

## **The Paranoid Feeling of Being: A Jungian Reading of Dostoevsky's *Double***

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### **Abstract**

Starting from a new definition of existential paranoia, conceived philosophically as an altered form of solipsism or theologically as the revelation of an immanent inferno, we go on to explore the dissociative constitution of Dostoevsky's novella, *The Double* (1846). Influenced by the Shakespearean "I am not what I am", Yakov Petrovich Goliadkin, the main character, builds an intriguing attack on the Jungian category of the persona, which we read as a symptom of indifferentiation. We will also analyze hero's nightmare, where the conflict between the Ego and the Doppelganger receives a tragic dimension, attempting to evaluate *Goliadkin 1* and *Goliadkin 2* through Jungian typology. Insights from Philip K. Dick, Emil Cioran, Rainer Maria Rilke or Mihai Eminescu will help us scrutinize the ambiguous and intricate "paranoid feeling of being".

**Keywords:** Jung, Dostoevsky, Cioran, existential paranoia, persona

### **Of Existential Paranoia**

Paranoia can be described as an altered form of solipsism. There are at least two versions of paranoia: either one discovers that he is the only real *Dasein* in a world where everybody else is a simulation, or one becomes aware of the fact that he or she is a simulation in a real world. The first version was explored by Philip K. Dick in his praised novel *Time Out of Joint* (1959). Movies like James Mangold's *Identity* (2003) and M. Night Shyamalan's *Sixth Sense* (1999) present the second situation. I chose to reflect on the first version because both views share a perverse symmetry in depriving the *Dasein* of his world.

*Paranoia*, etymologically defined as “alternate awareness” [*para-nous*], is capable of transforming the *Weltanschauung* through the remodeling of perception. If the experience of taking drugs can be seen as oriented through the unconditional “pursuit of pleasure” to revealing *the world as heaven*, paranoia can only be understood as an absolute intensification of pure pain, revealing *the world as hell*. If anxiety cuts one off from *das Man*’s perimeter, paranoia, seen as a lesson in “underground reality”, is a harrowing of hell. Through its extreme isolation, paranoia separates the *Dasein* from its *In-der-Welt-Sein*, removing the Self from world. Not only that he is being excluded from this world; moreover, the *Dasein* becomes, in R.D. Laing’s terms, a “divided Self,” one suffering from an internal split. Losing the *In-der-Welt-Sein* and the *Mit-Sein*, not unlike the monks from the desert, who are still linked to their abandoned world through the wires of resentment and nostalgia, *Dasein* loses himself.

“The world doesn’t exist anymore; it is only the ‘I’ that still exists. The world revolves around this divine ‘I’. Neither this ‘I’ doesn’t exist anymore...” This inner division between Ego and the Self was well documented by the Romanian poet Mihai Eminescu:

When I look back on living, the past seems to unfold  
As though it were a story by foreign lips retold.  
As though I had not lived it, nor made of life a part.  
Who is it then so softly this tale recites by heart  
That I should pause to listen... And laugh at what is  
As though it never happened?... Maybe since long, I’m dead!  
(Eminescu 1964, 76; trans. Corneliu M. Popescu)

Paranoia brings along the separation between individual and world (“I am the anti-representation of the world”) and the inner dissociation (“I am not myself, I am the Other to myself”). The territory discovered in the heart of the world, in the womb of *Sein*, is the mental experimentation of hell. The etymology clearly shows that paranoia is a form of being aware of reality. I believe that it is a form of comprehending the dark *essence of existence*, the subliminal revelation of the immanence of hell. If the anxiety of death helps us overcome the everyday inauthenticity, paranoia allows us to exit the world and

ourselves. After breaking his internal unity – “I am not what I am” says Iago (Shakespeare 1992, 5), “Myself am Hell” (Milton 2005, 106) explains Lucifer in *Paradise Lost* –, paranoia transforms the *Dasein* into a shadowy figure who has lost both his world and his sense of Self.

Technically speaking, paranoia is based on the perception of the falseness of the world: the paranoid subject feels that everything is fake, “directed” or “set up” and that there is not a single trace of authenticity or spontaneity in his psychotic universe. A movie like Peter Weir’s *The Truman Show* (1998), where a bogus world is built around the main character played by Jim Carrey, shows the ultimate ambiguity of falseness: “Is my perception false or is the world itself a fake?” That is the paranoid question. And how can I know the difference? The feeling that the world isn’t real, that everything else is a simulation, the sickening bitter taste of falseness can only be disproved – and treated – with the notion of contingency, which reveals the unnecessary character of our existence. The ratio between paranoia and contingency is equivalent to that between meaning (“everything has meaning and it’s all about me”) and meaninglessness (“accidental coincidences can only emphasize the worldly feeling of alienation and indifference”). More exactly, the neutrality of contingency relativizes the notions of meaning and non-meaning, while inversely, paranoia’s method renders the category of *meaning* absolute.

### **From “It’s Not Me” to the Destruction of the Persona**

The second sequence of the Dostoevskyan novella *The Double* (1846) treats the crucial theme of identity. Meeting the head of an office during a carriage ride, Goliadkin hesitates to assume his identity and salute his superior (his failure to identify himself will later prove to be an ontological failure to recognize himself):

Should I bow or not? Should I respond or not? Should I acknowledge him or not?” our hero thought in indescribable anguish. “Or pretend it’s not me but someone else strikingly resembling me, and look as if nothing has happened? Precisely not me, not me, and that’s that!” Mr. Goliadkin said, tipping his hat to Andrei Filippovich and not

taking his eyes off him. “I...I’m all right,” he whispered with effort, “I’m quite all right, it’s not me at all, Andrei Filippovich, it’s not me at all, not me, and that’s that. (Dostoevsky 2005, 43-4)

“It’s not me” reminds of the famous “I am not what I am” (Shakespeare 1992, 5), Iago’s self-characterization of his imposed split between appearance and essence or between persona and shadow. The demonic Iago parodies the supreme creator who revealed Himself in Exodus 3:14: “I am that I am”. The ones that are what they are solve the problem of the contrast between essence and appearance integrating their essence into the appearance, simultaneously being their own manifestation and their own revealed obscurity. This is the ideal case of the divinity, the case of an “I” who won’t ever be “Not-I”. But “if I am not what I am”, I cannot keep at bay “the inferno of the existence”, which will always manifest itself through ambivalence and duplicity. I cannot claim that “hell is other people” (Sartre 1989, 45) (if that were the case my own Selfhood would be a soteriological reservoir), my founding myth will be „myself am Hell” (Milton 2005, 106). My Selfhood is the inferno: the split between „me” and „me”. Therefore „it’s not me”, I don’t find myself inside myself, I run from myself, I don’t know who I am. Moreover, I am afraid of myself and I probably hate myself. My Not-I will be the shadow who grows as I’m diminishing.

Moving on, Dostoevsky’s novel contains an intriguing description of the future Jungian category of the *persona*. Persona can be defined as the “the mask of the actor” (Jung 2014, CW 9/I §43). After Jung, “the persona ... is a compromise between individual and society as to what a man should appear to be” (Jung 2014, CW 7 §246) or “the individual’s system of adaptation to, or the manner he assumes in dealing with, the world” (Jung 2014, CW 9/I §221). Yakov Petrovich Goliadkin, the main character, attacks the category of the persona (defined by the Jungian therapist Jolande Jacobi as the “mask of the soul” (Jacobi 1971, 1-5), claiming that his sincerity is absolute: “I put on a mask only for masked balls, and do not go around in it before people every day.” (Dostoevsky 2005, 56) Goliadkin’s self-confessed persona is *his total lack of persona*. His incapacity to distinguish between Ego and persona shows us his

unconscious indifferentiation, a symptom of the future psychosis. According to Nietzsche, a sense of allegiance to the mask is necessary: “Everyone profound loves masks” [*Alles, was tief ist, liebt die Maske*] (Nietzsche 2002, 38). Without mask there is no guardian at the gates of our empire. Without mask the shadow transgresses both Ego and persona, gaining more control. If we are the owners of a treasure – and we all are, even if we do not know it –, we should guard it and keep it safe. Moreover, the energy from the depths must be filtered and processed, otherwise, in its pure state, it is infernal and can harm us. From a conversation with Anton Antonovich Setochkin, we find out more about Goliadkin’s attack against the principle of the mask:

No, sir, you know, Anton Antonovich, I’m talking, sir, I’m talking about myself, that I, for example, put on a mask only when there’s a need for it, that is, uniquely for carnivals or merry gatherings, speaking in a direct sense, but I don’t mask myself before people every day, speaking in another more hidden sense, sir. That is what I meant to say, Anton Antonovich. (Dostoevsky 2005, 189)

Goliadkin expresses himself in a disguised manner, building an authentic philosophy of the mask, a true *personology*. The fact that the Dostoevskyan hero puts on his mask only for “masked balls” is not a virtue, as he wished, it’s a symptom of this aforementioned indifferentiation between consciousness and unconsciousness. He wants to project honesty while he displays division: I am not who I am (I am not Ego or persona, I will be the shadow). One could infer that life is either a “carnival” (where persona, the interface between individual and society, is the sole ruler: my persona touches the persona of the other, to simplify the intersubjective dialogue), or an “inferno” (where the shadow, the Not-I and the inner split are the only masters). From the beginning, Goliadkin’s existence stays under the sign of the shadow. Dostoevsky’s hero conceives himself sincere in an insincere world, suffering from Hyperion’s Romantic complex, which manifests itself through separation, differentiation and isolation. In the overestimation of his sincerity (the absence of a mask), Goliadkin paves the way of his future psychosis. After the Jungian analyst Barbara Hannah, “people with a deficient persona are really at a great

disadvantage in outer life. They have no shield against the projections of others and are in constant danger of falling back into the original state of participation mystique with their environment (Hannah 2000, 76).

### The Constitution of the Double

When Goliadkin meets his double, one could say that there is confrontation between identity and alterity, a collision between the “I” and the “Not-I”. This mysterious meeting violates Pauli’s exclusion principle which states that two identical objects cannot simultaneously occupy the same spatial position. In this case fiction overpowers the laws of physics; moreover, the novella moves towards a paranoid meta-physics, where the positional simultaneity of the “I” and the Double radically expresses the breaking down of the identity principle. Goliadkin *is and is not* himself at the same time, destroying the logical laws of non-contradiction and identity. The following formula applies to his case:

$$a = [(a = a) \wedge (a = \neg a)]$$

In a Sartrean manner one can define this type of subject as alternating between facticity and transcendence or between freedom and contingency. One can redefine this situation in a Jungian way: the center of my Ego coincides with the center of my Self but my Ego hesitates between shadow and persona.

After meeting with his Doppelgänger, Goliadkin even begins to doubt his own existence (Dostoevsky 2005, 142). The primacy of the enmity and falseness in the confrontation with his Not-I brings us to the *paranoid feeling of being* and to our definition of paranoia conceived as a radical alteration of solipsism. If the classical solipsism can be understood as the impossibility of proving the existence of others, the paranoid solipsism seems to even doubt the existence of the thinking subject. In other words: am I a hallucination in a god’s mind (“Wenn du der Träumer bist, bin ich dein Traum” [*If you are the dreamer, then I am the dream*] as Rilke has put it – Rilke 2001, 23) or a software programmed by an almighty conscience? If Mihai Eminescu asks himself in his poem *Dream* (“Does the

world exist? Or is it only my vision?” – Eminescu 2012, 17), the paranoid often sees himself as a ghost, who will be sent back to nothingness, once the dreamer wakes up and pushes the start button of self awareness. It’s a troubling feeling to ponder one’s own inexistence and something far apart of everyday normalcy [*das Man*], when one possesses a common sense of the reality, which spontaneously discriminates between “real” and “imaginary”. This feeling could be the start of an alternate consciousness, of a systemic anomaly [*para-nous*]. One can notice that describing Goliadkin’s nightmare, the Russian novelist anticipates a scene from *The Matrix Reloaded*, when, attempting to finish off Neo (Keanu Reeves), the agent Smith (Hugo Weaving) clones himself and multiplies *ad infinitum*.

[...] but with every step, with every blow of his feet on the granite pavement, there sprang up as if from under the ground—each an exact and perfect likeness and of a revolting depravity of heart—another Mr. Goliadkin. And all these perfect likenesses, as soon as they appeared, began running after each other, and stretched out in a long line like a string of geese, went hobbling after Mr. Goliadkin Sr., so that there was no escaping these perfect likenesses, so that Mr. Goliadkin, worthy of all compassion, was left breathless with horror—so that, finally, a frightful multitude of perfect likenesses was born—so that the whole capital was flooded, finally, with perfect likenesses, and a policeman, seeing such a violation of decency, was forced to take all these perfect likenesses by the scruff of the neck and put them in the sentry box that happened to be there beside him [...] (Dostoevsky 2005, 254-5)

From the perspective of the shadow (or of the copy) we have an anarchistic and criminal multiplication. The confusion and chaos created by the multiplying of the clones build the premises of a crime, therefore the (dream) police will sanction this revolutionary act. The terror increases once we analyze the scene from the perspective of the Ego (or of the model): Sankt Petersburg is invaded by the copies of *Goliadkin 1*, the original Ego. If only the clones (only *Goliadkin 2*, the Doppelgänger) multiplied, the identity structures of subjectivity (“ego sum qui sum”) would face immediate obliteration. *Goliadkin 1* sees in his dream a crowd of his copies, growing as cancer cells, which are *entirely different* from him, from their source. An absolute split replaces the hegemonic structure of the identity. The feeling of self assurance is also attacked because the mass of

copies (which mimic the original, the only authority who knows the difference between model and clone) will act at the limit of legality, incriminating thus *Goliadkin 1*.

One can read this nightmare in a sociological fashion, as Dmitri Chizhevsky shows. If from a psychoanalytical phenomenology the “attack of clones” brings with it the destruction of identity, from a socio-political point of view, this situation shows that Dostoevsky’s main character is pushed at the limit of the condition of citizenship, becoming, like Camus’s character, Meursault, an absolute “stranger”. The “ontological problems of the fixity, reality, and security of the individual existence” (Chizhevsky 1962, 116) are presented by the Russian writer, when he refers to a *zōon politikón* – not only humiliated and discriminated but also – excluded from the *polis* by his clones. Dostoevsky anticipates in this strange dream Kafka, drawing on the problem of political meaninglessness. When one removes the right of a socio-political existence, one prepares the way for an ontological annihilation: not unlike Josef K., Goliadkin will be banished beyond the walls of the citadel at the end of the novella.

It is interesting to see how the Ego perceives the shadow, how Goliadkin looks upon his double: “Mr. Goliadkin Jr. appeared, cheerful as always, with a little smile as always, also fidgety as always—in short, a prankster, a leaper, a smoocher, a tittler, light of tongue and foot” (Dostoevsky 2005, 275). The shadow is presented as lecherous (“She’s a tasty morsel, that one, said Mr. Goliadkin Jr., winking slyly at Mr. Goliadkin Sr” – Dostoevsky 2005, 296) and greedy (“placing his empty cup, which he had drunk with indecent greediness, on the table” – Dostoevsky 2005, 298). Starting from these descriptions, we can classify *Goliadkin 2* as the Extraverted Sensation Type according to the Jungian typology presented in *Psychological Types*.

Wulfen’s *The Sybarite: A Guide to the Ruthless Enjoyment of Life* is the unvarnished confession type of this sort ... To feel the object, to have sensations and if possible enjoy them – that is his constant aim [...] The more sensation predominates, however, so that the subject disappears behind the sensation, the less agreeable does this type become. He develops into a crude pleasure-seeker [...] (Jung 2014, CW 6, §§ 606-608)

While *Goliadkin 1* is captivated by his inner world, *Goliadkin 2* is a “worldly”, sociable personality, strongly attached to everyday “reality”. From his perspective, the problem of solipsism is irrelevant. To give another the cinematographic example, a famous Extraverted Sensation Type from *The Matrix* is the villain Cypher (Joe Pantoliano), who considers that (sensitive) pleasure is more important than (intellectual) truth. “I know this steak doesn't exist. I know that when I put it in my mouth, the Matrix is telling my brain that it is juicy and delicious. After nine years, you know what I realize? ... Ignorance is bliss”, claims Cypher, in a premeditated parody of the discouraging reflections of the *Ecclesiast*: “For in much wisdom *is* much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow” (Ecc. 1:18). If *Goliadkin 2* corresponds to the Extraverted Sensation Type, *Goliadkin 1* coincides with the Introverted Intuition Type. According to one Jungian therapist, “when people of this type break down they tend to become paranoid” (Stevens 2001, 92).

### **Conclusion: Immersion into Paranoia**

If until now we have mentioned only the philosophical definition of paranoia, understood as an alteration of solipsism, we should also mention its psychiatric definition. A paranoid delusion is a “false belief based on incorrect inference about external reality that is firmly held despite what almost everyone else believes and despite what constitutes incontrovertible and obvious proof or evidence to the contrary” (American Psychiatric Association 2013, 819). Paranoia is based on a false perception (a “wrong” vision of reality), which sees the whole world as falsified or phony. The impression of falsity is so strong that the paranoid can no longer discern between the inner and the outer world (his unconsciousness is projected in front his eyes). When the paranoid feels threatened, trembling with fear of the outside world, he feels the projection of his own aggressiveness (Stevens 2001, 66). When he says “they want to kill me”, he is projection his own homicidal intention. One of the best literary descriptions of the paranoid nightmare belongs to Philip K. Dick:

A paranoid psychosis. Imagining that I'm the center of a vast effort by millions of men and women, involving billions of dollars and infinite work... a universe revolving around me. Every molecule acting with me in mind. An outward radiation of importance... to the stars. Ragle Gumm the object of the whole cosmic process, from the inception to final entropy. All matter and spirit, in order to wheel about me. (Dick 1987, 119)

The paranoid will say “I am God” but not with a cheerful mood. The god from the unconsciousness is a demon in disguise (*le mauvais demiurge*) who will force his will upon the afflicted subject. Therefore, Goliadkin will obey the will his dissociated shadow: we anticipated that the inner division in the structures of his identity will lead to psychosis. This demonism of paranoia, found in the Philip K. Dick’s novels or in Roman Polanski’s movies (for example *The Tenant*, 1976) make a strong case for considering paranoia as an initiation into the Cioranian “satanic principle of suffering”: “The divine principle distinguishes itself by an effort toward cosmic synthesis and participation in the essence of everything. The satanic principle, on the other hand, is a principle of dislocation and duality which characterizes all suffering” (Cioran 1990, 109). The dislocating pains of insanity cut Goliadkin off his *In-der-Welt-Sein*. The separation is absolute, the isolation – impeccable. The last image Goliadkin will see in his trip to the mental hospital (a harrowing of Hell, which was only a one-way journey in Dostoevsky’s time) belongs to his Doppelganger, a true devilish twin, who has lead and pushed him into the abyss: “he would thrust his head through the window and blow Mr. Goliadkin little farewell kisses” (Dostoevsky 2005, 372).

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