

**THE DUALITY OF MAN
THROUGH THE METAPHOR OF THE WOLF IN STEPPENWOLF**

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***Abstract:** The present article aims to offer an insight into the psychological evolution of the main character in the modernist novel, *Steppenwolf*, written by Hermann Hesse. The duality of man is a very broad, complex and highly debated topic and it has been viewed as a many layered topic since it implies psychology, philosophy of mind, theories of personality, ontology, phenomenology and not least, socio-cultural strings. Modernism is known as a cultural movement illustrating the 20th century world and it is a key reference regarding the understanding of human evolution up to the present because there were not only historical events that changed everything irrevocably such as the world wars, but there were new perspectives about life and existence on this earth. The identity of the person became a central theme tackled by most scholars, linguists, writers, philosophers and thinkers. The imagery presented in modernist novels stand as pieces of a whole focused on subjectivism in terms of experiences, consciousness of the person and complexity of the human being's inwardness. The distinctive features of their narratives are on one hand, the effect produced by the text and on the other hand, the infinite challenges when decoding the meanings. Another main aspect is the lack of plot happening that becomes a string of psychological searches. The main frame of work present throughout this paper is symbolism, some of the Jungian concepts as part of the character's understanding of his self, and observations related to psychological terms such as consciousness, self-awareness, unconscious, person that shall be viewed in the light of phenomenology. The interpretation is divided in three main parts, according to the key aspects that were traced: the idea of double through the metaphor of the wolf, the social effects on the character's perception, and his relation towards him and others.*

***Keywords:** double, self, Jungian concepts, psychological insight;*

1.1 The person and his/her dark side through the metaphor of the wolf:

Hermann Hesse: *Steppenwolf*

One obvious difference between humans and animals is the rational thinking possessed by people and consequently, all the inner courses of feelings, anxieties lived consciously and many others gathered in the unconscious. Due to this fact, the complexity of man cannot even be compared to those of animals but there is the so-called animalic side of humans which is a reality due to the layer shared by both: survival. Thus, man cultivates his humanity and tries to avoid this dark side because his main goals are knowledge and civilization. Being civilized means behaving with the conscience of morality and this implies spreading love, kindness, patience, empathy. The animalic side is called and considered as being dark because it means brutality and acts of violence, mainly the psychological cases being targeted here, towards oneself and towards otherness. The contrast is a sort

of duality present within man and very much connected to his struggle: a quest of his origin, of his identity, and directly of his self. As a result, literature comes as a book of knowledge containing revealing examples and answers, helping the readers to better understand themselves, life, and the way of the world.

A novel that outlines very interesting details in connection to this struggle and this dual existence of animalic/dark impulses and social, spiritual, emotional, psychological sides within man is *Steppenwolf* written by the German writer, Hermann Hesse. It describes the evolution of the main character Harry Haller towards self-consciousness and self-knowledge. It is a story within a story but the focus is on this man.

The background is compiled from the impressions of a third-person narrator who presents the new tenant of his aunt. Then, he exposes the confessions of this tenant who left a sort of reflexive journal when leaving forever. Thus, the narrator becomes the tenant himself, named Harry Haller.

The largest part of the novel is covered by the first-person narration of Harry about his life, his experiences, and his thoughts. The atmosphere of the writing is most of the time real, but it has also surreal passages. Being a modernist piece that appeared originally in 1927 and translated in English in 1929, it has an open ending. This fact maintains, even more, its universal and regenerative meaning.

1.2 Haller and his society from the point of view of modernity

From the beginning of his confessions, Harry Haller mentions that he lives within the privileged class of bourgeoisie even if he strongly criticizes it: “So I went down the stairs from my room in the attic, those difficult stairs of this alien world, those thoroughly bourgeois, [...] I don't know how it comes about, but I, [...] the hater of life's petty conventions, always take up my quarters in just such houses as this” (Hesse, 1929:16). The German bourgeoisie has been described as “a supine class, genuflecting to the authoritarian state, aping the social values and manners of the aristocracy, lacking in civic spirit and political engagement” (Blackbourn& Evans, 1991). It appears as mediocre because people change their minds depending on interests and along with the class history they were characterized by lust for power through material ownership, this way of thinking being identified at all levels, mainly when talking about lifestyle, manners, clothing, etc. Surprisingly, more and more people of this kind can be identified today.

The character presents feelings of isolation because he is an outsider within his society. He lives physically among middle-class people but psychologically he does not identify with their outlook. He highlights this contrast through irony: “I like the contrast between my lonely, loveless, hunted, and thoroughly disorderly existence and this middle-class family life” (p. 16). One may realize that society is lacking in encouraging communication, love, and support between citizens. Appearance is what the character undermines or what the author himself tries to criticize through his voice.

Moreover, Haller calls himself “homeless steppenwolf” (p. 16). Being among his kind is not enough to embed to him the idea of protection or belonging. There is

no connection between him and them. This beginning of his testimonial forecasted his present world of depression. Everyone comes alone and leaves alone the world but family gives sense and purpose to life on earth. Home is where the beloved ones are. Home is where one finds peace and acceptance towards himself and ultimately, home is what we call happiness. One is at home where one is truly happy and content and reconciled with what one is and who one is. The character lost this sense and he remained only with the hope of recalling this state from childhood. He cannot find himself, nor does the society help him too much: "I live neither in palatial houses nor in those of the humble poor, but instead and deliberately in these respectable and wearisome and spotless middle-class homes[...]The love of this atmosphere comes, no doubt, from the days of my childhood" (p. 17). His origin is unknown for the other characters and also for the reader, but he does briefly mention that he is a divorced man, thus living alone, away from his past. He expresses only his feeling of homelessness. He could not rely on those around him because he would not fit the rules of that society and everything became a fight with himself. He is like a nomadic person, searching a "home" for his soul. This generates the situation of him moving out without talking to anyone when leaving, as it had happened according to the first narrator. He tries to find a path, exactly what every man does in this life.

Striking is another issue revealed from his words and the working image of the society is once again questioned. There is a moment of coldness and dreaming for Harry when he sees social activities such as going to the cinema or the orchestra as being only for ordinary, normal people: "But none of these was for me. They were for "everybody," for those normal persons whom I saw crowding every entrance" (p. 20). But then comes the question: What exactly is or means normality? Today, being normal refers firstly, to physical health and secondly, to behaviour. One is supposed to behave and think in a certain way to be considered normal, consequently, to be included in one's surrounding society. The danger is that it can become a sort of erasure of one's personal identity and one has to be at least conscious of this fact.

Nature is also an essential element for life and it influences most of the time the well-being of any person. Harry is experiencing such moments when observing a plant, araucaria. It is normally a tree, but it became an indoor plant due to humans who made it an ornament. It is not a usual tree and its history develops an interesting significance, besides its name, "the monkey puzzle tree": "The monkey puzzle tree is an unusual, attractive, and very interesting plant. Its ancestors coexisted with the dinosaurs and formed large forests" (Crampton, 2019). Its old roots link the plant to ancient times and it may be a small piece of the garden of Eden.

Harry sees the corner with araucaria as a sacred temple which touches unexpectedly his soul: "And now I came to the araucaria. [...] Sometimes, when I know that I am unobserved, I use this place as a temple" (Hesse, 1929:17). This scene has a double significance. The sacred was violated by men, nature being trapped inside, in an artificial landscape but the plant still has divine aura for those

who choose to feel it. Additionally, there is a paradox because if the character sees that place as a temple it means that the scene can also be a warning for those believing in deceitful gods such as money. This episode has great significance because it describes the Modernist anxiety: the loss of Eden, of innocence, the loss of the sense and feel for the sacred which produced within man the feeling of isolation and impossibility of belonging, therefore, signalling a new sense of identity.

The sight of the plant alters his perspective and at the same time guides, quietly, the thoughts of the character. Seeing it makes him realize the degree of hypocrisy of his fellows and all the dirt hidden behind that excessive cleanness. The description of the plant hides a counterfeit perfection, the one pretended by the bourgeoisie because it is surrounded by pride: “a stately araucaria, a thriving, straight-grown baby tree, a perfect specimen, which to the last needle of the topmost twig reflects the pride of frequent ablutions” (p. 17). The effect of the exaggerated clean environment has exactly the opposite effect and it is very useful for the reader to navigate through such a description because it is an exercise which leads the mind to the real face of the facts: “for this little vestibule shines with a superhuman housewifery” (p. 17).

An image can mean a lot of things but it is of high importance to be able to see beyond the appearance. It is again a warning for the present reader who is surrounded by advertisements and most of the time convinced and manipulated by them. The araucaria scene outlines how the reader is under the impression that he or she understands and controls what he assimilates when in fact, he does not catch the essence. Literature develops exactly this ability, to see, to think critically. Araucaria is an endangered plant because it grows very slowly. Its presence in the novel is very connected to reality, being a warning for humanity. Nature has to be admired and not damaged by human activity. When closed within houses or buildings it almost loses its divine effect intended as a soul medicine for the man himself. This universal theme of appearances, superficiality, ephemeral vs reality, introspection, enduring becomes more acute and more openly discussed in Modernity.

Kurt Fickert stated that: “Hesse uses the literary device of the epiphany to describe effectively the turmoil of his life and times and the transcendence beyond the resultant despair” (Fickert as cited in Milne, 2006:236). The character undergoes a crisis and such a moment of epiphany is recalled after the brief memory with araucaria. The two scenes are not connected but it is obvious how nature generates the reminder of such a source, music: “There were now and then, though rarely, the hours that brought the welcome shock, pulled down the walls and brought me back again from my wanderings to the living heart of the world. Sadly and yet deeply moved, I set myself to recall the last of these experiences. It was at a concert of lovely old music” (Hesse, 1929:18). The character confesses the unique feelings of these rare moments of spirituality and words appear as insufficient to express the sense of the ineffable.

Interestingly, araucaria has a symbolism which incorporates exactly the awareness coveted by Harry: “When working with the spirit of monkey puzzle we are reminded of the wisdom we gain from new adventures and how these adventures inspire us to adapt and transform in ways we may not have thought possible[...]taking risks is an important aspect of starting over again” (Wauters, n.d.). He is a fifty-year-old man who will discover life from a new perspective.

Harry himself mentions that he is different and that his joy comes from unusual experiences or at least seen as unusual because he cannot share them. The consequence would be his being perceived as a mad man: “On the other hand, what happens to me in my rare hours of joy, what for me is bliss and life and ecstasy and exaltation, the world in general seeks at most in imagination; in life it finds it absurd” (Hesse, 1929:18).

The nephew of the landlady, the first narrator, warns the reader that he presents a stranger who made him question the world he lived in because this man was not only unknown but also having a mysterious identity. The flow of his daily, common routine was changed by this man. He was not able to fully understand him but his writing was worth spreading because it opened the view upon society and personal being. It happened to him and he decided to make it known to everyone: “I often had to think of these words while reading the records. Haller belongs to those who have been caught between two ages [...] Therein, it seems to me, lies the meaning these records can have for us, and because of this I decided to publish them” (p. 14).

Suffering becomes the best solution for the character who initially cannot find fulfillment and peace and the nephew considered his manuscript so valuable because it describes the entire process of his pain and inner journey. This is the core of the novel because it applied not only to the 20th-century society, but it applies to the present one also. The sense of life is more and more lost by teenagers and identity becomes so uncertain that living is torture or self-punishment as it is for Harry. Nevertheless, the reader is informed that this example is positive and it gives hope differently because the writing itself was a sort of cure for the character: “Haller's sickness of the soul [...] the sickness of the times themselves [...] They mean, literally, a journey through hell [...] journey undertaken with the determination to go through hell from one end to the other, to give battle to chaos, and to suffer torture to the full” (p. 14).

1.3 Haller and the ‘Steppenwolf’

Steppenwolf is a novel considered by critics as autobiographical because there are many similarities between character and author. Firstly, there are the initials of their names, HH-Harry Haller and Hermann Hesse. Secondly, it is the personal crisis faced by them: “between 1924 and 1926, when he was writing the novel, Hesse went through a crisis similar to that faced by Haller. Like Haller, whose initials the author shares, Hesse felt depressed and tried to shake it off” (Milne, 2006:221). This frail situation created the double, the wolf.

Harry proclaims himself ‘Steppenwolf’ from the beginning because this is how he presented himself to the nephew of the landlady who met him in person. His shouting is more like a howl rather than a human call: “Ah, but it is hard to find this track of the divine in the midst of this life we lead, in this besotted humdrum age of spiritual blindness [...] How could I fail to be a lone wolf, and an uncouth hermit, as I did not share one of its aims nor understand one of its pleasures?” (Hesse, 1929:18). Loneliness produced the feeling of isolation and the character notices that he is different because he cares about inner growth rather than those around him.

A wolf can live alone but most of the time he is part of a pack or the leader of that pack. He can adapt to drastic climate changing and beside his strength, he can run long ways to find food. The character cannot find a pack because he chooses to live alone and to hide himself from the society. He pursues that long run towards the unconscious side of his mind and he maintains the track of his journey through writing.

There are many species of wolves but interesting about them is their connection and communication: “Wolves communicate, collaborate and share knowledge across generations. The older wolves, as more experienced hunters, share hunting strategies and techniques with younger wolves” (Wheeler, n.d.). The character has lost its roots and this blurs his existence: “wolves form friendships and maintain lifelong bonds. They succeed by cooperating, and they struggle when they’re alone” (as cited previously).

Related to communication, wolves use visual, olfactory, and vocal instincts to understand each other. Similarities with humans are obvious and they sustain the choice of the character to call himself a wolf. They mirror some aspects from reality: “Eye contact can be used as a friendly greeting, but a direct stare is a threat, whereas subordinate Wolves or Coyotes avoid eye contact when they meet the direct look of a dominant individual” (Castello, 2018:18). Regarding the olfactory sense: “Marks may be made on objects, territory, or scent marks of other individuals, or the animal may mark itself” (p. 18). Marking the territory partly reassembles buying properties. Vocal sounds are even more intriguing and related to the facial expressions because humans use very often face mimics or sounds that function as a code: “Most Canids vocalize during the first weeks of life, but subsequently there is an inhibition of that behavior outside the home den,[...] It serves to bring individuals together, to inform rivals of pack presence and may indicate an animal’s size and aggressiveness” (p. 18). It is just as men who learn to think before talking and ‘howl’, speak only when necessary, raising of the tone happening mostly when defending something. The character internalizes all these aspects and he does not ‘defend’ himself directly by talking to someone about his deepest suffering, but he writes, instead.

The moment of him realizing his double face is when receiving a strange book from a mysterious man on the street at night. The book is entitled *Treatise on the Steppenwolf*. This treatise is written by an objective narrator but those lines describe harsh facts about Harry. The first one assails his personality: “And so the

Steppenwolf had two natures, a human and a wolfish one. [...]In him the man and the wolf did not go the same way together, but were in continual and deadly enmity” (Hesse, 1929:25). Most of us encountered such periods when having or living with the impression that we are divided selves because here being a wolf refers to behavior, acting like a wolf. The entire novel challenges the idea of singular identity and these multiple views about Harry reflect the request for psychological clarity and transparency specific to Modernism.

Another point of discussion is inclined towards pain and suffering: “It cannot be denied that he was generally very unhappy, and he could make others unhappy also, that is, when he loved them or they him” (p. 26). This general state of sadness is created by a projection of the mind and a change takes place only when accepting your condition.

The next sorrow emerged from lost faith: “The "suicide," and Harry was one, need not necessarily live in a peculiarly close relationship to death. One may do this without being a suicide. What is peculiar to the suicide is that his ego [...] is felt to be an extremely dangerous, dubious, and doomed germ of nature” (p. 28). Suicide means not only disappearing physically. The novel pictures the psychological suicide of the character which can also be tracked on real people in present societies.

Additionally, this treatise on steppenwolf reveals Jungian concepts that offer an even richer insight into the consciousness of the character. The objective narrator mentions what is happening to Harry and what cause is behind his actions: “Harry finds in himself a human being, that is to say, a world of thoughts and feelings, of culture and tamed or sublimated nature, and besides this, he finds within himself also a wolf, that is to say, a dark world of instinct, of savagery and cruelty, of unsublimated or raw nature” (p. 35). This is what Jung names “shadow”: “Next is the shadow. This is the animal side of our personality (like the id in Freud). It is the source of both our creative and destructive energies” (Jung as cited in McLeod, 2018). We can realize that a shadow is not only the visible one but also the invisible one, that which is felt. We cannot forget about it because we experience such thoughts almost every day. Creativity is born from this process and our good or bad energy comes from it.

The other concept found in Jung is “the self”: “there is the self which provides a sense of unity in experience. For Jung, the ultimate aim of every individual is to achieve a state of selfhood (similar to self-actualisation), and in this respect, Jung (like Erikson) is moving in the direction of a more humanist orientation” (as cited previously). This is exactly what the character does. He has lost the ‘unity’ of his being and he is desperately trying to find “psychic wholeness and spiritual understanding” (Milne, 2006:221). The ending of the treatise expounds that it will be a long, harsh path for the character: “Now we bid Harry good-bye and leave him to go on his way alone” (Hesse, 1929:40).

Harry’s first encounter is with a ridiculous representation of death. Unforeseen, he watches a funeral, and instead of empathizing with human sorrow, he realizes that it is a masquerade. Cold faces and unvalued words of a priest. Not even such

an event could escape bourgeoisie deceitfulness: “I saw the clergyman and the other vultures and functionaries of a burial establishment going through their performances [...] they outdid themselves and from pure acting they got caught in their own lies and ended by being comic” (p. 45). He calls them vultures because their close-minded sight views only the prey, traces of feelings being erased. Once again the character receives the confirmation that people present appearances and selfishness.

Subsequently, the feminine presence comes unexpectedly and changes everything. Harry meets Hermine to a local pub, “The Black Eagle”. It marks the entrance into real life because she teaches him to live: to dance, to laugh, to remove, at least for a while, his sadness and it is also the beginning of his connection to his unconscious. This entrance is his path towards salvation and towards his mind, exactly as the eagle foreshadows: “In early Christianity the eagle was seen as a symbol of hope and strength, representing salvation” (Trish, n.d.); “The Verreaux Eagle is a Symbol of power and is about taking back authority of your mind or a material matter. [...] If things do not look clear, or they appear bleak it’s okay to seek guidance from trusted and experienced advisor whose able to tell you the truth” (Lemon, 2018).

Hermine is seen as a man by Harry. Her face reminds him of his childhood friend, Herman. There are already too many name coincidences and this game proves to be part of the psychical peregrination. Hermine guesses the pain of her new acquaintance and she seems to have solutions and answers to his exact feelings. She is very spontaneous and fills his life with joy. The character himself confesses that he has met a sort of teacher who makes him obey because she has broken his isolation: “she seemed to know more of life than is known to the wisest of the wise.[...] Though I saw Hermine only for the second time that day, she knew everything about me and it seemed to me quite impossible that I could ever have a secret from her” (Hesse, 1929:71).

He has met his “anima”: “the feminine element within a man” (Milne, 2006:232). This is another Jungian concept present in the novel: “The “anima/animus” is the mirror image of our biological sex, that is, the unconscious feminine side in males and the masculine tendencies in women” (Jung as cited in McLeod, 2018). Harry himself mentions the mirroring: “Why, you’re my opposite. You have all that I lack.[...] It was indeed like a magic mirror to me” (Hesse, 1929:68). Hermine is his incarnated spiritual half who makes him understand life, love through Maria, her friend, and experience the unconscious through Pablo, a saxophone player known by her. She accomplishes the role of an advisor and path-opener rather than being that half understood as wife.

Ultimately, this novel is a representation of a psychological search, that of Harry, which can be found in any human being living in any society because the unseen will always be mysterious. Each has his or her own experiences and through sharing them the understanding is broadened. As it was the case of this character, many times we can be our own teachers if we accept our way of being

without judging ourselves but sowing seeds of knowledge, responsibility, love, sharing, and cultivating peace with the selves.

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