

Elastic minds at the flexible labor market

The rise and fall of psychological man

Abstract: Postmodern social sciences interpret the psychological self either as a romantic compensation for the lost soul or as the most important means of the disciplining biopower to produce normal subjects. In any case it is seen as a contrast and end to political movements. I am trying to defend an opposite thesis and show the historical emergence of the personal mental space in the context of a market economy of independent smallholders. Political freedom and the ensuing experience of individual agency was based on the ability to define the rate of exchange of one's labor either by possessing the means of production or – in the centralized production – bargaining collectively. Developmental child psychology and psychological utopias of self-actualization belonged to the period of welfare states in the West, as labor hours decreased and the standard of living rose for the majority. As political regulation of the economy collapsed, the normative psychological ideals, too, have changed, now emphasizing flexibility, relatedness and adaptation instead of the enlightenment goals of political autonomy and moral integrity.

1. From feudal bonds into citizenship

Academic scholars now mock "psychological autonomy" most often as new-ageish psycho-babble. Social constructivists have long been revealing that the self is a romantic illusion which emerged to restore the religious soul in the disenchanting world of mechanical science and in the industrial division of labor. A more leftist line of argumentation accuses psychology of the "turn inward" which has annihilated the rules of public debate – allegedly flourishing before individualization – and changed political emancipation into a purely private quest for integration.

Academic men now emphasize their privileged access to objective reality behind subjective experiences, ridiculing the folk psychology of the common women. This elite suggests that there is no "authentic" humanity beyond cultural definitions and turn their disillusionment into an eulogy to unlimited choices in the world-wide candy store of individual tastes.¹ They misinterpret history, however, when making citizens' activity and psychological innermost diametric opposites.

If we take the rate of exchange of labor as a criterion for "autonomy", we can notice the correlation between the rise of the psychological self and powerful political movements in West Europe, Scandinavia, and the USA. From the end of the 18th century, pressure from below forced the ruling classes first to allow the common man human rights, and then (between 1880 and 1920) political rights, then – during the second third of the 20th century – also social rights.

¹ Anderson (1990), Anderson (1997), Gergen (1991), Roddey (1995), Kirschner (1996), Pfister (1997).

In premodern societies, the masses existed only to produce surplus and soldiers for the wars of the ruling elites. The commoners lived on average about 40 years, and their lives not promised no personal or social progress. Individuals did not matter outside their social networks and were directed more by codes of honor, by status, and by tradition than by personal conviction.²

During the 18th century, exposure to the forces of nature and social repression ceased to be one's God-given fate, because the beginnings of the market economy made social rise possible. Life expectancy increased, not least due to the confirmation of the rights of property.

During the French Revolution, the "possessive individualism" of the natural-rights theorists was actualized for small landowners and entrepreneurs, whose rights of possession were guaranteed as firmly as were those of the nobles.³ In Sweden (then including Finland), the peasant landowners gained their first privileges in 1789: a dominium directum to their land. Until then, these "free peasants" were taxed as hereditary tenants, who lost their holdings if they did not their taxes (meaning practically all surplus) for three years. Dominium directum endowed the common people with a vote in public matters.

It is true that the rise of the Third Estate was overshadowed by the fact that the Fourth Estate, i. e., the landless, experienced proletarianization at the same time through various enclosure acts and centralized production, but as early as the 1870s the threats of general strike, revolution, and the ensuing broadening of the enfranchised segment of the population helped laissez faire liberalism to evolve into social liberalism (Fabianism & cathedre socialism). Some foundations of the social security network were laid down in Europe towards the end of the 19th century.

An inner mental space emerged along with the division of labor and disconnection between work and home, because people became no longer entirely one with their status but occupied so many divergent roles that they began to experience themselves as unique, permanent, and separate personalities.⁴ By distancing themselves from their activities, people could evaluate the conventional imperatives of life merely as prejudicial rules benefiting the nobility. Political mass movements thus presupposed some degree of individuation.

The division of labor made life an open-ended project, not merely a repetition of an eternal cycle of reproduction and drudgery. Children became their parents' delegates moving into a better future, so their inner state began to matter and was judged according to current moral standards. In Germany, the 18th century was a century of paedagogic theories. Blind following of tradition was replaced by a moral gyroscope which was internalized through a close attachment to mothers, who cared for the emotional education at home, and through identification with the father figure as a competent representative of adult society.⁵ Children were allowed a childhood as a separate period devoted to their own development also in those labor

² Crone (1993).

³ Pipes (1999), Lasch (1991).

⁴ Willems & Hahn (1999).

⁵ Riesman (1950), Ariès (1962), deMause (1974).

class segments which achieved a decent pay and a predictable future.⁶ I am not arguing for a culturalist tabula-rasa theory of mind, but saying that deeply ingrained human potentials for self-organization were supported by the more and more attuned relationship between infant and caregiver and the more and more favorable balance of social power.⁷

Confirming subjective experiences in close relationships created individuals. Problems such as the meaning of life or the balancing of individuation and belonging had once haunted a few of the wiser ancient free men or renaissance nobles, but now these dilemmas were gradually democratized. The practice of the investigation of one's innermost nature spread from the elites to the common people, because they had to act as independent sellers and consumers in a free market and evaluate the consequences of their deeds as their own responsibility. According to Charles Taylor, self-grounding enlightenment rationality as a corrective of the corrupt world was balanced by the expressive inner nature of romanticism, while people were trying to remodel their mechanized world cozier.⁸ The first indication of this subjective responsibility was the great religious awakenings, starting from the 17th century in West Europe.⁹ Moral self-scrutiny flourished in novels, letters, and biographies since then.¹⁰

Moral perfectibility was the aim of the humanistic citizens' education of the 19th century. Natural laws, even Darwinian evolution, became aligned with religious redemption. Science should in the end be reconciled with ethics and esthetics in a new, psychologically deep human being, who reflected cosmological order and contributed to it in his/her own subjective manner. The Victorians were not only hypocrites who dealt with class conflict by displacing it into sexual repression; they lived also in an open-ended history and dreamed of free agency as spiritual beings. For this reason, they could defer immediate gratification and invest for the future both in bank accounts and in ongoing self-education.¹¹

Active citizenship was the interface between the two sides of the enlightenment ideal of "autonomy", as a maturity (Mündigkeit), as making one's own laws: one's ego mediating between drives and external norms and political movements critically evaluating those norms.¹²

It is true that citizens internalized prevailing values as their personal self ideal¹³, but this kind of customization of historical possibilities as personal motivation cannot be condemned only because of the process of internalization. Increasing one's control over one's fate by gaining more education and living a healthier life, or by cooperating politically can be labeled as "disciplinary self-techniques" only from the viewpoint of post-totalitarian pessimism.

⁶ Ambjörnson (1988), Horgby (1993).

⁷ cf. Pinker (1997), pp. 431-432, and Siegel (1999); Greenspan (1997).

⁸ Taylor, C. (1989), pp. 355-390.

⁹ Siltala (1992).

¹⁰ Gay (1995).

¹¹ Siltala (1999).

¹² Schneewind (1998), Freud (1923).

¹³ Baumeister (1986).

2. Political activism and the self-actualization of the 1960s

Intellectuals operate too much with totalizing dichotomies and neglect any empirical study of compromises. The welfare states were incrementally created as a compromise solution to the crisis surrounding free trade, which culminated in two world wars, chauvinism, and ethnic cleansing.

The macropolitical national economies of the postwar period preferred full employment and full demand to any international mechanisms acting on the economy. Political intervention in the economy was possible only as long as capital movements were regulated by central banks in the Bretton-Woods system. Labor agreements between trade unions and organized employers made jobs a social possession of the employees. On that basis, workers were able to predict their futures, invest in homes, and educate their children into the white-collar class. Most citizens in the West attained a middle-class standard of living, because employees got the lion's share of their productivity, and distributory social politics took care of those who could or did not work.¹⁴

Capital was satisfied with a return of 3%, because society had to be pacified against the fifth column of Communism. Increasing productivity benefited the employees directly by making work less stressful and was not immediately expropriated by re-engineering. Mutual trust between firms, banks, and labor unions was considered to be more important than short-term profits.¹⁵ The result was that for the first time in history, common people had the energy to do more with their lives than merely struggle for survival. It was not an accident that Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs¹⁶, rising from the physiological needs through security and finally to social belonging and to self-fulfilment, became a basic text for both the personal pursuit of happiness and social interventions to ensure the quality of life.¹⁷

The horizon of expectation of the vilified 68s generation is often forgotten. We can a posteriori disagree with their political conclusions or life-styles, but we must admit that their historical possibilities were unique, with increasing leisure and an unparalleled supply of middle-class jobs, not least in the enlarging public sector.

The offspring of the war and reconstruction generation, the Baby Boomers, were able to ask whether their lives would be wasted in monotonous jobs. Theodore Roszak wondered in his *The Making of a Counter Culture* whether Marx would have had any impact at all on Western intellectuals of the Sixties if Marx had not, in his early manuscripts, used the word "alienation".¹⁸ Herbert Marcuse equated, in his *Eros and Civilization*, psychological categories as political categories to show the perverting influence of competition on human nature.¹⁹ Rudi Dutschke, his eager

¹⁴ Held et al. (1999), pp. 199-202; Castells (1996), pp. 21-22; Lehner & Schmidt-Bleek (1999), pp. 15-25; Martin & Schumann (1996).

¹⁵ Lash (1994).

¹⁶ Maslow (1954).

¹⁷ Allardt (1993), Schwartz (1995).

¹⁸ Roszak (1968), pp. 91-93; Dahmer (1982), pp. 318-320, 355-356.

¹⁹ Marcuse (1955).

reader, saw the strength of the "anti-authoritarian movement" in "the real expression of their own needs and of the interests of individuals."²⁰

According to the ideologues of the New Left, human beings are not aggressive and competitive by nature. When worry about economic necessities can be dispensed with, people's playful character or the "pleasure principle" will then take over.²¹ The pleasure principle would mean something other than mechanical eruption of repressed sexuality – reconciled with morality, the pleasure principle should spontaneously include the acknowledgement that everyone is a personality and allow the re-erotization of work into play.²² (This is the "genital" ideal of maturity inherent in most psychoanalytic theories since Karl Abraham 1925.)²³

Not only did long-haired hippies and some radical dissidents seriously discuss Eastern passivity and contemplation as alternatives for achievement motivation. John Kenneth Galbraith suggested as early as the Fifties that, beyond a certain level of affluence, the work-centred ethic was perhaps dispensable.²⁴

David Riesman, the sociologist, also warned about wasting one's life at work only to be approved by others: "We need to realize that each life is an emergency, which only happens once, and the 'saving' of which, in terms of character, justifies care and effort. – The idea that men are created free and equal is both true and misleading: men are created different; they lose their social freedom and their individual autonomy in seeking to become like each other".²⁵

Psychoanalysis was also remodeled by the "Zeitgeist". Heinz Kohut noticed during the 1960s that his patients no longer suffered from guilt neuroses but from more profound preoedipal, narcissist disturbances of their whole sense of self, which appeared as emptiness, meaninglessness, and ennui. He recommended, for the analysis, empathetic support for emergent selves instead of analytic interpretations.²⁶ Narcissism is, according to him, pathological only if one does not find a stance where one can fulfill one's wishes for recognition and deep resonance constructively in the service of others.²⁷ If one does not, one then will try to reanimate himself at the cost of others without recognizing their own inner processes and boundaries.

To be recognized as a unique personality seemed now to be included into basic human rights in Western countries. The Sixties generation tried, in their romantic rebellion against the stultified "organizational man" created by corporations and bureaucracies, to reconcile sensuality and morality.²⁸ But it is possible, too, that making politics a purely personal question promoted the psychological backlash during the Seventies and then the ensuing regression into a youthful counterculture

²⁰ Oglesby (1969).

²¹ Marcuse (1955), pp. 16-17.

²² Marcuse (1965).

²³ Harsch (1998), pp. 22-27; Dahmer (1982), pp. 318, 332, 335-336, 340, 343; Siltala (1989), pp. 340-342.

²⁴ Galbraith (1958); Kreml (1977), pp. 99-100.

²⁵ Riesman (1950), p. 297, p. 307.

²⁶ Kohut (1971); Loewald (1979); Gedo (1984), pp. 6-7.

²⁷ Passett (1983), Wahl (1985), Teicholtz (1999).

²⁸ Alexander (1995), pp. 20-23; Whyte (1956); Leinberger & Tucker (1991).

of victimization and a refusal to become adult and assume political responsibility.²⁹ Existential security enabled the Baby Boomers to choose careers, mates, and lifestyles, and these personal questions became substitute for universalist macropolitical movements.

3. The global economy affects the middle classes

The bureaucratic welfare state simultaneously culminated in and thwarted the autonomy of the common people. It enabled its citizens to make life-style choices independently of their families³⁰, but the corporatist system of lobbying began also to free the Western citizens from political activism and to shift the emphasis of emancipation from political to cultural choices.³¹

Politics gradually changed into the art of managing technical necessities, a change which enabled economic experts to seize power incrementally after the first oil crisis and create the "satanic mill" of world finance through GATT agreements, OECD recommendations, and deregulation of capital movements. Global capitalism was introduced as an evolutionary necessity of technology, a question far beyond democratic legitimation.³²

Even the most non-alarmist analysts of globalization agree that the social contract of the postwar years has been unilaterally changed to the advantage of share and option holders at the expense of employees and of social welfare. Since the freeing of capital movements in the USA (1974), four-fifths of those who have to work for their living have had to do more with less.³³ That shareholders demand exponential growth in profit rates obliges firms to maximize short-term returns by downsizing staffs and destroy the long-term production force. In the public sector, shrinking tax revenues have the same effect as stock market financing for the corporations.³⁴ The core staff, who have survived all the fin-de-siècle budget cuts, burn out.

"Information society" euphoria disguises the basic shift in the practice of labor contracts: "de-jobbing" means labor's giving up striking. It means for the employees individual competition in the short-term and just-in-time jobs or between semi-independent service-providers.³⁵ In the internationalization of capital, only shareholders can exert pressure through "strikes": only capital, not workers, can flee.³⁶ This shift in social power affects most members of the labor force. The average person can no longer relax after having acquired a permanent job and after having

²⁹ Calcutt (1998), Coté (2000).

³⁰ Coontz (1992), pp. 68-92.

³¹ Lasch (1995).

³² Held et al. (1999), pp. 202-235; Starr (2000), pp. 11-27.

³³ Castells (1996), pp. 21-32, 349-353; Castells (1998), pp. 70-165; Held et al. (1999), pp. 184-186, 232, 267, 277, 430-431; Luttwak (1998); Ehlscheid & Scherbaum (2001).

³⁴ Greider (1997), Gray (1998), Luttwak (1998), Kennedy (2000).

³⁵ Ashley (1997), pp. 134-235; Buchmann (1989); Aronowitz & Di Fazio (1994); Barlett & Steele (1998); Suikkanen & Linnakangas (1998); Vähätalo (1998).

³⁶ Martin & Schumann (1996), pp. 112ff.; Greider (1997), pp. 57ff., 285ff., 360ff.; Labarde & Maris (1998), p. 22.

paid for the family home, as was the case in the welfare state.³⁷ The alternatives for the common man are either to sell his/her independence to the firm in order to get decent pay or to submit to proletarianization in short-term junk jobs.

"Flexibility" as a competitive advantage equates the labor force with things: it is hired and fired when needed. The ideal that is aimed at is that people should circulate as effectively as money does in the new finance instruments of a virtualized economy, which has loosened its ties to any real production for fulfilling human needs. The economy no longer needs to legitimize itself by fulfilling human needs; people are, in their turn, required to justify their existence by sacrificing their lives for the "corporate spirit".³⁸

When the working day exceeds eight hours a day, employees can less well afford a family or civic engagement. Arlie Russell Hochschild, an industrial sociologist, has stated that the corporation requires from the new elite, the IT-workers, about 80 hours a week, but compensates for this load by offering intimacy and a quasi-religious sense of belonging. "Independent" information workers are kept in childlike dependency on their "caretaker", because they perhaps have little sense of identity outside their work life. If these yuppies have children at all, they may handle them as a second or third shift at home, as if home had become a burden to be carried.³⁹

In the 19th century, home was understood as a source of moral firmness and a haven in the heartless world, compensating for the now-lost community bond. During the era of Fordism and trade unions, the collective labor contract guaranteed at least the border between work and home.

There are no longer unions as equal partners to make social contracts, because national states are no match for the International of finance capital, and isolated just-in-time workers can hardly be expected to negotiate with their multinational counterpart on equal terms. Once, capitalism substituted for the total dependency on one's landlord a definite contract, in which the employee committed himself to work for pay. Principally, a capitalist paid for a given task and did not buy the soul, family life, or religious/political conviction of his employees.

Richard Sennett, another industrial sociologist, states that teamwork promotes superficial cooperation and manipulative other-directedness. It makes people sensitive fence-sitters, unable to defend their convictions. Management can assume the role of a coach, while the employees are pressuring each other to work harder.⁴⁰

Now, when intrusive psychological testing is flourishing, and both family life and citizen activism drained off through overwork, mature capitalism has returned from contractual freedom back to feudal serfdom. The corporations buy the whole yuppie: s/he must always be available and identify entirely with the goals of the

³⁷ Kortteinen (1992); Vähätalo (1998), pp. 9-23; Happonen (1999), pp. 423-452.

³⁸ Luhmann (1984); Clarke (1983), p. 208; Gronow (1988), p. 328; Labarde & Maris (1998), pp. 80-87.

³⁹ Kiiianmaa (1996), Hochschild (1997).

⁴⁰ Sennett (1998).

employer.⁴¹ The "social self" of Charles H. Cooley and G. H. Mead is, as updated version, again used to transcend the contradictions between labor and capital.⁴²

During the 1980ies and 1990ies, economic rationality had confined all values other than efficiency into the sphere of "pure" human relations. But efficiency infiltrates also the private sphere: human relationships begin also to follow the logic of utilitarianism in the ongoing calculation of hedonistic gains and losses.⁴³

When the private sphere of family and spare time disappears, the preconditions for a republic are also lost.⁴⁴ The critical psychic distance disappears, because parents have no time to engage with their children and confirm their subjective experiences as a valid basis for initiative and action.⁴⁵ The goal of socialization seems no longer to be a competent citizen with convictions of his/her own, as it was in most political theories, be they Liberal, Republican, or Socialist.⁴⁶

Only some decades ago, the Frankfurt school theory and psychoanalytically oriented feminism tried to categorize the creative tension between culture and personality as a crucial precondition for cultural renewal.⁴⁷ Now, when personality is in theory and in fact entirely reduced to external realities, an iron cage of an instrumental rationality may be expected. One subsystem of modern society, the economy, has obviously colonized the others, obliging all to follow its semantic distinction of effective profit-making. It has made choosing values instead of accommodating oneself to given tasks appear irresponsible.⁴⁸

In the early utopias of industrialism, people had robots to release them from drudgery. And daily work time actually did decrease for more than a hundred years.⁴⁹ But now, modernization has made people into appendices of machinery.⁵⁰ When life is warfare, there is neither time nor mental space to think over the goals for which you are fighting.⁵¹ National politics now has to adapt its citizens to fulfill Standard & Poors' classification of competitiveness⁵² instead of "bending the nature"

⁴¹ Pritchett (1997).

⁴² King (2000), Sklansky (2000).

⁴³ Coontz (1992), pp. 93-121, 151-154; Bellah et al. (1985).

⁴⁴ Arendt (1958), pp. 22-78.

⁴⁵ Greenspan (1997).

⁴⁶ Lasch (1991, 1995).

⁴⁷ Adorno (1952/1953), pp. 7-18; Dahmer (1982), pp. 320, 339; Wiggershaus (1986), pp. 298-304, 387-390; Frosh (1987), pp. 210-231; Elliott (1992). – Today, some of the most advanced post(structuralists) have also abandoned the impasse of linguistic determinism in subjectivation: "–the subject produced as continuous, visible, and located is nevertheless haunted by an inassimilable remainder, a melancholia that marks the limits of subjectivation." The account of the constitution of subjects shows, paradoxically, how agency can oppose and transform "the social terms by which it is spawned." Butler (1997), p. 29.

⁴⁸ Horkheimer (1941), pp. 26-48.

⁴⁹ Schor (1993).

⁵⁰ Lütkehaus (1995), pp. 281-303; Halberstam & Livingston (1995). – Tammilehto (1998), pp. 264-268, shows how the behavioral model consisting of secondary reflexes is embedded in neo-classical economics.

⁵¹ Labarde & Maris (1998), pp. 20, 27, 30, 68, 80-85, 135, 161, 165.

⁵² For instance, Suomen Kuvalehti 31. 7. 1998: "Suomi on maailman viidenneksi paras maa" ("Finland is the world's fifth best country").

of the economy to human will.⁵³ The only possible politics is adapting to the "necessary" cuts. Cutting will slice from the nation its "fat".⁵⁴ Existential questions are unhip, because they are already solved: employees exist to produce shareholder value, and non-productive segments of the population have lost their right to exist at all. A large-scale program of eugenics is in progress between individuals, institutions, firms, nations, and the three main blocs of the world economy, and last but not least in managed health care, which has been militarized in its vocabulary.⁵⁵ Services to children, old people, the chronically ill, and mental health patients are cut in budget cuts downsizing the public sector.⁵⁶

Nebulous conceptualizations concerning mass society ruled by monopolies, made by the old critical theory as early as during the 1930ies, can finally be operationalized in concrete comparisons between two kinds of affluent societies since WW II, politically regulated and deregulated. Whereas the welfare state was planned by child psychoanalysts to embrace like a huge mother's arms all citizens and hold them safe through the existential ruptures of modern life⁵⁷, the competitive state is founded on the survival of the fittest. All that has been considered progress during two hundred years – democracy, equality, human rights – seems now to be labelled regression, because it can "impede commerce".⁵⁸

Dismal prognoses as to the instrumentalization of rationality, which once seemed to be aesthetic exaggeration by privileged intellectuals faced with mass affluence, can now be statistically supported by cumulative evidence about how increasing productivity in the service of international shareholders is reducing the freedom of the working majority and by corresponding changes in the sociological and psychological theories.

⁵³ Beck (1998), p. 26.

⁵⁴ "Cutting" is praised as an absolute value. For example, in news of the visit of Sweden's prime minister Göran Persson: *Helsingin Sanomat* 23. 4. 1996 "Sweden is the best for budget cuts in the whole of Scandinavia".

⁵⁵ Stein (1995), pp. 406-415.

⁵⁶ Garrett (2000), pp. 266-480. – See *Aurora*, 2/1996: "Yksilöstä on tullut pelinappula" Tytti Seessalo; *Helsingin Sanomat* 10. 1. 1997: "Vm:n ylijohtaja tuomitsee 'pehmeän' työttömyyden hoidon. 'Ekonomistien olisi ryhdistäydyttävä ja ammuttava älyttömimmät temput alas'" Atte Jääskeläinen; 25. 2. 1997: "Työttömyys on käsitetty väärin. Teollisuuden ja työnantajien uuden puheenjohtajan Jukka Härmälän mielestä suuri osa työttömistä ei saisi töitä edes hyvinä aikoina. Hänen mielestään tämä joukko kuuluisi sosiaalisektorin puolelle." See also *HS* 17. 10. 1996: "Kaikki voidaan hoitaa jos tehottomat hoidot karsitaan" Päivi Repo; 4. 1. 1997: "Terveyspalvelut –" Päivi Repo; 16. 2. 1997: "Raha rengiksi terveydenhoitoon" Jyrki Iivonen; *The Washington Post* 6. 11. 1997: "Arguing for Infanticide" Michael Kelly; 19. 2. 1998: "Vanhushoidon kansanliike sohaisi ampiäispesään" Anna-Leena Pyykkönen; 20. 3. 1998: "Kolmasosa henkilökunnasta myöntää, että vanhuksia satutetaan turhaan" Riitta Vainio; 28. 4. 1998: "Kehitysvammaliitto kysyy ihmisen arvoa. 'Säästäminen ei saa olla rodujalostusta'" Irja Hyvärinen; 8. 5. 1998: "Lasten sairaanhoidon keskittäminen Hyksiin tuli kalliiksi Helsingille" Mikko-Pekka Heikkinen; 10. 5. 1998: "Ihmisen hinnoittelu muuttuu yhä räikeämmäksi" Kati Haapakoski; 20. 5. 1998: "Irti masennuksen vuosikymmenestä" Kari Pylkkänen; *Kirkko & kaupunki* 23/1998: "Köyhien lapset lihoiksi?" Marja Kuparinen; *Suomen Kuvalehti* 18/1998: "Kaikein kovin arvo" Tapani Ruokanen; *HS* 19. 10. 2000: "Kodinhoitaja ei ehdi tehdä juuri mitään" Vellamo Wehkakoski, 1. 11. 2000: "Rangaistusmaksu poiki hätäsijoituspaikan" Riitta Astikainen, 3. 12. 2000 "Kutsumus kovilla" Marjut Lindberg, 8. 1. 2001 "Jopa joka kymmenes potilas saa haitan huonosta hoidosta" Päivi Repo.

⁵⁷ Zaretsky (1999).

⁵⁸ Labarde & Maris (1998), pp. 22, 27, 32, 160, 177; Bertaux (1998).

4. Flows without frames

When the mastery of work and the ensuing political power no longer helps one to locate oneself and test realities, the imagined world of the "information society" easily possesses one's mind. One can seldom attain the old ideal of cultural competence, the cultivated personality, because knowledge is too wide and dispersed.⁵⁹

Joining the world wide web is praised as the only way to obtain new insights and thus keep up with the times. But when one is buried in heaps of data, can s/he process it? Is it information for me? Can it be compared with models in long-term memory and be evaluated with emotions, can it be associated to produce personal insights? The problem is the framing, not the output of laser cable.⁶⁰ Anthropologist Bradd Shore warns of losing the embodied experience: "Meaning construction' requires relatively stable mental models or schemes by means of which people can maintain a sense of fundamental stability in their apprehension of reality, even as they navigate in a world of unpredictable and novel experiences. Such mental models – whether in the form of image schemas, body habits, linguistic metaphors, category structures, scripts... – are the source of human creativity as well as the basis of cognitive stability". Now, when patterns come to be comprehended as negotiable surface arrangements and can no longer serve as life-affirming orientational models: "How far can the stability of such orienting models be compromised before experience loses its integration?" 'Master narratives' or foundational schemas are replaced with "negotiable and contingent collections of atomic 'facts', bits of knowledge with no grounding context, in relation to which they may be rendered meaningful." The loss of the narrative center is brought about by a technologic trend that employs rational means for semantically vacant ends. "It is at once the birth and the fabrication of the postmodern mind."⁶¹ According to Fredric Jameson, whereas modernity saw life as linear development, postmodernity patterns everything spatially.⁶² Modern life was once meaningful, because arranged into a developmental narrative, where sufferings and adversity found their significance as pertinent phases of maturation.⁶³ Such frames are no longer available.

"The powers of mind are everywhere ascendant over the brute force of things", writes George Gilder, whose universe consists of ideas and the heroic individuals who think them. Doug Henwood claims that info fetish of this kind is now hiding behind the commodity relation and the social relation behind; they appear as relations between bytes – "a second order fetishism."⁶⁴ "The information society" comprised of real-time interactive data seems to actualize the omnipotence of

⁵⁹ Oelkers (1980), pp. 423-427; Lasch (1991), pp. 360-368.

⁶⁰ Roszak (1986), Greenspan (1997).

⁶¹ Shore (1996), pp. 157-161 (quot.), 314-315. Based on Lakoff (1989), pp. 115-129. – "The more you interact not with something natural and alive, but with something electronic, it takes the sense of the earth away from you, takes your embodiment away from you, robs you of more and more of embodied experiences". (Lakoff (1989), p. 126.)

⁶² Lakoff (1995), pp. 364-376.

⁶³ Taylor (1989), pp. 47-52.

⁶⁴ Henwood (1995), pp. 163-171. Cf. Gilder (2000).

wishes, which Freud described in relation to dream work or psychosis, contrasted to slow, alloplastic changing of the world into a place more agreeable to human wishes.⁶⁵

Then, cyberpunk fiction is consequently the dream work of the net society. In this genre, the center of experience is demolished, and the hero floats free as a series of bytes, re-embodying himself as a hologram in various shapes, ages, and sexes. The subject is one with the object, not sensing its environment as a center as does the classic subject, because the reality of post-referential cyberspace cannot be experienced through the senses or lived in a narrative form. In terminal space, the synchrony of episodes supplants linear life-history. Thus, the self is replaced by culture. This means Deleuzian floating with the stream and giving up one's whole psychology with its old-fashioned distinction between slowly maturing structures molded by conflicts, on the one hand, and a fast stream of sensory perceptions, on the other. Subjects are deconstructed and reconstructed with their varying combinations poles and intensities.⁶⁶ Decentred, disembodied subjects reduced to mere carriers of input information are infinitely malleable. "In a system that did not want workers to think too much but needed to control their actions, behaviorist psychology was useful", writes Monty Neill. "Cognitive psychology is more useful to today's system, which needs workers to think for the system and to think differently, manipulating abstract systems. ... Thinking is redefined as what computers do or what humans do to interact with computers, eliminating the rest of the mind and body from thinking. ... Puzzles can be entertaining, challenging, require lots of thought, and yet be substantively mindless. The mind is thus habituated to thinking only in limited, even in complex, ways".⁶⁷

Mind is seen by Internet enthusiasts as a store of clear-cut data.⁶⁸ Cognitive patterning of human beings as computers makes it easy to imagine, after having deleted old-fashioned programs, to reprogram their memories. The cognitive idealism of the first-generation artificial intelligence is repeated in handling children as machines needing only adaptive software.⁶⁹

The cyperpunk as a compensatory emancipation represents the old male dream of creating himself independently of women. When participating in the Net, the cybernaut lives forever in the computer's memory and shares the all-knowing capacities of the machinery. In the consensual hallucination of cyberspace, people can set free their pure "selves" unencumbered by their physical baggage. All

⁶⁵ Freud (1924), pp. 357-361.

⁶⁶ Bukatman (1993), Deleuze & Guattari (1977). – "Cyberspace is precisely noncorporeal, and so it is precisely non-subjective. If it is an interiorized space, then this is not the interiority of psychologized subjectivity, but rather of a fully technologized (cultural) space which overlaps and restates the vocabularies of a postmodern urbanism". (Bukatman (1993), p. 225.)

⁶⁷ Neill (1995), pp. 189-199. – "In inducing physical and social isolation, the computer is the extension of the 'white man.' Devoid of emotion, disconnected from the body (except during a workout), non-nurturing and unmusical, the type of the 'white man' excludes all the human traits capitalism has attached to women and people of color – " (Neill 1995).

⁶⁸ Roszak (1986).

⁶⁹ Lakoff & Johnson (1999), pp. 75-93; Greenspan (1997); Green (1995), pp. 62-84; Robins & Webster (1989); Raven (1991).

differences are dissolved in this "one world" of community-in-communication, where everyone is connected with everyone else all the time.⁷⁰

Cyberpunk omnipotence is now the official ideology of the edutainment sector. The academic avant-garde praise the collapse of the ontological security of commoners as an evolutionary leap from a false concreteness of identities into a relational freedom of decentered subjectivities. Cynical laughter at the "child within", louder and louder during the Nineties, accompanies the shrinking of private space.

5. Second chances vs. life history

Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck, leading sociologists of the postmodern era, claim that choices at the microlevel will accumulate into macrolevel changes and form the basis for a new democracy. Thus, the "homogenizing" institutional political channels may be rejected along with the thingly "Fordist" identity which is fixed by gender, family, locality, class, and nation. The same chaos which produces risks also, these sociologists assert, makes people more autonomous in handling risks (and does not cripple them).⁷¹

The optimist theorists of postmodernity uncritically take the ideal at face value, disregarding the psychological preconditions of elasticity. Choosing between non-linear options and tolerating difference must presuppose a degree of emotional security, but they cannot explain where such continuity can be experienced. Münchenhausen can raise himself by his hair, they expect: a young person should construct her/his ego in mature object relationships, which already demand ego strength, defined as the capacity to discern between one's own and someone else's wishes, and to negotiate some common objective ground between them.⁷²

Evolutionary psychologists may ridicule tabula-rasa theorizing of postmodern cultural studies, but they join their opponents in their almost total rejection of developmental psychology. Instead of decent nurture of children, they emphasize phylogenetically acquired neuronal modules as the basis for learning and social competence; these should be triggered by corresponding circumstances even without adult collaboration.⁷³ Evolutionary psychologists have made an invaluable contribution in revealing the impact of the peer group on implicit working models of the self in the world, but in their ideological reductionism most do not see the continuity from primary attachment experiences into the ability to cope with the peer group and adulthood, which has been confirmed by experimental research more than once.⁷⁴ The human genome does not replicate itself independent of environmental responses; a baby's brain is modeled and organized by its alignment with the more mature brain

⁷⁰ Huyssen (1986), p. 70; Romanyshyn (1989), p. 172; de Kerckhove (1990), p. 184; Druckrey (1991), p. 7; Fitting (1992), pp. 307-309; Chopra (1993); Morse (1994); Woodward (1994), p. 6; Robins & Levidow (1995), pp. 105-106; Simmons (1995), p. 153-154; Bewes (1997), pp. 63-67.

⁷¹ Beck (1993), pp. 144-172, 204-248; Beck (1998), pp. 9-33; Beck (2000), pp. 7-66; Giddens (1991, 1994).

⁷² Brater (1998), p. 151.

⁷³ Harris (1998); Pinker (1997), pp. 447-450.

⁷⁴ Novack & Harlow (1975), pp. 453-465; Hodges & Tizard (1989), pp. 77-97; Champoux et al. (1992), pp. 251-255; Dornes (1999), pp. 530-570.

of the caregiver, and this co-construction also includes protein synthesis by the genes.⁷⁵

Social constructivists and adherents of physical reductionism may disagree about cumulative knowledge, but they act in unison in eliminative materialism, claiming that intermediating psychic structures and mental states are the fictional posits of a badly mistaken theory, devoid of any ontological basis, and trying to banish them from respectable scientific discourse.⁷⁶ Ontogenetic experiences (life histories) are denied by both evolutionary geneticists and linguistic constructivists; both emphasize inherent or cognitive capacities for adjustment.⁷⁷ The past does not predict the future, and nothing prevents adult cognitive and social abilities from developing; personal history is, according to the constructivists, only an actual narration and can be reshaped at will.⁷⁸

Both cultural idealism and biological materialism are used to justify the abandonment of children to get along on their own. Individual choices on the same horizontal level must construct the world as horizontal performances unconstrained by economic structures, cultural patterns or accumulated life history. Prevailing discourses, e.g. the linguistic social constructivism, the short-term therapies which emphasize the power of positive mind-control, the utopias concerning the internet as a transcendental subject dissolving the ontological borders between the individual and the media all seem to have adopted the neoliberal "rational choice" ontology.⁷⁹

Collective bargaining is over and done with, but one can choose his/her hair color! The universal principle of self-organization, co-evolution of a biological species along with its environment, the definitional dissolution of subject and object in a network of unconstrained communication establish the ontology of the "new" antidevelopmental rational choice paradigm⁸⁰, even if the opposite could easily be validated by just these principles.

Anything that cannot be chosen or rejected here and now is nowadays excluded by postmodern people from consciousness as too disempowering. Such things are externalized into the realm of economic natural laws, and rebelling against these is of no use. Since their new focus on language, the social sciences have studied society as a microsociological construction of speech acts predetermining each other. In the era of Talcott Parsons and structuralism, the social sciences were interested in non-rational behavior, whereas the focus is now on rational and conscious choices according to shared cognitive maps.⁸¹ This narrow outlook on society excludes supra-individual economic structures and unconscious motives. Surface phenomena need no deeper causes or unifying schemata as explanations.⁸²

⁷⁵ Greenspan (1997), Siegel (1999).

⁷⁶ Stich (1996), pp. 3-22.

⁷⁷ Schmidt (1987), Plotkin (1998).

⁷⁸ Lewis (1997), Dornes (1999).

⁷⁹ Tilman (2001).

⁸⁰ Mazarr (1999), pp. 10-15, 90-97; King (2000).

⁸¹ Heritage (1984).

⁸² Tuija Pulkkinen defines the postmodern attitude as denying "the valorization of basis over surface, so typical of the modern, as well as the explanation of the surface phenomena with the basis, or the

In their rejection of psychological explanations, the Foucauldian social sciences come to treat people as subjects making rational choices, capable of constructing their already constructed lives anew. As such, the "constructed" individual of postmodernism – at least at the level of structural analogies – comes close to the transcendental individual of classic liberalism.⁸³ Thus, Foucault, who considered himself a deconstructor, is used to justify positivist description, positive thinking emphasizing people's own resources, and the prevailing power-knowledge system, which prefers immediate facts and eschews interpretations.

Every definition of the human condition is now labeled as essentialist terror, which prevents one from choosing whatever one wants as a rational agent. If psychoanalytic researchers describe for instance the fatherless childhoods of slum inhabitants, they are accused of "blaming the victim"; instead, the disadvantaged should be described as active constructors of their lives.⁸⁴ The deconstruction of discourses has during the 1990s replaced political activism, and the omnipotent "agency" of positive thinking has compensated for the lost power of organized labor and public-interest groups during the 1990s. The sociologist Scott Lash has defined the background ideology of postmodern social sciences as "aesthetic reflectivity". Older sources of social criticism, such as psychoanalysis, are deplored as being normative, heterosexist, gender-biased. Cultural differences are emphasized, uniting economic factors denied.⁸⁵

According to Elisabeth Roudinesco (1999) and David Ashley (1997), the fetishization of difference eternalizes it; ascribing a behavior to an ethnic or other subculture frees it from universal standards. Perhaps the western middle-class man is no longer the norm because since the 1980s not even that man himself can any longer fulfill the post-WW II historical standard of decent middle-class life. Economically, the upper 20% are leaving the other 80% more and more behind.⁸⁶ Demolishing universal developmental ideals may sound tolerant and multicultural, but it also means abandoning any hope of progress for the majority. The majority do have to compete with one another for the price paid for their labor, but even this fundamental necessity to compete for resources promotes a false sense of difference that can easily be exaggerated and ontologized by postmodern social analysis, emphasizing differentiating experiences instead of those that men have in common.⁸⁷ Rejecting universal developmental psychology equals abandoning critical comparisons between one's actual life and historically possible life. Psychological universalism would not eliminate differences but unify people in their particular psychic answers to the universal challenges of separation and individuation.

offering of an inside foundation as a reason for the outside appearance." In contrast to modernists, postmodern researchers do not seek any foundation or any final explanation, only various layers. "The radical constructivism included in the Foucauldian conception of genealogy, questions and denies the notion of the original core self and simultaneously preserves agency and the capacity to judge." (Pulkkinen 1996, pp. 46-49.)

⁸³ Pulkkinen (1996), pp. 83-84, 93.

⁸⁴ Scott (1997), Kelley (1997).

⁸⁵ Lash (1994), Ashley (1997), Coté (2000).

⁸⁶ Hocker (1997), Keister (2000).

⁸⁷ Coté (2000), p. 4.

6. Psychology without a psyche

It is much easier to deconstruct standards than fulfill the historical promises present in them. According to Kenneth J. Gergen and Walter Truett Anderson, psychological speech means only cultural lag and historical burden.⁸⁸ "Without the language of the self – of our internal states, processes, and characteristics – social life would be virtually unrecognizable", claims Gergen.

Gergen equates the self with cultural input. The construction of selfhood is only horizontal, consisting of actual human relations, which are not colored by early experiences or class positions. There is no ego mediation; a pathology of projective identifications is here described as a normal state.⁸⁹ For Gergen, the new decentered self is many selves devoid of any internal coherence.⁹⁰ This view is possible because he defines the self as a sample of attitudes, not as a dynamic system. Emotions are only cultural labels for diffuse arousal. Such a mind does not suffer from social incompetence in the face of inundating information. Instead, the postmodern self immerses itself voluntarily in the limitless abundance of internet, multiculturalism, and sky channels.⁹¹ S/he comes to include contradictory elements which relativize each other, loosens face-to-face communities and their conventional truths. "The fully saturated self becomes no self at all".⁹² A "flexible", totally relational personality needs no moment of re-centering.⁹³

Anderson, as well, claims that giving up the self-centered perspective produces the same disidentification with one's overwhelming mental contents as a long therapy can offer, without the subject's falling into listless apathy.⁹⁴

Postmodern psychologists seem unable to make any distinction between overwhelming influences and freely chosen relations between people. The unintegrated flow of emotions and impressions without any distinction between subject and object is not very pleasant, claims James Glass, who tries to differentiate between clinical schizophrenia and postmodern citation across literary canons. One cannot play with signification without any subjective center, no matter how provisory and procedural the game may be.⁹⁵ – And when the optimistic theoreticians of postmodernity conclude that there has occurred the emergence of spontaneous responsibility from the collapse of collective politics, have they confused the demand for adult capacities with their supply?

⁸⁸ Gergen (1991); Anderson (1997), pp. 187-189.

⁸⁹ Dornes (1999), p. 532.

⁹⁰ Gergen (1991), pp. 248-249; Miller (1974), pp. 193, 78; Taylor (1984), p. 168.

⁹¹ "... the somber hues of multiphrenia – the sense of superficiality, the guilt at not measuring up to multiple criteria – give way to an optimistic sense of enormous possibility. The world of friendship and social efficacy is constantly expanding, and the geographical world is simultaneously contracting. Life becomes a candy store for one's developing appetites". Gergen (1991), p. 150. See also pp. 74-79. Cf. Berger et al. (1973).

⁹² Gergen (1991), pp. xi, 4-7, 55-65.

⁹³ Gergen (1991), pp. 1-3.

⁹⁴ Anderson (1997), pp. 225-242.

⁹⁵ Glass (1993).

As "the separation between self and other becomes diminished," "warfare becomes a nonsensical proposition," believes Gergen, who cannot cope with racism, ethnic purges, hate groupings, fundamentalism, because he does not acknowledge any discrepancy between cultural input and personal reaction.⁹⁶ Gergen's society constitutes a free internet discourse between free academic participants. One is free to enter new chats, if the old ones do not please.⁹⁷ The absence of moral meta-language between various lifestyle enclaves does not trouble Gergen, unlike Robert N. Bellah or Christopher Lasch⁹⁸

Nonconformist personalities with convictions are of little use in this brave new world. Concentration camp guards were obviously not traitors to human values – as modern psychology put it – but relationally attuned people, competent to understand situational cues.⁹⁹ A socio-biologist might explain their conformity as stemming from group selection.

By definition, linguistic togetherness removes structural conflicts and permits one to imagine communitarianism in the midst of high capitalism: "communication-as-community". Politically correct avowal of people's relational embeddedness¹⁰⁰ instead of claustrophobic privatism¹⁰¹ sounds extremely social and mature but in fact avoids the earning problem entirely. Communitarian moralism and "non-judgmental" individualism make in Gergen's theory a curious mixture – but in post-modernism, anything goes, because facts are not mediated by any interpretations.

7. Subjective moralism instead of attuned reciprocity

"Hard" facts of reductionistic natural sciences and "soft" untestable theories of cultural studies seem to exert the strongest appeal for Generation X, now conquering its positions, maybe because these correspond to their attachment patterns: being left alone to take care of themselves in overcrowded day-care centers, as their Baby Boomer parents worked, divorced, and actualized themselves as if their offspring

⁹⁶ Gergen (1991), p. 254.

⁹⁷ Gergen (1991), pp. 196-198.

⁹⁸ Bellah et al. (1985), pp. 131-140, 177-192, 252-271; Lasch (1985). – On the possibility of reconciliation between moral universalism and contextual sensibility see also Benhabib (1992) and Habermas (1996).

⁹⁹ Gergen (1991), pp. 44-47, 151-153, 166-170; Snyder (1979), p. 134; Riesman (1950); Asch (1946), pp. 258-290; Hovland & Janis (1953); McGuire (1968).

¹⁰⁰ Gergen tries to recruit Carol Gilligan (1982) to support his claim: "Concepts of the individual – as the center of knowledge; as possessor of rationality; as author of his or her words; as one who creates, decides, manipulates, or intends – are all placed in question". "One's own role thus becomes that of participation in a social process that eclipses one's personal being. One's potentials are only realized because there are others to support and sustain them; one has an identity only because it is permitted by the social rituals of which one is part; one is allowed to be a certain kind of person because this sort of person is essential to the broader games of society". Gilligan, quoted by Gergen (1991), pp. 156-157.

¹⁰¹ Gergen criticizes Anthony Giddens for his exclusive ontologies for individuals and society. "The terms 'culture' and 'individual' thus appear as two different ways of labelling the same reality" (1991, p. 275); "It is the individual who has hopes, fears, wishes, thoughts, desires, inspirations, and the like. These are the terms by which we understand daily life, and which are embedded within our patterns of interchange". (1991, p. 160.)

did not exist at all. All over the western world, the Baby Boomers got well-paid permanent jobs and let inflation pay for their houses, whereas their offspring met a hypercompetitive labor market of short-term junk jobs (if one cannot qualify for IT work) and expensive real estate which inflation no longer pays as during the 1970s. The Baby Boomers could afford to dream of personal liberation and adhere to universal humanistic values, but their children have to traverse the jungle, like streetwise inner-city inhabitants.¹⁰²

Explaining losses as new degrees of freedom and replacing political emancipation with positive words is possible, if memory and emotional working through are prevented. Creating a uniting picture of life would be dangerous; it would oblige people to confront their suffering, which is carefully repressed by their keeping facts and feelings apart.¹⁰³

When one does not dare to trust any longer in the environment or in others, one refrains from commitments and reduces one's perceptions to immediate episodes without continuity. One shrinks from keeping up with the wider self-ideal, which also includes values and significant others and projects undertaken with them.¹⁰⁴

Roy F. Baumeister describes dissociation as a defence mechanism to avoid facing insurmountable challenges: "The key is breaking conceptual links; suspending the mental activity that relates present affairs to other times, places, events, and concepts; and minimizing interest in general contexts or principles. – The mind must stop seeking to learn, to draw conclusions, to invoke broad attitudes. The present must be cut off from other events and times, and experience from moment to moment left unanalyzed, uninterpreted, unelaborated. Things happen, and that's that, and there is no use in trying to figure them out. By unmaking or deconstructing experiences, one banishes their threatening and upsetting aspects from the mind".¹⁰⁵

The only way of the unguided Generation X children to keep hope alive was to hide dependency wishes deep in the right hemisphere and cope by use of the capabilities of the left hemisphere: linear, sequential thinking, clear-cut concepts with direct references, causal explanations, and analyses. The capacities of the right hemisphere, emotional appraisal, communication by the non-referential significances of the metaphor, paradox, and jokes, social cognition and holistic framing and understanding the "gist" were allowed to wither away. Thus, the postmodern people avoid uncontrollable, chaotic interactions and emotional involvement, with political questions included. Because one cannot understand the essential features of sensory data without giving them emotional meanings, the blockage between emotional exchange and intellectual reflection upon what one is doing in that primary

¹⁰² Holtz (1995), Coté (2000).

¹⁰³ Anita Rubin, researcher into youth, has discovered a deep cleavage between the optimistic life expectations of Finnish teenagers as regards one's career and their conviction that an environmental catastrophe will occur during their lifetime (1998). Robert Jay Lifton has found a similar discrepancy: "In pursuing this double life, we oscillate between protective numbing with a partial shutting down of the self, and sufficient openness to troubling feelings of meaninglessness and disintegration to serve as stimuli to self-exploration and change". (Lifton (1993), pp. 49, 147, 157, 174-177, 196, 205, 207-208.)

¹⁰⁴ Baudrillard (1988), pp. 40-44; Lasch (1985); Bukatman (1993), pp. 248, 263; Asendorf (1993), pp. 66-70.

¹⁰⁵ Baumeister (1991), pp. 61-62.

interaction will produce both an anti-intellectual intellect and irrational passions.¹⁰⁶ Not only children need a responsive container for their emotions and thoughts; the adult capacity to tolerate uncertainty, to associate, and to symbolize depends also on how well they feel themselves understood.¹⁰⁷

Buried emotional needs still exert pressure and intrude in the outbursts of borderline narcissism, where the other is commanded to serve as one's primary self-object without any inner processes, intentions, and wishes of his/her own.¹⁰⁸ If the cold scientific facts, for instance of the gene's selfishness, represent the younger generation's grasping for a firm hold on truths, instead of a disappointing mutual dependency,¹⁰⁹ so does the postmodern verbal constructivism in its definitional omnipotence reflect one's longing for an entirely compliant caregiver who exists only for one's own sake and possesses no live outside one's own wishes.¹¹⁰

Robert Godwin has noticed how "politically correct" debate on the significance of words has concentrated on issues of gender, sexuality, death, handicap, and race, all of which differences thwart one's desire to be omnipotent, to change and control.¹¹¹

The private death of the public sphere occurs when private longing for intimacy and personal recognition are directed towards "society" or towards the participants in a public discussion. Postmodernists congratulate themselves on leaving behind the literal correspondence between signifiers and signified objects, but they nevertheless confuse words and deeds in their discourse on discourse analysis. This confusion enabled police to arrest a Canadian student to be investigated for eventual school shootings, because he was working through his school bullying experiences by writing violent fantasies.¹¹² Recent theories of eliminative materialism must to resort tacitly to the presupposition of a direct reference between words and the world: it is the causal relation to physics that legitimates a property as really existing.¹¹³

Timothy Bewes, a literary critic, sees here the same abhorrence of signification and fetishization of objective culture in Communitarianism, in the liberation discourse of the Internet, in calls for the homogenization of the private and public lives of politicians, and in "real soap/drama". The postmodern cultural obsession seems to be to "expunge the signifier from the semantic equation, to attain a purer realm of

¹⁰⁶ cf. Greenspan (1997), Siegel (1999).

¹⁰⁷ Bion (1962); Hilbert (1992), pp. 91-92, 164-165, 226-227.

¹⁰⁸ Masterson (1981), Kreisman & Strauss (1989), Britton (1998).

¹⁰⁹ The gene's selfishness as the *primus motor* of the universe and of human beings has been interpreted as a soothing cosmology amongst chaotic changes, i.e., a surrogate religion as the "true self" was some decades earlier (cf. Nelkin (2000), Kirschner (1996)).

¹¹⁰ Whitebook (1995), pp. 217-222.

¹¹¹ Godwin (1994), pp. 86-87. – I am the first to admit that also actual moral and political issues have been removed from the agenda labeled as PC by Republicans, but some "politically correct" debates can nevertheless be conceived as the desire that words and thoughts should magically make things happen or undo them.

¹¹² *Boston Sunday Globe*, January 21, 2001: "Case of a Canadian student draws writers' sympathy", Colin Nickerson.

¹¹³ Stich (1996), pp. 9, 35-37, 45, 196-199.

authenticity, sincerity, honesty." Both postmodern ironic sensibility and politically correct word magic "take the signifier persistently for the thing itself, in such a way that political activity is replaced with a series of cosmetic adjustments to objective culture." The reduction of meaning to signs is apparent also in the upward reevaluation of "factual" or statistical scientific knowledge and the demystification of the human mind to only a chemical soup, a genetic blueprint, DNA manipulation or digital pictures.

Because objective value judgements are nowadays taken as a priori impossible¹¹⁴, and because no procedural ethics exists for resolving conflicts between various subjective subcultures, subjective violence and then the tuning out of disabling self-consciousness are the only means to break from immobility into action. When language has lost its function as a carrier of shared meanings, a disenfranchised, alienated subjectivity faced with an indifferent world cannot otherwise attract attention. This is the result of the simultaneous acceleration of objective culture and the stultification of the subject. Another alternative would be learned helplessness. But subjective arbitrariness means abnegation of responsibility, as well as defeatist accommodation. Actions become possible only at the cost of radical insensitivity to human complexity and suffering.¹¹⁵

A sense of absolute relativism and tolerance is impossible, if "postmodern" people equate symbols with things; experience them with animal seriousness and do not play with shifting meanings; feel overwhelmed by what happens instead of seeing how they themselves construct their reality through projections.¹¹⁶ The postmodern world corresponds to the paranoid-schizoid mode of experiencing, where "the self is predominantly a self as object, a self that is buffeted by thoughts, feelings, and perceptions as if they were external forces or physical objects occupying or bombarding oneself."¹¹⁷

Cultural civil wars, lawsuits, bombings, and public scandals compensate for the lost Cold War and class conflict as emotional splits, by which people protect their core sense of self and define their boundaries against enemies. Politics is now about petty details of everyday life, and its agenda consists of anthropological-existential attempts to actualize oneself rather than negotiation of material antagonisms. Disagreements are no longer about ideas or even interests, when politics means the assertion of one's gender, race, or sexual identity in public. Challenges to one's life-style identity lead inevitably to dramatic increases in the "rage quotient" in public life, because "to argue against my idea is to unhinge my private identity"¹¹⁸

Hearing so many angry undertones among the incisive scientific critics of psychoanalysis makes one ask, why can disproving an obviously out-of-date theory of ridiculous "folk psychology" trigger such outbursts? Psychoanalysis has been an appropriate straw man for those who believe that personality is as easily changed as bytes in a computer. Psychoanalysis is accused of binding men deeper into their

¹¹⁴ Tilman (2001), pp. 141-145.

¹¹⁵ Bewes (1997), pp. 15-138.

¹¹⁶ Ogden (1986), pp. 41-99; Schoenhals (1997).

¹¹⁷ Ogden (1989), pp. 21-22.

¹¹⁸ Giddens (1991); Hitzler (1998), p. 180; Boling (1996), p. 42 (quot.).

misery, of implanting false memories, and selling defect-centered vocabularies to account for these contrived horrors.

The crusade against psychoanalysis is an attack against linking together well-known but traumatizing facts and valorizing them emotionally. The target is not so much the Freudian corpus but making taboo all that it was about – first and foremost the activity of the mind in belaboring and not only reflecting facts.

I suspect that psychoanalysis has become a stumbling block for postmodern optimists, because its historical biases remind us of the lost possibilities of autonomous citizenship: of a personal synthesis of one's facts and fantasies and of agency based on character which – on the other hand – was based on predictable outcomes of one's actions.

Herbert Marcuse defends the classical individual in *Das Veralten der Psychoanalyse*¹¹⁹:

"Heute hängt die Chance der Freiheit in hohem Masse von der Kraft und Bereitschaft ab, sich der Massenmeinung zu widersetzen, unpopuläre politische Praktiken zu verfechten, die Richtung des Fortschritts zu ändern. Die Psychoanalyse kann keine politische Alternative bieten, aber dazu beitragen, private Autonomie und Rationalität wiederherzustellen. Die Politik der Massengesellschaft beginnt zu Hause mit der Verminderung des Ichs und seiner Unterwerfung unter das kollektive Ideal. Der Widerstand gegen diesen Trend kann ebenfalls zu Hause beginnen: die Psychoanalyse kann dem Patienten helfen, mit einem eigenen Gewissen und eigenem Ichideal zu leben, was durchaus bedeuten kann – in Absage und Opposition gegenüber dem Bestehenden.

So zieht die Psychoanalyse ihre Stärke aus ihrem Veralten: aus ihrer Insistenz auf den individuellen Bedürfnissen und Möglichkeiten, die von den gesellschaftlichen und politischen Entwicklungen überholt worden sind. Was veraltet ist, ist deswegen nicht falsch. Wenn die fortschreitenden Industriegesellschaften und ihre Politik das Freud'sche Modell des Individuums und seiner Beziehung zur Gesellschaft haben hinfällig werden lassen, wenn sie die Kraft des Individuums, sich von den anderen abzulösen, ein Selbst zu werden, und zu bleiben, untergraben haben, dann beschwören die Freudschen Begriffe nicht nur eine hinter uns liegende Vergangenheit, sondern auch eine neu zu gewinnende Zukunft".

¹¹⁹ Marcuse (1965), p. 105.

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