

Experts of the Soul¹

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Zusammenfassung: *In den liberalen demokratisch-kapitalistischen Gesellschaften des Westens hat sich psychologisches Fachwissen unentbehrlich gemacht, nicht nur im Hinblick auf die Regulation solcher Bereiche wie z. B. der von der Fabrik bis zur Familie, sondern auch in ethischen Systemen, nach denen Bürger ihr Leben führen. In diesem Beitrag werden einige Wege dargestellt, wie die Geburt dieser "Seeleningenieure" und deren Stellung in verschiedenen sozio-politischen Arrangements verstanden werden können. Psychologie, so wird argumentiert, schafft berechenbare Individuen, und so gestaltbare interindividuelle Räume, unterstützt Autorität mit ethisch-therapeutischer Begründung und stellt eine ethische Technologie zur Verfügung, mit der das autonome Selbst der Individuen geformt werden kann. Diese Kennzeichen der "techne" der Psychologie sind intrinsisch mit der Problematik liberaler Demokratien verbunden, die mit dem Anspruch von Privatheit, Rationalität und Autonomie regieren. Ferner haben diese Kennzeichen Bedeutung für die gegenwärtigen gesellschaftlichen Umgestaltungsprozesse in "Osteuropa".*

Summary: *In the liberal democratic capitalist societies of "the west", psychological expertise has made itself indispensable, not only in the regulation of domains from the factory to the family, but also in the ethical systems according to which citizens live their lives. This paper suggests some ways to comprehend the birth of these "engineers of the human soul" and their place within different socio-political arrangements. Psychology, it argues, makes individuals who are calculable, makes intersubjective spaces that are manageable, underpins authority with an ethico-therapeutic rationale and provides an ethical technology for the shaping of autonomous selves. These features of the 'techne' of psychology are intrinsically linked to the problematics of liberal democracies which seek to govern through privacy, rationality and autonomy. They also have implications for the current transformations in the societies of "Eastern Europe".*

It was, I believe, Joseph Stalin who referred to writers under his brand of socialism as 'engineers of the human soul'. In the liberal, democratic and capitalist societies of „the West“, the task of engineering the human soul has fallen to a different sector - to professionals imbued with the vocabularies, the evaluations, the techniques and the ethics of psychology. Whether it be at home or at work, in marketing or in politics, in child rearing or in sexuality, psychological expertise has made itself indispensable to modern life in such societies. How should this phenomenon be understood?

I suggest that we should not answer this question in terms of the evolution of ideas, the appliance of science or the rise of a profession, but in terms of expertise. I use the term „expertise“ to refer to a particular kind of social authority, characteristically deployed around problems, exercising a certain diagnostic gaze,

grounded in a claim to truth, asserting technical efficacy, and avowing humane ethical virtues. Whilst the notion of professionalization implies an attempt to found occupational exclusiveness on the basis of a monopolisation of an area of practice and the possession of an exclusive disciplinary base, expertise is heterogeneous. It amalgamates knowledges and techniques from different sources into a complex 'know-how'. The attempt to ratify the coherence of this array of procedures and forms of thought is made retrospectively, and characteristically not by deriving them from a single theory but by unifying them within a pedagogic practice.

The notion of expertise enables us to distinguish between the occupational advancement of a particular professional sector, the spread of a particular mode of thought and technique, and the transformation of practices of regulation. For the social consequences of

psychology are not the same as the social consequences of psychologists. Psychology is a 'generous' discipline: the key to the social penetration of psychology lies in its capacity to lend itself 'freely' to others who will 'borrow' it because of what it offers to them in the way of a justification and guide to action. Hence psychological ways of thinking and acting can infuse the practices of other social actors such as doctors, social workers, managers, nurses, even accountants. Psychology enters into alliance with such agents of social authority, colonising their ways of calculating and arguing with psychological vocabularies, reformulating their ways of explaining normality and pathology in psychological terms, giving their techniques a psychological coloration. It is precisely through such alliances that psychology has made itself powerful: not so much by occupational exclusiveness or monopolization but because of what it has provided for others, on condition that they come to think and act like psychologists.

These alliances do not simply provide psychology with a means to gain its hold on social reality, as it were, by proxy. They also provide something for the doctors, nurses, social workers and managers who enter into psychological coalitions: those engaged in the proliferating practices that deal with the vagaries of human conduct and human pathology and seek to act upon it in a reasoned and calculated form. Psychology promises to rationalise these practices, to systematise and simplify the ways in which authorities visualize, evaluate and diagnose the conduct of their human subjects, and conduct themselves in relation to them. In purporting to underpin authority by a coherent intellectual and practical regime, psychology offers others both a grounding in truth and some formulae for efficacy. In claiming to modulate power through a knowledge of subjectivity, psychology can provide social authority with a basis that is not merely technical and scientific but 'ethical'.

Making psychology technical

From the perspective of expertise, our analysis of the proliferation of psychology connects with a number of other reflections on transformations in social arrangements and forms of authority in European societies over the last century. Our focus shifts from psychology itself to the modes in which psychological knowledges and techniques have grafted themselves onto other practices. Psychology is seen as offering something to, and deriving something from, its capacity to enter into a number of diverse 'human technologies'. The term 'technology' directs our attention to the characteristic ways in which practices are organized to produce certain outcomes in terms of human conduct: reform, efficiency, education, cure, or virtue. It directs analysis to the technical forms invented to produce these outcomes - ways of combining persons, truths, judgments, devices and actions into a stable, reproducible and durable form. But the notion of a human technology is not intended to imply an inhuman technology - one that crushes and dehumanises the essential personhood of those caught up within it. Psychology has become enmeshed within such technologies, in part, because it answers to the wish to humanise them, to make them adequate to the real nature of the person to be governed.

Unlike the ancient professions, psychology has no institution of its own: no church within which to redeem sin, no court of law within which to pronounce judgment, no hospital within which to diagnose or cure. Psychological modes of thought and action have come to underpin - and then to transform - practices that were previously cognized and legitimated in other ways - via the charisma of the persona of authority, by the repetition of traditional procedures, by appeal to extrinsic standards of morality, by rule of thumb. It finds its social territory in all those dispersed encounters where human conduct is proble-

mated in relation to ethical standards, social judgments or individual pathology. What is it that psychology can offer to such encounters?

Making individuals who are calculable

Marx, Nietzsche, Weber, Lukacs, Habermas and Foucault each, in their different ways, suggested that calculation was central to the social arrangements and ethical systems of the capitalist, bureaucratic and democratic societies of North West Europe and North America, not only in the domination of nature, but also in relation to human beings. We have entered, it appears, the age of the calculable person, whose individuality is no longer ineffable, unique and beyond knowledge, but can be known, mapped, calibrated, evaluated, quantified, predicted and managed.

For those who take their cue from Marx, it is in the workplace and in the activity of production that the rise of calculability is to be grounded, in the capitalist imperative of management, prediction and control of labour. For those who take their cue from Weber, calculation is an inherent part of rational administration, bound up with the desire for exactitude, predictability, and the subordination of substantive or ad hoc judgment to the uniformity of a rule. In each of these cases, the calculability of the person is seen as the effect or symptom of a process that has its roots elsewhere. But what is at stake should not be seen as belonging to the order of effects. One should investigate more directly the practical conditions and social arrangements that made it necessary and possible for the human individual to become calculable. Through what procedures of inscription, differentiation and cognition did the knowledges and procedures emerge which would make of the human being a calculable entity? How did this calculation come to appear, not the result of disputable value choices or social goals, but of objective criteria, arising out of scientific investigation, and made through technical rather than political procedures?

The social vocation of psychology and its status as expertise is intrinsically bound to such questions. For it was through the formation of a specifically psychological expertise, and through the construction of institutional technologies that were infused by specifically psychological values, that individual difference became scientifically calculable and technically administrable (Rose, 1985; 1988). A psychological knowledge of individual differences did not emerge from a mysterious leap of the intellect or from laborious theoretical and scientific enquiry, but neither did it merely answer to the demand that capitalist control of the labour process be legitimated, or spread because of its elective affinity with a rationally calculating „spirit of the age“. It needs to be understood as an „institutional epistemology“ (Gordon, 1987), born within the mundane organizational practices of those social apparatuses constructed in so many European states in the late nineteenth century that sought to organize persons en masse in relation to particular objectives - reform, education, cure, virtue. Schools, hospitals, prisons, reformatories and factories acted as laboratories for the isolation, intensification, and inscription of human difference. They were simultaneously locales for observation of and experimentation with human difference. Knowledge itself needs to be understood as technique, rooted in attempts to organize the environment according to certain values. And truth becomes powerful to the extent that it becomes technical.

The psychological „test“, in all its forms, is the paradigmatic technique of the calculable person, for visualising and inscribing individual difference in a calculable form. The test is a tiny but all pervasive diagram of a certain combination of power, truth and subjectification: tests and examinations render individuals into knowledge as objects of a hierarchical and normative gaze, making it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish (Foucault, 1977, pp.184-5). The invisible, subjective world of the individual can now be visualised and represented in classifications, in figures

and quotients. The psychological test thus plays a crucial organizational role within the calculative attitude that has become central to all those 'disciplinary' institutions that are the other 'normalising' side of liberal democracy, institutions where individuals are to be governed in terms of their individuality, in such a way as to maximise their organizational utility and utilise their powers in a calculated form.

Critics of psychology often portray its utilisation of tests and numbers as the antithesis of humanity and democracy, reducing the person to a mere number. But one dimension of the „power of psychology“ lies in its „humane“ capacity to shift judgments about persons from a sphere of values, prejudice or rule of thumb to the sphere of human truths, equality of standards, cogently justifiable choices and objective criteria of efficacy that should reign in a democracy. Psychological expertise renders human difference technical: judgment can appear to answer only to the demands of natural differences and human truths.

Making spaces that are manageable

Psychology is often criticised for its individualism. But psychology also makes possible a technology of spaces and relations, coming to infuse all those practices where authorities have to administer individuals in their collective existence. What is it that psychology offers to those charged with the administration of group life?

Psychological expertise makes inter-subjectivity calculable, enabling the calculated supervision and administration of collectivities. Social space has thereby been opened to calibration and management (Miller and Rose, 1988; Rose, 1989; Miller, 1989). Whether via the notions of individual attitudes, of public opinion, of the human relations of the workplace, of the psychodynamic relations of the organization - those who are charged with the responsibility for administering the social existence of individuals may redefine their task in psychological terms. The language and

techniques of attitude measurement and the attitude survey open the social actions of individuals to systematic planning and management by authorities. The notion of the group enables thought to grasp and administer a human domain that inhabits the architectural space of the factory, the schoolroom, the hospital and the office. The notion of public opinion and the technique of the opinion poll open a relation between political authorities and those they govern that goes beyond the requirement that political leaders periodically seek a democratic mandate through an election that can only acclaim or condemn.

In each case, the aspiration is that psychological expertise can produce techniques by which authority can be exercised in the light of the personal commitments, values and motivations of those subjected to it. In a liberal society, authority is only effective and legitimate to the extent that it is exercised in the light of a knowledge of those who are governed.

Making authorities who are ethical

Psychological expertise promises something to those who have the responsibility of wielding a power over others. On the one hand it enables them to assemble their various tasks and activities within a certain order and to subject them to a consistent set of calculations. On the other, it promises to 'ethicalise' the powers of authorities from business consultants in search of profits and harmony to military men in search of efficient fighting forces. In this combined promise of rationality and ethicality, psychological expertise can promise to make authority simultaneously artful and wholesome.

Psychology grafts itself onto practices of law, punishment, management, parenthood through its promise to combine efficacy and utility with humanity and truth. In installing itself within the self-guidance systems of the manager, the parent, the social worker, psychology turns the authority into a psychologi-

cal calculator - one who visualises the factory or the family in psychological terms, analyses its strengths and weaknesses in psychological vocabularies, and makes decisions according to a psychological calculus. Those in authority are offered ways of deliberating about, judging, organizing and simplifying the multitude of decisions that confront them. No longer are the various activities of the manager or the parent merely an array of tasks that happen to coincide within the remit of the decision maker. These tasks can be linked up, related, explicated in terms of knowledge, made according to certain formulae and adjudicated in terms of justified criteria. Whether instructing, managing, curing, punishing, educating or reforming, one can first „understand“, via a hermeneutics of the soul conducted in psychological terms, one can then „diagnose“ according to a cogently justifiable system of classification, and finally one can „prescribe“ a response via a calculated knowledge of subjectivity and techniques for its transformation.

But it is not merely that psychological expertise is „simplifying“. This, after all, could be said of any other form of expertise to the extent that it renders a diverse assemblage of issues cognizable within a single explanatory space. Psychology offers also an ethical means of exercising authority, one that is not based upon an external truth - be it divine right or collective good - but on a truth internal to the person over whom it is exercised. Exercising mastery over others in the light of a knowledge of their inner nature makes authority almost a therapeutic activity. The possibility emerges that the decisions made by authorities can be aligned with the best interests of those over whose lives they will affect - be they worker, prisoner, patient or child. This ethical-therapeutic transformation is one aspect of the force that bonds diverse social authorities to psychological expertise and makes it so powerful. It also explains the seductive promise held out by psychology to those who will exercise authority. It gives a new kind of human and moral worth not merely to the gross and evident wielding of power over others, but also to

the mundane activities of daily decision making in the factory or in the family.

This points to a characteristic that gives psychological technologies a general political significance within liberal democratic techniques of government. The seduction of the psychological enables 'private' domains such as the business enterprise and the family to be regulated by means of, rather than in spite of, their autonomy and responsibility. Psychological expertise is disseminated not only through the activities and ministrations of experts themselves, but also through school curricula and educational courses, radio and television programmes, popular books, magazines and advertisements. The norms and vocabularies promulgated confer a new of visibility upon the workings of the family or the factory and new ways of identifying its malfunctions. Certain features become visible, certain notions are used to judge them, certain vocabularies are installed to render organizational or familial life into speech in the form of problems requiring solution. Now mothers, fathers, managers, bosses can themselves take on calculations and make judgments in these terms. And, when problems get too great for self-regulation, they can consult the experts to seek to overcome the anxiety formed in the gap between what they are and what they want to be. The 'private' domains of the family and the factory can thus be normalised though the anxiety of its internal authorities without breaching their formal autonomy: 'private' authority is bound into 'public' values by means of psychological expertise.

Psychology does not simply ally itself with authorities in private domains by promising to solve their problems. In „applying itself“ to such problems it transforms their terms. Industrial accidents become a matter of the human relations of the workplace. Profitability becomes a matter of releasing the self-actualising potential of the workforce. Naughty children become a matter of the emotional heritage of the parent's own childhood. Career advancement becomes a matter of self-confidence, and self-assertiveness. Marketing be-

comes a matter of segmenting consumers by their psychological profiles, and advertising a matter of linking your product with the desires of those who must come to purchase it. Each of these problems now becomes inconceivable in other than psychological terms.

The application of psychological expertise to a domain itself generates new ways of construing existence as potentially problematic. Thus one sees the correlative emergence of normality as something to be achieved and as risk as something to be calculated and administered. The retro-direction of the psychological gaze can identify problems in potentia and hence generate prophylactic strategies for their preemptive solution. In the shift of problematization from pathology to normality, normality itself is rendered as the fragile outcome of the successful averting of risk. Expertise offers to turn chance into certainty: the production of normality can itself become an endeavour suffused with psychological calculation. Normality is to be produced by a permanent modulation of deliberations and decisions by psychology in the light of a calculation of risk.

In this process, a new kind of relationship is established between the psychological experts and those who consult them. Whether they be managers, parents or patients, their relation to authority is a matter neither of subordination of will nor of rational persuasion. Rather it has to do with a kind of discipleship. The relation between expert and client is structured by a hierarchy of wisdom, it is held in place by the wish for truth and certainty, and it offers the disciple the promise of self-understanding and self improvement. It is not merely the promise of professional advancement that attracts business people, social workers, doctors, police officer and so many others to psychologically informed training courses in managerial skills. Not is it merely the hope that, once schooled in psychological vocabularies, techniques and ways of calculating one will be able to simultaneously do a good job and do good. The insight conferred by the psychologisation of one's job is also an insight

into oneself and ones life. For the allure of psychology is that the ethical pathway for authority is also an ethical pathway for the self.

Working on our selves

Psychological languages and judgments have the capacity to graft themselves into the ethical practices of individuals - their ways of evaluating themselves in relation to what is true or false, good or bad, permitted or forbidden. Ethics here is understood in terms of specific 'techniques of the self', practices by which individuals seek to improve themselves and their lives and the aspirations and norms that guide them. Many have commented upon the ways in which contemporary practices for the interpretation and improvement of the self have achieved a psychological coloration, operating according to psychological norms and in relation to psychological truths (Rieff, 1966; Lasch, 1979, 1984; Rose, 1990). Psychological languages and evaluations have transformed the ways in which we construe and conduct our encounters with others - with our bosses, employees, workmates, wives, husbands, lovers, mothers, fathers, children and friends. Each mode of encounter has been re-configured in terms of personal feelings, desires, personalities, strivings and fears. Psychological techniques have come to infuse, dominate or displace theological, moral, bodily, dietary and other regimens for bringing the self to virtue or happiness, and also those deployed for reconciling the self to tragedy or disappointment. The experts on hand to guide us through the conduct of our lives are by no means all psychologists. But, increasingly, they deploy a psychological hermeneutics, utilise psychological explanatory systems and recommend psychological measures of redress.

The ethical technologies deployed within this regime are, of course, heterogeneous. Nonetheless, the technology of the confessional is perhaps most significant. It characterises almost all systems of psychotherapy and counselling. It also provides a potent technical form

that has come to install itself in a range of other practices where the conduct of personal life is at stake, from the doctor's surgery to the radio 'phone in', from the social work interview to the frank interchange of lovers. For Michel Foucault, confession was the diagram of a particular form of power (Foucault, 1978). The truthful rendering into speech of who one is and what one does - to one's parents, ones teachers, ones doctor, ones lover - was both identifying - in that it constructed a self in terms of a certain norm of identity - and subjectifying - in that one became a subject at the price of entering into a certain game of authority.

To speak the truth of one's feelings and desires, to 'share' them as the saying goes, is not merely the rendering audible of the inarticulate murmuring of the soul. In the very procedure, the confessing subject is identified: the „I“ that speaks is to be - at least when „insight“ has been gained „- identical with the „I“ whose feelings, wishes, anxieties and fears are articulated. One becomes, at least in potentia, the subject of one's own narrative, and in the very act itself one is attached to the work of constructing an identity. In the same process as the subject affiliates him or herself to such an identity project, he or she is bound to the languages and norms of psychological expertise. For the words and rituals that govern these confessions are those prescribed by an authority, albeit one who has replaced the claims of god and religion with those of nature and the psyche.

Some contemporary psychologists interpret the outcome of such processes, in which individuals scrutinise, interpret and speak about themselves in a psychological vocabulary, in terms of the „social construction“ of the person (eg. Shotter and Gergen, 1989). I am agnostic about such ontological claims. It is not so much a question of what people are, but of what they take themselves to be, the criteria and standards by which they judge themselves, the ways in which they interpret their problems and problematize their existence, the authorities under whose aegis such problematizations

are conducted - and their consequences. If we have become profoundly psychological beings, it is not that we have been equipped with a psychology, but rather that we have come to think, judge, console and reform ourselves according to psychological norms of truth.

Confession has been joined by a range of other psycho-technologies of the self, from behavioural techniques for teaching the arts of existence as social skills to bioenergetic techniques of bodily therapy. The details are less significant than the mode of operation of psychological expertise that is involved. It is not only that the truths of psychology have become connected to our practices of the self, with the notions that happiness and success can be achieved through the engagement of the self in a psychological regime of therapeutic remodelling. It is also that a psychological ethics is intimately tied to the liberal aspirations of freedom and autonomy. It promises a system of values freed from moral judgment - its norms answer not to an arbitrary moral or political code but only to the demands of our nature and our truth as human beings. It does not try to impose a new moral self upon us, but to free the self we truly are, to make it possible for us each to make a project of our lives, to fulfil ourselves and shape our existence according to an ethics of autonomy.

Critics tend to view the rise of the therapeutic as a symptom of cultural malaise: of the pervasive individualism of modern western culture; of the decline of religion and other transcendental systems for imparting meaning to quotidian existence; of the transformation of familial authority and the rise of narcissism; of the loss of the old solidities in a post-modern world in flux. But a different approach is suggested by the prominence which contemporary psychological ethics gives to the norm of autonomy. Contemporary rationalities of government also attach considerable value to notions of individual liberty, choice and freedom as the criteria by which government is to be calculated and judged. Perhaps the potency of psychological expertise in advanced liberal democracies can be related to the rise of social

arrangements that presuppose human individuals to be committed to shaping a meaning for their lives through the maximization of a personal lifestyle. The ethical technologies within which psychological expertise is so deeply enmeshed provide a means for shaping, sustaining and managing human beings that is not in opposition to their personal identity but promises to produce such an identity. Psychological expertise should be seen, perhaps, as a necessary reciprocal element of the political valorisation of freedom.

Psychological expertise and liberal government

There is a particular salience to an investigation of the relations between the political rationalities of freedom and the growth of psychological expertise at the present time. The societies of „Eastern Europe“ are currently attempting to cast off their allegiance to the political problematics of Marxism-Leninism and to the associated regulatory technologies of the party apparatus, the central plan and the ethics of social duty and collective responsibility. In their place, they look to the economic and industrial technologies and expertise of „the West“ in order to re-construct their economic orders on the principles of the market, competition and enterprise. But the experience of „the West“ might imply that there is also a relationship between liberal democracies and expert technologies of a different sort. This would be a relationship between political problematics articulated in terms of individualism and freedom and the expertise of the psy sciences, in particular of psychology.

Three broad themes are important in examining this relationship between psychological expertise and liberal democratic forms of government: rationality; privacy and autonomy. First, in liberal democratic societies the exercise of power over citizens becomes legitimate to the extent that it claims a rational basis. Power is to become painstaking, calculating and justifiable. This dependence of power

upon a claim to rationality opens up a vast and auspicious territory which expertise can colonise.

Second, liberal democratic problematics of government depend upon the creation of ‘private’ spaces, outside the formal scope of the authority of public powers. Yet the events within these ‘private’ spaces - notably ‘the market’, ‘the organization’ and ‘the family’ - are construed as having vital consequences for national wealth, health and tranquillity. The Janus face of expertise enables it to operate as a relay between government and privacy - their claims to truth and efficacy appealing to, on the one hand, to governments searching for answers to their problems of regulating economic, industrial or familial life, and on the other hand to those in authority over these private spaces - be they industrialists or parents - attempting to manage their own private affairs efficaciously.

Third, liberal democratic problematics of government are autonomising, they seek to govern through constructing a kind of regulated autonomy for social actors. The modern liberal self is ‘obliged to be free’, to construe all aspects of its life as the outcome of choices made amongst a number of options. Each attribute of the person is to be realized through decisions, and justified in terms of motives, needs and aspirations of the self. The technologies of psychology gain their social power in liberal democracies because they share this ethic of competent autonomous selfhood, and because they promise to sustain, respect and restore selfhood to citizens of such polities. They constitute technologies of individuality for the production and regulation of the individual who is ‘free to choose’.

The rise of psychological expertise, that is to say, is intrinsically bound to the problematics of liberal democratic government, of governing through privacy, rationality and autonomy. Hence it is appropriate to ask, in this era of social transformations, what role did the psychological technologies play under command economies and in planned societies. And will the transition to what may be described, at a

rhetorical level, as market societies, require as its necessary corollary not just the importation of the material technologies of liberal democracy but also their human technologies - the engineers of the human soul that are the other side of what we have come to term freedom.

Anmerkungen

1. This is a revised version of a paper delivered at the 9th Cheiron-Europe Conference, Weimar, 4 - 8 September 1990.

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