

Personality and the Familial Unconscious in Szondi's Fate-Analysis

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Introduction

Lipót (Leopold) Szondi (1893-1986) was a psychiatrist of Hungarian origin, who later in his life settled and worked in Zurich (Bürgi-Meyer, 2000; Bürgi-Meyer, Gyöngyösiné Kiss 1994). His fate analysis is considered among the depth analytical schools of the 20th century. As Szondi defined it, fate analysis is 'genetics introduced to psychoanalysis'. Szondi was familiar with Freud's psychoanalytic writings, and besides this influence, his views were based on the findings of contemporary international twin-research, neuro-endocrinology and the complex examination of mentally handicapped children (the impact of biological and environmental factors considered together). He created a human drive study, in which individuals' present and future behavior, their characters and the existential possibilities of their fate are all determined by the dialectics of the opposing drive-pairs of four drives. He also compiled the so-called Szondi-test, which enables researchers to assess the individual differences in manifest and latent drive needs; to describe and diagnose the functioning of the healthy and the pathological personality (Szondi, 1947, 1952; Szondi, Moser, Webb, 1959; Déri, 1949).

To complement the Freudian concept of the individual unconscious, and Jung's idea of the collective unconscious, Szondi introduces the notion of familial unconscious to describe the role of individuals' familial ancestry grounding their choices. In Szondi's conception, people's fate is shaped by their choices. The choices of partner-, friend-, profession-, illness- and form of death are pivotal among these (Szondi, 1944).

The ancient figures of the familial unconscious refer to the determined nature of our choices, as it is these ancient figures that lead us to our particular choices, thus to shaping our forms of fate. However, individuals also possess a personal ego, which is able to form a new personal fate from the potential possibilities offered by the familial unconscious. Fate analysis holds that our possible fate always contains certain compulsions, (due to familial ancestry, heredity, and genetic determination) but the free choice of the ego is always present, which can result in a freely chosen destiny. Fate analytic therapy aims to confront patients with the legacy of their ancestors, and acknowledging that they will be able to decide freely how they are going to handle this heritage, i.e. what new fate they want to create for themselves (Huth, 1978, Kürsteiner, 1987, Jüttner, 2003).

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Freedom and compulsion in human fate

The question of fate had already occupied Szondi's interest in the early days of his career (Szondi, 1937). It happened then that a married couple visited his consultancy, and – years after their wedding – the wife presented symptoms which were most similar to those of her mother-in-law. The wife complained of insomnia, headache, fear of social situations, as well as neurotic obsessions of the urge to poison others. This case reminded Szondi so much of an elderly patient of his that after finding the notes of her case he was convinced that at that earlier date the widow had used almost the same words to describe her symptoms. The husband, present in the consultancy, recognized his mother in the elderly lady. Szondi thought that most of the contemporary doctors would have rendered this the matter of sheer coincidence – that is, a man choosing a wife who happened to suffer from the same poisoning obsessions as his mother years earlier. However, Szondi himself held different views, and searched for the answer to the question of what could have led the husband in his choice of spouse. Szondi based his answer on genetics, and claimed that the husband and the wife were 'gene-relatives', whose fate was determined by their common 'inherited elements'. Supposedly, the disorder that manifested in both the mother and the wife was latently carried by the husband's hereditary features. Szondi claimed that it was these latent genes that unconsciously guided the husband in his partner-choice. Later the question was extended beyond the choice of a partner to the query of what directs humans in their crucial existential choices? In other words, what leads us in our choices of partner-, friend-, profession-, illness- and form of death? In his research Szondi recorded several hundreds of genograms (family trees) and collected data of thousands of relatives in order to receive the answer with the help of genetics. Finally, he came to the conclusion that ancient drives make the choices in us or through us. The act of choice is perfectly conscious, however the cause of the choices lies hidden in the familial unconscious. Szondi claimed that in our crucial existential decisions we are all guided by this familial unconscious. The familial unconscious contains those unconscious drives that strive to return in the fate of the offspring, following such genetic laws as 'patterns and figures' (Hughes, 1992).

In his first fate analytical study (1937) Szondi elucidates the genetic background of partner-choice and describes its types. It is then that he formulates the fate analytical object-choice theory, which he calls genotropism. According to the concept of genotropism, two individuals whose genetic material is similar, may carry latently reappearing hereditary tendencies, and will mutually attract each other. By 1944 Szondi had extended the choices that determine our fate beyond the choice of a partner to the choice of friends, illness and the form of death. Ancient drives lying hidden in the familial unconscious also play a role in backing and guiding one's choices.

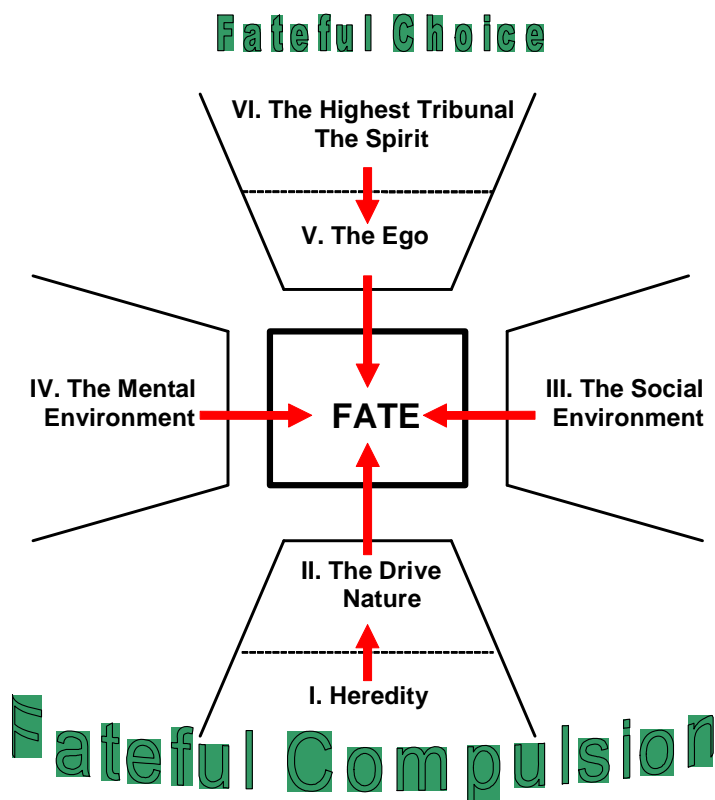
In his first approach – during his investigations in Hungary – Szondi chiefly studied the factors determining one's fate (family heredity, social and mental milieu), but already at that time he had established the concept of dirigible fatalism. According to the concept of dirigible fatalism, nature will precisely circumscribe one's individual sphere of fate, but within this genetically determined sphere we are free to consciously choose objects and walks of life which help us gratify our ancient drive needs in our individual ways. This is the reason why fate analysis uses the term dirigible fatalism. The ancient drives may be gratified both in socio-positive and socio-negative forms, i.e. in ways accepted or rejected by society. Szondi holds that the choice of profession is a domain where we are able to channel our drives in a positive manner. (Just to mention a few of the abundant examples: a man may become a fire-fighter in order to socialize his pyromaniac drives; or may chose to be a butcher to socialize

his aggressive drives, or a surgeon or dentist etc. to sublimate it. Szondi also describes all the humanized, socialized or sublimated ways of gratifying our drives.)

In summary of the concepts of the first phase of fate analysis, it can be stated that this phase mainly focused on searching for factors determining fate. Szondi thinks that people's whole walk of life is impregnated by genetic factors, which determine the quantitative power of drives, the process of development, the direction of manifestation and shape individuals' fate. However, the functioning of the genes does not entirely determine our sphere of fate. Our biological attributes are in constant interference with the environment, and their impact creates a flexible and dynamic system, which may result in a number of unique variations. Consequently, although the various manifestations are closely related to the ancestors, the role they play in life may be greatly diverse from the aspect of the individual and the society.

In his research period in Switzerland Szondi already placed the emphasis on the choice of fate in the concept of new anancology (Szondi, 1954, 1968). At this time Szondi's main questions were whether individuals have only one single fate. If inheritance endows us with several possibilities of fate, are we really able to choose from them? Do people have a fate that can be chosen freely besides the fate determined by an inherited compulsion? If individuals are born with the possibilities of more than one fate, how could those be made conceivable and conscious for them? In reply to these questions, Szondi elaborated the system of fate analytic therapy, which aims to help the patient to 'swap' the bad fate for a new, better one. From this point on, both in theory and therapeutic practice, Szondi distinguished and used the notions of a compulsive fate and a freely chosen fate. He claims that everyone's fate holds both compulsion and freedom. The building blocks of one's destiny are handed down by the ancestors, thus the building material we may have is predetermined. However, it depends on our free choice what individual fate we are able to formulate or integrate with these blocks. In other words, familial unconscious contains a collection of patterns for all the possible fate-figures, from which individuals are free to choose one pattern and figure, or, as in most of the cases, to create their unique destiny from various possibilities of fate. Szondi's new anancological concept accepts the choosing, decisive role of the ego in human fate, which, at the same time, provides freedom and places responsibility on individuals in directing their fate. In this way, personal destiny is a dialectical coexistence of compulsive fate and freely chosen fate. See Figure 1.

Figure 1. The scheme of dialectic anancology, Szondi 1954.



According to Szondi in the life of the individual there is a definite plan. This plan comprises 6 forces. These are: 1. heredity, 2. the character of drives, 3. the social milieu (environment), 4. the mental milieu (environment), 5. the ego and 6. the spirit which is the highest tribunal of the fate. (Heredity, the character of drives, the social and mental milieu are the factors of compulsive fate, while the ego and the spirit are the factors of selective fate). The conception of a transformation of fate occurring in the course of time is based upon the fact that of these 6 fate-determining forces of the individual, at one time has placed the compulsive power of heredity, drive nature, social or mental milieu in the foreground but at another time on the contrary, the freedom of the ego and the spirit. The fate of the individual is neither compulsively predetermined entirely by internal and external factors nor yet absolutely free (Szondi, 1954).

So, in Szondi's model of fate compulsive fate is composed of the system of drives formed by genetic inheritance, the mental and the social milieu, while freely chosen fate consists of the decision-making (stand-taking) ego and the spirit. The system of drives built upon the genetic background creates the features of the personality, whereas the mental- (or world-view) and social environment is the very milieu the individual is born into. People are not free to choose these aspects, i.e. these are the compulsive components of one's fate. The factors of the freely chosen fate are the decision-making (stand-taking) ego and the spirit supporting it. The latter contains all the ideas that belong to the person's value system and enable the individual to experience supra-personal transcendence.

Thus, in fate analysis, besides heredity, the decision-making (stand-taking) ego and the spirit are also considered to be powers directing people's destiny. The ego bridges over drives and the spirit. The spirit is the transcendent instance that provides ancient drive forces with humane features and direction. The eight factors determining fate – together and opposing one

another – are in constant movement and change during our lifetime, thus their interaction is dialectically interpreted. The dialectics and constant dynamic change of fate factors force us always to be ‘underway’ and never to ‘stand still or arrive’. With a theatrical metaphor Szondi explains how fate changes on one’s stage of life, just as acts and scenes change on a revolving stage in the theatre.

Szondi’s fate analysis, in which he intended to study the genetics of the familial unconscious, may serve as a bridge between Freud’s personal unconscious and the collective unconscious described by Jung. Familial unconscious manifests itself in individuals’ fate choices by the inheritance of the ancestors’ aspirations and strivings. Szondi argues that the above three branches of depth psychology intend to elucidate the three different functioning modes of the unconscious by voicing the language of symptoms (Freud), symbols (Jung) and choices (Szondi). These ways of functioning all exist in the psyche in continuity and united globality (Szondi, 1955).

Fate analytical study of drives

In his study of drives Szondi elaborates on Freud’s ideas when defining drives as certain compulsions in the living organism, striving to restore a former state. Taking a further step, Szondi states that from this follows the genetic origin of drives. Furthermore, he also diverges from Freud’s concept in rejecting the Freudian dualism in the classification of drives (distinguishing life- and death drives) and claims that the number of drives equals the number of genes determining drive-directed reactions. In Szondi’s ideas, people with mental disorders actually suffer from drive disorders, or drive syndromes. Relying on the contemporary findings of genetics, he distinguishes four drives: the sexual, paroxysmal, schizofrom (ego) and circular (contact) drives. Each drive consists of two opposing drive needs, and each drive need comprises two opposing drive tendencies. The altogether 16 drive tendencies account for the dialectics and dynamics of our drive system. Szondi does not make qualitative distinction between the drive needs of healthy and mentally disordered individuals. This means that we all have the same drive needs, the difference between people is only quantitative. To understand the concepts of drives, drive needs and drive tendencies, see Figure 2.

Figure 2. The drive system in fate analysis

Sexual drive		Paroxysmal drive		Ego-drive		Contact drive	
h	s	e	hy	k	p	d	m
to love sy, or need for being loved	sadism	being good	to show oneself	introjection	inflation	seeking sy or sg	clinging to sy or sg
↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕
humanistic love towards mankind	masochism	being bad	to conceal oneself	negation	projection	sticking sy or sg	become detached
Eros	Thana- tos	Etics	Morals	Ego- systole	Ego- dyastole	Anality	Orality

The four psychopathologic drive cycles and their eight corresponding inherited mental disorders by Szondi as follows:

- I. Sexual drive: 1. homosexuality (h), 2. sadism (s),
- II. Paroxysmal drive: 3. epilepsy (e), 4. hysteria (hy),
- III. Schizoform drive or Ego-drive: 5. catatonia (k), 6. paranoia (p),
- IV. Circular or Contact drive: 7. depression (d), 8. mania (m).

Szondi developed his projective test in the years around 1935. The test consists of the photo portraits of 48 mentally ill patients, suffering from 'drive syndromes'. The pictures are exposed in six series, each series displaying the portrait of a patient suffering from one of the above eight disorders. The patient is asked to choose from among them according to his/her preferences, likes and dislikes. Initially the test was called a 'genotest', as it aimed to detect the patient's drive structure. Administering the test on ten occasions enables the researcher or the therapist to map both the patient's current psychic state and his/her permanent personality traits. The test is also suitable for the diagnosis of the character- and drive structure of normal individuals and patients with psychopathology.

Ego-functioning and personality in depth psychologies

The ego-concept of fate analysis differs from both that of psychoanalysis and analytical psychology. In Freudian psychoanalysis the ego develops from a part of the id and after its formation it functions as a mediator between the id and the outer world. Ego-functioning needs to harness the id, and to adjust the outer world to fit the desires of the id. In order to divert the unfeasible desires of the id, the ego develops various defense mechanisms, such as suppression, negation or sublimation. Besides the id and the ego, the third sphere of the psychic apparatus is the super-ego, which is formed through the internalization of parental requirements and prohibitions. The super-ego serves to prevent the realization of the drive tendencies disapproved by society, to direct the ego from rationality towards moral goals, to elevate the ego to the realm of ideas. The three instances are in conflicts: instead of the pleasure principle of the id, the ego focuses on the reality principle, whereas the super-ego with its ideals directs the ego away from the reality principle towards irrationality. A healthy personality is able to form a relative balance between the three instances of the psychic apparatus, thus ego-functioning is not destroyed by either id drives or the strivings of the super-ego. Beyond describing the general structure of the psychic apparatus, the unique personality can also be grasped in Freudian psychoanalysis. This unique personality is an individual pattern, based on the interaction of drive forces and defense mechanisms operated by the ego (Freud, 1940).

In Jungian analytical psychology personality is a complex notion, involving various partial complexes, and it has both conscious and unconscious aspects. Personality contains psychic structures as the ego, persona, shadow, anima and animus, and the *Selbst* (Self or the deep core). The ego is the center of the field of consciousness, and as it involves the empiric personality, and it is the subject of all conscious personal acts of the ego. As it could be seen earlier, the ego, or the ego-complex is only a part of the whole personality. The ego serves to maintain the functioning and the continuity of the personality, it is through the ego that we

can experience identity. Testing reality is a further task for the ego. By this we are able to assess our inner processes, as well as the outside world. It is also the ego that perceives oppositions, conflicts between conscious and unconscious. The ego constantly intends to assimilate certain contents of mind, and strives to elevate them into the experience field of conscious functioning. Another important aspect of the Jungian psychology is the description of complexes, as becoming familiar with them will also lead individuals further on the way of acquiring and comprehending their unique personalities. Complexes are autonomous parts of the psyche, with strong emotional charging, which can have positive, motivating effects; and negative ones, originating from an (often childhood-) psychic trauma and influencing later psychic development. Complexes are unconscious, thus making them conscious and affectively elaborating them helps the rearrangement of formerly engaged energies, which will result in the restoration of the psychic balance and the wholeness of the personality, as well as the reintegration of the dissociated parts of the psyche. In his analytical psychology Jung emphasizes the significance of individuation in the process when individual existence evolves. In the individuation process the first step of psychic development is making the shadow conscious, then understanding the anima and animus follows, finally people need to reach their deep real self, and find the inner core of their psyche (Jung, et al. 1968).

In Szondi's fate analytical approach, the development of the personality is determined not only by genetic factors, but also by the mental- and social milieu, the stand-taking, decision making ego and its transcendent values. The term decision-making (stand-taking) ego is used by Szondi, and it denotes the function of our ego that makes decisions concerning ourselves. Szondi supposes that individual life as well as the development of the whole human race is based on a structure of oppositions. Such oppositions are the formerly discussed opposing drive needs, or counterparts as conscious and unconscious, masculinity and femininity, body and mind, being awake and dreaming, the material and the transcendent world. The question remains, however, how, by whom or by what these oppositions are resolved. For the individual the ideal solution would be the integration of the oppositions, i.e. creating a new wholeness from the oppositions. This solution would be the most beneficial both for the individual and the society. Because if individuals try to eliminate the state of oppositions by preferring one pole and neglecting or suppressing the other, it is not only harmful for themselves but also undesirable for their environment, as they will pose a constant menace for society owing to their unsatisfied drives. (The counterparts of masculinity and femininity may be set as an example, as choosing only one extreme and rejecting the other would not be beneficial. Men need to learn to be tender, and women proactive. People need to find the right balance of masculinity and femininity according to their gender roles, and they need to be able to integrate these opposing forces in their personalities.) The process of resolving oppositions is executed by a higher instance in the central control of the psyche, which Szondi calls *Pontifex Oppositorum*. Beyond the task of resolving oppositions, this Pontifex ego plays the role of assigning power and organization in the psyche, it serves to bridge oppositions and create wholeness, the integrated personality. As it had been discussed earlier, in his drive psychology Szondi describes four drives, each of them consisting of two opposing drive needs, which contain two opposing drive tendencies each. The dynamics of psychic life is based on this opposing nature of drive forces. It is the Pontifex ego that decides how the individual will integrate the drive structure constituted of oppositions, which drive needs it will gratify in a natural way, or which of them it will render to socialize or humanize (Szondi, 1956, 1980, 1984).

In Szondi's fate analytical psychology, the choice directed by the Pontifex ego is of utmost importance, which will also play a significant role in the humanization of drives. The way of becoming a 'humane human being' is always open for people, however they can only proceed on this way if – from the various possibilities of existence – they are able to make the

humanized direction conscious, and then choose freely. In fate psychology it is the socialization-, sublimation- and humanization of drives that lead to the highest level of human development. As it is also manifest in his study of *Cain and Moses*, from these three important processes it is mainly the recognition and description of the role of humanization that we can attribute to Szondi (Szondi, 1969, 1973). In Szondi's definition humanism is an intellectual, spiritual movement striving for the spread of love and humane attitudes. According to fate analysis, humanistic people will choose the humane way from the opposing drives (humanistic and non-humanistic manifestation); further they are able 'to extend humanistic needs not only to themselves, their family members, their fellow-churchmen, social cast, race, and nation, but to all human 'objects' of the world' (Gyöngyösiné Kiss, 1995, 1999a,b, 2007). To reach this level of development individuals need the assistance of such ego-functions as transcendence, integration and participation. Transcendence enables individuals to step further to a higher level of development; integration means the formation of a whole personality together with its conscious and unconscious aspects; and participation supports the ability of reintegration, which helps us to participate in human relationships, the world and the spirit.

Figure 3. details Szondi's ideas concerning the image of the human being in various psychological movements.

Figure 3. The road to becoming human (Szondi, 1963b)

	0	I	II	III	IV - V	
FUNCTION	participation, projection	sublimation	compensation	self actualization, inflation	humanisation	
The developmental stages of becoming human					D	liberator and humanisator
HOMO	0	A	B	C	elector	homo humanus
	participator	repressor	potentator	individuator		
The cronological order of the different directs of depth psychology	Imre Hermann, René Spitz	psychoanalysis (S. Freud)	individual psychology (A. Adler)	analitical psychology (C. G. Jung)	fate analysis (L. Szondi)	humanism

Fate analytical therapy

Fate analytical therapy aims to enable patients to leave the compulsions of their fate and direct them toward a more freely chosen way of existence (Szondi, 1963a; Seidel, Jüttner, Borner, 2002). In patients' lives compulsive fate refers to the power and determining role of

hereditary genetics, which may deteriorate the quality of their lives. The possibility of the socio-positive canalization of disturbing genetic factors may help individuals experience less suffering, and gratify morbidating drive forces in a positive form. For the purposes of the fate analytical therapy Szondi used a curriculum vitae written by the patient, a detailed genogram or family tree (preferably checked by the family doctor), and a ten-profile Szondi test. At the beginning of the analysis the therapeutic techniques are similar to those applied in psychoanalysis, they are also based on free associations. Patients also talk about their dreams. The therapeutic process is modified only months later, when the therapy reaches the so-called 'gap-period or hole-period'. In this period the patient's thoughts seem to be stuck, the chain of association from the depths is broken. A patient once described this situation as 'standing by a gap, not being able to proceed'. This halt or breakdown of the process, when associations also become superficial may even last for months. To overcome this difficulty Szondi modified the association technique and introduced the so-called 'hammer-beat association' technique, which aims to break the patient's opposition that causes the block. The technique means that the therapist will very rapidly – like a hammer-beat – expose phrases and sentences from the material of former associations and dreams that are supposedly connected to the current block, or may do the same with all the words of the entire material of the chain of associations. At this point the patient lying on the couch will give up his/her opposition and reproduces the particular symptoms (epileptic, paranoid, catatonic etc.) of his/her ill ancestors. The symptoms are presented and experienced by the complete consciousness of the patient, and this gives him/her a chance to face and experience the formerly hidden inheritance with clear consciousness. Szondi argues that as a result of this shocking effect the revolving stage of the psyche may be reversed, and the formerly hidden dimensions of the personality may be displayed. The hidden part of the personality may already be inferred from the earlier part of the analysis, when the patient shares with the therapist such 'archaic dreams' in which the protagonists are manifest carriers or conductors of a certain disorder. These ancient ill figures really exist in the patient's portfolio of ancestry as 'patterns of existence'. The main aim of the fate analyst is to understand the patients' 'conductor nature', as it is the carrier of their fate neurosis. Fate analysis intends to disclose the latently present ill ancestors, which – according to genetic laws of heredity – strive to 'reappear in descendants' and negatively influence their fate.

Not only the symptoms vividly experienced in the course of the analysis but the family tree and results of the Szondi test also play an important role in confronting the patient with his/her latent tendencies.

The last phase of the therapy is the post-confrontation phase, in which the therapist and the patient try to find the forms of gratification for the formerly morbidating drive forces that may be fit in the patient's life plans, and are not threatening for society, thus provide a viable possibility for gratifying the given drive without dangers. Let us remind the reader here that in Szondi's view mental disorders are actually drive syndromes, and it is the dominance of drive forces that leads to pathologies. Apart from the pathologic forms, drive forces may be gratified in several other ways, for example through the chosen profession, hobby or in different fields of interest. It is an important criterion for fate analysis that it can help patients whose ego-functions are intact, i.e. the ego is able to take a stand concerning heredity. Szondi's fate analysis is an efficient therapeutic technique to cure transgenerational, hereditary neuroses or fate neuroses.

Szondi and modern biology

In the 1930's Szondi based his fate psychology on the achievements of leading researchers of genetics (e.g. Brugger, Weinberg, Johanssen), so it was the Mendelian dominant-recessive genetic law that he based his concepts on the hereditary nature of 'drive genes' that provide the biological background of the personality. Szondi relies on genetics even he bases the law of genotropism on 'genesmanship', i.e. he supposes that our significant choices are influenced by the effect of recessive genes functioning. Although Szondi occasionally exceeds the limits of his contemporary genetic knowledge, – e.g. when discussing the biological origin and function of drives – in general he retains the views of genetics of his days. The question arises, how we are to reflect on Szondi's drive theory and the phenomenon of genotropism from the perspective of our present-day knowledge of genetics, what level of validity we can assume of it. As it is clear from many chapters of this book, (e.g. the genetic and evolutionary approach to personality, personality theories based on neural functioning, modern temperament- and character theories etc.) recent research has confirmed the concept of the hereditary nature of certain personality traits. Nevertheless, the genetic cornerstones of Szondi's theory seem to fail the test of modern scientific thinking. It is widely accepted for example, that personality traits are determined not only by one but several, supposedly hundreds or thousands of genes, which affect in interaction with environmental factors. In spite of this, Szondi's concept could be modified, if instead of allele pairs and Mendel's laws, the theory of polygenic inheritance were applied at this point. The idea of originating the phenomenon of genotropism from recessive genes is also problematic from the perspective of present-day genetics. This problem, however, is not necessarily irresolvable either, as the question of latent genes can be approached in modern genetics, for example in the phenomenon, when after passing a certain threshold, genes of lesser effect may determine the inclination for a given behavior or disorder (Berezkei, 1995; Berezkei, Gyöngyösiné Kiss, 2001). In summary, revisiting and reassessing Szondi's theory in light of modern genetics is yet to be seen.

The significance of the Szondi test in comparing different nationalities

The Szondi test is a projective technique which uncovers the features of personality. As a projective technique the purpose of it to establish a testing situation where the subject is enabled to express his inner world without knowing what he really reveals. It follows that the test assesses the unconscious level of personality which is not accessible directly. Furthermore the Szondi projective test shows not only the basic structure of personality but the dynamic aspects of it as well such as the accumulation and discharge of the drive-needs and need-tensions. By the test it is possible to catch the cultural influence on personality as it has shown by several cross cultural studies (Yarritu, 1955, Szondi, 1972, Yamashita, 1999).

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