

Time management, resource management and modern rationality – lessons from psychoanalysis

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Psychoanalysis represents the possibilities for individuals to optimize their relationships, in general, and their unique standing in terms of their own self-determination possibilities, in particular. It is time, time management, taken as the central life's resource, which needs to be managed, optimized and developed to the full, and this is intrinsically a symbolic decoding and recoding process. In other words, it is psychoanalysis at its best. Modernity itself needs psychoanalytic thought in order to solve its implicit paradoxes, fostering its rationality in creative, inventive and novel ways.

Time is the ultimate example of a social convention. The fact that different societies, across history, use different calendars and different time measurements implies that the concept of time reflects in itself the historical, cultural, social and political settings of the societies and civilizations using such calendars and time measurements.

Western culture is deeply influenced by time, by time understood as a form of embodying movement and change. It is not possible to capture the power time has in contemporary societies without realizing the following sequence: first, humans have the capacity for self-determination, as individuals, subjects of their own singular affections and processes of thought; second, the core importance of individual dimensions is a determination from modernity, modernity taken as an organized structure of thought and action, and not as a chronological age; and third, it is time management, understood and the ultimate example of resources management, the finest example of the links between individuality, rationality and modernity.

What is the place of psychoanalysis in this account? Psychoanalytic thought emerged as the child of this individualization process. Without a clear focus on individual processes alone, and on the capacity that each individual may develop, nurture and acquire, in relation to hers or his possibility for self-determination, there would not have been the creation of psychoanalysis, as we know it. Moreover, the presence of a wide spectrum of different schools of psychoanalysis illustrates how complex, rich and sophisticated the process of individuation is.

Equally important, psychoanalysis holds a double role, both being the product of modernity and of the modern focus on individual human development, on one hand, and being the feedback loop magisterial engine behind the possibility of modernity itself to reframe its controversies, ambiguities and paradoxes. Indeed, psychoanalysis represents a clear-cut answer to the need to solve contemporary conflicts through fertile, effective and productive creative tensions, in the form of theoretical and practical therapeutic thought and action. Yet, psychoanalysis' role goes far beyond the therapeutic setting, precisely because it is able to capture the narrative, symbolic and open questioning process, which characterizes the deep forms of transformative learning that are present in all forms of human development.

The possibility to take hold of one's subjective experience of reality, that is the central offer of modern rationality. To acknowledge, to account for and to create ownership in relation to individual life forms, to individual human lives, that is the open task that we have all inherited from modernity. Individuality and authenticity, in terms of density and of intensity of the degree of participation in how reality continuously manifests itself, is a continuous quest for signification. Humans use narratives to make sense of their worlds. Modernity encompasses a diversity of meanings, ranging from pre-socratic inputs, to renaissance novelties and to all the post-modern variants, which still capture the essence of modernity itself. Tourraine's programmed society, Castells' network economy or Lipovetsky's hypermodernity, are examples of the multiplicity of complex dimensions that are present in the concept of modernity.

The basic idea behind modernity is the possibility for individuals to carve and craft their own positioning, regardless of external impositions. As Nietzsche explained, the death of God meant that humans could take his place. The ideals of the Enlightenment, which pushed further the belief that scientific knowledge would solve the problems and needs of humanity, is still a powerful engine, able to explain the role of modernity today.