

Review of: "Addiction as a Loss of Inner Freedom"

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Addiction as a Loss of Inner Freedom

This article was interesting in its perspective on addiction, solely focused on conscious life, choice, and will. The point about the loss of inner (and, I would add, outer) freedom is crucial to the problem of addictions. The information presents a perspective and treatment based on the attainment of freedom and will, which are hampered by the repetitive trap of addictions. The viewpoint was supported by referencing the German philosopher Immanuel Kant and his concepts of reason. The authors contended, 'the understanding of these metaphysical principles is an important part of the recovery of an addict who wants to build a logical system of opinion.' They included the necessary balance between the mind or brain and body needs. This makes sense, but its basis solely on reason leaves out the complex unconscious issues driving the addict. I realize their focus is on conscious reason and will. However, the reality of the unconscious and the integration of the intrapsychic and interpersonal are also integral to the capacity to be aware of oneself. This is abandoned in the addictive responses to stress, life, and self. The coherent self is unavailable to the addict, and therefore one is certainly not free.

The pleasure the authors promote as driving the addictions leaves out the additional factors. Yes, pleasure is there, but over time, one needs more to satisfy the pleasure until the pain threshold is reached. Is it pleasure, or is it the brain, body, and soul having learned to feign life, not live it with conscious and willful intent? The mind struggles and finds freedom by going through the pain to gain freedom of thought and mind. There are many outlooks and perspectives on addiction, and this one presented here is reason-bound and will-directed.

The underlying philosophical ideas, although of interest and consequence, do not address the childhood, transgenerational history, culture, and psychological make-up of the addict. The development of personality does include the unconscious as part of what engenders choice and will. Inner freedom cannot be had only on the conscious plane. Too often, the conscious situations and outer issues become the focus rather than the underlying foundations on which our personal and collective worlds are built.

The concepts presented of self-endangerment are significant to note as addiction is a serious assault against life. The attention to the loss of identity and soul, with its isolative effects, is equally destructive and integral to the life of the addict who leaves the social world and is caught in endlessly repeating a predictable loop of cravings. The authors bring out the draw to the illusionary fostered by addictions. This segregates one from reality in the loss of self-awareness and will. The addict makes meaning of the illusions, leading a person farther from themselves, and sacrificing choice and will. This

person is unable to reflect and therefore is prevented from having a sense of self or self-awareness.

Another question to ponder is whether freedom and the ability to handle it can be frightening. Therefore, one tends to remain in the prison and confinement of addictions that seem a safer route. Caught in the loop of unreality, one is also driven by unconscious and transgenerational forces calling to be understood as part of the healing. The authors referred to the ability to sustain uncertainty. Carl Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist of the twentieth century, addressed the ability to hold the tension of the opposites in the mind and body and thus establish their union to result in a third thing, a surprise from the evolution of consciousness resulting in the transformation of the personality. In Jungian analytical psychology, the complexes or inner objects, as named in psychoanalysis, operate unconsciously so that bringing them to consciousness is part of gaining freedom and will.

The discussion of social media and its effect on our lives is a significant contribution. The point they make about the narrowing of brain pathways when there is only the same gadget in hand brings one to ponder the social effects upon the individual. What are we giving up for what we assume to be progress? The authors make the point that the brain is more alive and creative with many pathways available. I would add to this the whole personality, with its access to the unconscious, brings what they call 'happiness exiting into the lobby of personal freedom'. As the Freudian psychoanalyst Jonathan Lear proposed, "from a psychoanalytic standpoint, there are no autonomous actions. We are filled with inner objects with which we have various sorts of relations. We have an unconscious which makes us complex beings...Thus the Kantian ideal of autonomy is unrealizable. If we want to keep autonomy alive as a value in ethical life, we need to develop a plausible account of what kinds of intrapsychic relations with internal figures might nevertheless count as manifestations of autonomy" (Lear, 2003, p. 1359).

Because the article brought another perspective, albeit leaving off the unconscious, it was thought-provoking. Whether one agrees or not with the author's premise, the stirring of reflection about addiction is valuable. Inner freedom and pleasure are releases from the clutch of addictions.

Lear, J. (2003). 'The idea of a moral psychology: the impact of psychoanalysis on philosophy in Britain' *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*.84, pp.1351–61.