

# DISSEMINATION OF THE CONCEPT OF PERSONAL INDIVIDUATION IN MODERN PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOLOGY (THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT)

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**Abstract.** *The article aims to reveal the concept of Individuation. Individuation is perceived as a conscious decision to constantly create one's qualitative life by realizing one's creative strengths and personal human needs. It can and is also perceived as a (self)educational process, which occurs in an educational environment that is suitable for the self-expression and individuation of a person. The following article reveals the philosophical and psychological approaches towards the concept of personal individuation. The concepts of individuation of the following authors are being reviewed: I. Kant, F. Schiller, F. Nietzsche, J. Dewey, R. Rorty, G. Jung, C. Rogers and A. Maslow.*

**Keywords:** *concept of individuation, personal individuation, principium individuationis, Self, self-education, social constructivism.*

## Introduction

Today's society, social sciences, educology are increasingly focusing on individuation, i.e. on the search for one's personal path, by promoting personal creativity. Nowadays, critical and reflective individuation is relevant. It is a choice with whom and for how long to cooperate for the performance of joint activities. Spiritual (C. G. Jung (1921, 2012) and his followers) and sociocultural (R. Rorty (2007, 2017)) forms of individuation are most commonly discussed. Both forms presume some sort of a social order that allows and tolerates the formation of a personal path. The aim of individuation is to doubt, criticize, change and develop oneself as a certain construct.

In reviewing the concept of individuation, it is necessary to understand theoretical origins and historical development of the following term in the fields of modern philosophy and psychology.

The principle of individuation (Lat. *principium individuationis*) has been already formulated by medieval philosophers. In the broadest sense, it describes how one object differs from another. Despite the fact that the content of the

concept of *individuation* used in philosophy has changed historically, its fundamental meaning remained quite stable and clearly defined: it was used to describe the most common philosophical concept, how an object is identified as being individual and identical to itself, and thus without being anything else. Therefore, being common and universal, philosophical concept of *individuation* was and still is applied to a person, i.e. it is used to describe how a man as a person is distinguished from other (non-human) beings of the world and from other people (Šileris, 1999). Why and how individual entities appear from the general base of reality and acquire a separate and independent existence, and among them – individual and unique human persons or individuals? This is the fundamental philosophical essence of the question of individuation.

The direct link between the concepts of *individual* and *individuation* predetermines that even though there is an abundance of attempts in scientific literature to question the provision of methodological individualism that long prevailed in social and political theories, in this case *individual* is an indispensable starting point for analysis. Theoretical parts of the article review the origins of individuation, philosophical and psychological nature of the concept of individuation. The origin and development of the concept of *individual* is still the subject of scientific disputes. Most researchers agree that its origins are Christian, but modern individualism is reasonably considered to be a unique phenomenon in the history of world civilizations. According to A. MacIntyre, N. Machiavelli and M. Luther are real founders of the modern individual: “in the works of both authors a figure appears that can not be found in the moral theories of Plato and Aristotle times, that is an “individual” (MacIntyre, 2000).

### **Search for the concept of individuation: Concept of *Individual***

The concept of individual was not known in antiquity. It appeared and began to be used only by medieval philosophers (Akvinietis, 2015) and its content and meaning became apparent through the prism of the relationship with the concept of *person*. Both concepts – *individual* and *person* – are used to describe different aspects of a natural person. One’s natural and social levels of existence are described by the concept of *individual*. Supernatural or transcendental level of existence of a person is defined by the concept of *person*. Human being, as a person, goes beyond nature and sociality (both also occur in animals) by being of a higher spiritual order.

The modern concept of *individual* describes one’s immanent existence as of an abstract person. Since such an individual is not a natural person, it is impossible to know who one “really” or “actually” is. Thus, the question of individuation began to be differently formulated in the New Ages, when the modern concept of *individual* appeared and replaced the previously prevailing in philosophy concept

of *innate human being*. The founders of the modern concept of *individual* are considered to be two Renaissance thinkers: M. Luther discovered an individual in religion, while N. Machiavelli in politics (MacIntyre, 2000). They are innovative in a way that in the works of N. Machiavelli (2009) opposite begins to be formed: the sacred Christian individuality is being replaced by the individuality of a biological body with no soul. Such transformation anticipates the future M. Foucault's expression of "death of man": individual is an abstraction of man, or a "man with no qualities", – this is how the essence of the modern concept of an individual can be briefly defined (Foucault, 1998; MacIntyre, 2000, 45). By means of activity one creates new qualities for oneself, gains new features. In such perspective, the old philosophical problem of individuation not only acquired a completely new content and meaning, but has also become more relevant than ever and difficult to solve. The concept of *individual* is abstract, because its content is decoupled from all usual human qualities and their differences. The following means that this concept becomes "empty" and provides for an abstract equality of individuals, which can only be understood as their complete uniformity. Accordingly, the previous philosophical question of why and how a person differs from others acquires a completely different meaning: why and in what way a certain (or unique) individual in a modern society is found, formed and finally distinguished, as well as acquires a more or less defined and constant identity out of the similar faceless mass of individuals or an amorphous "human raw materials"? Due to the fact that the relevance and complexity of the following question has not been previously addressed, it became one of the most important problems of modern philosophy: personal individuation itself has begun to be interpreted as a complex process of individuation. The gradually established concept of *process* shows that the very concept of *man* is fundamentally changing. The pre-modern philosophy understands it as "the same" person – as a creature having a universal human nature and endeavouring to realize it as fully as possible.

**I. Kant's philosophy of transcendental idealism as a break point in the concept of individual.** I. Kant's philosophy of transcendental idealism became a decisive step in consolidating the procedural concept of individual, and the most important prerequisite for the dissemination of the idea of individuation. Here, a person becomes an unknown "thing-in-itself", or an unknown X, whose real features will never be revealed. Such a person exists only as a "phenomenon", whose qualities are not inherent in a natural man, but acquired and manifested through activity as an expression of "power". The concept of *power*, the derivative of which is the concept of *empowerment* (Ruškus et al, 2013) and is widely used in most sciences, as well as educology, is another testimony of the deep change in the concept of *man*. According to a French philosopher, P. Manent, human power and one's desire for power have given way to another domination,

*dominion*, which is no longer the power of man over man, but human power to create a man in man (Manent, 2005, 165). The power “to create a man in man” transforms the person into the “observed” or a “human phenomenon” that is constantly changing and dependent on the achieved level of cognition (Kant, 2013, 67).

The human phenomenon is not a gift, or as described by Kant, “thing-in-itself”, the specific intrinsic qualities of which should be found by means of examination. On the contrary, this phenomenon is the expression of the human power to create a new man in oneself and appears only because in order to “cultivate” it, two cognitive powers or abilities are being used: sensibility and intelligence. Here, the specific and, above all, innovative distinctive feature of Kantian transcendental cognition and his approach towards the human phenomenon becomes apparent: all familiar phenomena, including that of a man, have no “depth”, i.e. no essence or nature and exist only as one-dimensional facts of empirical experience: “There is no doubt that every our cognition begins with experience, as what else but objects could raise the cognitive ability for activity, as objects affect our senses and partly lead to images, partly encourage our intellect to compare those images, associate or detach and thus process the raw material of sensory impressions into the cognition of objects, called experience” (Kant, 2013, 43). This, in turn, means that cognition does not find them, but invents, and they are ephemeral constructs of such a new cognition.

The human becomes exactly as described: a constantly making oneself and self-renewing construct or a phenomenon, turning into a cognitive image constructed by a person. Such a human-phenomenon has no solid and unchangeable basis of existence in reality, and his only conduit of conditional certainty and stability is an abstract and empty idea of the so-called transcendental “Self” or the transcendental principle that accompanies all of his changing images and allows to think and imagine the ephemeral “unity” of a person. Such concept of “Self” already implies, even though does not fully guarantee, an opportunity of unrestricted individuation. According to Kant, every individual must create and develop oneself by looking into the “depth of the idea of humanity”: “Inner significance is the depth of the insight into the idea of humanity, it is revealed by the fact that rare aspects of such an idea are highlighted, and due to purposeful circumstances distinct and clearly expressed individualities can reveal their unique traits” (Kant, 2013). This means that in one’s life a person must consolidate and develop oneself without realizing a certain universal idea of a perfect person, but has to create oneself, implementing a strictly individual life project by freely choosing among other things, one’s own worldview, values and ideals.

**F. Schiller’s concept of “Self”.** Referring to Kant’s principles of transcendental philosophy and aesthetics, F. Schiller has consistently revealed and

exposed the duality hidden in the Kantian concept of “Self”. According to him, there are actually two definitions or dimensions of the human “Self”, which the philosopher calls a person and a state. Their interaction and relationship are defined as follows: “Insofar a person and a state in a human being, as in a complete creature, are different, so neither the state nor the person can be the basis for each other. In the latter case, the person should change, and in the first case, the state should be constant, so either the personality or the completeness should disappear” (Šileris, 1999, 67). “Hence, a person should be one’s own basis, as what remains can not appear from change; in such a way, first of all, we have come to an absolute self-based being, i.e. idea of freedom. A state must have a basis; due to the fact that its being is not based on a person, in other words, is not absolute, it must take place; this means, secondly, that we have found a condition for any dependent being or becoming – time. Time is a condition for any becoming, - that is an identic statement, because it means that sequence is a condition for something to happen” (Šileris, 1999, 68). The connection between the absolute freedom and time, indicated by Schiller, is a necessary condition for individuation and allows to clearly define the essence of the process of individuation: individuation is the only infinite expression of absolute freedom that became the “nature” of man, i.e. unaware of any inherent limitations, in time: “the human personality, taken by itself and detached from any sensible material, is the beginning of the possible infinite expression” (Šileris, 1999, 69). By surpassing Kant in such a way, his follower Schiller provides the concept of *individuation* with an even more definite theoretical and practical meaning: individuation, being an absolutely free-flowing human self-creation in time, is the expression of power that is hidden in one and objected by one’s creations, or a process of human empowerment extending to an infinite future through one’s realized individual life projects.

**F. Nietzsche’s philosophical *principium individuationis*.** F. Nietzsche has transferred his philosophical *principium individuationis* reflections into a completely new level of theoretical reflection, providing the following principle with a “postmodern” meaning. F. Nietzsche changes the concept of the principle of individuation by eliminating the difference between essence-phenomenon, nature and its embeddedness. Therefore, all beings in his philosophy are treated only as phenomenon with no measure of their own reality.

They also do not have the basis of their birth or beginning. Such non-foundation, on one hand, allows to perceive phenomena as appearing *ex nihilo*; on the other hand, since there is no “identity” that would allow to assess the level of realization, the world of phenomena becomes a special reality of dreams. Nature or identity as the ideal limit of dissemination of the being, in this case the human individual, simply disappears. A space of a completely different – limitless – individuation appears, where an individual constructs new ephemeral

forms of one's existence from nothing. This is already a completely "postmodern" interpretation of the principle of individuation. In fact, individuation becomes a special form of "free artistic self-creation", or in the words of the philosopher, expression of the "artistic instincts of nature" (Nietzsche, 1997, 41). The following suggests that personal individuation in this thinker's philosophy begins to be perceived not as a condition for one's self-realization or simply "aesthetic" way of life, but as a special – fundamental and authentic – form of artistic existence.

**J. Dewey' concept of *individuation*.** One of the most prominent proponents and defenders of the idea of individuation of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. was an American thinker J. Dewey. The main idea of this outstanding theorist of educational philosophy was that a human being is only human to the extent one maintains a relationship with others, while one can know oneself, perceive and understand one's needs and possibilities only in a social environment. Human identity has no predefined content and qualities, as who we are and whom we can be is determined by our decisions. Personality that is supported and created by decisions is never fully formed, as it is a result of interaction with the constantly changing environment. Dewey defines individuality as an ethical idea, the essence of which is one's own choice of reflective aspirations and plans, as well as opportunities offered by situations. (Dewey, 2014) After summarizing and assessing Dewey's insights, a researcher of his creation D. Hildebrandt aptly defines the essence of Dewey's developed and highly consistent concept of individuation: "Every choice of an individual determines one's further life" <...By virtue of my choices I create and establish myself; hence, it depends on me what individual story and subjective system of beliefs – a certain explanation why I act the way I do (as there is no cognitive relation between difference actions) I will create" (Hildebrandt, 2008, 190). The following description draws attention to the fact that individuation in Dewey's philosophy is no longer perceived as an implementation of life projects linked by linear causal relationships. It becomes a sequence of absolutely freely and spontaneously chosen, not determined by the past and implemented *ad hoc* life projects. From Dewey's point of view, the most important thing in a person's life is to develop – in physical, intellectual and moral terms.

**Postmodern philosophical concept of *individuation*.** R. Rorty's concept of *individuation*. The meaning of individuation was completely exposed in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> c., as only then "radical" individualism has been finally established (strictly, essentially emphasizing independence of an individual) – a distinctive feature of postmodern society. According to an American philosopher R. Rorty (Rorty, 2007), individuation is the development and implementation of self-creative competencies. It necessarily takes place within the boundaries of the existing, dynamic social and cultural networks. Being a constructivist, Rorty

emphasized that a person is not a gift, but a result of social, cultural, historical, economic and political interactions: “Transformation into a human being during the process of socialization, followed by (successful) self-individualization and self-creation, when a person, he or she, rebels against this established process” (Rorty, 2007, 118).

Rorty chooses the position of the postmodern pragmatism, concepts of epistemological behaviourism and creative misreading. Accordingly, the process of human socialization is a controlled assimilation of socio-cultural interactions, suggestion of an assumed essence, acquisition, recognition and creative confession, and the stronger and more original may one’s path of individuation be. Individuation is the development and realization of self-creative competences. It necessarily takes place within the boundaries of the existing, dynamic social and cultural networks, while the purpose of education is to master those networks, be able to participate in them (stage of socialization) and “train and provoke self-creation” (Rorty, 2007). The aim of such individuation is to doubt, criticize, change and develop oneself as a particular construct.

**The concept of Individuation in the works of psychologists (G. Jung: pioneer of individuation psychology).** The problem of individuation in psychology was established only in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> c., when psychology completely separated from philosophy and became an independent science. The main feature of this science, which distinguished it from the previous psychology, is the abandonment of the concept of a substantial soul. This meant that the concept of “Self” has changed fundamentally – this “Self” became an ephemeral and dynamic, i.e. devoid of constant certainty and constantly changing, as well as suffering from endless transformations, physical being. In this respect, the newly developed modern scientific psychology has extended and deepened tendencies that were highlighted in philosophy, but observed and examined them from a specific perspective.

Thus, the question of individuation has acquired a specific significance too: first, the new psychology analysed not individual mental processes, but human personality as a whole, and its becoming was analysed by one of its fields – psychoanalysis. Even though personal individuation was not directly investigated and its concept is not even used in the works of its pioneer and creator S. Freud, it is easy to see the origin of the idea of individuation, and its process and mechanism were actually explored. The basic scheme of this process is clear: the conscious human “Self”, or one’s *ego*, is perceived and analysed as a fragile and ephemeral derivative of two unconscious mental powers (layers) – subconscious, or *id*, and overconscious, or *superego*, - created and supported by a constant struggle and tension, distracted and torn by those unconscious powers. This means that human “Self” is not only perceived as limited or partly conscious, but also having to constantly regain that consciousness and even one’s existence from the

subconscious and impersonal mental powers. Regain, defend and preserve one's conscious "Self" – is the most important human task set by Freud's psychology, but basically it is nothing other than the original definition and formulation of individuation and its aim. This is how Freud draws basic guidelines of the psychological concept of individuation and further direction of its research. (Froidas, 2014)

The process of individuation in the context of psychology is, first of all, perceived as the pursuit of self-determination and autonomy by an individual. Self-determination is important as a prerequisite for the empowerment of an individual, as it guarantees freedom to make decisions and essential life choices (Deci & Ryan, 2008). An empowered individual becomes an autonomous personality.

In accordance with the following guidelines, specifically with the scheme of the mental structure and the dynamics of its dissemination presented in Freud's works, his follower C.G. Jung has developed a consistent and comprehensive theory of personal individuation. (Jungas, 2012)

Individuation implies the maximum differentiation and separation from the rest, the maximum development and manifestation of each part of the personality. This is the overall development of an individual personality – each individual seeks to stand out from the surrounding environment to the maximum, develop one's powers and abilities to the maximum, and become a single person. In psychology, the concept of *individuation* plays a significant role. In general, individuation is the process of forming and becoming individual, in a specific sense – development of a psychological individual different from the common, collective, psychology. Therefore, the fundamental suppression of individuality is its artificial mutilation. The psychological process of individuation is closely related to the so-called transcendental function, as this function provides individual lines of development, which are impossible to achieve by the path drawn by collective standards. Under no circumstances can individuation be the only goal of psychological education. Before setting individuation as a goal, another educational aim should be achieved: to adapt to the minimum of collective standards necessary for existence; in order to reveal the identity of a plant, it must first be able to grow in the soil, in which it was planted.

Individuation is always more or less contradictory to the collective standards, as its essence is the separation and differentiation from what is common, and creation of what is special, but not artificial specificity, but specificity *a priori* that is already inherent in the inclination of the being.

Individuation, hence, may be called the approach to the identity or self-realization.

**The problem of individuation in humanistic psychology: C. Roger's and A. Maslow's theory of self-realization.** The problem of individuation has been

raised and solved by the field of modern psychology – the so-called humanistic psychology. Its pioneer C. Rogers has been greatly influenced by the ideas of representatives of existentialism: F. Nietzsche, M. Heidegger and J.P. Sartre. This field of psychology appeared in 1950s and was innovative and differed from the two previously prevailing fields of psychology – behaviourism and psychoanalysis – in a way that it attempted to bring back to psychology the concept of a holistic person as an integral personality, capable of consciously give meaning to one's existence. Behaviourist psychology relied on the positive methodology and studied only the eternally observed manifestations of human behaviour. Rogers, founder of the new direction, explicated this question as a group of inter-related questions: "What makes and turns a man into a man? What encourages one to improve? What are one's life goals and meaning of life?" Such a holistic vision of a human presupposes that an individual has to search for the meaning of life in oneself and find it. Since the question "What is a man?" is in principle open and infinite, i.e. it will never be completely answered, in his perspective, the concept of a person as of a being open to infinite opportunities, becomes apparent (Rogers, 2005). The following implies that the most important task of a person with endless potential is to fully realize this potential. This provision means that Rogers also takes over, only specifically interprets and develops the same idea of human self-realization as of a free self-creation. From his point of view, authentic personality is a self-creative *ex nihilo* individual, who does not limit oneself in advance by any experiences and thus is capable of freely and fully realize oneself. Rogers's concept of self-realization is a distinct variant of the theory of psychological individuation, the core of which consists of four fundamental concepts: a) Human identity, defined as what we consider ourselves to be and what opportunities we realize; b) Human self, understood as all thoughts and feelings that are used to answer the question of who we are; c) The real self, that is the core of an individual's personality – feelings and thoughts that reflect one's desires, qualities and abilities; d) Development of personality, which in this theory is understood as the pursuit of implementing one's potential, aim (Rogers, 2005).

The essential point of Roger's theory of individuation is his belief that an "individual can become an authentic personality and realize one's real self only by resisting the influence and pressure of the environment" (Rogers, 2005). Exactly here is the main difference in the interpretation of individuation proposed by his humanistic psychology and psychoanalysis, according to which individuation is more determined by the uncontrollable internal and external factors of mental life of a person (Rogers, 2005).

Roger's humanistic psychology is developed by A. Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of needs. According to Larry A. Hjelle, "the following theory carries on the functionalist tradition of James and Dewey, blends with the holism of

Wertheimer, Goldstein and Gestalt psychology, dynamism of Freud, Fromm, Horney, Reich, Jung and Adler. The following synthesis is called a holistic-dynamic theory” (Hjelle & Ziegler, 1992). The starting point of Maslow’s theory is the idea of a hierarchical pyramid of needs, first described in 1943 in the article “Theory of Human Motivation”. Maslow’s tiered pyramid of needs is as follows: a) Physiological needs; b) Safety needs; c) Social needs; d) Self-esteem and recognition needs; e) Self-actualization and problem-solving needs.

From the point of view of the aspect of individuation, and from the general perspective of Maslow’s theory, it becomes evident that the most important thing here is the need for self-realization. The following need is realized by a variety of forms – it depends on the individual, i.e. on one’s choice. The power and importance of the following need is clearly revealed in Maslow’s statement that a choice between two options is absolutely necessary and inevitable. One can choose either to realize oneself or to retreat to the so-called “safe zone”, which means to abandon that opportunity and actually condemn oneself to the stagnation of self-realization and degradation of personality. Moreover, the more an individual avoids self-realization and chooses to abandon the opportunity, the greater is the gap between who one is and who one could have become (Maslow, 2011).

## **Conclusions**

The article presents different philosophical and psychological approaches towards the process of individuation, which is governed by reflexions, doubts and criticism that allow the individual to change and develop one’s *Self*, thus becoming a constantly updated project and construct.

In philosophical and various scientific literature particular attention is paid to individuation that can be defined as a constant evolvement based on personal self-creation. The critical overview of the concepts of individuation developed by such authors as I. Kant, F. Schiller, F. Nietzsche, J. Dewey, R. Rorty, G. Jung, C. Rogers and A. Maslow has proven that each person seeks to realise one’s inner potential in his own manner.

All the authors mentioned above share the common belief that personal individuality should be perceived as a constantly changing factor. The modern philosophical and psychological provisions of the personal individuation described in the article justify that Individuation is perceived as a conscious decision to constantly create one’s qualitative life by realizing one’s creative strengths and personal human needs. It is an ongoing process. Individuation involves the ability to build a relationship with others, without abandoning or losing oneself (one’s identity).

Due to the constructivist nature of individuation, it is inevitably implemented as a process of personal education. Thus, for individuation to be successful, an appropriate, i.e. favourable educational environment should be created.

It can and is also perceived as a (self)educational process, which occurs in an educational environment that is suitable for the self-expression and individuation of a person. Individuation is a path and process of self-education, where identity of a person changes and develops. Individuality of a person is created through the process of individuation. A prerequisite for successful individuation is its reflexivity, which offers opportunities to critically reflect upon, assess and adjust this process.

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