

Disharmony of the soul

Many philosophers have said that a meaningful life requires goals and an effort to reach them. But what if our aims are disharmonious, contradictory, conflicting? What if we don't know what we really want, and cannot decide how to proceed? What if we are confused and divided within, at odds with ourselves, our own enemies? What if we suffer from incoherence, internal battle and remorse instead of being able to accept and love ourselves? We are often told to be ourselves, but what if we are not a unified self at all but several incompatible selves? If goals give life meaning, this entails that the meaning of life gets fragmented and endangered.

Disintegration may result in an inability to act - a sort of paralysis - or then wavering, oscillating, chaotic action: we start one way and then switch to another route that does not cohere with the previous one.

Maybe we can prune our wants and goals to enable coherent long-term action. Julius Evola writes well that "the problem of being oneself has a [...] solution in terms of unification. Once one has discovered through experiment, which of the manifold tendencies is the central one, one sets about identifying it with one's will, stabilizing it, and organizing all one's secondary or divergent tendencies around it. This is what it means to give oneself a law, one's own law." Being a unified self is not possible until we discover our core tendencies and learn to discard deviant peripheral drives. Perhaps the latter wither away altogether.

But sometimes we cannot dissolve disharmony, and there is nothing else to do than to give up, to resign. We accept the fact of internal disunity and retreat to a higher plane. Since we cannot control our conflicting desires and aims, we leave them as they are. This may mean peaceful cessation of willing and action; or then we act with a sense of lightness that is engendered by an awareness of the arbitrariness of our choice. In both cases the anxiety of trying to find the uniquely correct path is lessened.