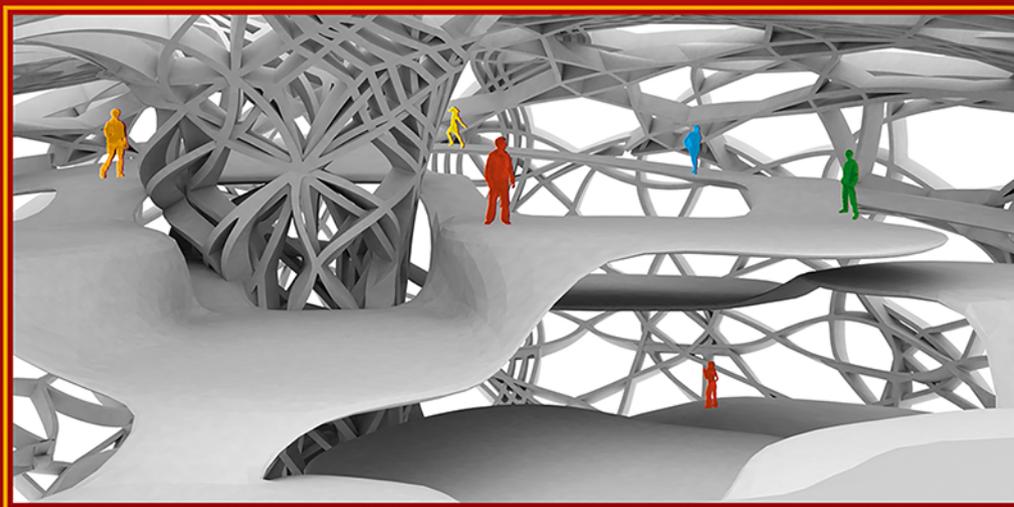


Artho Stefan Wittemann

Love and Logic of the Soul

The Architecture of Human Nature



Foreword

Anyone who aspires to explore the world of the psyche needs courage, endurance and skill. Because the psyche is a living system of such independent intelligence, convoluted logic and cunning self-defense that whoever seeks to measure and fathom it is faced with an almost unsolvable puzzle. At the beginning of the journey, on its surface, the psyche acts mostly friendly, harmless and normal. But it soon proves to be exceedingly contradictory, confusing and unruly.

The explorer who confidently and courageously sets forth to solve its riddles, to explore its depths and to organize its colorful facets, sooner or later runs into impossible-to-untie knots, impenetrable borders and dark secrets. To look these difficulties in the eye and still move on is the challenge posed by the psyche over and over again.

The reader of this book could be experiencing a similar situation. This book takes him along on the journey of discovery. It confronts him with the crazes of the psyche. With its demand that even the smallest of differences be taken seriously, the most sudden abrupt movements be matched, the complex simultaneous events be watched closely and the state of not-knowing be borne.

And it rewards the reader with the same gifts which the psyche bestows upon the courageous researcher. Gradually, the fog clears, and as the inconsistencies fall into order, the big picture is revealed. It is the picture of a living system which designs and organizes itself with great logic, love and humanity.

So don't get discouraged if you get lost every now and then and don't know exactly what all this is leading up to. Surrender to the flow of the narrative, the thoughts and the insights. Let yourself be guided – just as we have to let ourselves be guided by the psyche into its own depths if we want to understand it fully.

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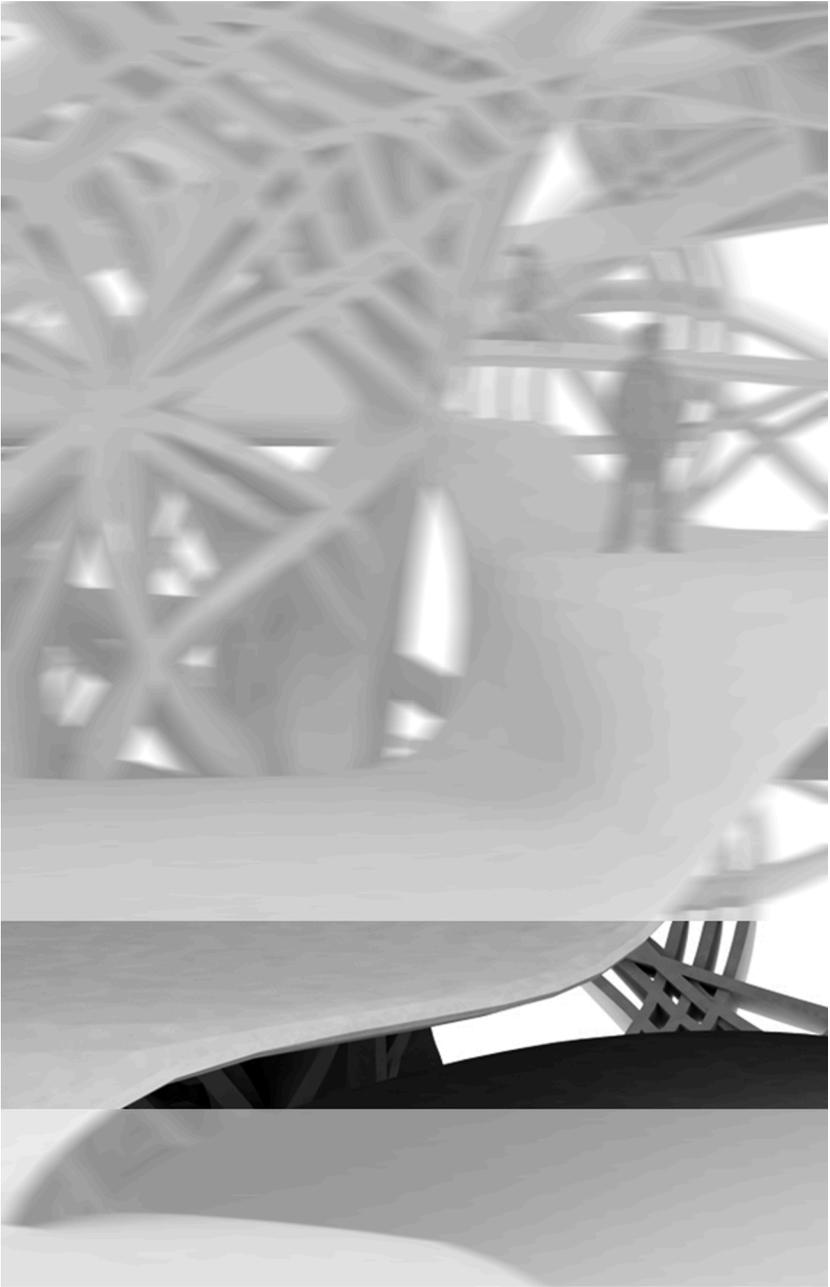
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Chapter 1. Sources and other assumptions



Power failure. A completely normal evening

Tuesday evening, somewhere in a city in the western hemisphere. It's dark and cold outside, but the apartments are warm and brightly lit. In one of them lives Luka. She is on the phone with her best friend. From time to time she looks into the oven to see if the cake is done yet. She lives alone, but she has a large circle of friends. Tomorrow is somebody's birthday. She is looking forward to the celebration; she will be bringing the cake and she tells her friend on the phone about her great idea for really surprising the birthday celebrant. Luka is a professional social worker. She lives on the second floor.

Under her lives Chuck. They don't know each other. Chuck is warehouseman at a large discounter. He is a brilliant forklift driver. His hobbies are watching TV and videos. He is divorced and lives alone. On weekends, if it isn't his turn to have the children, he meets his buddies and lives it up. Today he has made himself comfortable on his sofa with a beer and is going about his hobby.

At the top, in the attic apartment, lives Tracy. Tracy is an editor for a popular psychological publisher. She loves her job as it corresponds to her personal interests. Tracy meditates and visits seminars and lectures on the development of consciousness. She has put in a CD with relaxation music and unwinds, sitting on the floor with a fresh cup of herbal tea. She has a boyfriend, but today is her "night off", time just for herself.

Philip lives on the ground floor. He owns a small but profitable company in the computer business and has still has work to do. He is sitting in his office in front of his PC and is solving a tricky programming problem. He's single with short relationship intervals, right now he is single again. He is relieved by the fact, because it gives him more time for his job.

At this moment, the power fails. All devices, the phone and the stove, the television, the CD player and the computer suddenly turn off. The lights go out. It is pitch dark and dead silent.

Chuck is the first to react. Enraged, he throws the empty beer can at the TV. He curses technology, calms down for a second, shuffles to the fuse box in the hallway in the glow of his lighter; he sees it's not the problem; he picks up the phone, hears that it's dead and throws a second tantrum. A view from the window shows him that it's dark all over the city.

Luka freezes for a moment. Her conversation was stopped right in the middle and she is standing in the dark. The cake! She stumbles towards the stove and sensing the heat she can locate the oven door. She pulls it out; the smell of the fresh, unfinished cake fills her nose. Silent tears of disappointment run down her face. Helpless, she sits down on a chair.

In her apartment under the roof, the sudden darkness and silence have taken Tracy by surprise. She is startled but then she can't help but smile. Isn't this a sign, a gift of life, a reminder that she should focus on her own inner silence? She closes her eyes and relaxes as she has practiced in her meditations. She can still feel the reverberations of the jolt, then peace descends and she observes her thoughts and feelings.

Philip, on the ground floor, keeps his cool. On the one hand, this is bad timing. His client wants to see results and work with the new program. On the other hand, what good does it do to get upset now? His data is backed up and the power failure is a very good excuse for the delay. Actually, he didn't feel like more work anyway. He just know what to do with himself now, completely without power.



Power failure. Without power

Luka has recovered. She works her way carefully to a kitchen cabinet, fumbles for matches and a candle, lights the candle. Her kitchen is bathed in the warm dusk of the flame. Quite romantic, actually. But all alone? She can't call anyone and she wouldn't want to go out on the dark, cold streets. She recalls the man from the ground floor. He greets her so nice every time they meet in the entrance hall. He must be sitting in the dark, too. She knows that he lives alone. Maybe he would enjoy some company?

Tracy is sitting in the lotus position on the floor struggling with her thoughts. She's not really feeling serenity; all the time she thinks about her boyfriend and the fight she had with him the day before. He accuses her of not really getting involved. She had planned to find inner peace. Instead, she constantly discusses with him in her mind and justifies her position. It tires her.

Philip sits in his living room, disgruntled. He could go out, drive to a local pub or to some friends; but the lights are probably out there, too. And if the power came back on, he might pick up his work. He drums nervously on the table, gets himself a glass of red wine, keeps drumming. He almost doesn't hear the knock at his door.

Chuck is standing at the window. He knows he can forget about watching the football game for today (can they even play now?). He looks out into the night. The city is so dark one can even see the stars. Something calms down in him.



Power failure. In paradise

Luka is back in her apartment. She talked with Philip for two hours, by candle-light, with red wine. About his computer programs, his car, his last birthday party, even about his last relationship. Somehow it was good to have someone to talk to, they both agreed on that. Philip was entertaining, funny and charming. Nevertheless, Luka now feels kind of empty and depressed and doesn't exactly know why. She decides it would be best if she goes to sleep shortly. After all, tomorrow's the party.

Philip is in high spirits. How nice, the girl from upstairs dropped by! Just like in that commercial for coffee. Maybe something more will come of it? No, better not – being in the same building easily leads to complications. Then just to talk, on a purely friendly basis. That power outage was good for something after all.

Tracy has fallen asleep on the carpet during her meditation. Later, she will wake up dazed and confused why she isn't in bed. Once she sees that the light doesn't work, she will remember and go to sleep.

Chuck walks through the dark streets. He enjoys the silence and the clear air, the view of the stars. It has been a long time since he has done that. He feels calm, strong and secure. He decides to do this more often.

All four of them live in paradise. At this moment, they have more clothes than most people on earth will have throughout their whole lives. They have a warm apartment, equipped with modern electrical appliances. They have a bathroom with always warm water, a kitchen with a full pantry and shops in the immediate vicinity for everything else they might need. If someone wanted to describe an earthly paradise two hundred years ago, it wouldn't have been much different.

All four are educated. They can read, write and count. They have traveled to exotic countries and have seen even more exotic countries in extensive television documentaries. All have an education and expertise with which they earn their money.

With a little attention, knowledge and support, Luka, Chuck, Tracy and Philip could have learned a lot about themselves in this night. The blackout was a bit of a shock for everyone, a short break in their routine. For a moment, it threw a spotlight on their personality, intensifying their habitual and unconscious attitudes.

But they know next to nothing about themselves. During the long years of their education (between nine and fifteen years!), it was never about them. During these years, they were confronted with enormous amounts of information – historical epochs, mineral commodities, vector calculations, irregular verbs and the mating antics of wood grouse – but they themselves, their dreams, confusions, fears and hopes, their subjective realities, were never part of the subject matter. They spent years in a classroom, but what was going on between people – the subtle wars, clandestine love affairs, true friendships and agonizing loneliness – their real life – was never officially a topic. Not a single lesson focused on their personal inner world.

Most knowledge from the classroom has long been forgotten; the friendships of those days are a distant memory, the enmities as well. What remains is a deep but unconscious conviction: It's not about me; what's important is always on the outside.

But what should they know about themselves? They are likable and reasonable people. They have their peculiarities and quirks, just like everyone else. But they have their lives under control and they don't do anyone any harm. They are normal.

As normal as any illiterate at the beginning of the 19th century, before obligatory education was introduced. If someone back then had claimed that all had to learn to read and write, he would have been a laughing stock. What for? To make me stronger or faster when scything, striking the hammer, spinning wool?

Today, the benefits of reading-and-writing skills are understood. But when it comes to the knowledge of ourselves, we are still illiterate.

Ask an average educated person the following simple question: "What is the human psyche, and how is it built?"

At best, you get a colorful list of terms associated with the word psyche: "Feelings, thoughts, reason, the unconscious, instincts." Then, after short consideration: "Doesn't the body somehow belong to the psyche? Spirituality? Body, mind and soul! That might be it!"

Apart from the fact that few people ever inquire the nature of the psyche: you most likely will not even get a half-way conclusive answer. Ask a trained psychologist, the quality of the answer won't be much better.

It is as if you were to ask, "What is a forest?", and the answer was: "branches, wood, moss, roots, leaves – and trees, of course – trunks and the like"

"I see. So that's what a forest is. I understand. Sounds logical. I'm glad we got around to discussing it."

Strangely, no one will find that odd when it comes to the psyche. Why should we? As long as we know where to find the most reliable cars, the cheapest coffee and the best hotels, we don't have to worry about the quality of the psyche. What has that got to do with us? We're probably just made up of incredibly complicated networked synapses that nobody understands correctly anyway. It's better to leave the matter to neurobiologists and in twenty years we'll know more.



Inside the black box¹. Sigmund Freud

Psychology is the youngest of all modern sciences – not much more than a hundred years old. This is remarkable in itself. Astronomy, physics, chemistry, geology, biology, medicine – all have their roots long ago. Only slowly did man direct his gaze from the stars to the earth and onto himself. It seemed to be easier to study the movements of the stars and the properties of matter, than to devote oneself to the volatile subjectivity and confusing changeability of human nature.

Sigmund Freud was the first scientific explorer of the psyche. He did what any scientist does: He was looking for the units that make up the object of his investigation. He searched for units in the psyche. Freud observed that people carry conflicting tendencies in themselves: they have sexual fantasies, but they paint a picture instead, or they become Mayor. In the pictures, a suspicious number of naked people appears. Just think about Michelangelo's ceiling paintings in the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. You can even see the bare buttocks of God there.

The artist declares to be "interested in the human form" and wins an award.

The night before the inaugurating the new communal pool, the Mayor has a strange dream: He stands on the diving tower wearing a top hat and a tail-coat. Below, half of the city is gathered and everyone looks up at him expectantly. He then opens his pants, pees down into the pool and says: "I hereby declare the pool open for the public!"

Once the picture has been painted and the pool has been opened, the original impulses have long been forgotten. This is confusing and doesn't make sense. Still Freud believed that there was a hidden meaning behind such phenomena. He was not contented to simply collect the phenomena of the psyche and document them. He developed a theory that was to reasonably explain these phenomena. In his "structural model" he divided the psyche into three

¹ *Blackbox: Generally an object whose internal structure and functioning are unknown or would appear not to be important.*

areas: the Id, the Ego and the Superego.² The Id is the area of the psyche from which the sexual and other uncivilized dark desires come: greed, selfishness, aggression – all the things we secretly dream of.

The Superego is the opponent of the Id. While the Id tells us what we want, the Superego tells us what we should do instead: become a mayor, a successful artist or something else decent. The Super-Ego wants us to make a good impression, so everyone likes us and we are successful. The Superego sacrifices the impulses of the Id to be acceptable to society.

The Ego is the third instance. The Ego tries to reconcile the two opponents with the help of reason. Too much Superego would make our lives compulsive and sterile and would completely suppress the Id. But the Id won't allow that, it defends itself with stealthy fantasies, with slips of the tongue and with weird neuroses. But too much Id would spread chaos, lust and caprice. So the Ego mediates between the two, making us the likable and reasonable people we are.

This model was a revolution in the perception of the psyche. For the first time the attempt was made to summarize the confusing details of psychic phenomena. The image of three living units in interaction with each other emerged.

All three units share basic characteristics: they exist simultaneously, even if they can never be perceived at the same time. Each has its own will, its own tasks and needs. And all three units influence and wrestle with each other.

At first glance, Freud's structural model seems quite obvious. That does not mean it's correct, but even today, more than a hundred years later, it is still used to explain the psyche. When looking up the term "I" in the current edition of the largest, 700 page German dictionary on Psychology³, I found the following text:

"I: The core of the personality, the conscious instance that controls the experiences and actions of a person. In Psychoanalysis, the Ego is considered to be the organization unit of the psychic apparatus next to the → Id, which me-

2 **Sigmund Freud**: *Das Ich und das Es*, Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt, 2003 (Note: All quotes in this book are translations of the original German sources)

3 *FA Brockhaus GmbH, Leipzig – Mannheim 2009*

diates between the demands of reality (environment), the instinctual wishes of the Id and the moral demands of the → Superego (conscience).

In → Ego-Psychology, autonomic functions are additionally attributed to the Ego; there is mention of the "conflict-free sphere" of the Ego, referring especially to the rational fractions of the Ego functions."

End of story. On 700 pages pure Psychology, 90 words are dedicated to the "core of the personality". (The core? Why the core?). The Ego is described as the "conscious instance controlling experiences and actions". Conscious and control sounds good. Conflict-free sphere? Rational? We're not complaining. No, we are relieved: the Ego is normal. The Ego is rational. The Ego controls. The Ego is conscious. Or as Freud, the inventor of this division, says himself:

"The Ego represents what may be called reason and prudence, in contrast to the Id, which contains the passions."⁴

We are happy to hear this statement. Freud confirms what we suspected anyhow: our Ego is reasonable, prudent and rational. There's probably not much more to say about it. Otherwise, they surely would have done so.

Our problems, should we have any, must simply come from the unconscious, from the conflicts that the Superego and the Id impose on the good old Ego. They lurk with their secret wishes and their hostile demands in the dark depths of the unconscious, into which the Ego unfortunately rarely gets insight.

What the psyche is and how it is constructed, we still don't know. Sure, we now believe that it consists of three parts. But the solution to the problem has only been postponed. For instead of one black box, we now have three: One, which we do not have to worry about because it is prudent, reasonable and balancing by nature, and two hidden in the unconscious that are so difficult to access that we can only manage to reveal a few scraps of knowledge. How are we ever going to find out whether there are really only three major units? How are we going to find how the structures are organized within and what their nature is? How can we know whether reason and consciousness really exist in the Ego alone?

At least now we know that the "core of our personality", our I, is level-headed and rational.

4 **Sigmund Freud:** *Das Ich und das Es*, Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt, 2003



Inside the black box. Welcome in, keep out

A tree does not grow its trunk, roots, branches and leaves in a big chaotic pile. It organizes them into a fairly clear arrangement. This clarity is even more welcome when different trees grow close together and form a forest. In a large pile, the many leaves and needles would be hard to distinguish and classify.

When Freud started speaking of the Id, Ego and Superego, he introduced a whole new category in psychological reasoning: the "structures". Freud says that the psyche doesn't bring forth thoughts, feelings, dreams, behavior and other phenomena in a wild muddle, but organizes these phenomena into three major groups.

According to Freud, everything we think and do in life, everything that we aspire or renounce, doesn't grow on one, but on three different trees.

The Ego brings about certain feelings, thoughts and behaviors and they differ in nature from those of the Superego or Id.

With this structural model, Freud brought previously unknown clarity into the complex and confusing phenomena of the psyche.

However, our enthusiasm for the newfound clarity rapidly evaporates as we recall what Freud goes on to say: namely, that the Id and the Superego are for the most part in the unconscious, where we can never directly experience and investigate them. For Freud, the Id is "...the dark, inaccessible part of our personality [...], chaos, a cauldron full of seething excitations [...] a place that contains the untamed passions."⁵ According to Freud, the Id is not only inaccessible per se; it is also in and of itself disordered and structureless. We don't even have to start searching for an internal structure of the Id. At best, it can still make out as the origin of different drives.⁶ But, Freud says: "A drive can never become an object of consciousness, only the idea that it represents."⁷

⁵ *Sigmund Freud: Gesammelte Werke XV, pg. 80 et seq.*

⁶ *Sigmund Freud: Eros und Thanatos, i.e. sex drive and death drive*

⁷ *Sigmund Freud: Das Ich und das Es, pg. 129. Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt 2003*

And the one area which is the most accessible to consciousness, the Ego, is primarily concerned with adapting us in a reasonable and prudent manner to the outer and inner reality. We certainly do not have to look for the cause of our problems in the Ego.

In situations where the Ego can indeed become a problem, namely when it is defending itself against unpleasant or painful impulses from the unconscious, it is, according to Freud unconscious itself again.

The Superego, which emerges from the Ego, seems to consist of the rules of family and society; an unordered collection of dos and don'ts that are subject to the respective values, morals and specific requirements of our parents. They constantly confine the Ego and it doesn't even notice.

This model is a strange hybrid creature: it explains the structures of the psyche and at the same time the impossibility of studying them directly. Like a black hole in space that swallows all light and therefore can never be seen, we can only come to indirect conclusions.

That's how Freud's structural model puts anyone who wants to explore the psyche into a rather helpless position. It's like standing in front of a house that has only one door. When you ring the doorbell, the prudent and rational Ego opens the door and leads you into a relatively pleasant reception room. The Ego claims to be living alone in the house. While it does wonder about strange noises that sometimes penetrate through the walls, it doesn't want to be bothered by them.

The visitor looks around, chatting with the Ego about this and that and casually asks if it likes the Playboy magazine, which is poking out from under the sofa. The Ego blushes and claims to have never seen this magazine before.

On his next visit, the visitor notices that the magazine is gone. The furniture in the room has been rearranged as well. Everything is neater, more sterile and tidier. Once again the Ego claims to have nothing to do with it, to have not even noticed it, but it finds that the room actually looks much nicer now. Even the Ego itself appears to be more light-hearted and accessible this time. Sometimes it looks at the clock, as if it had important appointments.

The visitor trusts the Ego. It acts sincere and is willing to talk. The visitor concludes that there must be secret residents in the home. And because they display contrasting movements – sometimes inclined towards pleasure, sometimes inclined towards discipline – he believes there must be two of them. However, two so persistently and cleverly concealing themselves that you will never encounter them directly. Two which you can only hunt if they forget to cover their tracks in the hide-and-seek game. The Ego itself shows little inclination to deal with them and that doesn't make things easier.

Freud says: I now know the structures of the psyche. And that's how I know that they can never be examined directly. Freud opened the door to the structural understanding of the psyche and single-handedly closed it again.

Up to this very day, his outlook has fundamentally shaped our approach towards the psyche. Over the past hundred years, many new psychological theories and methods have been developed. Freud's paradigm that it is impossible to examine the unconscious directly, comprehensively and systematically, has never been refuted. Basically, there were only two ways from here. Some asked: How can I lure a few secrets from the unconscious and how can I interpret them? And those who found that too cumbersome and too uncertain asked: How can I influence the psyche without understanding it, without opening the black box?



Inside the black box. Content and its sources

How can you understand a complex system without directly looking inside? You can only observe what comes out. Imagine yourself getting into your car in the morning to drive to work. You start the engine, but besides the familiar hum of the engine you hear other strange noises which seem very strange – small explosions, a muffled scream and quiet guitar music. Now, if you can't look directly from which source these sounds come from, you have a problem. You will begin to devise theories about the origin of these strange phenomena: maybe some mechanic has forgotten his radio under the hood? Or a homeless street musician is performing under your car. Perhaps the engine is misfiring or hostile dwarves are dueling it out in the trunk? Yes, some of your theories sound more plausible, more obvious than others, but you really can't know. Freud must have had quite a problem when he tried to properly classify the strange phenomena that came from his patients. However, for the sake of simplicity, let us focus on your weird motor experiences just a bit longer. (You need not be embarrassed, it can happen to anyone.) It is now of critical importance – both for you and the source – to find out whether the music comes from a forgotten radio, a homeless musician or from another, perhaps unknown source. Because if you just start driving now, your problems could snowball within a very short time. Instead of some small irritation you might find yourself in trouble with the police. Or with a bad-tempered mechanic. Or some engine damage. So you should first take steps to identify the source. And here we are at the heart of the problem: It is not the phenomenon alone we need to understand, but the source from which it comes. Let's consider this simple truth in the form of yet another example.

"I love you!" That sentence, which millions of people all over the world say to each other every day, can have completely different meanings – depending on the source it comes from.

Here is a small selection of what "I love you" may mean depending on the inner source:

1. Love me!
2. I want sex.
3. I can't be alone.
4. I hope you're happy now and will leave me alone.
5. I cheated on you, but you will not even suspect it.
6. I love you as long as you aren't requesting anything from me.
7. I sacrifice myself for you.
8. I love you.
9. It is convenient to have you here.

Freud, and after him many other psychologists, undertook a bold venture: He wanted to understand the psyche, without referring directly to the sources he postulated because he was convinced that that wasn't possible. So he focused on the phenomena – the contents. He paid close attention to words, feelings, dreams, behaviors and symptoms that came out of the psyche of his patients. Thus he hoped to find out which source they came from and what they meant. Interpretation became the central tool of his investigations.

But is it true that one has to interpret the contents of the psyche, to get to the secrets of the soul? And is it true that the Ego with its alleged prudence and reason has so little to do with our problems, biases and craziness? Maybe the inner structure of the psyche is different. Not just three-folded. A little more complex. A little more sophisticated. A little more elegant. A little more human. And maybe even a little easier to understand?



Power failure. An open secret

When Philip came to my office for the first time, he was not even sure what he wanted. He had my address from Luka, a client of mine who lived in the same house as him. He had met a few times with her, on a purely friendship basis, as he assured me. The first time he found her to be kind of nice somehow, but he couldn't take her too serious. "Besides, there wasn't any power there at the time and it was better to be with her than sitting alone in the dark, if you know what I mean", he told me, grinning. However, after their second conversation, his impression had changed dramatically. Although they barely knew each other, she had the nerve – or should he say courage? – to make strong allegations against him. She accused him of being self-possessed and using her as an audience for his show. The seriousness and honesty with which she spoke had impressed him – against his own will. And somehow he knew that she was right. It was not the first time that he heard things like that; actually all of his relationships had ended with similar complaints. It had never bothered him much, on the contrary: He was, for the most part, relieved that the relationship was over and he had his peace and quiet again. He was handsome, charming and wealthy enough to never stay alone for long, and soon the game started all over – until she (no, actually he) grew tired again. With her it was different; she honestly told him her opinion, but she sought nothing from him. They hardly knew each other and so he didn't have to get rid of her either.

But her words had left him wondering. "I can't really get involved on a deeper level," he admitted, when I asked if he wanted to work on a specific topic. With these words, for the first time, the charmingly cocky, condescending expression on his face disappeared. He seemed very serious for a brief moment.

"Men and women just do not fit together," he went on, "except in one place, of course!" There he was again, the Philip from just before. "Every man wants more than one woman, it's all testosterone. And genes. Darwin, you know. I just feel better when I'm alone. Relationships are exhausting – you constantly have to listen to some type of blame. I don't have the time for that." He grinned at me, satisfied. "My job is asking enough of me! You want to stay in the profit zone!"

Philip told me about his work as an IT contractor which he obviously enjoyed and which allowed for a carefree lifestyle. He had ten employees, he was driving a fast car, he had several weeks of vacation per year and he could manage his own schedule.

"Maybe I just haven't found the right one yet," he unexpectedly came back to his original topic. "Maybe she's still in the works."

"And what do you expect from working with me?" I asked.

Again, for a moment, the bold and superior expression disappeared from his face.

"There's something wrong with me," he said, thoughtfully, "something's weird." Short pause. Then, grinning: "Probably a trauma from my childhood!" And there it was once more, the challenging, superior tone.

The CV which he had sent at my request before the first session, showed no evidence of particularly dramatic events in his childhood. On the contrary, he seemed to have grown up under favorable circumstances with thoughtful, supportive parents. Even now, when I asked him directly, he couldn't recall any particular incidents. His parents were both alive, and he remained in friendly, informal contact with them and his two siblings. Philip was a witty, confident, successful contemporary. He was not a sadist, criminal or a failure. He was just self-centered and fun oriented and fit perfectly into the image of the joyful, modern, dynamic person. He could have easily qualified as a model in expensive mobile phone, car or watch commercials. To be sure, he was clearly not interested in deeper bonds. But maybe he was just enjoying his independence and one day he would really find the right one.

In the meantime he would just enjoy the blessings of modern paradise. Besides expensive watches, his "hobby" was fancy cars. He bought and sold them in fast regularity and although he didn't need the money, he always tried to make a small profit. He felt a thievish pleasure every time it worked. His charisma was – upon first impression – so charming, engaging and compelling that one was inclined to buy many things from him, not just a used car.

And now he was – for the first time in his life – keen to investigate himself and the quality of his relationships. But – how do we do that? In a relatively short

time, we have collected a lot of information about Philip. We know something about his biography and his present life. We have seen him unconcerned and challenging and, in brief moments, thoughtful. We know that his relationships are rather superficial, selfish and short-term. We know a lot of information.

Only one thing we don't know: How do these pieces of information fit together? What do they mean? What sources do they come from? Is Philip caught in a "dependency-autonomy conflict", as a depth psychologist might formulate it, or is he just a little immature for a 36-year-old? Did he experience some kind of trauma in his childhood after all, which is now repressed and shows in his inability to make stronger bonds? Do we need more information about him to answer these questions? Or is there another, more direct way to find out?

Master of all engine classes

Do you know flicker pictures? Depending on which angle you look from, they alternately show two different views. Some show a serious face, which, if you turn the picture slightly, suddenly winks and smiles at you. If you followed my conversation with Philip attentively, you have noticed that Philip – much like a flicker picture – has shown alternately two very different faces: the superior-charming and the earnest-pensive. The changes were fast and not very spectacular, but still obvious. As long as the first face was there, I really had no idea what he wanted in my practice. Only the short change into the contemplative state showed me that he might be interested in more than an entertaining encounter. Obviously, two very different Philips had presented themselves. The entertaining one was more visible than the contemplative. He dominated our conversation, and he probably also had more influence on Philips life. It had to be the charming and witty Philip, who constantly changed cars and women, not the serious and reflecting one. Or is Philip a misconstrued car dealer? It is unlikely, but we'll try and figure it out.

If these two Philips should actually exist, we know very little about them – far too little to say anything significant about them. We have to get to know them better and, at best, individually and not in rapid succession. But how?

First, I ask Philip whether he ever noticed himself that he had been quite serious for brief moments. "Yes of course, I'm really a philosopher who is misun-

derstood, that's the reason I am here! By the way, where's the couch?"

"For a philosopher, you're pretty funny."

"Very funny!"

"So there is a serious and a funny Philip?"

"Absolutely! You could put it that way!"

"And to which of the two Philips do I have the honor of speaking with now?" I ask, ready for all kinds of nonsense.

"With Philip the Great!" he replied solemnly and with a cheeky grin, "with Philip, the master of all engine classes!"

"I see, Master! I'd like to get to know you better! "

"That's wonderful! For once someone who knows how to appreciate my genius!"

"Yes. But first I want to assign you your own place. Philip the Great, you've earned a place at the front! Come a little bit forward, please!"

Philip and I are sitting opposite each other, a good three meters between us. He slides forwards with his chair about a half a meter.

"Like this?", he asks. "Or may it be a little more?"

"Thank you, that's just fine. So you are Philip the Great! The Philip that we know and love!"

"They love me all!"

"I am not surprised! With your sense of humor!"

"Humor? Are you kidding me? They love me because I'm good. I'm good at the computers, in bed, at the wheel, at the counter, under the counter and on the slopes – on water, on land and in the air. I'm always ready to have fun, up for everything and always easy-going. That's why they love me. Humor is the bonus track."

"Wow! You have some healthy self-esteem!"

"Look, I'm a sky-diver, a bungee jumper and a surfer, I make lots of money because I know my way around, I drive a nicely kept Porsche and I'm good looking. I know which clubs to visit, so I need not go home alone. Now, if you can just tell me how to find a relationship that does not smother me to death, I'd be as happy as could be."

"Alright then, listen! I'll tell you the secret to a happy relationship. If someone gets into your hair, simply tell her: "Honey, I love you just way I am! We will stay together forever, and if one of us should die, I'll move into a little house by the sea." You get it? Just tell her what she wants to hear and do what

suits you. That's the secret of long love. But don't pass it on, because that's how I earn my money!"

Philip the Great hesitates. Grins. Looks at me skeptically. Laughs. Slaps his leg. "Thanks! Great tip! I'm glad we talked about it. And now?"

"Tell me more about yourself! How exactly do you make everybody like you?"

Philip the Great becomes a tick more serious. "Okay, how do I do that? I'm open, you know? I'm outgoing, I approach people. I tell them about myself."

"What do you tell them? The same as me just now?"

"Yes. No. Well, yes. Actually it doesn't matter. Whatever I come up with at the moment. Just something about myself. But only the good stuff. About my job. How do I get my orders. My successes. Where I go on vacation. How I got to know this or that person. Whatever comes to mind."

"And they like you for that?"

"Sure! They're happy when you tell them about yourself. I also do it in a funny way; I don't just give a report or something. You must never be too serious, always easy and relaxed. You never say: I was in Dubai. You say: I was in the craziest hotel in the world. But say it like it wasn't a big deal."

"You were in the craziest hotel in the world?"

"Yes, how do you know?"

"In Dubai?"

"Wow, you're really listening!"

"How was Dubai?"

"Awesome!"

"Was it awesome or do you just say "awesome" as a matter of course?"

"It's just what you say. Actually, it was super boring and extremely stressful. I was there with a girlfriend, we had a fight, she moved to another hotel, and I spent my days counting the soap bars in the bathroom. But you have to say "awesome", and then comes the story of the hotel that looks like a sail and the huge room and the great swimming pool and the 10-course meal."

"And why do you do that?"

"Because they like it."

"Because they like you?"

"Yes. Right."

"You make sure that people like Philip?"

"Yes, I make him interesting. Pleasant. That's how I do it."

The mood of Philip the Great changes somewhat. It's a bit more quiet now.

"Funny, isn't it?"

"No, not funny. Reasonable. You create contact."

"Contact, yes. And distance."

"Distance, how?"

"Distance. It's all about stories. Dubai, Porsche, la-la-la."

"Contact and distance."

"Exactly. They stay, but they don't come closer. That's how I do it!"

For the first time, since I met Philip, he is very quiet. He still appears tall, self-assured and confident. But more thoughtful, more to himself. Reflecting.

"Okay, my friend, time's up. I want to talk briefly to Philip again."

"I am Philip."

"No, you are Philip the Great, Philip's receptionist. Philip is sitting behind you."

He turns around, looks at the empty space behind him. He doesn't make any joke, but simply moves his chair back to its original place.



In the supermarket. Great pleasure

Philip is a happy man. At least neither he nor his business partners, friends or acquaintances have any doubt about it. He is usually in a good mood. When he enters a room, he exudes a sense of optimism and soon becomes the center of attention. His contributions are exciting, new and fun – just like his life.

When Philip heard the term "work-life balance" for the first time, he knew instinctively that he was among those who didn't have to worry about this business at all. His life was already a successful mix of work and fun.

During his computer science studies, he had founded his own company, which dealt with the programming of computer games. Philip loved computer games, but found most to be too boring, too slow, too un-sexy. The first game he invented was, due to the limited technical standards of the time, not very fast either, but because it displayed a woman taking off her clothes very slowly, it quickly spread among his peers and earned him the reputation of a refined womanizer, computer freak and businessman all the same. His career appeared from then on as a series of lucky coincidences. In truth, it was the successful combination of an impressive appearance, technical proficiency and accurately calculated timing that made sure that he could use people and situations in a targeted manner for his own advancement without anyone noticing it.

Philip himself feels to be more of a spoiled child of Fortune than a cunning egotist. He is certain that his wealth, success and fun are just the natural reward for his intelligence, creativity and openness. He is a born winner. And winners simply know how to live. His life has quality. That's one of his favorite words. Quality.

Philip is always active, always busy. Relaxation for him is just another form of activity. Relaxation is his word for the activities on which he spends the money that he makes with the activities he calls work.

Doing nothing has no quality, at least none that could be measured by Philip's standards. The only form of doing nothing that he is familiar with is hanging out on a couch, which is very prominent in the middle of his living room. A single piece that he bought from a designer he is friends with at an exhibition; reduced by a whopping 50%, it cost only 4,000 dollars. "Practically free" is his casual standard comment, if a visitor can't stop being amazed

(About the price? The design? His negotiating skills? His good taste? Does it matter?) Relaxing on that couch, gives him the feeling that even lying around on such a unique piece somehow has quality. Still, he can't stand it for very long. His time is precious. He prefers to meet with friends or potential business partners. Networking is the intersection between work and relaxation for him. Good connections are the oil in the engine of his life, both professionally and personally, and it is crucial to know the right places and meet the right people. In his case, the right ones are always the best. The best restaurants. The best clubs. The best art openings. The best spas. The best hotels. The best hideaways. The best surfing beaches with the best waves. Philip has never wondered why life has always had the best in store for him. He has never asked himself why he should deserve that – apart from the fact that he can afford it. He finds it normal. He has never wondered about that, either.

He has remained so natural, hasn't he. His apartment is the same as in his student days. This was a conscious decision he made, to help him stay down to earth. First he moved into a small room in a shared apartment and then he became the main tenant. Soon he lived alone and when the house owner died and the apartments were sold individually, he bought it, and a few years later, he bought the apartment next door to it too.

From the outside you would never guess that behind the two worn-out doors a highly stylish seven-room apartment lay concealed. Just the exceptional cars, that occasionally park in the driveway or in front of the house, reveal to the attentive observer that students probably don't live here anymore.

You have to know the fancier brands to realize that the holes in Philip's jeans were not cheap. Connoisseurs will also appreciate his watches. And Philip knows how to interpret the almost imperceptible glance at his wrist.

All this pleases Philip. The luxury of feigned simplicity. The freedom to get everything. The exclusive circles. The insider's knowledge of the best deals.

Philip is normal, likable and reasonable. One can understand the pleasure that his lifestyle gives him. And yet one doesn't know what this pleasure ultimately consists of. Is it really the pleasure the glittering stuff and the kicks from new things and places give? Or is it the pleasure to be someone special and important? Or is it the pleasure to maintain the distance created by all the stories? Or is it the pleasure to avoid what would happen without the distance: an unprotected, direct encounter with himself and with others?



Power failure. A visit

A few days after his first encounter with Philip the Great, Philip rings Luka's doorbell. He feels the need to talk about his experience during the session. He is a little afraid she might reject him, but Luka is pleased with his visit and is curious about his report.

"The meeting was weird," Philip begins, "even though I was prepared for all sorts of things to happen. It's not so that I have never reflected on myself. We once had a coach in the company, who did some role-plays with us. Communication styles, I-messages and such. And I thought we'll discuss my behavior with women and then I'll get tips for changes. That's why I went there after all.

Well, I thought, let the shrink find out why I don't have much luck with women! To be honest, I was sure that he wouldn't get very far with me anyway. How could he after all! I'm not deranged. I just have this little problem with women and I don't even know if it really is one."

Luka smiles. She had encouraged Philip to get support on the matter. But although he had spontaneously agreed to it, she knew right away that he did not expect to get much out of it.

"Well, maybe it is one" Philip concedes. "Anyway, he talked with me in a completely normal manner, I told him how I live, that I often change cars, that my relationships never last long and I'm not sure if I'll ever even want a longer relationship. I thought he would latch on to that. But it didn't seem to bother him. And at some point he suddenly asks, which Philip he is talking with at the moment, with the serious one or the funny one. And I hear myself say: With Philip the Great! It just occurred to me spontaneously, but it fit. So he says he wants to get to know him better and I should move towards him a bit. I pull the chair slightly forward and then it started. It was pretty funny, we laughed a lot!

I explained nicely what an incredible genius I am, and he told me about eternal love and that I shall move to the sea, if my wife should someday die. I didn't exactly understand it, but it was funny. And suddenly I realized how I dupe people with this number. How they should find me interesting and exciting

and at the same time how I keep my distance. So, actually the same as what you told me too. Only this time I sensed it myself. The great mood in which I am then and how that's exactly the way I keep everybody at bay. And how it's empty in the end because I basically stay alone. Only I never feel it. Philip the Great!"

Luka looks at Philip thoughtfully.

"Do you care about this at all?" Philip asked anxiously. "Or am I talking too much again?"

"No, it interests me!" Luka says, "because it really has something to do with you."

"Actually, I don't know what happened there," Philip continues. "I acted just like always, and still something was different."

"The difference is that only a part of you spoke," says Luka. "Actually, you're almost always Philip the Great, and that's why you don't notice it. You are unconscious of him, because he is always there."

"I always thought the unconscious is repressed or difficult to reach."

"Not if something is so close to you that you no longer notice it," Luka points out. "Like your own nose. You know it is there, but most of the time you don't notice it."

"That's right, Philip the Great is always there. I really know him from my daily life, even if I never think about it. He is a lot of fun. But in being him it seems I keep people from getting close to me. That was something I really wasn't aware of. Especially not that I want to keep them at a distance. I clearly felt my own will to do it. And I still don't know how that happened."

"Maybe the fact that it was not just about his stories, but about him?"

"Maybe, yes. I still would have had a lot of stories in store. But you're right: Suddenly it wasn't about the stories, but about him, and how he does it."

"So, Philip the Great was not busy with his content, but with himself. And that's how he saw something that otherwise remains hidden behind his stories: His intention to keep people at a distance. Can you feel his intention now?" Luka asks.

Philip pauses for moment. "To be honest, I do", he says. "I wanted to tell you this, but basically it's enough for me now."

"Then just leave again" Luka suggests. "I would rather you be honest."