a period without a moment of happiness (Boon, 1999, pp. 18-20). We get to know the *family romance* of Beauty Kitt, tellingly, through her long monologues in front of the mirror. She was born to a mentally unstable woman who was raped by an alcoholic. After her father dies in "terrible circumstances" and her mother is put away in madhouse, Beauty Kitt is sent to various foster families. She lives in miserable conditions and is raped at a very young age by the same Mr. Wadman (Boon, 1999, pp. 10-12). Wadman and Beauty Kitt's family histories can be said to be purely traumatic, leading to a mere abyss of a subjectivity without content. Boon makes clear that these family histories are not the place where ultimate explanations are to be found. Mr. Wadman, for example, contends that his account of his youth and the circumstances of his crimes will never satisfy the psychiatrists and the judges: "I know. They'll desire to know other things of my past. But what use would it be to make up some absurd stories to tell them" (Boon, 1999, p. 45). In Boon's novels subjectivity is not about psychology. The subject, baffled and bereft of any firm ground, cannot but encircle the ruins of it own destituteness, the abyss of its own zero-level of psychology.

Boon once pleaded for "psychologically untruthful stories": much like a painter, a novelist should change and distort the perspective in order to construct his piece of art (Boon, 1997, p. 542). The question concerns whether this is only a matter of a literary procedure, a technique utilised by the novelist in order to shed a better light on the *condition humaine*? In this interpretation, Boon would be writing psychologically untruthful novels in order to realize an awry, but more truthful, look at the human being. Or, alternatively, does Boon's denouncing of psychology testify to the fact that the post-war late-modern human has come to a point where it is beyond psychology? Such an eventuality would mean that the psychological outlook, as such, has become obsolete: in other words, psychology only tells the story of forms of subjectivity long gone. However, both interpretations, in fact, only beg a further question: is it possible to know something about the

human being beyond psychology, be it that the discipline, as such, is inadequate and structurally failing, or be it that the late-modern human being itself has reached a position beyond the psychological? Is meta-psychological knowledge possible? In order to disentangle these questions, let us return to Boon and demonstrate the problematic status of any knowledge concerning the human being.

The Homo Epistemologicus, The Woman and Sexuality...

Where Boon's characters constitute themselves in the very zero-level of subjectivity and psychology, he mocks the falsity of the psychologisation of mainstream psy-experts. An example of this would be when Mr. Wadman is taken into custody on suspicion of several murders and he overhears an expert proclaiming:

> … the pure sadistic murder is rather rare in reality and necrophilia even rarer, but, still the murders under scrutiny can be added to the limited cases mentioned in the juridical annals (Boon, 1999, p. 174).

Wadman calls this "scientific humbug" and describes how the "drawling professorial voice" evokes the image of old yellowed medical books on blood-letting to which a chapter on vampirism is added (Boon, 1999, pp. 174-175). Should we not interpret Boon here as suggesting a metaphor of the psy-experts as vampires, feasting on the supposedly scientific truth they extract from their patients?[3] Remember Stanley Milgram's experiment (Milgram, 1974), which can be considered as paradigmatic for psychology in its claim to lay bare the truth of the psychological human being. Milgram's intention with his experiments in the early 1960s was to study obedience to authority.[4] In his fake learning experiment, which was said to test the effects of punishment on learning, test subjects turned out to be willing to press a button to deliver an electric shock to another person simply because he or she was instructed to do so. While no one was actually shocked, the majority of the subjects who played the role of teacher followed the orders. The experiment ends when in a kind of didactic candid-camera moment Milgram himself enters the room to lift the veils of deception, reconciling the victim with his torturer—a moment that may remind us of today's emo-television. Milgram debriefs the baffled subject with questions such as "Do you feel upset?" "What did you feel?" and "Now that you know, how do you

[3] To this one can add Boon's depiction of the press, who equally as vultures throw themselves on the proto-freudian stories as they for example find out that the mother of Beauty Kitt is still living.
[4] The analysis presented here is based on: (De Vos, 2009b).

feel?" Milgram clearly addresses his participants on their zero-level of psychology, showing them that the human being is but an automaton of processes of obedience which psychological science has laid bare. Milgram not only induces his subjects to turn their gaze inwards, he also 'ghouls' on this twofold process, de-subjectivizing his subjects (exactly with psychology), he, at the same time, enforces the birth of the psychological Narcissus of the emotions (*now that you know, how do you feel*). Milgram capitalizes on the alienation, skimming the surplus of the psychological standard emotions. But perhaps the strangest aspect of the experiment is the role in which Milgram places his test-subjects: the so-called naive test subject is, surprisingly, asked to play the role of an experimental-learning psychologist! Does Milgram in this way, then, not enact a central feature of late-modern psychologisation: the phenomenon whereby the human being is called upon and interpellated to become its own psychologist? The *homo psychologicus* only has access to itself, or better, to the psychological golem he is said to be, via academic knowledge.

As such, Milgram's "psychologisation-psychology" testifies to the fact that modern subjectivity is fundamentally tied to knowledge and theory. Boon's characters in *De Paradijsvogel* are also marked by this push to knowledge to fill the lack of being.[5] Beauty Kitt, for example, relates that when her first, heavily tattooed husband tried to wrap his arms around her, she had to hide a self-help booklet on sexual problems. The booklet did not, however, bring her solace, she tells, it only put her again into a miserable despair thinking about suicide (Boon, 1999, p. 44). This desperate desire to know with the expectation of alleviation from science shows how psychology(zation) begins with a subjectivity without content, as the latter is nothing but the Kantian epistemological ego in search of a subjectivity and psychology from which it, as an emptied zero-level, is itself for ever exempt.

In *De Paradijsvogel* this epistemological desire above all finds its expression in the figure of E.H. Ramadhoe[6] who is writing a dissertation on "the meaning of the frivolity of our civilization" (Boon, 1999, p. 93). He is building an extensive annotated collection of photographs of glamour girls in order to understand the "idolatry of woman" (Boon, 1999, p. 158)[7] in his time. Here we come close to Boon's own biography. Boon not only calls

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[5] One could critically regard this as a move to meta-psychology as we might regard a epistemological desire as the primordial psychological feature of the human being. However, one cannot cut this epistemological drive loose from the birth of the modern subject (the subject of the sciences), precisely where psychology comes in at the deadlock of epistemology. See: (De Vos, 2010, in press-b)

[6] Boon himself explains that while E.H. could stand for an abbreviated name, it could also stand for the "Eerwaarde Heer" the Dutch title for 'Honorable Reverend'. (Florquin, 1972, p. 74)

[7] Ramadoe considers himself a true scholar, claiming that his study does not turn him into a "lecher" (Boon, 1999, p. 167). The lecher of course is Mr. Wadman

this particular novel "his dissertation", he was also engaged himself in compiling a, both serious and ironic, collection of pin-ups and erotic pictures in order to compose the "the standard study of the female human-animal" (Boon & Steivekleut, 2004, p. 7). Boon and his characters are thus themselves theorists, if not psy-scientists, directing their academic gaze at the world and, above all, at the enigma of (the idolatry of) The Woman.

As such, the specific place of sexuality in Boon's cultural critique is an important amendment to Lasch's dealing with sexuality in his account of narcissism. In *The Culture of Narcissism* sexuality can be said to be the very place where Lasch's critique of psychologisation overtakes him and where he himself engages in a psychologising stance. In wanting to promote a kind of unmediated and authentic sexuality against the pop-psychological accounts that besiege the late-modern subject, Lasch has to resort to a meta-psychological use of psychoanalysis.[8] In contrast, Boon show us that modern man relates to himself and the other —this is where sexuality comes in— via an epistemology, via an academic perspective. For Boon, there is no unmediated direct way of being in the world. When Ramadhoe says that he "prefers the role of the indifferent spectator above the role of the actual actor", it is not hard to recognize here Descartes' foundational move: the withdrawal from the world stage (the withdrawal, of course, being that which creates the stage) as the very condition for the modern sciences.[9] The modern subject, as a fundamentally Cartesian subject, is irrevocably marked by this epistemological rupture: modern man thus relates to himself and the world from a point of departure outside of the world, outside of himself. The central aspect in Freud's discovery is that the mediated relation between the human being and the world passes over the particular, and problematic, knot of sexuality. It is this which Lasch attempted to render un-problematic, in considering an unmediated authentic sexuality as a positive possibility. In Boon's novel, however, the problematic relation between sexuality and knowledge is not resolved, but rather made fully explicit in its insolvability. Mr. Wadman is an exemplary figure in this respect: if the perversion of the epistemological drive is already immanent with his father, then it fully blossoms with Wadman junior. Remember how the father as an architect visiting building

[8] Lasch, recoursing to the American psychoanalyst Kohut, proclaims: "Those who feel secure in the ego's ability to control the id, according to Kohut, take pleasure in occasionally suspending the secondary process (for example, in sleep or in sexual activity), since they know they can regain it when the wish to." (Lasch, 1978, p. 97) This amounts to a paradoxical, psychologised/psycho-analysed promotion of authenticity

[9] "And inasmuch as I hoped to be able to reach my goal better by conversing with men than by staying shut up any longer in the stove-heated room where I had all these thoughts, the winter was not yet over when I set out again on my travels. And in all the nine years that followed I did nothing but wander here and there in the world, trying to be more a spectator than an actor in all the comedies that are played out there; and reflecting particularly in each matter on what might render it suspect and give us occasion for erring, I meanwhile rooted out from my mind all the errors that had previously been able to slip into it" (Descartes, 1996[1637], p. 16)

sites was thrilled if workers had an accident so that he could pose as a medical doctor passing by chance:

> What my father liked most in these days was to put his finger in the mechanism which, as they say, is actually moved by a God. And in a way he became a God himself in doing so. And I … but I am again cynical, I resemble these lads from my school time, who always came up with their ambiguous sayings (Boon, 1999, p. 47).[10]

Mr. Wadman junior can thus be said to be the one who reveals the other side of his father's medical pretensions. This is repeated in an even more clear way regarding the scientific ambitions of E.H. Ramadhoe. Ramadhoe is the conscientious and decent scholar slowly building his scientific collection. Wadman also collects women and classifies them: he kills them and adds their bodies to his "collection", as he calls it, in his backyard under the rose bushes. Wadman is the dark truth of the academic pretensions of Ramadhoe. Marquis De Sade already revealed the perverse potential of science and modernity in his *philosophie du boudoir* (Philosophy in the bedroom: De Sade, 1990), drawing the radical conclusions of the philosophy of the Enlightenment. A more recent example of the immanent perverse core of academia is how central Milgram's experiment has become to the canonical literature that informs the "enhanced interrogation" of the military (McCoy, 2006). The involvement of psychologists in torture practices in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo might in this way not be mere happenstance. But it is important to note that Milgram's experiment is itself already structured as a form of torture. Indeed, Milgram uses deception and unethical, transgressive methods (experiments like Milgram's were immediately legally forbidden) in order to extract the truth from test subjects, and to produce scientific data (De Vos, 2010, in press-a).

This awry look at science and its perverse core allows us, in the same vein, to consider the psychopathological cruelties of Mr. Wadman. In doing so, one observes that such cruelties are not the atavistic remainders of primitive violent man, but, rather, are radically modern, and to be understood as epistemologically driven. For if state and military torture aims at the truth, does psychopathic torture not equally aim to engender the truth of the human being? The psychopath can thus be said to desire to lift the veils of deceiving reality to lay its finger on bare life.[11] The humiliation and pain inflicted by the psychopath aim

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[10] Passage translated by Stefan Hertmans.

[11] The street-killer Hans Van Themsshe's lamentation during his trial "I want to become human" (see: De Vos, 2009a) in this way perhaps betrays the true motive of his atrocities, stabbing two toddlers and a nanny to death

to unearth the truth of the human being. And, as both the practices of "enhanced interrogation" and those of the psychopathic Wadman show us, this endeavour is a scientific one. The truth must be reached according to the academic paradigm.[12] Furthermore, Boon's Wadman shows us that the true subject is the dead subject:

> Dead people gain a form of beauty they have never possessed alive. A human being lives to become a beautiful corpse one day. But I do not express myself well… I mean, a dead person has been freed of the burden that has oppressed him all of his life. A woman for example, then finally finds satisfaction, she in vain looked for all of her life with the man (Boon, 1999, pp. 14-15).[13]

Thus, in contrast to Lasch's attempt to envision a subject beyond narcissism, one able to transcend the "ironic, pseudo-analytic self-awareness as a kind of 'second nature'" (Lasch, 1978, p. 79), Boon is far more radical, showing how the true subject is a dead subject, refuting in the same movement Lasch's envisioning of a full realization of the sexual relation. Boon, consequently, evades the trap of meta-psychologisation and, in his problematizing of sexuality vis-à-vis subjectivity, can thus be said to stay closer to the original Freudian stance than either Lasch or Kohut. As said above, Boon knew his Freud, in *De Paradijsvogel* Ramadhoe even refers to him:

> … one of our greatest thinkers uncovered, that all what men achieve is only motivated by an erotica gone astray. And because of this sentence he has been loathed by us, his contemporaries (Boon, 1999, p. 201).[14]

> The question remains, here, whether Boon has finally opted for the mere exploration of the *condition humaine*? Does his attempt to go beyond psychology also lead him beyond economico-political critique? Has Boon thus embraced Freudianism and finally left behind his Marxism, exchanging his ideology critique for a more limited cultural critique?

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in order to put his finger on life itself. This would mean that the deeds of psychopaths are epistemologically motivated. But of course, perhaps this epistemological *Hineininterpretierung* is the only way that we can understand them.

[12] Psychopathology is a modern phenomenon, or, phrased otherwise, there are no psychopaths without the psy-sciences.

[13] Passage translated by Stefan Hertmans. One might interpret this along the lines of Žižek's idea that the only good neighbor is the dead neighbor (Žižek, 2004, p. 213) This is Žižek's rather forced interpretation of Kierkegaard's Kantian approach that the true love is the love for the neighbor (for a concise discussion see: (Neill, 2011). The specific point of Boon's character seems to be that the only true neighbour and the only true love is death itself: for Mr. Wadman death is the only possible aesthetization of the abject otherness of the other

[14] Passage translated by Stefan Hertmans.

Beyond the condition humaine

When Boon tries to give an account of subjectivity in post-World War II times, interrelating sexuality, religion and culture, it is beyond doubt that he is informed and guided by Freudian theory. This is particularly discernable in a sub-story interwoven in the novel, a mythical story situated in an undefined historic time on the origins of religion and on the origin of the city called Taboo. The name of the city is a clear allusion to Freud's seminal book *Totem and taboo* (Freud, [1913]1955), in which Freud attempts to explain the origin of human culture. In addition, Freud constructs a mythical story, the myth of the primal horde, in which he places the intertwining of religion and sexuality at the origin of human culture. Boon's story of the city of Taboo connects with the Freudian myth at several different points: Boon's basic argument is that religion, originating in the scarcity of resources, eventually takes the path of the repression of sexuality, and pushes the human being out of nature into the alienation of culture.

> And where they had known the happiness of being young, human animals, they now began to hate more and more the natural and the animal. They embarked on a journey, to a "beyond", and immediately started to feel the pain and the sorrow for what they left behind (Boon, 1999, p. 179).

The "beyond", put between quotation marks, seems to be invoking another well known book of Freud, *Beyond the pleasure principle* (Freud, [1920g]1955). In fact, it is evident that Boon, now and again, lapses into a mere translation or illustration of certain theories concerning the origin of religion —especially the Freudian idea concerning the role of sexuality.[15] This is not the strongest part of the novel, for, and this is similar to the case of Christopher Lasch, it is there that the ghost of meta-psychology threatens to weaken the narrative power. Although the integration of the mythical story in the novel does not always succeed, and despite the fact that Boon's critique of religion is not wholly convincing, there are nevertheless some important aspects which transcend the immanent meta-theoretisation. We should, for example, valorise Boon's penetrating insight that, even if post-war Europe was engaged in a secularization process, nevertheless religion was bound to return and reclaim its position. The "monster of religiosity", as he calls Noema (Boon, 1999, p. 213), the mythical double of Beauty Kitt, is bound to reclaim its rights, albeit passing over the cult of film stars and the society of the spectacle. Moreover, Boon's at-

[15] Boon does not only lean on Freud's Totem and Taboo but incorporates other ideas and theories. The Freudian elements he explicitly uses are totemism, incest and the murder of the father figure.

tempt to ground a cultural critique within a critique of religion is at least an interesting and original approach.

A second important point to salvage from meta-psychologisation is *the position of the subject*, which becomes clear via the mythical story. In order to do so, let us depart from the proposition that the central character, and the actual subject of the myth, is the story-teller. In *De Paradijsvogel*, the story is told by the impotent boxer Vulcan Fiber— an ex-husband of Beauty Kitt modeled on Joe DiMaggio (De Poorter, 1989). Vulcan Fiber is above all a non-character: his actions in the novel are limited to falling into a kind of epileptic stupor, in which he is visited by the figure of Tubal Kain who tells the story of the city of Taboo. Vulcan Fiber, impotent and epileptic as he is, is the subject beyond sexuality, beyond psychology, beyond *the condition humaine*. Is he thus not the figure of the naked human being, reduced to its essence, or more succinctly, to its non-essence? Stripped of every substantiality, this emptied subject is the actual protagonist of the novel. Vulcan Fiber, then, stands for the true modern subject which grew to full stature in the postwar society of the spectacle. Vulcan Fiber embodies the zero-level of subjectivity previously discussed in relation to Mr.Wadman and Beauty Kitt. The existential emptiness is radically empty: there is no psychology, no meta-psychology, not even a *condition humaine* to be situated at that abyss. At most, one can try to depict the borders of the chasm. The position of Tubal Kain, the poet of the people of the mountain cleft, is no different: "I was empty, and this emptiness would have sufficed if I only could live solely in it" (Boon, 1999, p. 183). However, as a poet he is called upon to relate the vicissitudes of the lives of others:

> And again I discovered (and how immensely sad this made me!) that once again I let myself be guided by the lives of others, as always I lived only through the others (…). I was a sounding board, an instrument to be played, which would produce the tones, the words which one desired to hear (Boon, 1999, p. 182)

The artist and the novelist incarnate the zero-level of subjectivity insofar as this zero-level is that which defines the modern human being itself. Consider how in a TV sit-com, for example, the laughing— via canned laughter— is done in our place; or how cybersex is performed by your avatar: the specificity of modern subjectivity is that is has a non-participatory core, an exempted zero-level subject. Tubal Kain does not fit anywhere; against his own will he becomes the Poet and the Prophet, giving voice to an utopia which is only the fantasy of others (Boon, 1999, p. 186). Tubal Kain cannot identify with the religion of nature of Irad, the one who found the hidden valley, nor with the monotheism of his sister Noema who wants to return to the city of Taboo. It is clear that Boon above all sympathizes with what one could call this in-between-period, dominated by a kind of religion of nature in which sexuality is not yet the central taboo which it becomes with monotheism. Although Boon understands this period as a transition, I am tempted to say

that this in-between-position is the very position from which Boon himself looks at things. Boon once argued that his characters belong to a time where one culture passes away in its death bed while another culture is born in the childbed (Cited in: Haasse, 2000, p. 23). Rainer Maria Rilke has described this position most aptly saying, "each age has such dis-inherited children, to whom no longer what's been, and not yet what's coming, belongs" (cited in: Agamben, 1993, p. 43). Does this not apply particularly to Boon, as he wants to part ways with a clerical, conservative Flanders, while he at the same time sees a new society coming to which he also does not belong? Note how close this position is to Christophers Lasch's analysis of his own timeframe. Lasch writes that facing "a dying culture," one has a particular responsibility:

> … the task of building a new order—endures most of all in those who knew the old order only as a broken promise, yet who took the promise more seriously than those who merely took it for granted (Lasch, 1978, p. 235).

The witness of an old culture dying and a new narcissistic one emerging, is the in-between human, Never having lived the old order fully, he or she experiences it as a promise on the verge of breaking.[16] But should we not recognize that this juncture is essentially what modernity is about? The gap between Old and New man might then precisely define modern man, and by extension, late-modern man.

Conclusions: from utopia to a non-psychology and back again

If the idea that every time is transitory time sounds comforting in a way — as, in a *nihil-sub-sole* stance, it would seem to argue that subjectivity always was and will be problematic and thus we should not really be worried about contemporary constraints on subjectivity as, for example, an intensified psychologisation — then I would, in contrast, like to invoke the image with which Boon's novel closes. At the end Mr. Wadman is pursued by a mob who want to lynch him. He flees to the house in which Beauty Kitt lives, tellingly called Phoenix, built upon the dark waters of the mythical town of Taboo. The mob enters the house and corners Wadman, Beauty Kitt and Ramadhoe in the basement. Beauty Kitt, in a last gesture of identifying with Noema, opens her cape and the mob sees that her sex is covered by an inverted triangle, the mythical forgotten symbol of the Bird of Paradise.

[16] One finds yet another example of this "in-between human" with Foucault's suggestion of the coming of a new man while moderns man is "erased , like a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea", (Foucault, 2002, p. 442)

Then suddenly the building collapses. However, in a kind of post-war scene, Boon describes how the outer walls of the house remain standing, with a metal Bird of Paradise swinging on a beam. Marceau Dewilde has argued that this symbolizes the fact that, even if society and culture collapse, the bourgeoisie will always resurrect as a phoenix (Dewilde, 2000).

The end of the novel, then, refutes the interpretation that Boon has fully traded his economico-political critique for a more ethical and existential approach, in which he denounces social realism and psychological probability. If Boon does indeed exchange economic and social history for a metaphysical approach, as Weisgerber (1976) contends, then I would argue that Boon turns to a metaphysics of the social and the economic, elucidating, above all, their de-subjectivating logic. In other words, Boon, indeed, surpasses social realism and the psychological, but only insofar as he understands that late-capitalism itself has become de-realizing and de-psychologising. Thus, whilst the social optimism of his earlier novels has indeed withered away, this does not mean that De Paradijsvogel is not still a radical political critique. This critique is not merely existential: *the condition humaine, for Boon,* is not a timeless metaphysical element, but rather the concrete and real way in which, in late-modernity, the social gets de-socialized, the political de-politicized, and the subjective de-subjectivized. The paradox —which I have only alluded to in this paper— is that late-capitalism is the expropriation of subjectivity insofar as it expropriates precisely the zero-level of subjectivity inherent in modernity. Psychology, in its denial of the zero-level of subjectivity, plays a central role here. It is precisely where the subject is robbed of its subjective abyss and, in turn, filled by signifiers, imagery, and the forced upon roles of the psy-sciences, that its subjectivity is 'ghouled' or preyed upon by late-capitalism. And, even if Boon can be said to have left behind his utopianism, only his non-psychology can be the index of those psychologically unenvisageable possibilities.[17]

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[17] Here I am inspired by Ray Brassier who, glossing the French philosopher François Laruelle, writes that the *suspension* of the traditional practice of thought opens up new possibilities of thought. (Brassier, 2003) I owe this reference to Ian Parker.

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Rebel Pathologies: from Politics to Psychologisation…and back.

Mihalis Mentinis

Introduction

In a text entitled 'The revolutionary psychology of Lev Davidovich Bronstein', Parker (1996) argues that revolutionary psychology should not be regarded as an 'academic system of knowledge', a 'theory or set of theories', nor can it be 'formalised, written, transmitted and learnt'. A revolutionary psychology, rather, he goes on, "can only be *lived,* and as a process of personal engagement, of political action" (p.184). Parker, then, proceeding with his précis of Bronstein's (alias Leon Trotsky) life, arrives at the conclusion that any "worthwhile and progressive psychology must take the form of biography" (p. 193), which provides us with examples for adopting forms of action. Perhaps in an attempt to avoid formalisation, however, Parker pays scarce, if any, attention to what these 'forms of action,' as he refers to them, really are, and the very adjective that is supposed to give meaning to such psychology is poorly discussed. Even though the text is about Leon Trotsky — leaving no doubt as to what the author wants to convey— its overall tone

is somewhat timid, and, more troublingly, it is marked by a problematic tendency towards trivialising the word 'revolutionary', reducing it to any kind of progressive, leftist personal engagement with politics. It is my contention, then, that in times in which products ranging from washing powders to electronic gadgets are advertised as 'revolutionary' or as 'bringing a revolution' (in cleaning, in entertainment and so on), and in which charity oriented humanitarian subjectivities and eco-friendly lifestyles are characterised as progressive, or even radical, we must stress that if such a thing as 'revolutionary psychology' exists, it can never be simply a marketing label for interesting life-stories, unconventional ways of life, and humanitarian attitudes, no matter how progressive these are. Whilst, admittedly, interesting lives and certain kinds of positioning towards social and political issues can, of course, contain progressive, and even radical elements, this in itself does not qualify them as examples of revolutionary psychology.

Another substantial problem with Parker's approach –at least my own particular reading of it- is that his revolutionary psychology could be read as being the invention or creation of a 'great' man's life of political action who then bequests his experience and theoretical insights to his followers and future generations as 'forms of action'. Hence, despite his own monition against resurrecting the cult of the personality, and warnings against lapsing into the reductionism of bourgeois psychology, Parker's approach, as it stands, runs the risk of dragging us as far back as the very beginnings of bourgeoisie psychology, with the Puritan analysis of inclinations and individual talents (see Federici, 2004). Furthermore, Parker's assertion that any revolutionary psychology must take the form of biography also runs the danger of psychologisation, for biography— as an account of an individual life— always entails a certain degree of psychologisation. Consequently, I propose abandoning the term 'biography' altogether in our discussions of revolutionary psychology, and, in its place, adopting the admittedly clichéd term- although significant nonetheless for differentiation purposes- 'anti-biography'.[1] An anti-biography would focus, not on the individual life itself, but on the repertoires of revolutionary engagement and action within which the life of an individual unfolds. Revolutionary psychology, then, becomes the individual unfolding within, and in relation to, revolutionary repertoires of action; such forms of action are not the inventions of 'great' individuals endowed with talents, creativity, intelligence, and extra psychical resources, but, rather, historically, po-

[1] The term 'anti-biography', as Psaroudakis (personal communication) suggests, is not an adequate term either for it stills refers to the realm of the psychologised personal biography. We need, then, an altogether different word in order to convey and discuss the individual-repertoire relationship. For lack of a better term I maintain the term 'anti-biography' only provisionally.

litically, and collectively constructed forms of personal engagement with class struggle, with a clear aspiration to nothing less than communism.

Drawing upon the revolutionary trajectory of the spokesperson and military commander of the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (EZLN), subcomandante Marcos: what I will attempt to demonstrate is that biographical approaches to Marcos are precisely what have allowed anti-Zapatista bourgeois psychologists, as well as pro-Marcos commentators, to psychologise his political involvement, thus rendering the main revolutionary repertoire within which he unfolded his personal trajectory invisible as such, in turn, reducing it to the pathological personal choice of a single individual. Before discussing the obscure workings of rebel psychologisation and pathologisation in detail, I will first present an excursus of the revolutionary repertoire in question: a repertoire that defines —albeit in an open, and constantly changing form— a certain relationship between radical intellectuals and the subaltern. Despite the fact that this is by no means a repertoire exclusive to Latin America— in actuality it can take multiple forms— for the sake of brevity I will discuss it solely in its Latin American specificity, and most radical form. It is important to explicitly state that this is a Marxist repertoire. Even though its historical origins and development precede Marx himself, I take Marxism to be "an accumulating tradition of practical revolutionary knowledge that stretches in time from before Marx to our times" (Parker, 1996:184). To set out, we need to jump, for a while, on Columbus's caravel sailing amidst 'the Tempest'.

Ariel and Caliban: a revolutionary repertoire

In the *Diario de Navegación* ('Navigation Log Books') of Columbus, we have the first European accounts of the ferocious *Carib* Indians who ruthlessly fought the Spaniards upon the latter's arrival to the continent. On Sunday 4 November 1492, less than a month after Columbus's arrival, we read the following entry: "…he learnt also that far from the place there were men with one eye and others with dogs' muzzles, who ate human beings", and then again on 23 November: "…which they said was very large [the island of Haiti] and that on it lived people who had only one eye and others called cannibals, of whom they seemed to be very afraid"(quoted in Fernández Retamar, 1974, p.11-12). On 11 December, of the same year, it is noted that *Caniba* refers in fact to the people of El Gran Can —which explains the deformation undergone by the name *Carib*— also used by Columbus (ibid). In Columbus's diaries the ferocious *Caribs*, or *Canibas*, are contrasted with the submissive and meek *Arauacos.* This early binary representation of the natives— reproduced and given further dimensions by the Spanish Crown's *Requerimiento*, which demanded the Indians make a choice between submission and life, or resistance and death

(see Saldaña Portillo, 2003) — is also found in Shakespeare's last play, *The Tempest.* Within this play, Caliban (Shakespeare's anagram for 'cannibal') and Ariel (probably a corruption of the name 'Arauaco') are two figures that are enslaved and robbed of their island by Prospero (the letters can be rearranged to spell out 'Oppressor'), a foreign conqueror. Even though both figures are native to the island and oppressed by Prospero, they nevertheless develop a very distinct relationship to their master. Unlike the submissive and obedient Ariel who binds himself to the master, Caliban is portrayed as brutish, vulgar, and unconquered. In contrast to Ariel's self-effacing willingness to serve Prospero, Caliban displays a sardonic and audacious rebelliousness against his master (see O'Toole, n.d.a.). We should note, in passing, that writing 'the Tempest' in the early 17th century, Shakespeare's portrayal of Caliban reflects the epochal panic with the proletarians' unruliness and refusal of wage-labour. Primitive accumulation demanded the discipline of the Caliban-proletarians, who, as Federici (2004) argues, preferred to risk the gallows than submit to the new conditions of work.

Amidst debates concerning the nature of the population in the early 19th century, both Shakespearean characters (i.e. Ariel and Caliban) were introduced within Latin America. Rather than simply reproducing Shakespearean representations, however, literature has been highly polemical as to which character the Latin American population should identify with. On the one hand, writers of pro-colonial persuasions have preferred the more docile Ariel to the vexed Caliban— the latter being represented as an uncivilised savage in need of discipline and education; on the other hand, anti-colonial writers have opted for Caliban's turbulent and unruly spirit, as the subject of the struggle against colonialism, imperialism, and military dictatorships. For certain writers within this latter group— such as, for example, Fernández Retamar, whom I will discuss forthcoming— Ariel has been identified with the figure of the intellectuals— at least those radical intellectuals who have not submitted completely to the master— and his task identified as that of the vanguard of the Caliban-proletarian struggle. The seeds for such a re-working of the Caliban-Ariel relationship are found in Marx and Engels's 'Manifesto of the Communist Party':

> "In times when the class struggle nears the decisive hour....a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift and joins the revolutionary class... and in particular, a portion of the bourgeois ideologists, who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole" (Marx & Engels, 1848, Chapter 1, n.p.a.)

Though it is beyond the scope of the current article to go into a detailed excursus of the various forms the debate concerning the relationship between Ariel and Calibans took in Latin America, suffice to say, it took many different directions: often prioritising the 'Caliban' qualities of the working class, to the exclusion of the indigenous populations from any revolutionary capacity of their own; in conjunction with the assignment of a series of

different missions and levels of commitment to radical intellectuals. Indicatively, following the post- Second World War developmentalist discourse that defined a certain relationship between the 'underdeveloped third world' and the developed countries— mainly the US— revolutionaries, such as Che Guevara and Mario Payeras, conceptualised the relationship between the peasants, and/or indigenous, and revolution as one of progression from pre-modern forms of life to a developed modern stage. The role of the radical intellectual, then, was as the facilitator and guide of this developmental process (see Saldaña Portillo, 2003). In other cases, the Ariel-Caliban repertoire received a religious tingle, sometimes a particularly strong one, due to the influence of liberation theology and the involvement of priests and catechists within the armed revolutionary struggle. In general terms, the Cuban Revolution was a hallmark for the development of the Ariel-Caliban repertoire in its most radical form. After the Cuban revolution, Miller (1999) argues— albeit in an exaggerated way: "it was no longer plausible for intellectuals to say, as Vallejo had done in the 1920s, 'as a man, I am a revolutionary, but as a poet, I am a free spirit'" (p.125). This statement, however, holds only partly true, since things seem to have been more complicated. By the end of the 1960s, in the aftermath of the so-called 'Padilla affair' — named after the Cuban poet who was arrested and eventually imprisoned for openly criticising the Castro regime— and in the shadow of Castro's doctrine, expressed in his speech to the intellectuals in Havana: 'within the Revolution everything, against the Revolution, nothing' (Castro, 1961, p.6), intellectuals in Latin America started taking different positions towards the Cuban Revolution and communism. Schematically, three main groups formed. Firstly, those who continued to wholeheartedly support the Castro regime: writers such as the Cuban Fernández Retamar and the Uruguayan Mario Benedetti, whose ideas represented what we can call the pro-Cuban orthodoxy. The second group consisted of those intellectuals who had grown critical of, and even hostile towards, the Cuban regime, eventually distancing themselves from Marxism in general: here we find novelists such as the Peruvian Mario Vargas Llosa and the Mexican Carlos Fuentes. In the third group, we find such writers as the Uruguayan Eduardo Galeano and the Argentinean Julio Cortázar, who displayed an unorthodox, promethean thinking, strongly opposing the putative inseparability between social realism and socialism maintained by the first group, but, nevertheless, remaining loyal to Cuba and socialism throughout the 1970s and 1980s (see Stabb, 1994). In its most radical form, the repertoire we discuss here was highly influenced by Che Guevara's total commitment to revolution, and was supported by the intellectuals of the first group.

In a hugely influential text for those generations of intellectual revolutionaries across Latin America between the 1970's and 1980's, Fernández Retamar took the discussion on Ariel and Caliban to critical point, identifying Latin American culture, not with the airy and intellectual Ariel, but with the ferocious, unconquerable Caliban: "what is our history, what is our culture, if not the history and culture of Caliban?" (1974: 24). However,

Fernández Retamar argues that there is no real Ariel-Caliban polarity: both are inhabitants of the island and slaves of Prospero, the foreign magician. Ariel is the intellectual from the same island as Caliban, and it is he (not she) who has to make the choice of either serving Prospero— for which, Retamar argues, Ariel is particularly adept— or allying himself with Caliban in the struggle for 'true freedom'. It is at this precise point that Retamar adds further to the radicality of the repertoire of the *intellectual comprometido* ('committed intellectual'), for he argues that:

> here that "sector of bourgeois ideologists" to which Marx and Engels refer experience a second form of rupture: except for that sector proceeding organically from the exploited classes, the intelligentsia which considers itself revolutionary must break all ties with its class of origin (frequently the petite-bourgeoisie) and must besides sever the nexus of dependence upon the metropolitan culture from which it has learnt, nonetheless, a language as well as a conceptual and technical apparatus. That language will be of profit, to use Shakespearean terminology, in cursing Prospero (1974: 63).[2]

It was this rupture from the metropolitan culture, in all its dimensions, and taken to its most extreme, that the first generation of the non-indigenous Zapatista militants in the 1970's and the second generation of the 1980's— including Marcos— would perform (see Mentinis, 2006). As Marcos (1994) asserts—in doing so, invoking a notion of authenticity likely inspired by Sartre— it was a total rupture that "meant abandoning everything, everything, everything in every sense: name, family, prestige, future, adulation. It meant starting over again, being another person, someone who is authentic" (n.p.a). Departing from the developmentalist discourse of Payeras and Che Guevara, and in contradistinction to the authoritarian leadership of the latter, what these militants ultimately added to the Ariel-Caliban repertoire was a re-thinking and renegotiation of the relationship between the indigenous population and the radical intellectuals, thus producing in the Jungle of Chiapas a relatively anti-hierarchical— at least in comparison to previous experience— 'Zone of Proletarian Development' (see Shah-Shuja, 2008). Furthermore, within Zapatista-Marcos's writings, post-1994, there is a marked attempt to bring together the revolutionary commitment of the aforementioned first group of radical writers with the open, creative (even surrealist), and non-dogmatic thinking of the writers of the third group— Marcos was, after all, an incessant reader of Julio Cortázar. Thus, with the Zapatistas, Ariel

[2] Jan De Vos has brought my attention to the fact that this language includes the language of psychology too. We should consider, thus, that Caliban's relation to Prospero's language cannot be as simple as Fernández Retamar sees it to be, and Caliban has to severe his dependence upon Prospero's language too.

gradually begins to lose his/her vanguard position and is embedded in Caliban's struggle in a different way from that espoused by many revolutionaries of the 1960's and 1970's. [3]

Having concluded this excruciatingly concise excursus of the revolutionary repertoire defining a certain relationship between radical (bourgeois) intellectuals and the subaltern , so as to attempt to extend Parker's (1996) notion of revolutionary psychology and move away from strictly biographical approaches, I will at this juncture proceed to discuss two forms of psychologisation which presuppose and reproduce certain forms of psychology (see Parker, 2008). The first form corresponds roughly to the anti-Zapatista commentators and bourgeois psychologists, and explicitly employs a mainstream psychological discourse that aims at both Marcos's and Marxism's pathologisation. The second form— which corresponds to some Leftist pro-Zapatista commentators— does not employ any kind of explicit psychological discourse, but, rather, constitutes a discursive practice which reproduces versions of mainstream psychology and selfhood that disable radical politics.

Psychologisation I: the brilliant imposture

The initial military reaction to the Zapatista rebellion by the Mexican state was accompanied by a parallel attempt to criminalise the leadership of the EZLN and Marcos. When criminalisation failed, a number of bourgeois and state experts— from communication analysts to historians— undertook the task of 'unmasking' Marcos, demonstrating how behind the rebel persona lurked a demagogue, and manipulator of the indigenous people; a violent, dishonest figure who put his personal interest and obsession for publicity and fame before the very lives of the indigenous populations, on whose behalf he hypocritically claimed to speak. De La Grange and Rico (1997), in their biography of Marcos, were more than clear in their anti-Marcos delirium, brandishing him a *genial impostura* ('brilliant Imposture'). As a discursive practice, the endeavour to morally annihilate Marcos was informed by, and reproduced, a very particular form of psychology (see Parker 2008). This form of psychology involved a certain conception of selfhood, which following Shah-Shuja (2010), can be termed the 'divided bourgeois self'. It was precisely this artificial and simplistic separation of an external aspect of Marcos's self (identity), and a private aspect of his self (subjectivity), that allowed the former to be presented as the false

[3] Interestingly enough, in one of the latest taking ups of the Caliban figure, Hardt and Negri (2009) celebrate the latter's revolutionary force but say nothing about his past, present or future relationship to Ariel.

façade of an obscure and pathological subjectivity. It comes as no surprise, then, that mainstream bourgeois psy-experts, of all specialisations (psychologists, psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, and graphologists), had a privileged and prominent position within this systematised, ideological practice.

Psychology, as a mechanism of the constituted power (see Negri, 1999), was further employed to set limits to the Zapatista demands. A Mexican bourgeois psychiatrist argued, for instance, that if Marcos insisted in his unrealistic demands, all he would be demonstrating was his 'pathological narcissism' (see: Santamarína, 1998). Eventually, even his signature became an object of graphological analysis: one more pseudo-scientific method through which to ostensibly penetrate into the deepest layers of his 'personality', and reveal the 'psychological portrait' of the perverse *pasamontañas*. 'Who is Marcos?' pondered one author of an article in a Mexican weekly in the immediate aftermath of the revolt. The analysis of his signature betrays the 'truth' about the masked impostor: a man with "exhibitionist tendencies, feelings of shame of his own sexuality, tendencies for violent and inappropriate outbursts" (Hernández, 1994: 20). Such references and allusions towards a weak sexuality— or even a kind of hidden, repressed homosexuality— concerning an exhibitionist nature, and predisposition towards inappropriate violent outbursts, portrayed Marcos as a culturally specific, neurotic, crypto-homosexual— thus, pathologising him within the borders of a culture that gave meaning to the word 'macho'. However, it was a strategy that had grander designs than Marcos's mere pathologisation: it was also geared towards the breaking of the ariel-caliban ties, targeting all those who dared to show solidarity with the Zapatista cause; those whom one right-wing commentator accused of suffering from 'political immaturity'— the 'global-idiots' or 'idiots without borders' (Montaner, 2001).

As aforementioned, the psychologisation and eventual pathologisation of Marcos aimed at something broader and more insidious than simply annihilating him morally and symbolically: it sought, rather, to present his involvement within revolutionary politics as a mere function of his pathological character, in turn, rendering invisible the fact that Marcos— like all non-indigenous Zapatista militants— was operating within a historically and politically constituted repertoire. There was one further direction taken that aimed to have precisely the opposite effect: this practice sought to demonstrate that Marcos was something akin to a case study, one which demonstrated the psychologically problematic nature of the repertoire in question. It is this latter practice which I will now discuss further.

Marcos's decision to engage with the most radical form of the Ariel-Caliban repertoire entailed, among other ruptures, a break with his own family. In the ten years prior to the Zapatista uprising, he and the other non-indigenous militants would rarely, if ever, return to their homes. When Andres Oppenheimer (1998) —a co-winner of the Pulitzer prize—

touches upon Marcos's relation to his family, he makes the following interesting observation:

> as if confirming psychologists' family constellation theories, according to which the middle children are the most psychologically troubled ones, Rafael[4]—the fourth of Don Alfonso's eight children— seemed eager to find a political justification for breaking with his parents (1998: 252).

This is an extraordinarily interesting comment: in part, because it contains a number of arbitrary assumptions which take us beyond the realm of mere pathologisation of Marcos as a psychologically troubled individual. Firstly, there is a peculiar, causal relation established between being 'psychologically troubled' and wanting to break from one's family. Why does Oppenheimer— a laureate journalist, no less— consider the former as categorically leading to the latter? Such a causal relation reaches the point of absurdity when one considers Oppenheimer's contention that, in order to produce this break the psychologically troubled person is in need of a 'political justification'. It would be remiss not to logically cogitate over what such a political justification would actually entail; Oppeneheimer's own retort consists of quoting an excerpt from the chapter entitled 'the family' from Rafael Guillén's (alias Marcos) graduate thesis: "as a unity of consumption and reproduction of the labour force, the family in the capitalist system is also the basic unit of reproduction and transformation of the dominant ideology" (quoted in Oppenheimer, 1998: 252). Bingo! The political justification Marcos was striving for comes from Marxism— indeed, in his thesis he drew extensively upon Marxist theory, especially the structuralist Marxism of Luis Althusser— and thus my argument has come full circle: Marxism, a central accoutrement in the Ariel-Caliban repertoire, is the theory that provides political justifications for the immoral tendencies of psychologically troubled individuals; or, phrased otherwise, Marxism is pathologised as the theory of the psychologically troubled. Of course, one must take umbrage with another of Oppenheimer's arbitrary, verging on chimerical, causal connections between Marxism and breaking with one's own family, for a Marxist critique does not necessarily entail a breaking with one's family— but, alas, Oppenheimer seems indifferent to such details.

Let's continue to move forward, and more closely examine the very meaning of the phrase 'psychologically troubled', employed by Oppenheimer. Whilst, indeed, family constellation theories do contain the seed of pathologisation of the middle-borns (e.g. as having lower IQ), they do not tend to speak of the middle-borns as being 'psychologically

[4] Rafael Guillén was Marcos's name by birth.

troubled', but, rather, as displaying different characteristics from either first-borns or last-borns. Even when assessed in terms of the 'Big five' personality dimensions (i.e. Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Extraversion, and Openness to Experience), and taking into consideration the fact that middle-borns are said to score differently in four of the five, the differences are not directly or explicitly described as demonstrating a 'psychological problem'. And, moreover, in the fifth dimension (namely, neuroticism), in which a high score could justify— at least, within mainstream culture— the term 'psychologically troubled', there are no significant birth-order effects (see Sulloway, 2007).[5] Why, then, does Oppenheimer employ such a term? This is merely a rhetorical question, for Oppenheimer's intentions are of no interest to our discussion. What is of interest is the fact that Oppenheiemer's reference to family constellation theories inevitably brings to mind the best known work on birth-order effects, Frank Sulloway's (1996) *Born to be Rebel.* Within this work, Sulloway purports that middle-borns and last-borns are more likely to be the 'rebel of the family' than the first-borns, citing a number of revolutionaries who fit this pattern (e.g. Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Fidel Castro, etc.). In other words, what Oppenheimer characterises as 'psychological trouble' is nothing other than rebelliousness— once again associated with Marxist revolutionary politics.

Psychologisation II: the brilliant myth

If family constellation theories have been selectively used and manipulated by those hostile to the Zapatista project, so as to render Marxism the problematic theory behind the Ariel-Caliban repertoire, they have also been employed by pro-Zapatista authors with no less anti-revolutionary implications. For example, in his otherwise meticulous biography of Marcos, Henck (2007) draws upon family constellation theories— as if these theories present us with facts independent from politics— in order to 'explain' Marcos's trajectory. Despite the fact that Henck takes into account the social and political conditions in Marcos's intellectual and political trajectory, such conditions are considered somewhat inadequate unless supplemented by psychosocial structural explanations. Presenting the family constellation theories in the beginning of his book, Henck appears to suggest that Marcos was simply *conditioned* to become a revolutionary. Henck references Sulloway's

[5] I do not mean to imply here that family constellation theories describe psychosocial facts. The reason I review "evidence" from these relevant research is in order to show that even when assessed against these theories Oppenheimer's assertions remain arbitrary and badly founded.

theory, particularly those parts that emphasise that later-borns are more likely to become revolutionaries and challenge the established order, thus attributing their radicalism, "not to class consciousness", but, rather, to competition for limited family resources (quoted in Henck, 2007: 16) . Here, psychologising is once again targeting, not simply Marcos, but Marxism. Henck, then, concludes that "Rafael, as we will see, conforms to this revolutionary elite pattern on every count" (2007: 17). Henck's approach inscribes in the radical political field a strong anti-egalitarian statement. For if Marcos is an elite revolutionary predestined by some psychosocial determinations to rebel, then all other militants and, indeed, the indigenous populations themselves, are nothing but predestined *not* to rebel or at least to follow him in his rebellion—I will expound upon this in due course in relation to Naomi Klein's accounts of Marcos. The Ariel-Caliban relationship, then, is sliding back to Che Guevara's— who, interestingly, was a first-born— and Mario Payera's representations of the intellectuals as leading to progress the pre-modern, underdeveloped peasants and indigenous— a relationship strongly opposed by the Zapatistas. In his account of Marcos's life and relation to the indigenous populations, Henck reproduces throughout his treatise mainstream bourgeois psychological explanations based upon Marcos's 'personality'— instead of, for example, seeing Marcos's relationship with the indigenous as a socio-politically constituted relational dynamic—explanations that, ultimately, run against the egalitarian politics he adheres to.[6]

This psychologisation of Marcos goes far beyond his pathologisation and the reactionary re-organisation of the Ariel-Caliban relationship: it goes as far as psychologising all those outside the organicity of this relationship who are in solidarity with the Zapatista struggle. What many-pro-Zapatista commentators and analysts have done is allow psychology to walk into politics and claim a share in the explanation of the events— explanations which attempt to re-establish order and control. It is this which I will discuss in greater detail for the remainder of this section. Let's return to the anti-Zapatista psychologists of the state. Constructing the psychological profile of Marcos, Anaconda (1994) makes the following important profiling statement: "[Marcos's] calculations of ambition predominate over material necessities arriving to the point of showing indifference to eating and sexual pleasures" (p.22-23). Here, the commitment, discipline, austerity, organisation, and management of resources, and so on, which are endemic to the radical form of the Ariel-Caliban repertoire and any revolutionary struggle (see Badiou, 2009), are displaced to a reduced form of indifference to sexual and gastronomic pleasures, reminiscent

[6] Nick Henck has objected that in his work he introduces Sulloway's theory tentatively, and that my reading misrepresents his overall argument. In the light of this comment, I present my argument here only as a possible reading, among others, that could derive from his argument. .

of forms of asceticism associated in Mexico with catholic saints. However, in contradistinction to the saints, in the above account Marcos fasts and practices celibacy not to achieve god, but to attain his mundane personal ambitions; he is, in other words, a false saint or even a false hero, who instead of fighting for his people, fights for his own personal interests. This is where leftist pro-Marcos sympathisers enter the picture, attempting to counter this image of Marcos with an equally anti-revolutionary emphasis upon the latter's 'sublime' qualities. Whereas the anti-Zapatistas reproduce the bourgeois divided self in order to pathologise the private aspect of it, the pro-Zapatistas reproduce a version of a humanistic, unified and actualised selfhood (of the great man). For leftists of this persuasion, Marcos is a real hero and an authentic saint. Here is Naomi Klein's account of Marcos:

> This masked man who calls himself Marcos is the descendant of King, Che Guevara, Malcolm X, Emiliano Zapata and all other heroes who preached from pulpits only to be shot down one by one, leaving bodies of followers wandering around blind and disoriented because they lost their heads (2001:14).

Note that Klein's heroes who were shot down 'preach from pulpits', as does Marcos—albeit in riddles rather than in certainties; he is a postmodern persona after all. Preaching, however, is not something revolutionaries do: preaching belongs to the world of priests, prophets, saints, and martyrs. Moreover, the pulpit is not a revolutionary apparatus like the AK-47 is for the guerrilla group, but, rather, a structure or an elevated piece of furniture in the Churches where a member of the clergy stands and reads the gospel (the San Marcos gospel?). One can patently recognise, here, the intermingling of two closely related discourses: heroism, and saintliness — which I will henceforth classify as a single discourse.[7] As Gómez Peña writes:

> Many of Marcos's hard-core sympathisers are trying to figure out a dignified exit for the hero. Should he take off the mask in private, go back to his normal self, and disappear for good? Should he commit political suicide or die in time to conquer a space in the Mexican Revolutionary Olympus…(1995: 95).

[7] I treat here the discourses of heroism and saintliness as a single discourse for they function in almost identical ways in relation to psychologisation and within consumerist societies. The hero is first and foremost a military man, and, as Sartre (1988 [1952] tells us, the Christian legacy is full of examples of men who made the transition from a military hierarchy to saintliness (e.g. Saint George, Saint Ignatius, Saint Martin etc).

In an article appearing firstly in the Mexican daily *La Jornada*, shortly after the National Democratic Convention (CND) organised by the Zapatistas in the Lacandon Jungle in August 1994, Elena Poniatowska— a renowned Mexican Leftist intellectual— refers to the subcomandante as "that man that has a god inside, and whose name is Marcos" (1994: 324). And, after all, who has a god inside, if not the semi-deified hero, the saint, the holy man, the one who inhabits the border between humanity and the sacred? Both Klein's and Poniatowskas's respective accounts are archetypal examples of psychologisation, even if, at first glance, they do not appear as such. There are several avenues one can explore here to elucidate this. The first avenue is an equally complex and protracted affair; henceforth, the following précis is by no means exhaustive. We know from Sartre (1988/1952) that the hero and the saint are prominent figures within consumer societies, and, as such, are inconceivable without the luxury and myths of these societies. Both figures exist somehow outside society, albeit in relation to it, and for it. Heroism and saintliness also serve a specific function within 'post-modern' consumerist culture, with the latter also closely related to psychologisation in various ways; consumerism, for example, is often framed in therapeutic terms, such as in the expression 'shopping therapy', etc. The hero and the saint would, then, constitute clear examples of what one may denote 'hyper-psychologisation'— the condensing of society's most valued psychological properties into categories not explicitly psychological; categories which serve to maintain and perpetuate consumerism. A terser approach would be to dismiss any understanding of these discourses as somehow preceding the development of bourgeois psychology. If these two decidedly interrelated discourses make absolute sense, it is precisely because they refer, albeit implicitly, to familiar psychologised layers of reality. This means that the hero and the saint again function as hyper-psychologised categories for particular, socially defined, positive psychological qualities and attributes. Therefore, when Poniatowska states that Marcos 'has a god inside' or when Klein presents Marcos as a 'hero', we, in turn, 'read' into or extrapolate from these categories a person who has a 'strong and composed personality', 'knowledge', 'developed linguistic skills', is 'talented', 'charismatic', 'intelligent', 'altruistic', 'empathic', and so on and so forth. The discourse of heroism and saintliness is thus a discourse that allows psychology to enter politics through the backdoor, with Marcos presented as an idealised version of a postmodern ('teaching in riddles'!) psytherapist, whose death would result in 'bodies of followers wandering around blind and disorientated'.

One could, of course, object at this juncture and suggest that the preceding analysis is just another arbitrary reading and that, in actuality, there is no *explicit* reference to psychology whatsoever. A more sophisticated mind would go even further, perhaps arguing that it is, in fact, precisely my own reading which psychologises the whole affair: both, by making it explicit, and through establishing connections between the hero/saint and psychological properties. And these would be fair arguments if it were not the Mexican bour-

geois psychologists themselves psychologising all this before me. So, if I psychologise the above accounts on Marcos— which I unquestionably do— it is not in order to elucidate these accounts by revealing their hidden nature, but in order to present the logic that allows psychology, with great ease, to enter the political sphere and claim a share of the events. What I am performing is a tactical psychologising in order to capture what the construction of Marcos as a brilliant myth may imply for psychology, and see where the latter will be able to insert itself in order to attempt to establish order. Perhaps after such a lengthy excursus the reader has forgotten what I set out to do here: to demonstrate how all this is, in the end, turned against all those who would support and show solidarity for the Zapatistas and, mutatis mutandis, any other radical movement. So, let me conclude my argument. By depicting Marcos in heroic and semi-sacred terms (hyper-psychological terms), Klein, Poniatowska, and many other pro-Marcos supporters allow bourgeois and state psychology to attain a grip upon all those who show solidarity to the indigenous struggle, through the use of a single word: 'PROJECTION'. The Mexican bourgeois psychologist Anaconda, responding to what he perceived as a pro-Marcos frenzy in Mexico and abroad from the very first days of the Zapatista rebellion, would include a long paragraph on projection, in turn, preparing the terrain for the pathologisation of solidarity:

> "…in this case projection is personalised in leaders or a group of leaders to whom the person comes close or affiliates herself with voluntarily looking for somebody to depend on or hoping to find security. In this case, projection results in the need to endow the leaders with elements of omnipotence and dress them with absolute positive aspects…and seeing them as superhuman beings…" (1994:19).

Taking the above quote into consideration, supporters of radical politics, then, can be presented as suffering from dependency or emotional insecurity. Revolutionary politics thus collapses once again into some kind of psychological malfunction— one should remember, here, prior references to the Zapatista sympathisers as suffering from 'political immaturity'. Here, immaturity is conceptualised in psy-terms as feelings of dependency and insecurity, resulting in projection; thus, the relationship between Marcos and his emotionally insecure and dependent 'followers' is again constructed as a therapeutic one. To put it simply, relations of solidarity are reduced to, or explained away in terms of, projection.

…and back

In his discussion on pan-psychologisation, De Vos (2008) distinguishes between psychologising and psychologisation, arguing that "formerly, psychologising was the way to depoliticise social antagonisms; currently psychologisation is linked to a *de facto* depolitici-

sation. Psychologising was about making the socio-economic and political aspects invisible; psychologisation is about making itself invisible" (p 10-11). The problem with De Vos's argument, as I see it, is that the distinction he makes implies that psychologising— as the depoliticisation of social and political antagonisms— is no longer necessary because psychology has achieved an "all embracing and even totalitarian grip on the human being" (2008: p.6). When De Vos becomes uncertain of this distinction, it is on the basis that the distinction gives the wrong impression of two distinct historical times (2010). The problem with his distinction, however, is not the wrong periodisation of history it might imply, but the unconvincing claim that psychologisation is linked to a *de facto* depoliticisation, and, as such, is no longer necessary; as he puts it: "there is nothing to de-politicise, politics has left the building" (2010). This is, however, a rather restricted view of politics, one that prioritises capital's tactics of simulation over resistance. For De Vos, psychologisation is not a process that de-politicises— for to depoliticise would mean that there is still politics, a claim he considers invalid— but, on the contrary, a process that continuously re-establishes itself through an on-going psychologisation discourse. By seeing things from the perspective of a putative *de facto* depoliticisation, De Vos consequently understands psychologisation as an 'order of things', a total and completed state, and an all encompassing grip on all aspects of life.[8] Against De Vos's view, of the discourse of psychology having colonised all aspects of life, in turn, depriving them of any possibility of being identified without reference to this discourse, I insist on conceptualising psychologisation— at least in one of its most dominant dimensions— in a more traditional schema: as a process rather than a state— as Holloway (2002), for example, has shown in relation to commodity fetishism. Conceptualising it as a process means that there is always something that escapes psychologisation: that there is resistance, and resistance *is* politics, even when, on occasion, it is mixed with pseudo-psychological jargon. Thus, psychologisation needs to perform continuous operations, not only in order to simply re-establish itself— to make itself present— but also in order to depoliticise and colonise actions that escape it.

This is not to deny psychology's grip over many aspects of reality, nor to suggest that De Vos is, even to a certain extent, correct when arguing that there is no authentic, real life outside psychologisation. In radical politics, however, things are different: radical political discourses and practices require no reference to psychology, and they exist outside psychologisation, and against it— even when psy-language is sometimes employed. It is

[8] To this De Vos has objected that I take his argument too far and that he does not see psychologisation as an omnipotent state. On the contrary, he argues, we need a 'proper politics' beyond psychology(-isation). In the light of this objection I present my arguments in this article as only a reading that could derive from his work.

when a guerrilla group engages in armed struggle and talks of communism, or when people take to the streets to riot against the government, that liberal analysts employ social psychological frustration-aggression models to understand what is going on, and bourgeois psychologists clamour to attach labels of aggressive and paranoid personalities.[9] This demonstrates lucidly how psychology is a continuous control operation of the constituted power. Or, phrased otherwise, psychologisation remains the process, in one of its dimensions, by which psychology attempts, not to gain an absolute grip upon radical political discourses and radical repertoires of political action— this is impossible for reasons related to the social ontology of politics proper— but to temporarily tame its force, control it, and re-establish order. Let's see another example: Engaging with the Ariel-Caliban repertoire in its radical version means that one aims at the production of an 'event', a revolt, or a revolution – in Negri's (1999) conception of an 'event' as being induced by conscious 'pre-evental' efforts on the behalf of subjects rather than Badiou's (2002). Moreover, the event is constituent power and contains no certainty for its participants, whilst demanding, in turn, a risky commitment and dedication. As Marcos once commented, in reference to the Zapatista revolt of 1 January 1994:

> We were many those of us who burnt our vessels that dawn of 1 January 1994 and we took up that heavy gait covering our face with a balaclava. We were many those of us who made that step with no return (quoted in Anaconda, 1994: 20).

Categorising the above statement, the Mexican psy-expert Anaconda (1994) includes it under the subtitle: "depressive thoughts" (p.20). There is no *de facto* depoliticisation here; rather, it is the radical political nature of Marcos's statement that the psy-expert responds to in order to contain its revolutionary spirit, and present it as a psy-malfunction that needs to be treated. Her unsuccessful, verging on ridiculous, attempt demonstrates unequivocally that radical politics can never be brought under the total grip of psychologisation.

De Vos's total approach to psychologisation as an 'order of things', is based, to a certain extent, on the lack of a clear distinction between politics proper and politics as regulation, or administration, and it is this lack of a clear distinction that makes him see psychologisation as a *de facto* depoliticisation. What De Vos calls *de facto* depoliticisation is nothing but continuous operations of regulation and administration based upon psycholog-

[9] It is indicative that during the mobilisations in Athens and other Greek cities in 2008, a psychology lecturer claimed during his lecture that it was highly probable that those who engaged in acts of violence were suffering from ADHD and had not been diagnosed. ADHD, the lecturer continued, if not diagnosed in an early age almost certainly results in delinquent behaviour. It was a clear de-politicisation of the events.

ical discourse. But this hardly stands for a *de facto* depoliticisation. We should note that it is hardly accurate to say that psychology depoliticises, for this gives the impression that the political field and the psychological field are two different domains. Rather than seeing the relationship between the two as an external one, psychologisation should be approached as a process *within* the political; psychologisation is thus one of the processes by which constituted power attempts to block and cancel radical political interventions that threaten its order. When De Vos (2010) observes that 'psychologisation is politics already', as shown in the 'marriage de raison between psychology and policy makers' (personal communication) — despite the fact that, again, there is a lack of distinction between regulation and administration on the one hand, and politics proper on the other— he implicitly recognises that in order to understand what psychologisation does, or even for psychology to understand itself, we must employ a discourse of politics, a discourse that exists outside psychology. This makes it abundantly clear that the 'pan-psychologisation' he stands for is simply a witty exaggeration. In fact, it is an open question whether we should talk of the psychologisation of politics, instead of the political *uses* of psychology.

The climate of pan-psychologisation he produces, forces De Vos to look for messianic— almost totalitarian— solutions to the problem:

> Maybe instead of an Agambian inspired *other use* of Academia…we should opt for a more radical attempt to break the hegemony of Academia and suffocation of other discourses. Instead of promoting and out-of-the state, we perhaps must readopt the old idea of seizing the state structures. The only way then to make the state structures usable in an emancipatory project would then be to get the academics out, pretty much in the same way as the merchants and the Pharisees were thrown out of the temple (2010 unpublished paper, p.20).

Notwithstanding my own sympathies with De Vos's anti-academism, the problem in the above quotation concerns who is this 'we' he refers to? By we, is he referring to the 'good academics', the ones who, perhaps, with the help of some radical workers are going to seize state power and kick the 'bad academics' out? From what position are 'we' going to do this: that of the oppressed; of the enlightened; of the politicised subjects who bring freedom to the psychologised ones? De Vos's politics, here, are, at best, messianic. The metaphor he employs is indicative, for the merchants and the Pharisees were thrown out of the temple, neither by an invisible hand nor by a group of anarcho-syndicalists who occupied the Solomon's temple, but, rather, by the very man who claimed authority and patriarchal spiritual rights over the temple, and who bore the title 'messiah'. When it comes to politics, however, the word 'messiah' is a hyper-psychologised category— as noted previously in relation to the saint and the hero. Furthermore, forcing academics out does not mean that psychologisation will disappear; it only means that it will pass to

another level of operation, similar to magic, astrology and religion— operations whose existence do not require the existence of the academy.

To conclude, instead of dreaming of storming the academic 'winter palace', we should work towards a different kind of psychology. If psychology and psychologisation, in their present form, are processes of regulation and administration of the constituted power and depoliticisation of resistance, the task is, then, to take it on and work for a kind of psychology that de-psychologises itself and aligns with radical politics. This will not be an alternative psychology, nor will it be a new radical discipline; on the contrary, it will be revolutionary psychology as a process, as a radical repertoire of action that aims at the disappearance of psychology in its present form. Where such effort is going to lead is impossible to say. Taking on psychology in its present form, however, can bring us closer, not simply to the de-academisation of life, as suggested by De Vos, but also to the very destruction of certain state structures or the disengagement of aspects of life from the state and psy-sciences's grip. Even though Parker's (1996) 'biographic' revolutionary psychology runs many of the risks I discussed vis-à-vis Naomi Klein's and Elena Poniatowska's accounts of Marcos, his transitional demands for taking on psychology are heading in the right direction (see Parker, 2007).

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