De-Pathologizing the Self. Cultural Diversity, Mental Illness and Historical Change

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De-Pathologizing the Self

Cultural Diversity, Mental Illness and Historical Change

Introduction: the paradox of a pluralistic society

Nowadays, cosmopolitan populations increasingly affirm and value the broad physical, ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity of human beings. At the same time, in stark contrast to our almost boundless delight in the plurality of expressions of human diversity, there is a narrow tolerance for a variety of behavioral and experiential human differences. Many present-day cosmopolitan societies increasingly call for behavioral and experiential conformity rather than diversity. What we theoretically and politically cherish is, at the same time, being slowly medically eradicated. This paradox is a dangerous feature of contemporary globalized society that may lead to highly problematic consequences in the future.

In this paper we will argue that stigmatizing and pathologizing human behavioral and emotional diversity, with its barely hidden intent of eradicating it (pharmacologically or behaviorally) is a menace to the diversity of the human race. The extraordinary diversity of humans entails both strengths and vulnerabilities, while mental illness arises as its inevitable consequence. While our human fitness into the world that we occupy as a species is the function of this diversity, eradicating it is evolutionarily dangerous in a sense that the future
world might require behavioral and emotional responses that are considered abnormal today. In other words, what has no value today, might acquire biological and social significance in an unpredictable future cultural-historical context. For this reason, it is prudent to preserve the reservoir of diversity for the sake of the common future, even if our current temporal horizon limits our understanding of the forthcoming historical world.

In order to support this view, we will present a typology of human being in the world based upon two criteria, role-playing and role-identification, that encompasses both normal and abnormal behaviors. We will argue that despite being not only statistically but also – at least for some – normatively abnormal, the extreme qualities represented in this model exemplify qualities that may actually be valued, needed, and called for in different cultural-historical contexts. For this very reason, they should not be a-priori pathologized.

The perspectives of psychiatry and diversity

Depending on the epistemological perspective from which we approach the phenomenon of mental illness, it can be defined as a human disease, dimension, behavior, or life-story (McHugh & Slavney, 1998). Each of these four perspectives entails a mode of understanding that operates according to its own “logical grammar” and illuminates one facet of reality at the expense of others (Schwartz & Wiggins, 1988). The most orthodox perspective of diseases allows for an understanding of mental illness in terms of the logic of cause and effect, the perspective of dimensions in terms of a logic of gradation and comparison, the
perspective of behaviors in terms of a logic of teleology, and the perspective of
life-story in terms of a logic of meaningful narrative. Each of the perspectives
provides an epistemological framework that necessarily pre-defines the
phenomenon of mental illness and makes it possible to comprehend it at all. It
enables us to grasp and illuminate one of the aspects of its reality while
concealing others. We are unable to speak of mental illness “in itself” or “as such”
– without a given epistemological perspective it is simply incomprehensible.

The same is true when it comes to diversity. In this sense, diversity is yet another
eyepistemological perspective that provides a way of seeing mental illness in a
manner distinct from each of the four perspectives outlined by McHugh and
Slavney. However, as we will argue, it can also be superior to these four
perspectives. We claim that the perspective of diversity must be a part of any
comprehensive evaluation of a mental condition and should be taken into
account in every diagnosis of mental illness. From the perspective of diversity
mental illness ought to be seen against the background of the plurality of human
beings inhabiting the earth. Such a plurality is not only a political (Arendt, 1958),
but also a biological phenomenon in the natural scientific sense.

It is an established fact that unlike any other species, humans are so diverse that
they can inhabit the whole planet. A given feature that constitutes a weakness in
one environmental context may become a genuine advantage in another. Hence,
just like skin color that evolved in order to provide survival in diverse
geographical circumstances, any given mental issue can be seen as pertaining to
the world adaptation. The perspective of diversity thus tells us about the
spectrum of the plurality of human beings, where every given mental illness can be considered as entailing an actual or a potential strength.

The unquestionable advantage of perspectivism in psychiatry is that it introduces a methodological pluralism and allows for a coexistence of complementary approaches to mental illness. However, at the same time, perspectivism in the form outlined by McHugh and Slavney presupposes the very existence of mental illness. As a matter of fact, this presupposition is holding all four perspectives together. The perspective of diversity is – in this sense – substantially different. Just like the others, it discloses something that any of the other four perspectives do not – in this case, the possibility of understanding mental illness not in terms of human limitation, but in terms of human capability. And just like the others, it is neither final nor universal. However, unlike the other four, the perspective of diversity has the capacity to undermine them all. This is because it disputes the aforementioned presupposition of mental illness and therefore has the capability to challenge the very concept of mental illness as a purely ontological and a-historical entity.

The threat of uniformity

Before we move on to present the actual strengths and advantages associated with mental illness, let us restate the paradox presented at the beginning of this paper. Even though the diversity of the human species is being contemporarily cherished at the political level – where, at least in the western world, a multicultural society is considered a valuable civilizational accomplishment – the
universalizing pretenses of the perspective of diseases endanger this diversity at the level of mental health care. In this sense, modern society values mental conformity over mental plurality.

As far as the history of psychiatry is concerned, this attitude toward diversity is relatively new. Up until the 19th century “madness” had rarely been an object of scientific studies, and it was seldom seen as mental illness (even if it was present, in a variety of diverse forms, in the Western world (Foucault, 1965). Only with the processes of industrialization and concomitant medicalization of life, the tolerance towards mental diversity started to diminish.

In the 20th century the unifying attitude of western rationality became a concern for both social theorists and critical psychiatrists from all sides of the political spectrum. Phenomenologists claimed that it reduces the plurality of men to an almost physiological uniformity (Arendt, 1958). Leftist thinkers were concerned with the threatening political implications of a one-dimensional, allegedly dehumanized, consumption-oriented and alienated bourgeois subject (Marcuse, 2007). In conservative psychiatric terms the uniformity was even construed as existential neurosis (Gebsattel, 1964). From the perspective of catholic anarchism, modern medicine was interpreted as a part of the industry-complex and even accused of literally creating mental health problems (Illich, 1976). The anti-psychiatry movement of the 1970's popularized the claim that the statistically “normal” is already sick. Despite the fact that the so-called “second biological psychiatry” appeared undoubtedly progressive (Shorter, 1997), the view that psychiatry’s function is to be a normative power of the state and
industry has been held by many (Szasz, 2001, 2010). The critique of the growth of the pharmaceutical industry in the 1990's as well as the widening categorical thresholds for many psychiatric diagnoses only reinforced these long present concerns (Horwitz & Wakefield, 2012).

**Human diversity: between biology and culture**

Against the tendency to view human beings in isolation, we maintain that every organism, including humans, always exist in a particular relationship with its environment. World-relatedness is a fundamental feature of human life that cannot be simply reduced to mechanical principles. Even the most primitive organisms relate to their world, if in a very basic way. All organisms extend toward to their environment and "care" for their own being (Jonas, 2001). Our single celled ancestors could interact with their surroundings and with each other, which means that the key structures required for animal development had already evolved before the origin of animals (King, Hittinger, & Carroll, 2003).

The question of identity versus non-identity was initially an issue for the immune system (Cohen, 2000). Later, it became an issue for the nervous system, and much later a psychological and cultural issue. But all living units spontaneously engage in transactions with its others (Squire et al., 2002). Always threatened by non-being, organisms must constantly re-assert their being through their own activity (this fact may be contrasted with non-living things, which occupy space but do not inhabit a world).

Therefore, each living creature is involved in a structured, active relationship...
with his or her surrounding world. Enclosed within a semi-permeable membrane dividing the inside from the outside living organisms establish their boundary and take their place within a world. The semi-permeable barrier allows them to pull materials from the outside in and to push materials from the inside out. It implies that living beings are both enclosed within themselves, defined by the boundaries that separate them from their environment, and ceaselessly reaching out to their environment and interacting with it. The existence of every living being is sustained through metabolism, and therefore its existence is its own dynamic achievement. Inorganic matter need not actively do anything in order to endure, while the very being of a living creature is contingent upon its own ceaseless activity.

In the simplest organisms the forms of world-relatedness are mechanistic. In more complex animals they became instinctual. Instincts are more malleable and open but still relatively fixed and definite. With the complexity of behaviors increasing in a rapidly changing world, human biological instincts become less fixed and less rigid. As expressed by Arnold Gehlen, humans are “instinct poor” (Gehlen, 1988). Human instincts become weakened and cease to control human behavior to an unprecedented extent, which makes us world-open to a variety of environments, behaviors and values. Our forms of self-relatedness are also relatively plastic and ill-defined. In other words, compared to other animals, we are much more flexible and underdetermined. In fact, humans are so open that human culture must complement human biology. Culture imposes human-made forms of human existence and thus helps to close the world-openness left by our biology alone. Culture determines and supplements what biology leaves
undetermined and in that sense becomes a **biological imperative** (Schwartz & Wiggins, 2001).

Humans are both nidiculous and nidifugous species – born relatively immature and helpless, but in small litters and with sense organs fully operative. They are also secondarily nidiculous in the sense that a period of post-fetal gestation within what Adolf Portmann called the “social uterus,” i.e. cultural environment, must supplement their previous period of fetal gestation within the biological uterus. Only outside the biological uterus do humans achieve those features that especially mark them as distinctively human: upright posture, spoken language, and responsible action. The unfinished nature of human life at birth makes an extended period of sociocultural gestation both possible and necessary. Possible because the human child is flexible and malleable enough to absorb and incorporate the components of its sociocultural worlds. Necessary because without these influences humans would never acquire distinctively human traits. In other words, human biology remains insufficient for the formation of truly human creatures. It is only socialization into a particular society that defines for us the acceptable forms of world and self-relationship.

Therefore, what differentiates humans from the rest of the animals, even in the increasingly trans-human word, is the fact that humans meet their animal necessities with distinctly human intelligence and will, pointing beyond the utilitarian to the aesthetic. Humans are capable of creating a novel freedom by remaking the world in their mind’s eye as well as confronting their own mortality (Jonas, 1996). Even if unable to free themselves from their centered
animal existence, humans can place themselves over against it – they are capable of imaginative detachment from locality and time, and are not only reflexive but also reflective (Plessner, 1975).

Crucially, there is continuity between all these levels. Comte's *dictum* that society is an organism is a metaphor that has a great cognitive significance. As a matter of fact multicellular evolutionary development started when signaling between the cells began (Bonner, 2000). Grouping and raising individual animals to a higher level may be already seen in insects, whose colonies represent basic stages of biological organization (Hölldobler & Wilson, 2008). With regard to humans dependence on culture arises from the same basic biological condition that makes it possible for human beings to create and fashion culture. The plasticity and malleability of the human organism leaves people in dire need of culture. This same plasticity leaves us free to construct a world we chose – a world of culture. In that sense, the source of necessity is the same as the source of freedom. The same is true of values, which arise already at the most basic levels of life, even if only human beings can recognize such values as moral requirements and develop meaningful responses to them. Life itself is already normative and teleological and aims at its own future (Canguilhem, 2007).

In contradistinction to other animals, humans also vary immensely from culture to culture and are not simply determined by their environment. Whereas already in the world of animal species external, aesthetic diversity has a value exceeding mere survival (Portmann, 1961), with the human species the diversity becomes extreme. Even though we are a relatively young species that have not evolved
into different subspecies, our physical variation is continuous, and the gene flow among human populations throughout history is the rule rather than exception. For example, diversity associated with skin pigmentation has enabled humans to extend successfully across the globe. A consequence however, is an enhanced human vulnerability to skin cancer for some with fair skin and to Vitamin D deficiency for others with dark skin.

Psychological diversities can be viewed in an analogous yet pervasively more problematic manner. This is because, unlike physical diversities, often increasingly celebrated in present-day cosmopolitan societies, mental and psychological diversities are becoming – with notable exceptions – ever more problematic. While diversities of physique, race, region and society are affirmed and applauded decorum, temperaments and conduct arguably must conform to ever-narrower norms. The space of indefinite individual freedom beyond biology and culture, a space that, to be sure, is always limited, now shrinks even further.

**Extreme ways of being human: visionaries, builders, changers and preservers**

Social roles one is engaged throughout life can be played with varying levels of identification and different levels of performance. Each role is thus constituted by the mode of subjective experience and by the mode of objective behavior. As far as the first of these modes is concerned, the continuum of human role engagement extends from a full identification to a total distance. As for the second mode, the continuum of performance extends from being a superb to
being a very bad social actor. As described earlier by Schwartz and Wiggins (Schwartz & Wiggins, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2010), on the basis of criteria of social role-playing and social role-identification we can postulate the existence of four personality types (merely ideal-typical in the Max Weber’s sense, meaning not appearing in reality “as such”).

In order to emphasize the positive qualities of each of the types which we will discuss later, let us metaphorically call them: visionaries, builders, changers and preservers. Since people vary enormously in their capacity to identify with and follow social rules and norms, most of the population is not represented by either of these extremes of the broad spectrum of humanity, while a perfectly balanced personality would be located at the intersection of both criteria. Due to their extremeness in both identification with and playing social roles, these types lack normal (average) flexibility.

Table 1
Four personality types

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<th></th>
<th>Visionaries (agonomia)</th>
<th>Builders (hypernomia)</th>
<th>Changers (hyponomia)</th>
<th>Preservers (idionomia)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Role Playing</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>Role Identification</td>
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Visionaries are characterized by very poor role-playing and very poor role identification. They are *agonomic* – they struggle with social norms and lack the abilities to play social roles. Builders are characterized by very good role-playing and very good role-identification. They are *hypernomic* – they strongly identify with social norms and are highly capable of playing social roles. Changers are characterized by very good role-playing and very poor role-identification. They are *hyponomic*, meaning that they do not identify with the roles that they are nevertheless capable of playing superbly. Preservers are characterized by poor role-playing and over-identification with personal norms. They are *idionomic* – almost idiosyncratic, as they are extremely self related and are therefore unable to play their social roles effectively.

On the negative side, each of these types can be interpreted from within the perspective of a particular mental illness. Since their world-openness and their possibilities of being within their social environment are highly limited, they are – in George Canguilhem’s terms – pathological (Canguilhem, 2007). The qualities of visionaries are close to the schizophrenia spectrum. An example of their radical creativity are the so-called primary delusions, coming out of nowhere and presenting a subject with conflicting states of affairs (Jaspers, 1963; Schwartz & Wiggins, 1992). Builders exemplify what Hubertus Tellenbach and Alfred Kraus meant by the *typus melancholicus*, and their qualities may, at times, become even depressive (Kraus, 1977; Tellenbach, 1972). Builders are thus highly conventional, hyper-normal people who, due to their extreme form of identification with social roles, have problems with tolerating ambiguity. Changers embody qualities characteristic of anti-social personality or
psychopathy. They often act beyond societal norms, which they merely perform. They play social roles while maintaining inwardly an extreme distance from them. They are manipulative and potentially highly destructive to others. Finally, preservers are closest to the anxiety disorders, and especially the obsessive-compulsive disorder. They are scrupulous beyond the norm and adhere to their idiosyncratic rules to the extent of being enslaved by them.

**Historical function of abnormality: a new philosophy of history**

Nevertheless, it is not our intention to underline the negative or pathological qualities of these types, but on the contrary – to understand them as human ways of being or “existential types” (Kraus, 1977). Therefore, not only do we use these names in a descriptive, non-normative and non-pejorative sense, but also we aim at showing certain strengths associated with their functional abnormalities. Our guiding principle is that we should never *a priori* and exclusively pathologize, but embrace and appreciate human diversity and plurality.

In order to appreciate the positive side of our four types, we must now leave the individualist perspective and have a look at them from a broader cultural and historical context (as suggested earlier by Schwartz and Wiggins (1999). It is because the features of a particular type – analogically to an individual organism – do not present a whole picture, if not seen in the context of its environment and its cultural world. By adding the extra factor of time, we realize that this environment and the world are ultimately historical. Therefore, as we shall see, the proposed typology is not static but dynamic, and as such provides a
framework for conceptualizing historical change. In other words, it sketches a certain philosophy of history in the sense of a theory of cultural-historical process.

Traditionally, philosophy of history has dealt with the changes in time on a grand scale. Today, it is common to distinguish speculative and critical philosophy of history. Speculative philosophy of history used to provide all-encompassing models of historical development, and is represented by classical figures such as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Karl Marx or Arnold J. Toynbee. On the other hand, critical philosophy of history does not deal with historical process per se, but with historical narratives. It is not concerned with fathoming the mysterious nature of historical becoming, but with the epistemological task of understanding its narrative representations. Although all-encompassing models of the 19th and early 20th century have been obviously discredited today, philosophy of history is by no means absent from contemporary humanities and social sciences. As a matter of fact, the speculative task of philosophy of history has been replaced by more scientific, theory-based models.

It is not uncommon among historians and psychiatrists to be concerned with questions of the impact of mental disorders on culture and history, and to apply psychopathological concepts with the intentions of understanding at least some aspects of the historical process. Viktor Frankl used to distinguish three historical epochs on the basis of its major, representative neurotic concerns and concomitant three stages in the development of psychoanalysis: Freudian, Adlerian and his own (Frankl, 1968). Robins and Post argued that the concept of
paranoia – applied by the authors in a more psychoanalytic vein – may help us to understand several 20th century mass atrocities. More importantly, the authors claimed that the continuum of paranoid behaviors belongs to our evolutionary history and is as such a part of human nature, with its occasionally destructive influences (Robins & Post, 1997). Even such a profoundly unsystematic work of anti-psychoanalytic social philosophy as Anti-Oedipus, presented a quasi-universal history of the processes called de- and re-territorialization, consisting of three major epochs (or social formations) and their representative figures (or “bodies”): the savage, the barbarian, and the civilized man (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983).

More recently Nassir Ghaemi envisioned what he called a new psychological history, i.e. one that uses psychiatric concepts in its interpretation of history without pathologizing its subject matter (Ghaemi, 2011). Ghaemi argued that certain abnormality traits may help to make good leaders, especially in the times of crisis. His examples included William T. Sherman, Winston Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy. Ghaemi interpreted certain depressive traits, such as those of Churchill, as leading towards a greater political realism, and therefore, better predictions of a future. On the other hand, he saw certain manic traits, such as those of Kennedy, as providing an enhanced resilience. His overall point was that there is a deeper stigma anchored in our culture, which often prevents us from seeing the benefits of mental illness. Therefore – and this is where we agree with Ghaemi on principle – we should embrace the interpretative possibility that mental abnormality may entail certain functional advantages, which in turn may have great impact upon the course of history. As
normal is not necessarily good, so abnormal is not necessarily bad.

Having all this in mind, let us think of a possible role for our ideal-typical models in a dynamically changing historical world, and underscore the positive qualities of their otherwise abnormal characteristics.

Table 2

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<th>Personality Type</th>
<th>Historical Function</th>
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<tr>
<td>Visionaries</td>
<td>Innovative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builders</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changers</td>
<td>Revolutionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preservers</td>
<td>Antiquarian</td>
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Visionaries are visionaries precisely because they are not bound to existing rules of conduct. Hence, they can be exceptionally creative and capable of establishing principles of a “new system”. Their fragmented world, in which all sorts of free-associations are possible, makes them capable of providing a paradigm shift of a social order. The creative, “metaphoric-anarchic”² (Dobosz, 2013) thought processes (consisting in weakening and breaking up relations between objects as well as transformations and violating oppositions) are utterly important at times in between historical epochs. It is because these are the times when old systems fall apart and new systems are not yet constituted. Their historical function is being innovative.

An example of such a radical creativity inventing a wholly new system was the
transfer between hunting-gathering societies and horticultural-pastoral societies. This is not to say that domestication of animals has been the work of a proverbial “madman”, but merely that it required a *radically new* and *unprecedented* way of thinking and imagination. In other words, it required a visionary (or visionaries) who would break the continuity of previous development in the most unusual and un-thought-of way.

Yet, visionaries lack qualities enabling them to perform the revolution themselves. Building a new system requires, precisely, builders, who – in contradistinction to the visionaries – over-identify themselves with the rules of conduct and are simultaneously very good in performing their roles. As such, builders are fully committed to the given system and too rigid to adapt to any changing circumstances. Since they are ago-weak and lack an authentic self and role-distance, their true being is in their role. Society at large depends upon them, as they are people who would do their job and follow their social roles, no matter what happens and no matter how personally unsatisfied they are. Since they are fixed upon repeating the past, lack an open future and are not determining the future themselves, they are mentally fine when everything goes in a predictable, systematic way. For the very same reason, they are unable to change the system. Their perform a *conservative* function of maintaining a given society’s standards and norms.

Modern examples of builders are the bureaucrats – thousands of female and male clerks who scrupulously follow the orders of their superiors and expect the same from their subordinates as well as all ordinary citizens. The bureaucrats
literarily built the modern state and economic administrative apparatus and they are those who uphold its overwhelming power. They are in need of regulations of all aspects of life, thrive in strictly ordered normative circumstances, but start to feel guilty when not strictly following any instructions. Indeed, the builders are exceptionally reliable, but their major limitation is that they are unable to change the rules of the social game they are following.

In that capacity, they must be replaced by those, who were able to merely play social roles without identifying with them. The latter people are the changers. It is because changers are capable of bringing the existing rules of a social game, invented by the visionaries and manufactured by the builders, to the extreme. Since they are risk-taking, attachment-lacking, and find it easy to move on, they are able to violate social norms and easily adapt to rapidly changing circumstances. The latter are especially advantageous at the times of crisis. Changers can, in a way, “deconstruct” the system from the inside, while the changes that they propose often take form of a creative destruction. Their historical function is therefore revolutionary.

There are no better historical times in which changers can flourish than our own, post-modern period. In an age, in which anybody can be anyone, their personality traits make them almost predestined for success. That is to say, when the rules of the social game are shifting rapidly, changers' inward distance from their roles paired with their outstanding role performance enables them to constantly reinvent themselves. Their often-perceived vulnerability is maliciousness and selfishness, but their advantage is the strength that is needed
to play freely with the rules and thus start something new. The changers are contemporary super-achievers – computer gurus, heads of international organizations and political leaders who are superb players of the norms of conduct of their institutions. Both evil and good can come out of their behavior, but it would be foolish – historically speaking – to deny that we need “creative destruction,” even if its excess always creates harms. Real psychopaths and sociopaths are often destroyers, but they can also create through destruction by checking the limits of what is possible within the given game. Because of that, changers are usually situated at the peak of development of a given culture – at its climatic pinnacle. After their intervention, a culture starts to fall, while they are unable to stop this process and save what is valuable from the previous epoch.

This is where preservers come in with their historical role to play. Preservers are fearful and anxious about the unexpected, they act to prevent changes, and in order to keep themselves calm they prefer to dwell in what is sure and secure, namely, the past. The best future for them is the continuation of the past, one that provides them with the comfort of the predictable. Preservers can be librarians, art historians and collectors, who are often obsessed with and bothered by their subject matter of interest – in short, they are all sorts of traditionalists obsessed with their idiosyncratic interests, and their historical function is antiquarian.

Good examples of preservers were Christian monks that appeared on the historical scene during the times of chaos and anarchy separating the ancient
and the mediaeval times. These monks retreated into monasteries and spent their lives trying to preserve whatever there was to preserve from the shattered Roman Empire, painstakingly coping the ancient philosophical and scientific manuscripts, knowledge and values of a world long gone. By doing so, they raised a wholly new world, fixated upon repeating the past. They identified themselves with it, and hence the rigidity and relative inflexibility of the mediaeval worldview. Clearly, without them, we would have no Greek and Roman literature just as we would have no knowledge of Hippocratic medicine.

The historical role of preservers can be also exemplified by obsolete technologies. After the invention of the printing press by Guttenberg and the wholly new system of book production built upon his discovery, handwritten books became old-fashioned and simply unreasonable. Analogically, the digital revolution of the late 20th century made the paper copies obsolete for certain purposes, such as saving space. Nowadays, computer technologies creatively destroy the traditional printing techniques in a similar vein to the latter destroying handwritten manuscripts five hundred years earlier. Yet, despite this fact, there are still preservers, who will cherish the beauty and the quality of the pages written by hand – certainly, not necessarily obsessive-compulsive, but much closer on the continuum to idiosyncratic role identification and much further away from being good role players of their contemporaries’ social game.

When a given culture or cultural accomplishment comes to an end, erected by the builders and presumably destroyed by the changers, an opportunity to start something completely new appears on the horizon. For that to be accomplished,
however, some new visionaries are needed – ones not bound to previous rules and norms and capable of providing a fresh start. In the meantime, there are still at least some preservers, who will value and protect the remnants of the disappearing world.

**Conclusions: protecting human diversity**

The foregoing, speculative examples are not at all exhaustive and are merely intended to illustrate the informative potential of the presented model, as it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide its empirical validity. It should suffice to say that the model provides a culture-centered perspective and enables us to appreciate the culture-producing and transformative power of some of the extremes within the spectrum of human personalities. This spectrum, when viewed as a whole, enables conceptualization of large-scale cultural change in a manner that is appreciative of our species' biological and cultural diversity⁴.

The biological diversity of the human species enabled our ancestors to spread over most of the earth during thousands of years of migrations, while its psychological diversity enabled the creation of a variety of cultures. Visionaries, builders, changers, preservers as well as other atypical actors from the past had their impact upon the creation of our civilized world. In addition to their obvious shortcomings, they have thrived in favorable circumstances. Speaking from the broad perspective of the history of civilizations, all of them were needed, if only to perform the tasks that most of the (normal) people would have not been capable of performing.
Therefore, we claim that, even if pathological when viewed within such a perspective, these personalities bring with them certain evolutionary and historical advantages. This assertion is in principle consistent with the basic ideas of the neurodiversity movement, which posits that many disorders of mind and brain, such as ADHD, Autism or Dyslexia, actually entail particular capacities and may be adaptive for the survival of the human species as a whole (Armstrong, 2015). We maintain that in order to draw strengths from the actual biological, cultural and mental multiplicity of human species, we must start by looking at it with an unbiased eye and allow the perspective of diversity to take the place of the presupposition of mental illness. We will then discover the spectrum of the plurality of human beings and its functional advantages in an appropriate cultural-historical context. Such a diversity perspective – similarly to the one of the neurodiversity movement – may thus undermine the very possibility of an a-historical ontology of mental disorders. Even more importantly, in the face of the unpredictability of future socio-political circumstances, protection of human diversity makes us better prepared for the unknown future. If we are unable to preserve the behavioral and mental extremes that come with diversity, we may find ourselves acting against the moral imperative of responsibility as expressed by Hans Jonas – act in a way that your actions are compatible with the permanence of genuine human life and do not endanger the future possibility of such life (Jonas, 1984).
References


An example would be world-system analysis offering clear explanation of the transition between the feudal and the capitalist worlds (Wallerstein, 2004), or an even more comprehensive, widely used developmental typology of societies along the historical trajectory, dividing them into hunting and gathering, horticultural and pastoral, agrarian, industrial and post-industrial. The latter is based upon the criterion of primary means of subsistence and therefore very common sense (Nolan & Lenski, 2015). Using a different distinguishing criterion, such as phenomenological account of human activities, would lead us to an entirely different classification (Arendt, 1958).

It has been argued that a relationship exists between primitive, magical-mythical thinking and schizophrenia, as in both the pre-logical thinking associated with human creativity dominates above the causal-logical thinking (Mazurkiewicz, 1980). In this sense, the positive symptoms of schizophrenia can be interpreted as a product of magical culture-like dissolution. A more recent theory posited that the structure of the expressions of schizophrenic patients through which symptom are revealed resembles the structure of mythical tales and the delusions and hallucinations of its heroes (Dobosz, 2013).

Taking advantage of the concept of narrative identity instead of the role-playing and role-identification criteria, Thomas Fuchs has argued that it is actually the borderline personality that is the most suitable for the postmodern age (Fuchs, 2007).

As far as the question of the structure of the historical process is concerned, the model we propose is circular-linear (Dray, 1964). At the same time, it does assume some extent of both linear progress and regress, but only within a given circle of change.