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**AN ATTEMPT AT DELINEATION OF DEVELOPMENTAL PHASES
OF PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC PRACTICES IN ALBANIA**

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Abstract: *The psychotherapist profession is establishing itself among mental health professions spectrum in Albania during the last decade. The paper aims at providing a historical account of psychotherapeutic practices, attempting to delineate historical phases of its development up to the current state. An enterprise as such integrates accounts and research from various disciplines, primary and secondary sources of data, to bring forth a historically situated narrative of cultural conceptualizations and treatment practices for mental health disturbances.*

Keywords: *healing practices, psychotherapist profession, psychotherapy development in Albania*

INTRODUCTION

Psychotherapy slowly developed during the 19th century in Western Europe and broke through the beginning of the 20th century with the work of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) (Cautin, 2011; Pritz, 2002; Ellenberger, 1970). Freud is credited as the founder of modern psychotherapy. He defined the psychotherapist as a secular pastor of souls (Roudinesco, 2006), whose knowledge expertise in humanities and the scientifically established efficacy of his treatment methods (Wampold, 2001) have shaped his professional identity as an independent and autonomous profession (Pritz, 2011). The professional identity of the psychotherapist profession has taken a long course of accommodation to the specific circumstances of psychotherapy development as a healing practice in different European countries. The attempts to define and set training standards for independent and unified psychotherapist profession, culminated with the Strasbourg Declaration for Psychotherapy (1990).

Herein, psychotherapeutic practice is defined as: "*...the comprehensive, conscious and planned treatment of psychosocial, psychosomatic and behavioral disturbances or states of suffering with scientific psychotherapeutic methods, through an interaction between one or more persons being treated, and one or more psychotherapists, with the aim of relieving disturbing attitudes to change, and to promote the maturation, development and health of the treated person*" (European Association for Psychotherapy, 2003). In a general definition, psychotherapy refers to the treatment of emotional or physical ills by psychological means implying a belief in the influence of the mind on the mind and of the mind on the body (Cautin, 2011), thus historically characterizing it as a healing practice culturally embedded (Wampold, 2001).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

This paper aims at presenting a historical framework of psychotherapy development in Albania adopting a historical research methodology. Various sources of data are appropriated, principally secondary data sources (Lundy, 2008), and primary data ones, e.g. autobiographical accounts and conversational interviewing (Roulston, 2008) with key informants' persons (Fetterman, 2008), participants in the actual development of psychotherapy. An enterprise as such meets with some challenges. Firstly, in integrating various sources of data into a coherent and meaningful understanding of different contexts. Secondly, psychotherapy met a harsh and brutal interdiction during Hoxha communist regime (Nushi, 2006). Consequently, information on probable psychotherapeutic practices remains unexplored. Thirdly, the lack of systematic published official data on various mental health professionals and their activities in the health and social services system creates informational barriers. New nonmedical (psychosocial) professions, since the initiation of reform on mental health in 1993, have been included in the health system. Their roles, job descriptions and professional practices in the new multidisciplinary community based mental health system have not yet been adequately formulated (OSFA, 2011) and researched to rely on derived findings. Fourthly, the available historiography research on mental health practices have been coerced by former existing ideologies, i.e. a historical bias that calls for a careful reexamination and reinterpretation of facts.

The research draws on many sources formal and informal (in every case identified) to bring a most accurate version of interpretation. The process that addresses historical events may never be complete, therefore the present paper professes not that further inquiries would not generate different viewpoints of looking at the data.

A proposed phase model for the history of psychotherapy in Albania

The study attempts at drawing together data from various sources in order to timely delineate stages and events, retaining the belief that historical writings contribute to the understanding of how conceptualizations and practices of health is embedded in the culture and has influenced past and present history. They do also provide a historical background to the development of a particular discipline and may serve as reference for future developments and research. The previously conducted research (Abdiu, 2013, 2010, 2002, 1986; Nushi, 2006) constitutes the most systematic one on the history of psychological thought in Albania. In an attempt to systematize findings and understandings, the author puts forward a tentative phase model of psychotherapy development. It comprises five phases herewith identified as:

- 1) The pre-scientific phase (prior to the '20s)
- 2) The proto-psychotherapeutic practices (the 20s to 40s)
- 3) The interdiction of psychotherapy (the end of '50s till the late 80s)
- 4) The emergence of psychotherapy (the '90s)
- 5) The expansion of psychotherapy (the 2000s)

The pre-scientific phase before the '20s-Traditional healing practices

Each culture or civilization has had its own healing practices and traditional healers, whom bestowed the functions of curing the troubled souls (Ellenberger, 1970). In Albania, from the late 19th century till the beginning of the 20th century,

religious institutions were the sole, whose care toward the mentally ill is documented (Vehbiu, 1968; Hoxha, 1962), especially the monasteries (Hoxha, 1962, p. 119). Monasteries of Ardenica in Fier, Saint Jon in Elbasan, Pepel in Gjirokastra and Saint Naum in Pogradec were healing places particular for the nervous illnesses (Hoxha, 1962, p. 22). The disturbed were usually kept isolated for a short period in places called "*tamuk*" below the ground floor. It can be inferred from available studies in anthropology and cultural psychiatry (Durham, 1990; Vehbiu, 1968; Hoxha, 1962) that fasting (a diet based in oil and vinegar), sensorial deprivations¹, praying and an occupational regimen were among the healing practices. It was common in the beginning till the middle of the 19th century the use of fasting² as therapeutic modality (Cott, 1974), which was later removed from folk medicine and used as principal method of treatment in clinics and sanatoriums in Switzerland, France, Germany and to a lesser extent in the USA in internal medicine and psychiatry. Fasting³ had resulted efficacious in the treatment of grand mal epilepsy during the 1950s and the 1970s and used as treatment for mentally ill (Cott, 1974). The prayer served as a therapeutic autosuggestion and helped the patient to control his symptoms. Vehbiu (1968) refers to practices of praying in groups, by summoning all patients and walking around the monastery, which resemble practices of supportive psychological treatment. Psychologists have attempted to study experimentally the efficacy of prayer (Richards, 2011), by pointing out its role on modifying patients' beliefs in his recovery. That men of religion dwelled into psychological issues should not come as surprise considering that the first book written on psychology by an Albanian scholar relates to Imam Hasan Tahsini (1812-1881), whose book on psychology "*Psychology or the Science of the soul*" was published in 1894 in Istanbul.

¹ These applications resemble Chamber Rest applications that began in the 1950s which showed that REST (Restricted Environmental Stimulation Therapy) affects psychological functioning of thinking, perception, memory, motivation and mood. Its utility was explored in the treatment of major psychiatric dysfunctions such as autism, neuroses and addictions in heavy cigarette smoking and alcohol intake. In Chamber REST, the subject lies on a bed for 24 hours, being one frequently used period (Suedfeld & Borrie, 1999). REST has shown positive impact on memory functioning, reduction of rigidity of patterns of thought and behavior and stress relaxation (Suedfeld, 1980). REST as therapeutic is coined and deeply researched by Peter Suedfeld (1980) in his book "*Restricted Environmental Stimulation: Research and clinical application*".

² In fact, besides used as a treatment, people really got a taste for dieting in the 19th century, more for aesthetic reasons (Winterman, 2013), e.g. Lord Byron in the early 1800s was the first poet who popularized a diet consisting mainly of vinegar.

³ Dr. Allan Cott visited the fasting treatment unit at Moscow Psychiatric Institute led by Dr. Yuri Serge Nikolaev in 1970 who had fasted many thousands mentally ill patients for 25-30 days without fatalities, a treatment known as orthomolecular psychiatric treatment. Dr. Nikolaev had almost 30 years of experience with treatment. According to Cott, the treatment has been considered being effective in more than 70% of cases of schizophrenia of many years' duration. The treatment brings many biochemical reactions that normalize the symptoms of schizophrenia, specifically in the neutralization of toxins and normalization of proteins levels (For more see Cott's article, in References Section). Once returned from Russia, Cott undertook an experimental controlled fasting program as part of a research project at the Gracie Square Hospital in New York. The diagnoses of the patients at his study were schizophrenic for at least 5 years and had failed to improve under previous forms of treatment. His results were similar with Nikolaev's. Fasting as treatment has been studied ever since. In his book "*What really causes schizophrenia*", 2003, Harold D. Foster calls therapeutic fasting as one of the five most effective unconventional approaches to the treatment of schizophrenia. Two times Nobel Prize winner Linus Pauling coined orthomolecular psychiatry as a term in 1968 to refer the treatment of psychiatric illnesses with substances such as vitamins, minerals, enzymes, trace elements, co-enzymes, that are normally present in the body.

Generally, it was assumed into the 20th century that the effects of religious practices were beneficial in the treatment of mental illness (Richards, 2011). It was in psychotherapy that psychologists and religious professionals came to work closest together throughout most of the last century (Richards, 2011, p. 69). At that time, in many European countries the churches and monasteries served as places of care for the mentally ill (Ellenberger, 1970) with practices such as prayers, vows, pilgrimages and confession made individually to a priest. Before the rise of the modern psychotherapy, they were the sole that invented or applied psychological means to mental illness, as Richards (2011, p. 78) would name them, the *psychochristians*. Many of such practices bare resemblance with the psychotherapeutic method developed in the late XIX century and XX century such as confession and use of suggestion.

The periodical "*Diturija e përkohshme shqiptare*" in particular devoted writings (from 1927 to 1928, by K. Kmasi, I. Dalliu, L. Skëndo et al) on cultural conceptualizations of illness serving as ethnographic and anthropological research on traditional healing practices. Other sources of information include the writings of Durham (1990) and later de Waal (2009), which inform on diffusion of such cultural beliefs among population. A feature of such conceptualizations is animistic beliefs in the spirits and other human like figures, who influenced the thoughts, emotions and behaviors of the people. The spirits often speculated by healers were "*perija*" that seduced young men, or an old, ugly old woman "*shtriga*" who weakened the ill person (Vehbiu, 1968; Dalliu, 1928; Kamsi, 1928a, 1928b). Other spiritual influences were named "*lugati*", "*mokthi*" and the "*djinns*". Some explanations refer to the evil energy of the eye or sorcery by witches. In Northern Albania, for example, an epileptic person was believed to be possessed by bad spirits (Durham, 1990, p. 515). As apparent, there was belief that minds influenced other minds, or bodies of other people and supremacy was given to spiritual powers over the life of men. Such beliefs refer to idealistic conceptions on mind and universe and served the healing function of temporary relief from illness as Freud (2003) noted "*Spirits and demons ...are projections of emotional impulses of man by projecting them in the outer reality they can be controlled to inhibit such impulses without needing to be conscious of them*". Conceptions of demoniac possession have been a frequent occurrence for many centuries in the Middle East and Europe (Ellenberger, 1970, p. 16) until 20th century. Healers called "*xherah*" or "*frymaxhije*" and religious men were sought in times of bad physical and mental health (Hoxha, 1962, p. 11) as they were able to speculate about the possible nature of the spirit. Their most practiced healing method was magical healing, which can be described as a cure system in which the features of social life were projected onto the material world (Ellenberger, 1970, p. 35). Problems and difficulties in relationships were transferred in subjects out of the family circles. Exorcism or objects, called "*nuska*" performed such functions as were believed of having protective power for the subjects who wore them (Vehbiu, 1968, p. 40). What makes the most important curing agent at work? It is suggested (Ellenberger, 1970; Vehbiu, 1968) by inducing into the disturbed person a transference neurosis, which allowed for a materialization of disease to an object or outer subject

(Ellenberger, 1970, p. 12), thus replacing a neurosis with a transference neurosis, the nature and origin were demonstrated to the patient and consequently cured.

Such conceptualizations were greatly diffused until the 1960s (Vehbiu, 1968), a time period that corresponds with the ban of religion in 1967 by the communist regime, which consequently led to traditional healing practices being discouraged as unscientific and dangerous to public health (Selenica, 1957), meanwhile the psychiatric services were being installed gradually across the country. A number of traditional healers were brought to court and condemned for practicing sorcery and hypnosis, as the following case reported by Selenica (1957, p. 15) about a Muslim clergy from Kavaja, who cured through magical healing and practiced hypnosis in group sessions for the removal of bad spirits and djinns. A commission with medical doctors from Psychiatry and Neurology Department was set up, which disproved and publicly condemned the clergy's pretensions that he successfully treated patients. As embodied in the episode, a materialistic approach to mind and mental illness was later being adopted and idealistic conceptualizations discarded as unscientific.

During the late 18th century and beginning of the 19th century, Albanian young men were educated abroad in medicine science in Naples and Vienna (Makuçi, 2008). The opening of the Medical School in Istanbul and Faculty of Medicine in Athens in 1837 raised the number of Albanian students in medicine (Makuçi, 2008). Once returned, the young doctors contributed to the development of medicine as a science and practice encouraged by political health reforms initiated in the beginning of the 20th century and consequent governmental programs in public health. The Congress of Lushnje in 1920 culminated the efforts for structural organization of health services, even though the new health system was feeble and counted only 110 medical doctors in 1945. In 1921, the first neuropsychiatric hospital was built in Vlora (Hoxha, 1962, p. 120), where patients were treated in a more humane manner, influenced by principles of moral therapy of Philippe Pinel (1745-1826), who eschewed standard medical treatments such as corporal punishment as they had proved ineffective (Cautin, 2011), with isolation restricted only for patients with dangerously aggressive behaviors (Hoxha, 1962). Starting with the beginning of the 20th century, mental healing practices were incorporated within psychiatric hospitals, which assumed therapeutic functions for the mental disturbances. Since 1945, when communism came into power, such institutions reflected European influences in psychiatry science in particular.

The proto-psychotherapeutic practices the 1920s to 1940s

The period from the late '20s to the late '40s of the XX century is characterized by the emergence of psychological thought, which presentation into society manifested in the field of education, sociology and intellectual discourse. Specifically, the movement of therapeutic education and the cultural clubs with sympathy for psychoanalysis applied psychological knowledge in education and in the field of social sciences.

During 1925-1939, the Albanian state was led by Ahmet Zogu, who from 1925-1928 led as the president of the Republic of Albania and then from 1928 to 1939 as the King of Albania. Some of the achievements of Zogu period were the educational

reforms, aiming at raising the number of the schools and the qualifications of teachers with educational standards alike those of the Western Europe (Myzyri, 2004, p. 296). A High Pedagogical School called "*Normalja*" had opened in 1909, and soon turned into an excellence center of teaching by accommodating the young intellectuals once returned to the country. Among the 120 students that went to France, a number that reached a peak in 1933-1934 (Asllani, 2004, p. 165) about one third of them studied pedagogy and psychology at Sorbonne, Lion, Montpellier, Paris, Dijon etc. Many other students studied in Austria in the fields of pedagogy and psychology at Higher Pedagogical Schools in Klagenfurt, Graz, Linz and Vienna (Asllani, 2004). The Vienna of that time was a kind of Mecca for modern pedagogues (Ellenberger, 1970, p. 588) as the new Minister of Education, Otto Glöckel, a former teacher, forwarded the application of a new educational system based on democratic principles and respect of the individual needs of the children (Ellenberger, 1970, p. 588). The New Education Movement in Europe spread into the Albanian education system through the pedagogues, who had completed studies in Vienna and Germany and later serving as teachers at "*Normalja*". Austrian experts would even assist in the reformation of schools through offering temporary expertise. The New Education as movement in Albania brought the influence of many cultural and pedagogical movements: of German Romanticism and Herbatism pedagogy, French Romanticism and Enlightenment of Jean Jacques Rousseau, Voltaire, and Jean Piaget developmental psychology. The last one would spread among teachers once the Albanian Ministry of Education established link with the International Bureau of Education in Geneva, which from 1934 was directed by Jean Piaget (Gjedia, 2012). The director of "*Normalja*", Aleksandër Xhuvani, also a pedagogue of psychology, was the linking person. All these influences created an intellectual and spiritual atmosphere remarked by a freedom of educational ideologies (Shashaj et al., 2002). The therapeutic education movement in Vienna influenced by developments in psychoanalysis, in particular by the school of Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler (1870-1937), affected Albanian pedagogues being trained in Vienna and in other Austrian cities. "*The teacher of New Pedagogy needs to know the inner world of the child and to have mastered the genetic psychology of Piaget and educational psychoanalysis of Freud and Adler*" (Paparisto, 1937)⁴.

Psychoanalysis and education have had a long history of overlapping concerns (Applebaum, 2009; Britzman, 2003). Freud himself (1997) viewed psychoanalysis as an after education, expressing a hesitant attitude in the application of psychoanalysis to education, but later theorists, like Adler and among those, his own daughter, Anna Freud (1895-1982) noticed that ideas about learning and processes of learning were at the heart of psychoanalysis, so educators would benefit from understanding their work in psychoanalytic terms (Applebaum, 2009). "*A good teaching relationship is one built on a good relationship between teacher and child, where none is in authority over the other, but collaborators*" (Vinjau, 1937). This educational encounter benefits teacher and child making learning possible. Teaching

⁴ In Xhuvani (1937) See: Reference Section

may not be the same as acting as a psychoanalyst, but there are many parallels (Applebaum, 2009) e.g. psychoanalysis has taught that education rests on interpersonal relations. In particular, Adler set up a variety of therapeutic methods for therapeutic education (Ellenberger, 1970, p. 620). In 1920, he felt that the main effort in therapeutic education ought to be directed toward teachers (Ellenberger, 1970, p. 621). The pedagogical attitude at "*Normalja*" was influenced by Adler therapeutic education, which until 1934 was quite popular among the schools of Vienna. The teachers regarded the child as a rational being. "*Not in knowledge, but in the strong will lies the value of a man*"⁵, the will as a virtue of character was one of the strongest principles of the school, embracing the belief that man could overcome emotional and physical ailments through power of will, what Adler called *courage* (Ellenberger, 1970, p. 629). The virtue of courage was elaborated in his theory of organ inferiority. Branko Merxhani (1930, 1929)⁶ made frequent references to Adler's theory in his analysis of the child's position in the Albanian family⁷, by addressing parental overcritical attitudes toward the child. The latter ended by believing himself as evil and felt doomed to commit evil actions (Ellenberger, 1970, p. 644). Merxhani's essay titled "*Individualism*"⁸ written in 1937 further manifests the Adlerian influence in his analysis of the underdeveloped community sentiments among Albanians, "*a moral crisis*" in his words, apparently surmounted by their level of immature and ineducable egoism. The journals and periodicals, which elaborated New Education principles included "*Shkolla Kombëtare*"⁹, with articles written by A. Xhuvani, V. Xhaka, B. Hacı, V. Vinjau, M. Daiu, and translations from Maria Montessori, William James, Jean Piaget, Frederick Fröbel; "*Minerva*", published once a month in Graz University, Austria, which specifically informed on the Austrian Model of Education; "*Kopshti Letrar*", "*Normalisti*", "*Edukata e Re*" with writings on prenatal and infant development, child cognitive development, speech development, on lying and mythomania in children (M. Daiu, S. Papparisto, A. Kajanaku, L. Nosi, etc). They contributed with writings on psychoanalysis, suggestion and autosuggestion, delusions and hallucinations, experiments in psychology, personality and spiritual life and mental hygiene in the children (Kajanaku & Daiu). The first books of psychology enriched journal publications. Aleksandër Xhuvani published in 1933 a second text on psychology (Abdiu, 2010). A previous one was written by Isuf Agjah Korça in 1926¹⁰, but shorter in length and subject matter. Psychology books were translated e.g. "*Psychology of Education*" by Gustav Le Bon in 1923 by the Publishing House "Mbrothtësia" with a translation by Mit'hat Frashëri. From 1936-1937, "*Five lectures to psychoanalysis*" by Sigmund Freud was published in the issues of "*Përpyjekja Shqiptare*" translated by Branko Merxhani (1894-1981).

⁵ This was the motto of the periodical "*Normalisti*" published by "*Normalja*". It appeared at the front page of the periodical. A quote by Johannes Herbart (1776-1841).

⁶ See Merxhani, B. (2003) *Vepra, përgatitur nga Aurel Plasari & Ndriçim Kulla, Tiranë: Plejad*

⁷ See Essay "*Mother and Child*", written in 1930 in Merxhani, B. (2003) *Vepra*

⁸ See Merxhani, B. (2003) *Vepra, përgatitur nga Aurel Plasari & Ndriçim Kulla, Tiranë: Plejad*

⁹ A bulletin of Albanian Ministry of Health published every two weeks

¹⁰ *Seksioni Bibliografi, Diturija e Përkohshme Shqiptare, Volumë i dytë, numur 12, tetor 1927, Tiranë, fq. 395*

The cultural group "*The Club of Thessaloniki*" established by Branko Merxhani and Kristi Maloki (1900-1972), presented the group of adherents to psychoanalysis. They used the psychoanalytic theory for analysis of social life phenomena. To Merxhani what was crucial from the point of view of societal emancipation, was the formation of *a new moral character*¹¹, in order that society becomes less restrictive and more prone to opportunities for sublimation. He favored free love and more libidization of relations among family, which could serve as the base for adults to become cooperative, more freedom and rights for women from the oppressive power of the man in the family as "*woman's health and wellbeing contributes to society's wellbeing*". He discerned in the psychoanalytic theories of instincts and infantile sexuality educative steps taken toward psychological emancipation of society by means of education. Psychoanalysis has been seen as a very psychological intervention to achieve such goals "*it is needed to synchronize even scientifically and receive the advices from specialists like Prof. Pierre Bovet, Dr. Adler, and Sigmund Freud*" (Merxhani, 2003, p. 220). In 1932, he brought forth the idea for a National Psychological Pedagogical Institute¹² to support education in achieving such an enterprise. "*There cannot exist a pedagogy without psychology, a school that is not based on the knowledge and analysis of the psychic life of the young...education means developing the child's ego*" (Merxhani, 2003, p. 63). Among the Albanian intellectuals of the '30s a psychoanalytic critique toward Albanian society was adopted, which was perceived as lacking behind to European civilization, very patriarchal (Kaser, 2002), oppressive to women and children, enclosed, emotionally and sexually repressed¹³. Psychological manifestations of "*melancholy, rumination, often neurosis are effects of accumulated energy which finds no outlet*" (Migjeni, 1989, p. 314). Kristi Maloki was among those who adopted psychoanalysis critically in analyzing society, literary works, writers' psychological profile and culture. He had earned a PhD in 1929 in Philosophy at Graz University, Austria. He was among the first to address the need for social science research (Maloki, 2003). His essay in particular "*Nëpër gjurmë t'ujkut oriental*" is an attempt of applying psychoanalysis in psychohistory and ethno-psychology. In such a spirit, cultural anthropology and ethnology studies were published in "*Diturija e Përkohshme Shqiptare*" with writings by Lumo Skëndo, Kol Kamsi, etc. Of interest are the studies on traditional healing practices of psychological nature. They serve as ethnographic documents to understand cultural conceptions of mental illness narrated as bodily experienced in the cultural discourse, expressed with somatization (bodily conversion of psychic pain), whose healing practices rested in the externalization of the inner disturbance onto an outer object.

Medicine during the '30s and '40s would initiate reforms in institutional level with the raise of the first hospitals and health services. Dhimitër Vokopola (1987-1983), Sezai Çomo and Xhavid Gjata founders of psychiatric service, installed the

¹¹ See Essay "*Rëndësia biologjike - shoqërore e një fejëse...*" In Merxhani, B. (2003) *Vepra*, p. 95

¹² Merxhani, B. (1932) *Rreth organizimit tonë arsimor, Demokratia*, Numri 19 mars

¹³ See Migjeni Essays "*The student back home*"; "*The story of one of those*" in Migjeni (1989) *Vepra*, Tiranë: Naim Frashëri, pp. 281-304; 311-322

up to date models of psychiatric treatment of foreign countries. Vokopola adopted the moral therapy to psychiatric patients following Pinel reformation model of the late 17th century and was the first to initiate psychiatric services for children separate from adult psychiatry. He incorporated nonmedical treatment for the mentally ill with occupational therapy. Being educated abroad, they all attempted psychoanalytic treatments for the patients. When establishing the communistic regime and single adoption of Pavlovian psychiatry, they protested against the dominance and monism of soviet ideology in psychiatric science. That protest brought them imprisonment¹⁴, from which they escaped by an act of penance, a method used in the communistic regime to breed fear and initiate individual censorship, through which adherence to communistic ideology has been secured. Such progressive voices respectively in education, sociology and psychiatry acted like counterculture in the society of the '20 and late '30s proclaiming more freedom, emancipation, human dignity and individualism. These principles in the later political scene with the coming into power of the Communist Party and its monist ideology would gradually become silent.

Psychotherapy as subversive since the late 1980s

The "*Dictionary of Pedagogy*" (Osmani, 1983) defines "freudism" as a reactionary movement in bourgeois countries built upon the thinking of Austrian reactionary psychologist Sigmund Freud, which preaches degeneration and anarchy among youth (p. 125). Johannes Herbart, much praised in the '20 by the first Albanian pedagogues of the New Education Movement, was depicted as a negative influence and anti-national. The dictionary invalidated psychoanalytic, existentialist and pragmatist concepts on character as revisionary and bourgeois theories that based character on biology, whereas character was formed and conditioned by history, class ideology, materialistic conditions of living, environment and historical events (pp. 291-292), qualifying so a historical materialistic view of character. Politics during communist regime dictated science on ideological bases. With the incorporation of the country into the ideology of Marx and Engels, the individual, the unconsciousness of the individual, the self and personal meant nothing (Markova, 1997). The mind was reduced to a bundle of reflexes and nerves following Soviet psychiatry materialistic model of mental life. There was no individual mind, just a collective one. Marxist collectivism provided the base for a mob hysteria, which put an irresistible pressure on the individual to stay in line (Markova, 1997). Inability of self-reflection due to efforts to achieve an infantilized society distorted the processes of growing up and gradually degraded the moral and psychological health of citizens (Klicperová, 1999; 1997). The earlier conceptualizations of the "possessed soul" were replaced with "faults in character", which would be remedied by excessive physical labor and obedience to the collective, a merging with the "proletariat" and excessive self-criticism whose intention was to install a guilt psychosis, intra-psychic dynamics that guaranteed outward subordination to state. Anomie and loss of self-esteem were paradoxically indicators of the cure.

¹⁴ Bajram Preza "*Konferenca e XII e Shoqatës së Neurologëve dhe Psikiatërve të Europës Juglindore*", *Selanik 30, shtator – 3 tetor, 1998*

Pavlovian psychiatry based on the research on higher nervous system functions by Ivan Pavlov (1849-1936) and Soviet pedagogy were the models to follow in building the ideological communist character (Ginger, 2008). Psychology as discipline was incorporated into pedagogy, hence psycho-pedagogy. The conditioning learning psychology was studied to advance the education of masses. Research in psychology extended either in the field of educational psychology or research on the national history of psychology science. Nuri Abdiu (1930-2014) was one of the first to receive Doctor of Psychology with a study on the Hasan Tahsini' book "*Psychology or the science of the soul*". Tahsini's book explored the influences on psychology science of Aristotle naturalism and Descartes dualism, whose thesis in the 17th century paved the way for a distinct science of the soul. Bedri Dedja (1930-2004) was another figure of Albanian psycho-pedagogical school. He researched Albanian psycho-pedagogical thought e.g. in "*Notes on the history of Albanian pedagogical knowledge*" in 1972. The pedagogy books of Anton S. Makarenko's (1888-1939) were translated and used as guidelines to mind education. Makarenko in education and Pavlov in psychology were like cult figures in the ex. Soviet Union that mimicked the summit of all cults, the Stalin cult (Rosenthal, 2002, p. 387). Makarenko became the reigning authority in education; because he turned out the kind of "new men", Stalin wanted (Rosenthal, 2002, p. 395). The assimilation of Makarenko's approach might be explained not only in ideological terms, but also in its affinity with previous methods of therapeutic education in the 1930s having in common a voluntaristic oriented approach that emphasized consciousness and molding of personality to make it more amenable to social discipline (Rosenthal, 2002, p. 396). But with a difference, as the educational approach of the 1930s was based more on humanistic principles, with Enlightenment pedagogical ideas clearly present, whereas Makarenko's education of will required a controlled environment and respect for authority similar to a strict military regimen (Rosenthal, 2002, p. 397). A second difference lies in that the previous methods stressed the uniqueness of the child, while Makarenko education downplayed inborn characteristics (Rosenthal, 2002, p. 397), thus the personality of the child was believed to be molded by education. Makarenko's pedagogical influence in Albania was specifically reflected in the creation of the first educational colony in 1957 near Gramshi, where 100 children either orphaned or abandoned were accommodated. The first director of the school, Enrik Çoba was sent in Russia for 3 months to have firsthand experience of Makarenko colonies (Zajmi, 2016) and years later an ex. student of Makarenko served for a while as director of the school. The school combined in equal terms academic learning and labor and adopted a hard discipline. Positive enforcement was used as a learning strategy, and negative reinforcement through isolation of the child from the other children for a month period spending the days doing agricultural work. It functioned until 1990.

Psychiatry shrunk in its status during communist regime. The preparation of psychiatrists from 1975 to 1992 was reduced to one year compared with the two full year's program from 1974¹⁵. Pavlovian psychiatry was the only model acceptable by ideology and a censure was imposed to other models like psychodynamic, cognitive

¹⁵ Only in 1994 the curricula were updated and the one-year specialization turned into a four-year program

or humanistic. Mental illness has been seen as pathology of higher neurological functions. Yet there are no records of how Pavlovian conditional reflex theory might have been applied as psychotherapy (Astrup, 1965) or whether antecedent control strategies (Kern & Nathan, 2007) might have been used to reduce problem behaviors as behavioral therapy. Any attempt for psychotherapy was interdicted as in the subsequent story. In 1971, the psychiatrist Ulvi Vehbiu (1931-2010)¹⁶ had a six-month specialization course in Paris on autogenic training, founded by Johannes H. Schultz (1884-1970), a German psychiatrist and psychotherapist who became famous for the development of autogenic training¹⁷ in 1928. During his training qualification in France, Dr. Vehbiu attended lectures from Jacques Lacan (Kola, 2014), a well-known French psychoanalyst. Upon return, he tried to add psychotherapy in treating the patients starting with relaxation psychotherapy of anxiety disorders. He managed to hold the first lecture on psychoanalysis in 1974 (Kola, 2014) at the Faculty of Medicine and later for the first time in the Medicine Faculty, a course on Clinical Psychology in 1980. Such attempts may be considered courageous in the context of ideological coercion and continuous surveillance (Klosi, 2010) from the political authorities¹⁸ as psychiatric treatment restricted only in pharmacological treatment (Totozani, Shtino & Lala, 2010). Prasad (1985) would note that as far as medication treatment was concerned, there was no big difference between what he found in Albania and his work context as consultant psychiatrist in United Kingdom. He rather noted that psychiatrists did not use any psychotherapy and were not favorable of it. This apparent disfavor had a precedent. When rumors of psychoanalytic practice reached political surveillers, Dr. Vehbiu was discouraged to practice them. The late '80s marked a beginning of interest in psychotherapy at the University Psychiatric Department (Ledia Lazri, personal communication May 22, 2009). Dr. Vehbiu continued with one final act by supporting for the first time in the psychiatric department a job position for a psychotherapist (Lazri, personal communication May 22, 2009), even short lived (1991-1993). Alike many accounts in the countries of previous Eastern Block, records were made public that psychiatry was (mis)used by communist regime as a means for breeding terror. 260 cases are reported as psychiatric imprisonment in all psychiatric hospitals during the communist regime¹⁹ (Vata, 2016), which testify the ideological abuse of psychiatry, but in broader terms, mind control practices of communist regimes in former Eastern Bloc.

The emergence of psychotherapy the '90s - The Revindication

During the '90s, the country opened itself to outside influences after being for 50 years in a closed hermeneutical world during the communist regime. The self-fulfilling illusion lent its place to helplessness and total dependence to help from

¹⁶ *One of the founders of psychiatric services in Albania*

¹⁷ *A type of therapy that calms bodily reactions of anxiety, stress, depression and insomnia among other things*

¹⁸ *After the fourth Plenum of Albanian Working Party in 1973, psychoanalysis and any reference to unconscious was declared incompatible with the party ideology as expression of liberalism, hence an enemy ideology*

¹⁹ *Ex Prime-Minister Sali Berisha (2012) declared those imprisoned in the psychiatric hospitals of Elbasan and Vlora as political prisoners*

outside. A sign that still the people and the country had some energy to negotiate for a new process of becoming. The Psychiatric Department at Mother Teresa University Hospital would soon turn into the nucleus for reformation in the mental health system. Dr. Anastas Suli than Chief of Psychiatry Department at University Hospital initiated with his staff the mental health reform toward a model of community balanced mental health services (Suli, 2009). The WHO Office in Albania initiated a platform for reformation in psychiatry with support.

The few psychologists accommodated to the changing post-communist conditions. Political and physical freedom of movement made it possible to meet and exchange with Kosovar Albanian Psychologists, who practiced in a less restricted ideological climate. Their joined efforts founded the Pan-Albanian Psychology Association with Bedri Dedja as Chair. The association became member of the International Union of Psychological Sciences (IUPS) in 1999. Dedja participated as Chairman of the Albanian Association at the fourth European Congress of Psychology in Athens in 1995 with the paper "*Revolutionary steps in Albanian Psychological Thought over 25 centuries*". Later he participated at the sixth European Congress on Psychology in Rome in 1999 with paper "*Psychology of war and peace*". He attended the XXVI World Congress on Psychology at Montreal, Canada with a paper about the necessity of integration of psychologists in all spheres of life and about the prospect of an Albanian Scientific Journal on Psychology. Later he addressed an invitation to psychology and pedagogy academicians on joining efforts for promoting a psychology science in Albania. In 1995, he wrote about the prospect of opening a psychology graduate program²⁰, a prospect that would become true in 1996. The first graduate program adopted an American curriculum and was taught by professors with psychological knowledge, but they themselves still lacked clinical practice experience (Weinstein, et al., 2000). Two years before, a Social Work graduate program was opened at Tirana University. The Vice Chairman of the Association of Albanian Psychologists, Prof. Pajazit Nushi in 1995 published "*Albanian Dictionary on Psychology*". There followed a rapid increase in publication and translations on psychology and psychotherapy (Abdiu, 2013), which contributed to further expansion of psychological ideas in Albania.

The panorama of mental health professionals changed in the mental health system since 2000, due to the initiative to reform mental health system which received considerable inputs by WHO (Késte et al., 2006). A WHO model toward mental illness and definition of wellbeing served as a signing post toward reformation of mental health services abreast with research and best practices. A Mental Health Act was designed and approved in 1996 and a National Steering Committee was established to carry out the application of the new reform. The social workers and psychologists became part of the newly conceived community multidisciplinary mental health teams. The Kosovar refugee crises in 1994-1995 brought into Albania many NGOs, which offered psychosocial services. They provided a model of interdisciplinary work and an approach to mental disturbances

²⁰ See Journal "*Kombi*"(1995), No. 84, p. 359

different from the previous dominant (and only) biological model. The implementation of the reform met some challenges, e.g. scarce resources in human capacity (Çomo, 2015; OSFA, 2011) or its structural approach from top to bottom (Mueller, 2014). This latter could be the reverse of what the reform in principle tried to change; that is the centralization approach, the ideology of authority or expertise in approaching the question of what practices are best for mental illness.

It was amid this process of being trained and working in the new context of mental health services that some professionals having gained experience with troubled chronically patients. Motivated for further technical professional development based on an accumulated practice based knowledge, were looking for a frame to integrate all this together in offering a kind of treatment that they felt and were aware was called *psychotherapy*. A felt professional identity was growing that led to consequent actions, which made it possible the emergence of the psychotherapist profession. Psychotherapy as a treatment practice is a development of this reform context, which not only democratized psychiatric services, but mental health professional spectrum as well. It was in 1998, during his participation at Salzburg Seminars that Neli Demi (then a resident in psychiatry) was informed by Thomas Wenzel about European Society on Psychotherapy (EAP) and he urged to contact the General Secretary of European Association for Psychotherapy (EAP), Alfred Pritz. A meeting was held in 1999 and the idea for psychotherapy training in Albania was conceived. It was about to actualize in 2000 when Alfred Pritz, Thomas Wenzel, Gerhard Lenz and Inge Wolen arrived in Tirana to weigh over the possibility of training the first Albanian psychotherapists with World Health Organization (WHO) support. A WHO funded training program set up with help from the EAP to train 25 Albanian psychotherapists according to European Certificate for Psychotherapy (ECP)²¹ standards (Demi, personal communication, May 29, 2009; Van Deurzen, 2001). In 2000, a selection process started with the assistance of Thomas Wenzel. Only 25 candidates of 60 applications have been selected. They had graduated in the fields of psychology (mostly), social work and psychiatry. The first training on psychotherapy was psychoanalytically oriented and lasted for seven years. From the first groups of 25 professionals, 13 completed the training. The training standards for ECP covered 3200 hours (h) of training, from which 1800 h covered general knowledge in social and human sciences and 1400 h covered the specialized knowledge in the specific psychotherapeutic modality, distributed respectively, 500-800 h theoretical and methodological knowledge, 250 h personal therapy and supervision and 300-600 h practicum at a mental health setting. Albania had its first formally trained psychotherapists.

Expansion of psychotherapy (the 2000s)

Since 2007, the number of psychotherapists has expanded as associations for psychotherapy have grown in number. Nowadays there are eight associations for psychotherapy. The Albanian Association for Psychotherapy (2002), which from October 2015 hold the status of National Umbrella organization (NUO) for

²¹ *EAP launched ECP to unify criteria and standardization for psychotherapists' training across Europe*

Psychotherapy (EAP, 2015), CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) Albania, The Albanian Association for Positive Psychotherapy, EMDR Albania, The Albanian Center for Psychological and Psychotherapeutic Services, Tirana Alfred Adler Institute, Albanian Association for Psychodrama and the Albanian Lacanian Network. The total number of certified psychotherapists is 35; among them 17 hold the ECP. Four from the eight associations are offering formal training in psychotherapy, hence the second generation of psychotherapists in Albania. The total number of the psychotherapists in training amounts to 85 in the following modalities CBT, EMDR, group analysis and psychoanalysis. Within 3-5 years, there will be 117 psychotherapists.

Wolbert (2015, p. 15) refers to psychotherapy as an effective tool in treating mental illness. It was effective in treating depression (WHO, 2012) and other types of mental disorders (APA, 2012); in all evidence the effectiveness of psychotherapy as treatment method (Wampold, 2001). Transitional societies are characterized by a growing trend in mental and behavioral disturbances (Burazeri et al, 2014) with depression and suicide rates being among the highest in Eastern Europe (WHO, 2012), thus addressing interventions in mental health a priority in the national health policies.

Table 1

The numbers of certified psychotherapists and psychotherapists in training in each modality

Modality	Current formal Training in Psychotherapy (Yes/No)	ECP Holders	Number of psychotherapists completed training in psychotherapy	Number of psychotherapists in training
Psychoanalytically Oriented	Yes	13	13	16
Cognitive Behavioral	- Yes	-	5	21
Positive	No	-	9	-
Psychodrama	No	3	3	-
EMDR	Yes	-	2	30
Groups Analysis	Yes	-	-	15
Family Psychotherapist	No	-	1	-
Body Psychotherapy	No	-	1	-
Adlerian	No	1	1	-
TOTAL		17	35	82

Source: researched by author

In the context of professionalism of the 20th century (Saks, 2012), the profile of psychotherapist profession emerged in the discussion of its relation with state. As a result, in some European countries, the profession of the psychotherapist is legally recognized by law and part of the mental health services; whereas in some other countries its legal recognition is in process or not at all (Pritz, 2011; Ginger, 2010). The *psychotherapist* is not yet acknowledged as an independent profession in Albania. A professional group might initiate a process of recognition followed on

juridical and political. A restriction of the current situation lies in the unavailability of psychotherapy in the public mental health care system, where people who may need it the most cannot afford its cost in the private practice sector. The professional activity of psychotherapists need to be researched, which would offer a picture of practices and the members of this professional group. Such would contribute to public recognition. I hope that in the near future there will be greater knowledge on the psychotherapists' professional practice, their clients and types of psychotherapeutic treatments offered etc.

CONCLUSION

It was in the beginning of the 20th century that psychoanalytic theories firstly emerged in the intellectual discourse of the time. They were incorporated into the educational system to inform teachers on psychological development toward supporting child moral and social character formation. Principles of therapeutic education, as conceived by Adler and Individual Psychology, were assimilated as pedagogical discourse and approaches to further child's development and socialization. Therapeutic education did not involve psychotherapy, but rather a more holistic approach toward promoting children' wellbeing with a concentration on child's strengths. With Merxhani, Maloki and Frashëri, during the 1930s emerged the seeds of a psychoanalytic sociology, through re-appropriating psychoanalytic thinking to analyze society. This clearly manifests influences from developments in psychoanalysis in Vienna, as Freud from 1907 would return on the subject of psychoanalysis and sociology in many cases, e.g. (Civilized sexual morality and modern nervous illness, 1908; Totem and taboo, 1912; Group Psychology and the analysis of the Ego, 1921; Future of an illusion, 1927; Civilization and its discontents, 1930). Freud in 1919 did not regard psychoanalysis only as a treatment (Roudinesco, 2006). He believed that a psychoanalyst should be a person with values, principles, knowledge, culture and a capacity for political engagement (Roudinesco, 2006). The intellectuals of the 1930s found in psychoanalysis not only a scientific approach, but also an educational project to create the *new moral character* as Merxhani (1930) defined, to culturally emancipate society and to transmit to their members an ideal of freedom and rebellion (Roudinesco, 2006).

During the communist regime, psychotherapy was incorporated into psychiatry. The Albanian psychiatry although adopting a biological model, secretly and whenever possible never thoroughly abandoned psychotherapy. In circumstances of ideological imposition, they managed to use psychological healing practices and to preserve an intellectual affiliation to psychotherapy. Testimonies allude to a private visit of Jacques Lacan in Tirana in the early 1970s (Nathanaili, 2013; Demo, 2012). Psychoanalytic and other psychotherapeutic informed conceptualizations of mental illness were shared among trusted colleagues and even guardedly practiced. Autogenic training and other relaxation techniques were adopted. In the late '80 to the early 1990s, the American conceptual model of mental disorders perpetrated as Prasad (1986) observed that Albanian psychiatrists had a copy of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM 3rd edition, published by the American

Psychiatric Association in 1980) and practiced behavioral therapy for the treatment of obsessive-compulsive disorders.

The fall of communist regime was accompanied with instabilities in economic, political and social spheres. Its emotional impact through insecurity, pessimism and anxiety merged with absence of trust in people and political institutions (Markova, 1997), which further divided the gap between individual and its community resulting in helplessness. Post-Communist syndrome (Klicperová, 1999; Klicperová, et al, 1997) prevailed the psychological functioning of individuals and community. The havoc transition played a toll on the health of population (Burazeri & Achterberg, 2015; Burazeri et al, 2014; Qazimi et al, 2015; Qazimi et al, 2013; Burazeri & Klark, 2010; Burazeri et al, 2014) and on mental health (Burazeri et al, 2014; Qirjako et al, 2013; WHO, 2013; WHO, 2008; Tomov, Van Voren, Keukens & Puras, 2007; Jenkins & et al, 2005). Such deleterious effects on health, address the need for many preventative and curative consultations, as society is becoming more complex and depersonalized (Ginger, 2010), which might explain the growing role of psychotherapy in our contemporary society. It is estimated that 10% of the population needs psychotherapy (Ginger, 2010) to address mental health problems. If an optimal number for 100.000 inhabitants would be 50 qualified psychotherapists as calculated by Ginger (2008) we could infer that Albania would need an optimal number of 1400 of qualified psychotherapists, about ten times higher than the actual number. However, not every logic or argument lies solely in the strength of numbers. Thoughtful allocation of human resources (WHO, 2013) may compensate the quantity disadvantage. Psychotherapists may serve as consultants or supervisors to teams of mental health workers who receive none (OSFA, 2011, p. 38).

As far as the current picture of psychotherapy in Albania is concerned, plurality of psychotherapeutic schools and treatments may be advantageous as it provides various conceptualizations and methods to meet the complex situation of the individual and community. The current situation of mental health in the population needs that psychotherapists combine efforts in addressing what can be maximized and contribute to public discourse on mental illness, stigma reduction (WHO, 2009) and analysis of factors that inhibit personal and community wellbeing, as there is no health without mental health (WHO, 2005).

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