



THE ZÜRICH LAB[ORATORY]

OUR MODERN MARKET IN SEARCH FOR SOUL

by MAX JAKOB LUSENSKY



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HOW MODERN MAN'S SEARCH FOR MEANING AND SOUL
TURNED INTO A SEARCH FOR PEAK-EXPERIENCES AND
PSEUDO-SUBSTITUTES OFFERED BY THE MARKETPLACE

In his monumental address ‘Science as a Vocation,’ delivered at Munich University in 1918, social scientist Max Weber proclaimed the modern world “disenchanted”. “One need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits as did the savage for whom such mysterious powers existed” (Weber 1918, p. 8). To Weber, technological means and calculations now performed these services for man and thereby freed him from being caught in religious superstitions and magical beliefs. As Weber was busy “demystifying” our western world, 300 kilometres southeast of Munich, another great thinker of the 20th century was in the process of doing something quite the opposite.

CARL GUSTAV JUNG had drawn the same conclusions as Weber – modern life was disenchanted, stripped of mystery and meaning. But as the psychiatrist he was, he went one step further in also prescribing a remedy

for this diagnosis. The same year Weber addressed his Munich audience, Jung shared in the preface to his essay “On the psychology of the unconscious” (Jung 1917) his own reflections on the First World War and the attitude he saw needed. “Individual self-exploration, return of the individual to the ground of human nature, to his own deepest being with its individual and social destiny-here is the beginning of a cure for that blindness which reigns at the present hour” (Jung 1917/1966, CW 7, p. 5). He proposed that modern man “turn inward”, towards psyche, where the symbolical and thereby meaningful life, were still to be found. A process of personal re-enchantment that also embedded a potential political promise of collective change: one individual at a time.

Jung spoke out of personal experience. He had just come out of his “creative illness” (Ellenberger 1981) initiated by the break with Sigmund Freud. A separation that had taken

him on a Homeric odyssey into the depths of his psyche, experiences that would heavily influence his own version of psychoanalysis. He later writes about the importance of this period, “Everything later was merely the outer classification, scientific elaboration, and the integration into life” (Shamdasani 2009). What he “discovered” was a “constructive method” of self-exploration that seemed to offer the potential of a personal transformation. A method involving a radical shift of attitude, where the religious and/or spiritual needs of man was seen as central to healing. Did this method not also carry a promising message of bringing mystery and re-enchantment back into the life of modern man?

Well, that is one of the questions I set out to explore in this paper, where I hope to offer an alternative viewpoint to the idea of our modern world as disenchanted. Still today, hundred years since Weber proclaimed modernity in Munich it’s often expressed that we live in a secular world demystified of magic, driven by “economical man” and his rational needs. This is not completely true and following the line of thinkers such as sociologist Zygmunt Bauman I would like to sketch an alternative story of how our modern world got re-mystified and re-enchanted. How the “religious instinct” that Jung connected to in the depth of his own psyche, today seems projected on pseudo-substitutes offered by the marketplace. How mystery and magic have become part of the market’s “spiritual interiority”. Along the way I also hope to illuminate how Jung’s ideas of self-realization and building a “religion of individual character” have been led astray and subliminally incorporated into our economical system.

EXPERIMENTS IN ENCHANTMENT

Jung was far from alone in experimenting with new techniques of re-enchantment in the “Weimar Era” following the end of the First World-War. In Zurich the ‘Dada’

movement was wildly elaborating with art, dance and poetry: rejecting reason and prizing nonsense, the irrational and intuition. A cultural movement that initially was looked at with interest from Jung but that was soon was rejected as “too idiotic” to be



Early experiments in enchantment

schizophrenic holding no true meaning (Melzer, 1976). In the same experiential ethos, a few hundred kilometres south of Zurich, Hungarian dance artist Rudolf von Laban operated a school on Monté Verità, a hill outside the town of Ascona. A utopian artist colony that attracted a wide range of artists, thinkers, spiritualists, nudists and writers of the time and that had both Weber and Jung on the guest list. It was a diverse mix of eccentrics, organizations and energies that met there, often in direct conflict with each other’s ideas, but implicitly united in their emphasis on self-experimentation, and the search for new forms of enchantment. What they shared was the idea that Jung had expressed: cultural change must first go through a liberation of the individual.

JUNG’S OWN VIEW on religion and spirituality was clearly shaped by his profession as a psychiatrist and his scientific “persona”, stressing careful empirical observation. The religious was for him first of all an individual experience. One that had little to do with the dogmas and creeds he saw that Christianity and the church had placed on it. Religion for Jung was first most an “attitude” of psychological exploration of what Rudolf Otto aptly



Rudolf Laban with his "disciples"

termed the “numinosum”. “A careful consideration and observation of certain dynamic factors that are conceived as “powers:” spirits, daemons, gods” (Jung 1937/1969, CW 11, ¶8). Jung further defined the numinosum as a “dynamic agency or effect not caused by an arbitrary act of will” (Ibid ¶6). Following this definition, a religious person was an individual with a particular attitude, “peculiar to a consciousness which has been changed by experience of the numinosum” (Jung 1937/1969, CW 11, ¶9). This was the change of attitude he himself had gone through after his break with Freud and his own turn inward to psyche. An experience that led him to be able to answer the question whether or not he believed in God with, “I don’t need to believe, I know” (Jung 1977, 428).

Understanding this, Jung’s own attitude towards religion as formed by his own personal experiences of the numinosum, give us the essential background for better understanding the particular school of psychoanalysis his followers formed during the first decades of the 20th century. In a letter to P.W Martin

Jung writes: “You are quite right, the main interest of my work is not concerned with the treatment of neuroses but rather with the approach to the numinous” (Jung 1973, 1: 377). It was within the spiritual experience of each individual that the “cure” was to be found. Jung declared that the, “escape from the state of reduction lies in evolving a religion of an individual character” (Jung 1928/1960, CW 8, ¶110), a clear counter position towards the established religions of the time. “Techniques” such as “active imagination”, personal analysis and in-depth comparative studies of mythology and folklore were seen as means to re-connect with the “collective unconscious” and its often numinous and healing “archetypal images”.

Throughout the process he later named “individuation”, a certain change of attitude was to be observed in the individual. A personal transformation involving a shift in personality where the ‘ego’ takes a second position after what Jung defined as ‘the Self..’ Jung wrote about the ‘Self’ that it “might equally well be called the “God within us” (Jung 1966, CW 7, ¶399). The aim of this often life-long process of individuation is not to become perfect but “whole.” This was the “constructive method” Jung would spend the rest of his life, if not perfecting, so deepening. In it was an alluring message of personal re-enchantment that would be welcomed by a spiritually depleted collective that just had been drawn into yet another horrendous World War. A spiritual “seed” that would fall well in the liberal soil of the American continent, but that would grow into something quite different than Jung perhaps had imagined.

JUNG, GROSS AND THE COMING OF A NEW AGE

The horrors revealed after the ending of World-War II and the fall of the German National Socialist regime showed once again the devastating effect of man's technological advances. The nuclear bombs over Nagasaki and Hiroshima and the images of ruined European cities left post-war man with less trust in himself and society. Stability and safety were what the collective craved. The fast growing post-war marketplace was eager to transform wartime economy into more peaceful times and at the same time promise stability through channelling some of the excessive libido into consumption. New automobile models, household products, instant coffee brands and deodorants were advertised as a part of an idealized American lifestyle. The new mass medium of television exported the same internationally intervened with the emerging "popular culture" of rock music and soap operas. Had the pioneering spiritual lust of Jung and his likes been smothered by 1950's man's search for stability?

No, behind the conservative facade of conspicuous consumption and ad-images of idealised lifestyles new ideas and values were cooking collectively. A new generation started to make themselves heard and would soon start question the American dream as promoted by the 'Hidden Persuaders' of Madison Avenue. Ironically later labelled the 'Pepsi Generation' this was a generation grown up television and popular culture. What they did was to question the authenticity of the freedom promoted by the established authorities. It was a new type of individual taking shape, one that was eager to break with their parent's traditions, values and beliefs. A counterculture revolution that would turn to Jung's methods of inward looking, self-realization and personal transformation as a way of political liberation. Spiced up with a sexual ingredient supplied by Jung's "twin brother," Otto Gross.



"In Gross I experienced all too many aspects of my own nature, so that he often seemed like my twin brother minus dementia praecox" (Freud/Jung 1974, 157), Jung wrote Freud in one of his letters in 1908. Jung seemed to



Otto Gross, Psychoanalyst and revolutionary (1877-1920)

have had an ambivalent relation to Gross' from their first meeting. Gross had been sent to Jung by Freud for personal analysis, after one week of intensive therapy Jung wrote back to him saying that: "He [Gross] is a man of rare decency with whom one can immediately get on very well, provided one lets go of one's own complexes" (ibid. p. 153). Later Jung admitted being inspired by him when developing his concept of the introverted and extroverted personality types (that Gross had labelled "restricted but deep consciousness" versus "wide but superficial" consciousness). As time went by though he would largely dismiss Gross' contribution to psychology and describe him as a somewhat of a tragic figure who, "... in the swamps of Ascona ... celebrated miserable and cruel orgies" (as quoted by Heuer 2001, 670). It has been speculated that the reason for this negative attitude was that Jung's own analysis with Gross surfaced split sides in his own personality, too difficult to integrate (Heuer 2001).

Regardless, Gross, as an outspoken anarchist, was much more politically radical than both Jung and Freud. Like Jung he saw that collective change had to start within the individual.

Challenge of the authorities of society had to start with confronting that "inner-authority" and/or father figure within our own psyche. But, in contrast to Jung he also stated that no real change could take place in the individual if society did not first change. To this politicising of psychoanalytic ideas he also added a sexual component, one that stood in sharp contrast to Freud's sexual theory of libido. Where the latter saw the importance of using the psychoanalytical technique in helping individuals to strengthen their ego defences in order to better protect themselves (and society) from Id, man's instinctual animal nature run wild, Gross argued the opposite. That it is the repression of instinct that causes neurosis in modern man. Gross was the first to propose a "sexual revolution" and a liberation of the sexual libidinal energy of man. In this way he saw that society could be liberated and free its individuals from repressive authorities. For Gross psychoanalysis was not a bourgeois luxury for a wealthy few but "a weapon in a countercultural revolution to overthrow the existing order" (Heuer 2001, 660).

IT WAS THIS, Gross anarchistic-take on Freud's psychoanalytical ideas, coupled with Jung's spiritual method that would help form parts of the "psychological backdrop" for the counterculture movement, taking form on the American west coast in the mid 1960's. A political uprising that would come to realize Gross "sexual liberation", initiate international anti-Vietnam demonstrations, the "68-generation", and as it lost its political edge, form the basis of the "New-Age" movement. Implicitly and unintentionally Jung and Gross would influence the movement with a "spiritual-political" source of inspiration often credited other more public thinkers such as Herbert Marcuse of the Frankfurt School and Wilhelm Reich, another of Freud's rejected disciples. The collective was in uprising – the personal had become political and was eager to realize the ideas of political liberation through personal transformation.

MONTÉ VERITÀ GOES GLOBAL

John F. Kennedy 1963, Malcolm X 1965, Martin Luther King 1968: the counterculture and its hope for political change through personal liberation faded as quickly as it rose, as their human icons of freedom were shot one after another. The Vietnam War continued to rage, oil prices surged and the economy recessed in the 1970s. Instead of politics more people in the counterculture movement would escape within themselves through the new means of inward looking and self-realization that had started to flood the market under the umbrella of the “New Age.” It was Monté Verità gone global in a fast growing consumerist market of personal liberation. The ‘human potential movement’, eastern philosophy and yoga practices were competing with primal scream therapy, self-psychology, est and LSD. An anything-goes-philosophy turned the search for political liberation into a search for personalized “peak experiences”.

The radical political potential of the counterculture was fading. The first part, “to change yourself”, had seemed relatively easy, changing society was more difficult. It needed patience, consistency, organization and a strong political basis; “Senex” values all lacking in the “Puer” euphoria of the movement.

Jung’s ideas on the contrary, were not fading, but continued being an implicit inspiration for the growing New-Age generation of spiritual seekers in their search for “self-realization.” He had now, in the mid and late 1970s raised to public stardom, also outside the world of psychology, much through the help of Joseph Campbell’s release of the book ‘The Hero with a Thousand Faces’ and the later TV-program ‘The Power of Myth’. His message of self-realization, wholeness and personal transcendence was still the same but the method of how to achieve it would



be interpreted differently as his ideas took root in the positivistic, individualized and commercialised culture on the American continent. Instead of the religious, humble and sincere attitude of “serving Self”, proposed by Jung, a warped and “magical” attitude took shape.

The renowned anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski writes about magic that its function is to ritualize man’s optimism and to enhance his faith in the victory of hope over fear. It expresses confidence over doubt and optimism over pessimism and differs from religion in that it is purely practical and is always performed as a means to an end (Malinowski 1954). An optimistic and opportunistic attitude that better characterized the American culture than the European and that would have an impact on how Jung’s psychology were perceived and interpreted on the continent. David Tacey clarifies the link and difference between Jung and the New Age in his article “Jung and the New Age: A Study in Contrast” (Tacey 1998). He points out how the New Age movement was deeply inspired by Jung but in the positivistic, capitalistic soil of the American culture in the 1970’s and 80’s lost its potential political and spiritual components. He explains how instead “it aims to bring new enchantment and mystery into a world that has grown tired, depressed, and disenchanted” (Tacey 1998).

What is it we see happening to Jung’s spiritual method as it meets with the American market of the New Age? A religious attitude turning into (black) magic in serving ego purposes? Self put in the backseat of the ego in an increasingly individualised search for self-realization and differentiation on the marketplace? It’s the growth of a consumer culture that seems to support a rather infantile and narcissistic type of “wholeness,” quite different from the one envisioned by Jung. A wholeness that seems more closely related to Freud’s ideas of an “oceanic feeling,” governed not by the archetype of the Self but the “mother”. Inspired by the New Age a new consumer attitude is born, one that is in constant need for numinous experiences and endless psychic growth, a magical one, nourished by the market.

ENCHANTED CONSUMERISM

The “mother” of this new narcissistic consumer of the New Age forms our modern day consumer market and its ideology of consumer-ism. To understand how we quickly have to rewind the tape again, back to the 1960’s where the “counterculture” first took the corporations by surprise. Initially the market feared that the changes in values and lifestyles of this new (Pepsi) generation would threaten the capitalistic engine’s relentless need for growth. But as the (market) story often goes, the problem was quickly turned into a possibility and the solution was to be found by “turning to psyche.” Jung wrote that we live in a world of psychic images, “Far from being a material world, this is a psychic world, which allows us to make only indirect and hypothetical inferences about the real nature of matter” (Jung, 1933/1960, § 384). It was this psychological insight, that we experience our world through psychic

images, that would help form our consumer market of today. It would become the image and not the product, the desires not the needs that would characterize its offerings. Based on this insight a market transformation started that would turn ever more products into enchanted objects of desire. Pseudo-symbols and psychological substitutes for the New Age schooled consumer psyche in its endless search for self-realization.

TO FULLY UNDERSTAND how this psychic economy feeds on the consumer’s “magical attitude” in his/her search for self-realization we again have to turn to the shadow side of psychoanalysis. Contrary to Gross, Ernest Dichter, later labelled ‘Freud on Madison Avenue’ (who in his early day’s had his office opposite of Freud on Berggasse in Vienna), was seeing psychoanalysis as a tool for maintaining the status quo of the existing political





Ernest Dichter, later labelled 'Freud on Madison Avenue' (1907-1991)

system. This was to be done by addressing the therapeutic power of consumption. In Dichter's world (and soon most marketers) products were not merely materialistic objects but "psychic extensions" of the consumer's own identity. Dichter wrote in his book "Strategy of Desire", "Modern psychology have overlooked to a very large extent the real expressive powers that objects have. Objects have a soul. People on the one hand, and products, goods and commodities on the other, entertain a dynamic relationship of constant interaction" (Dichter 1960, 86). In this line of thinking a car was no longer a car and products could be seen as, "an extension of the consumer's own personality". Dichter, understanding the true psychic potential of products, wrote about the consumers that, "When they are loyal to a commercial brand, they are loyal to themselves" (ibid 86).

Dichter shared Jung's insight that we live in a world of psychic images and was quick to draw practical consequences of it for the market place. The new consumerist market where most of our basic needs already had become fulfilled and supply threatened to outpace demand had to be built up on a "psychological surplus". Using Freudian language we could say that Dichter established the "pleasure principle" as preceding

the "reality principle". It was emotion before reason that would characterize the new era of consumerism. The role of the advertisers and marketers became to transform their clients' products into "pseudo-symbols". Companies no longer sold the actual product but instead its "imago" or image (or speaking marketing lingo, "brand") that was in reality a warped "mirror" of the customer's most intimate desires, aspirations and self-needs. This magical act that is today referred to as "branding" would become fully possible through the "focus-group" (another psychoanalytical inspiration) and the new values and lifestyle studies that had emerged on the market by the early 1980's. This together formed a psychic economy that seemed to offer a "symbolical life" in relation to the marketplace, radically different from the one envisioned by Jung.

Let's pause and reflect on this. Is what we described here what could be likened to as a pseudo-spiritual ritual of magical consumption? Jung writes that, "A ceremony is magical so long as it does not result in effective work but preserves the state of expectancy" (Jung 1928/1960 ¶89). We have seen how individuals (labelled as consumers) are projecting a psychic inner need/desire (libido) on a brand's imago that is constructed to stimulate this exact same reaction. Psychological needs packaged as a product, with an emotional halo around it (imago) offered as pseudo-substitutes for subjective psychic needs on the market place, preserving the expectancy. A magical ritual of consumption resulting in what Jung defined as a type of possession and an "enlargement of personality". Jung explains it as: "The enlargement may be effected through an accretion from without, by new vital contents finding their way into the personality from outside and being assimilated." Following with the warning that, "... the more assiduously we follow this recipe, and the more stubbornly we believe that all increase has to come from without, the greater becomes our inner poverty" (Jung 1939/1959, CW 9, ¶215).

Could it be that in the search for personal psychic growth and self-realization projected onto these pseudo-substitutes we are simultaneously emptying ourselves and continuously “outsourcing” more psyche to the market? Is what we tried to depict here the enchanted eco-system and magical ritual that drives our modern day “psychic growth economy” of today? A consumer society made out of psychological surplus that has taken on pseudo-spiritual clothing. The “false self” of the market?

TECHNOLOGICAL TRANSCENDENCE

We have travelled fast through the century in trying to sketch an alternative narrative of our world as re-enchanted and characterized by a “pseudo-spirituality” offered by the market place. Munich, Monté Verità, Jung, Gross and Dichter; counterculture, New Age and magical consumerism. Still we have one more station we need to briefly visit in order to complete this speculation, that of technology. Counterculture turned New-age, turned consumer culture, would leave more and more people in the collective running themselves tired in search for self-realization and psychic growth. There seemed to be a wish to take one step higher up in Abraham Maslow’s “hierarchy of needs” (Maslow 1943) and to reach the deepest insights of Jung’s own heroic odyssey into the unconscious, that of “transcendence”. In the 1980’s and 1990’s the market had perfected its way of creating brands, mirroring consumers’ inner need for self-realization, but still struggled to sell wholeness and transcendence back to us as consumers.

It was with the new technology of the personal computer and the coming of Internet that this opportunity would rise to the surface. Jung wrote how the archetype of the “Self” and wholeness hides behind the mask of technique. “It is characteristic of our time that the archetype, in contrast to its previous

manifestations, should now take the form of an object, a technological construction, in order to avoid the odiousness of mythological personification. Anything that looks technological goes down without difficulty with modern man” (Jung 1958, CW10 ¶624). How could computer and communications technology in the hands of the market be transformed into a promise of personal transcendence?

Back in the early 70’s as the counterculture and New Age movement were still busy confronting inner and outer authorities and the marketers were experimenting with new ways of injecting “mana” into more and more products, on the American west coast another movement was getting ripe. In John Markoff’s book “What the Dormouse Said: How the ‘60s Counterculture Shaped the Personal Computer Industry” (Markoff 2005), the author tells the story of how a new generation of computer hackers and programmers were heavily influenced by the counterculture ethos in building what would become the personal computer (PC). It was a new generation of inventors and entrepreneurs, the early seed of the “Silicon Valley” who saw computers not merely as technical tools but as a way to expand the human mind and as an “extension of self”. The “hub” was Stanford University and their two laboratories “Stanford Artificial Intelligence Laboratory” and the “Augmented Human Intellect Research Centre”. The latter was built around the vision of how computing could help augment the human mind. Many of the technologies first developed by this generation of pioneers would in the late 1970’s and early 80’s heavily inspire the two Steves (Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak), busy in the garage in Palo Alto California creating the first Apple computer. A computer that in turn would inspire Microsoft in developing the PC, a tool that would change the life of millions and heavily influence how we live our lives today.

Marshall McLuhan explains in his seminal book ‘Understanding Media’ the link between man and technology and how “our human senses, of which all media are extensions, are also fixed charges on our personal energies, and that they also configure the awareness and experience of each one of us” (McLuhan 1964, 35). He goes on to explain its influence on man and ends the introductory chapter by (surprisingly) quoting Jung’s discussion about the roles of slaves in the Roman empire; how every Roman became inwardly and of unwittingly a slave in this society. “Because living constantly in the atmosphere of slaves, he became infected through the unconscious with the psychology” (Jung 1928). McLuhan through Jung helps us make the point that people today become like and start to think as the media and computer technology they consume.

FOLLOWING THIS THINKING, it becomes clearer how our communication technology of today helps form a type of “psychic extension” of our self; an extension into which man seem to project his “religious drive” and search for transcendence. The ubiquity of computers, networks, email and the world-wide-web seems seen in this light to carry an implicit promise of transcending our psychic as well as our physical limitations as humans. As computers today become personal parts of every man’s home, shrunk into mobile

phones in our pockets, wirelessly connected to Internet we are for brief moments offered to magically transcend mundane reality. We are welcomed into a virtual network of constant entertainment, information and communication. Together with this transformation comes the promise of ubiquitous and God-like lifestyles characterized by limitless growth (economically and psychically) by “outsourcing” parts of our psyche (memory, images, texts, music, friends) to the communication technology.

This final digression on technology serves the purpose of this essay in giving another clue to where man’s numinous needs are projected today and how the world has gone through a process of re-enchantment. Simply stated, it is another example of a pseudo-spiritual practice in our 21st century market place, which carries the enchanted promise of transcending life’s limitations already on earth. When in reality we transcend into a state of “participation mystique” with the machines, hardly reflecting on what parts of our humanity we are giving up.

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