

# Kill the Psychologists First!

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Terror, depression, addictions, sadness, obsessions – these and similar demons typically drive our patients into our consulting room. But the work we do, as psychoanalytic psychotherapists, actually requires that we distract them, and ourselves, from these immediate concerns. We listen intensively to their subjective pains, and then we probe beyond these into the deeper layers of the self. What we find there are their hopes and dreams, their regrets and nightmares, their loves found and loves lost. Pleasant or not, at the most basic levels of their being, we help them discover what Jacques Lacan describes as their “desire.”

Yet we live in a society that may well be increasingly threatened by individuals pursuing such desire, particularly in occupational settings. Many people may find their work gratifying and fulfilling; their work may well be consonant with their actual wishes. But some may consider these to be the lucky ones. Too many individuals simply don't know where their skills or passions lie, and in a depressed job-market their quest becomes all the more bewildering and desperate.

Our society as a whole rarely promotes true self-actualization. The skewed values promulgated by the media and the advertising industry often serve as outright impediments to personal authenticity. Our public educational institutions and the recent proliferation of “for-profit” schools of higher education can also fail the developing self. The former often promote students by any means possible, ignoring who they really are, be they artists, musicians, or writers. Limited cognitive-intellectual modes of learning marginalize whole populations of students. The “for profit” advanced educational institutions lure students by offering aid packages and, typically, false promises of job placement. Their focus is not the students' discovery of the gifts or true desires that could lead to fulfillment in the marketplace, or in their lives overall.

What Lacan means by desire is not a wish per se, but a general striving for fulfillment or meaning, a seeking of what makes life worthwhile. Often our patients' mental pain has emerged from the thwarting of their desires, typically resulting from adherence to unconscious dramas into which they were unwittingly drawn during their early childhood. As a result, they find themselves involved in unsatisfying love relationships and unfulfilling careers, lacking sufficient recreation or play, and generally living their lives in an inauthentic fashion.

Once these layers are unpeeled, and the underlying dramas are exposed and slowly altered, the more authentic being emerges. Gradually, individuals begin conducting their lives in harmony with their true natures. Of course, exceptions exist. Not everyone will benefit from psychoanalytic psychotherapy. Some individuals need the assistance of psychopharmacological agents to reduce biologically-based psychiatric disorders; others need governmental and alternative forms of aid so that they can achieve basic standards of living before the process of self-actualization can realistically begin. But even these individuals, assuming that they have mental pain and feel they are not thriving in their lives, can benefit

from psychoanalytic psychotherapy. This also assumes, of course, that they can afford it, are educated enough to even know of its existence, and are not swayed by cultural biases against it.

With the rise of globalization and the metastatic growth of multinational corporations, the individual's search for "personal truth" may become increasingly undervalued. **The concentration of vast wealth in the hands of so few raises the specter of the kind of "slavery" that Karl Marx decried, in which the dreams, needs and welfare of the workers were completely subordinated to the "true desires" of the all-powerful owners of industry.** Even the behaviorist B.F. Skinner, of all people, once argued that the interests of the large corporations would ultimately conflict with the basic needs of individuals.

In his excellent book, [The Empire of Illusion](#), Chris Hedges forcefully argues that corporations meet the criteria for being considered psychopaths – they are motivated solely by self-interest and lack empathy for others; they manipulate to achieve their goals, lie and deceive when necessary, and seek only profit.

Now that corporations can contribute to political campaigns as if they were individuals, their influence upon government is greater than ever, beyond what even Marx might have imagined. The last thing a corporately-influenced government would want is a profession that raises the consciousness of individuals, helps them find themselves, and assists them in adjusting their lives to be more in consonance with their true desires. Therefore, the work of the psychoanalytic psychotherapist may well become unpopular, or even dangerous. If corporate America ultimately sets its sights on federal governance, then maybe they should kill the psychologists first.