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CAN PYSCHIATRY GIVE DIRECTION TO MODERN PHILOSOPHY?

The purpose of this paper is to examine those aspects of modern dynamic psychiatry which could stimulate philosophical thought and perhaps lead even to collaborative investigations between the disciplines of psychiatry and philosophy. Although the overlap of their interests is obvious, there is an astonishing lack of communication between workers in these fields.

In the first section of the paper I will review some fundamentals of modern psychiatry and suggest some areas of mutual interest to philosophers and psychiatrists. In the second section I will investigate the springs of human activity for the purpose of guiding philosophical thought towards helping to solve the problems of modern man.

I

Let me begin with a brief review of the development of modern psychiatry. Historically, modern dynamic psychiatry began with

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Adolph Meyer, a famous neurologist who made painstaking and detailed studies of the brains of patients who died with certain severe mental illnesses, In spite of the use of all the best histological techniques, he was unable to find any sort of pathological or organic changes whatsoever. After considerable further reflection on the problem, he developed the idea that it was in the study of the longitudinal profile, or the life history, of the individual that the key to mental illness could be found. In other words, he emphasized examination of the "longitudinal life history" of the individual, with focus on the patient's particular way of reacting and behaving in interpersonal relationships, in order to find out why this individual developed a mental illness.

Meyer was one of the first who did not believe that some kind of extra-personal invasion by devils, bacteria, etc., was responsible for the development of man's plight. His interest was with the individual human organism as a primary psycho-biological entity.

The greatest of all understanding of the human personality is to be found in the works of Freud. The core of his system of psychoanalysis is that of a dialectical self-enlightening process which he himself used in the operation of discovering psychoanalysis, as can be seen through an examination of his greatest work, *The Interpretation of Dreams*.[1] Besides his immeasurably important contribution of the first functional dynamic description of the human mind in action,[2] it was Freud who called our attention to the importance of the world of phantasy, something which philosophers tend to forget.

Early in the history of any body of knowledge, whether it be knowledge obtained by divine revelation (religion) or empirical study (science) or by reasoning within a closed system (some types of philosophy), there is a tendency to what we might call *discourse by analogy*. Let me define this as the use by some mighty intellect, the founder of the body of knowledge, of "parables" or phrases designed to be intuitively grasped, in lieu of direct

[1] S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, London, Hogarth Press, St. Ed., Vols. 4 and 5, 1953.

[2] S. Freud, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, London, Hogarth Press, Vol. 23, St. Ed., 1964.

communication in any sort of specific-language. For example, when Christ says, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone," it is meant to express a broad general argument which the reader is expected to understand intuitively by going through the steps very rapidly in his own mind. Similarly, one of the most famous philosophers to discourse by the use of "myths" or analogies was Plato.

In the realm of science, Freud was a famous investigator who made use of discourse by analogy in his reports, because in such a difficult and unknown field as that of human relationships it was almost impossible to express all the related concepts in a more succinct and direct manner.

One of the most important of Freud's basic discoveries was the so-called "Oedipus complex." How did he develop this idea? We may find some clues to this in an early letter of his where he describes how he found the feelings towards parents that are part of the Oedipus complex in his own self-analysis. He then generalizes it as a universal phenomenon of early childhood, utilizing it to explain the gripping power of the *Oedipus Rex* play: " every member of the audience was once a budding Oedipus in phantasy, and this dream fulfillment played out in reality causes everyone to recoil in horror, with a full measure of repression which separates his infantile from his present state."[3] It is this basic dialectical proposition about the childhood phenomenon termed the Oedipus complex, which was derived from a self-enlightening process, that stands at the core of classical psychoanalysis. The genius of Freud was at its height.

After concluding from empirical data that all his patients' stories of sexual attack in childhood could not possibly be true, which resulted in a disillusioned period where he almost gave up psychoanalysis entirely, Freud was forced to consider a dimension of human living called the world of phantasy.

Some corroborative study of universal human phantasy involving the Oedipus complex is to be found in a well known book by Rank and Sachs[4] called *The Significance of Psychoanalysis for*

[3] E. Kris, *Sigmund Freud's Letters*. Basic Books, New York, 1954, See Introduction by Ernest Kris in *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, and the Freud-Fliess letter, No. 39.

the Mental Sciences. This book utilizes the Oedipus complex to explain a number of seemingly unrelated phenomena involved in religion, ethnology, linguistics, aesthetics, philosophy, ethics, law, pedagogy and characterology. I will consider only the part of the book that deals with types of philosophers or philosophical personalities, of which these authors delineate three. The first is called the "intuitive spectator," the real, artistic metaphysician, as represented most truly by Plato; the second type is called a "synthetic investigator," seen, for example, in the comprehensive systems of Comte, Spencer, and others, while the third is called the "analytical thinker," as represented most clearly by Kant and Spinoza.

One of the important points that Rank and Sachs bring out from their study of the personality of the philosopher concerns the type of "analytic thinker" who proceeds pre-eminently from certainty in the theory of knowledge, and attempt to erect systems on the basis of very restricted principles, in the manner of logical positivists. Rank and Sachs feel that this is a direct reflection of the peculiar character formation in the personality which is expressed in this type of philosophy, so that the philosopher, as shown in many places in the book, "seeks to shut himself from the practical congenial life, to keep himself free from the deceptive mingling of reality in his thought processes as far as he may." They describe certain compulsive features about this type of philosopher's personality which, although they permit the discovery of knowledge in a certain restricted area, make it impossible for this type of philosopher to go outside the particular areas he chooses to study.

Their greatest interest is in the metaphysical philosophers, who, in their almost artistic works, show a great deal of wish-fulfilment and unconscious material in the construction of their mythological "systems." Thus, in a sense, we are warned as early as 1916 by Rank and Sachs, to try to steer as well as we can between the Scylla of the obsessional restricted analytical type of philosophy and the Charybdis of intuitive, mystical, dream-like thought, which is based on wish-fulfilment rather than truth.

[4] O. Rank & H. Sachs, *Significance of Psychoanalysis for the Mental Sciences*, Nerv. & M. D. Mono. No. 23, New York, 1916.

Similarly, Russell described the "love of system" as the greatest barrier to honest thinking in philosophy, and "the demand for certainty" as "an intellectual vice."[5]

Freud uncovered many phantasies and ideas from childhood in the unconscious which are not "true." In the ordinary waking life of man phantasy ought to be important only as a means of temporary relief from the hostility of nature, or in considering possible future courses of action. Thus we snatch a few minutes here and there to day-dream, enjoy art, or achieve vicarious satisfactions in the experiences of imaginary characters on the stage. Phantasy life is another dimension of living along which both pain and pleasure can be experienced.

However, although there is some element of choice in existing along the other dimensions of living to which Aristotle's golden mean can be applied, the situation with respect to phantasy is different. Experiences can occur early in life that will invest certain childhood phantasies with such emotional charge that the individual can be left paralyzed and unable to advance towards reality and maturity in that area of living. Thus, in conscious life at a later time, due to the operation of mental mechanisms, certain activities are forced upon us by these emotionally charged phantasies pressing for expression. The part of the personality or "ego" that functions to integrate and permit satisfaction of our deep-seated needs with respect to demands of the external world, may be powerless to completely repress the unacceptable internal demands, and can, at best, manage only to permit satisfaction in a partial and distorted manner. We are now in the realm of neurosis and psychopathology, and have arrived at a psychodynamic expression of Spinoza's concept of "human bondage," in which a person is forced to behave in a way he knows is not best for him.

Living can become so distorted to people that existence along any other dimension except the phantasy world loses its flavor, and reality is either abandoned in the very sick or becomes narrow and charged with imaginary fears. Any study of reality, therefore, must take into account the distortion of the observations by the particular "neuro-mental configuration of the observer."[6], as well

[5] B. Russell, *Basic Writings*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1961.

as the influence of the phantasy life of that observer in his perception of the reality situation. Notice that there are *no* impartial empirical observers, just as "The Mind and the Eye" cannot be separated.[7] As the humanists have pointed out, *by the nature of things*, the study of reality must to some extent be muddled. *There comes a point when attempts to gain increasing clarity can be made only to the extent of causing separations that are so artificial as to be arbitrary and valueless.*

To paraphrase Svaglic,[8] in any field of knowledge, one can hold a number of attitudes toward the totality of propositions made by students in that field. One can lean toward *dogmatism*, i.e., insist that one group of propositions in the field is invariably and eternally true; or *skepticism*, i.e., that none of the propositions has any truth, or even that no true proposition can be derived for various reasons. In between these we find *syncretism*, i.e., that each proposition has some truth, but the best will come from the synthesis of all; and *pluralism*, i.e., that all criticism is a function of its subject matter and of the dialectic, or system of inference, exerted upon that subject matter. Thus a judgment true in one framework may be false or meaningless in another.

The original propositions of psychoanalysis were presented, especially by the lesser followers of Freud as *dogmatism*, and, as such, were received with considerable hostility by the empirical scientists of the day. However, these scientists were equally as dogmatic in their insistence on empirically observable facts as the basis of all statements. Today, both sides have to some extent changed their attitudes. The scientists, especially in the physical sciences, have ceased to think in terms of little hard balls, and are willing to work with purely theoretical and often totally unpredictable concepts, such as single non-localized electrons going through unimaginaby narrow slits, and the corresponding new quantum mechanics. In fact, some philosophers such as Camus have even criticised science in that by becoming so

[6] R. D. Chessick, "Application of Neurological Studies in an Approach to Some Philosophical Problems," *Philos. of Science*, *20*:300-312, 1953.

[7] A. Arber, *The Mind and the Eye*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1954.

[8] M. Svaglic, "The Chicago Critics." *Poetry*, *82*:98-114, 1953.

theoretical and unobjective, and in trying to explain highly abstract concepts in some kind of practical language (for example, the "fourth dimension"), science has become more and more artistic and involved in discourse by analogy!

Modern psychoanalysis, as well as modern literature, has become *syncretistic* and even pluralistic in its outlook. One can now defend the principles of psychoanalysis on scientific grounds by maintaining that they are not and cannot be derived from empirical scientific experiments in the classical Newtonian sense, but rather are intuitive abstractions from "process," in the philosophical sense.[9] They are hypotheses induced from the vast data of the doctor-patient relationship.

It was a major advance of Harry Stack Sullivan to recognize the importance of the *process* or *dynamic nature* of interpersonal relationships. He writes, "Psychiatry is the study of processes that involve or go on between people. The field of psychiatry is the field of interpersonal relations, under any and all circumstances in which these relations exist."[10] The method of modern psychoanalytical investigation is to abstract from the life history and interpersonal relations of the individual certain ways of relating to the key people in his life, which then carry over to all his interpersonal situations. From this labor of extraction which must be clinically tested and retested, come the basic propositions of psychoanalysis, established within their own cultural framework.

Thus, as in any other science, the basic data (clinically observed interpersonal situations by participant-observers) are used for the induction of certain laws, which are then tested by their application to future data. The process of intuitive induction is always poetical and aesthetic, but psychoanalysis, just as other natural sciences, is a field in which the final appeal is to experience consisting of clinical examination of the propositions that follow from the hypotheses.

Just as the integration of psychiatry with literary tradition reaches its peak in the amazing, multi-faceted genius of Freud,

[9] A. N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, New York, Mentor, 1948.

[10] H. S. S. Sullivan, *Conceptions of Modern Psychiatry*, Washington, W. A. White Foundation, 1947.

so, the integration of psychiatry with philosophy reaches highest proportions in the works of Harry Stack Sullivan. One of Sullivan's books[11] is even organized on the format of Euclid's *Elements.* There are definitions and postulates, and let us turn now to some of them.

The first of these postulates, which represents some of the latest thinking in psychiatry about human living, states that man can be thought of as distinguished from plants and animals by the fact that human life in a very real sense requires interchange with an environment that includes "culture." In other words, where there are no interpersonal relationships between men, the personality of the isolated individual will regress and deteriorate. This is remarkably illustrated by William Golding in *Pincher Martin.*[12]

The second is what Sullivan calls, "The One Genus Postulate," and is contained in his famous aphorism that "Everyone is much more simply human than otherwise." Differences in mental health do not arise so much from differences in heredity, language, or customs, but are a function of differences in relative maturity of the persons concerned.

Notice the implications of this kind of approach for philosophy. What Sullivan implies is that the study of ethics and guides for human behavior must take into consideration the state of emotional maturity of the individual. Thus, for a person to develop his viability as a human being, there must be a certain amount of psychic freedom from infantile problems and conflicts, or from "human bondage," to enable the individual to realize his full potentials of reason, love, and productive work.

The third important postulate stresses what I have already discussed about the development of the individual life history. Sullivan postulates a number of heuristic stages in the development of the individual, all along which errors and trauma may occur that result in later disturbance of the adaptability of the human being and development of good interpersonal relationships.

We may see in these three postulates the new attitude of

[11] H. S. S. Sullivan, *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry,* New York, Norton, 1953

[12] W. Golding, *Pincher Martin.* New York, Capricorn Books, 1956.

psychiatry towards human living. This is the latest expression of the modern direction in psychiatry, which focuses on the individual, his relations in the group, and his stages in development.

Sullivan defines the term "sentience" as the primary data of experience. This is borrowed from Spearman[13], who used the term in order to distinguish between the initial effect of stimulation on the sensory receptors (sentience), and the impression by the time it reaches the conscious (percept). This is a very important meeting point for philosophy and psychiatry, since both are interested in the basic data and methods of perception.

Here is illustrated how the positivist school of philosophy can be of great importance to a philosophy which is psychologically oriented. In the positivist school there is much concern with the demonstration of how primary data is used in the construction of the external world. The work of the philosophers has to do with building up our understanding of the external world from this primary material.

In psychiatry we are interested in the early and primitive stages of perception, what Sullivan calls the "prototaxic mode" of perception, before the infant has separated itself from the rest of the world, which is closely related to mental functioning in schizophrenia. This, in turn, is important because it gives us insight into the mode of experience of schizophrenic patients.

It in apparent that the fruitful integration of knowledge from philosophy and psychiatry may be gainfully employed in helping us to understand and eventually treat mental illness, and, at the same time, may be utilized to guide people on the road to increased maturity.

Wittgenstein's concept of "language games"[14], when it can be fully examined and understood, will, in my opinion, be a great contribution from philosophy in helping understand "schizophrenese"—the language of schizophrenic patients. In reverse, it is fruitful to utilize the latest information from neurology and psychiatry to re-examine certain classical problems in philosophy.

[13] Sullivan, *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry* cit.

[14] L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, New York, Macmillan Co., 1953.

In three previous publications[15], I have attempted this re-examination in more detail.

Another trend in modern psychiatry which has a close relation to some philosophical problems begins with Freud's *Civilization and It's Discontents*[16], and develops in Alexander's *Our Age of Unreason*[17]. Alexander depicts the embarrassment that people feel if confronted with the question of what to do with their leisure time. He speaks of this as "the typical feature of our day." There is a continuous struggle to maintain a higher standard of material living, but a continual and parallel withdrawal of the "wine of life." Alexander asks, "What will then be the content of life for people who have learned only how to struggle for such high material standards, but are not prepared to use their prosperity for the enrichment of their lives?"

He points out the critical problem which should be studied by the modern writer in philosophy, literature and psychiatry. The main goal of all the improvements in technical aspects of living should not simply be increased materialistic gain or the furtherance of national prestiege, but *a higher cultivation of our specifically human faculties.* Alexander writes, "Eating, sleeping, and propagation are common to men and animals. Division of labor, the exchange of socially useful services, can be observed even in insect society. But writing poems and novels, building cathedrals, producing plays and operas, discovering the laws of nature and inventing methods of healing, enjoying the landscape, educating and developing powers of the mind, are specifically human faculties."

Alexander reflects the increased concern of modern psychiatrists with the constantly rising anxiety and the development of mental disease in an age of technical perfection. This began with the thought of Kierkegaard[18], who forecast the increased

[15] R. D. Chessick, "Application of Neurological Studies etc." cit.; "The Problem of Time in Philosophy, Neurophysiology and Psychiatry. *J. Nervous and Mental Dis. 123:*14-17, 1956; "Creative Inspiration, Time and the Sense of Reality," *American Imago, 14:*317-331, 1957.

[16] S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, St. Ed. Vol. 21, London, Hogarth Press, 1961.

[17] F. Alexander, *Our Age of Unreason,* New York, Lippincott, 1951.

[18] S. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Dread*, Princeton (N.J.), Princeton Univ. Press. 1946.

dread of the masses as they are confronted with the loss of certitude and inwardness in a materialistic and technically advanced civilization.

In this section I have pointed out a consistent line of thought beginning with Freud's concern about the inner forces and phantasies of man, developing through Sullivan, who increasingly focuses on the importance of culture and the position of man in his social strata, and finally arriving at Alexander, who stresses the development of individual human potential, and the exercise of "specifically human faculties."

II

What is meant by "specifically human faculties", is a question that goes all the way back to Aristotle. In order to further understand this it is necessary to examine all human activity in order to sort out the specifically human. It will then be the task of philosophers to help us to cultivate these specifically human faculties, and to delineate the activities that most enhance such a cultivation and most benefit the individual and the human community.

As a psychiatrist, I would classify human activity into two essential types: I shall use the term *kinetic activity* to characterize those actions which are aimed at the maintenance of the vegetative processes of the organism, and which originate from the need of every biological organism to replenish and reproduce its physico-chemical constituents in the fundamental life-processes. In contrast to this, I employ the term *synthetic activity* to characterize the action of the organism in which it ultimately seeks to discharge what may be called "psychogenic tensions." Unavoidable residua are involved in the metabolic processes and attempts to maintain homeostasis by the organism. Part of the residua of this metabolism and of the unavoidable physiological and psychological process of continual adaptation to the internal and external environments is a certain *imbalance*, a mechanical impediment to the highest working efficiency of the organism. Part of it may even begin first on a cellular level of the body and involve a residual disturbance of the molecular organization of the cell itself. This sort of disturbance from an

organization that would afford the highest working efficiency is transmitted to higher and higher levels of integration in the body, until it reaches the peak of the hierarchy, the central nervous system. In some cases, there is a reflex readjustment of the organization at the lower centers of the nervous system, but in other cases, at the higher centers a dynamic pressure builds up for reorganization and return to the constant internal and external environment. The appearance on the psychological level of this need for discharge and reorganization I characterize as the development of "psychogenic tension."

The notion of "psychogenic tension" has not received adequate attention from philosophy. The basic error of numerous schools of ethics involves the failure to realize that vegetative satisfaction or even a static "happiness" or more accurately εὐδαιμονία, is necessary but not sufficient for human happiness, and that no satisfactory ethical system will work without accounting for the unceasing coexistent human need of activity directed toward the release of "psychogenic tension."

Kinetic activity is directed toward the goal of vegetative or structural maintenance, while *synthetic activity* is directed toward the goal of the maintenance of functional efficiency of the organism. The most fundamental way to understand the distinction offered here is from the study of infants and children. The need for two basic kinds of satisfaction exists even in the infant. This discovery is one of the most outstanding advances of modern psychiatry, and lends scientific proof to our philosophical principles. The initial impetus to *kinetic activity* is seen in the striving of the infant for nourishment from the mother's breast, and it is this original and powerful need for food that remains throughout life as the basis of *kinetic activity* with the goal of vegetative satisfaction. This is easy to observe and well known.

The important modern discovery, however, is that the infant cannot thrive on vegetative satisfaction alone. This has been demonstrated, for example, by the phenomenon of "hospitalism,"[19] and the inability of organically healthy babies to thrive

[19] R. Spitz, "Hospitalism," *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, 1*:53-73, 1945, and *2*:113-117, 1946.

in an environment that provides amply for vegetative needs but where there is a complete lack of emotional contact. The second basic need of the infant, after nutritional satisfaction, is for the development of a secure emotional contact with the external environment, so that it may release psychogenic tensions without disturbing its relations with the external environment, The mother who is unable to tolerate the baby when it disturbs the rigid schedule or the silence she demands, is preventing the baby's release of psychogenic tensions.

Certain kinds of treatment may force the baby into a characteristic attitude in order to release these tensions. It turns inwards and releases them in phantasy, rejecting the maintenance of so precarious an emotional contact with the environment. This is the *schizoid reaction pattern*; it often does not become manifest that such a pattern for the release of psychogenic tensions has been developed until adolescence, when there is considerable increase in biological activity with an accompanying resulting increase in the pressure for release of such tensions. The individual may be forced, by the great pressure for their release, into the pathological infantile reaction pattern that was previously developed in another period of great stress. He employs once more the schizoid reaction pattern to release the pressure of psychogenic tensions, but in order to do this he must revert to the infantile state, concomitant with the disintegration of mature ego function and withdrawal from reality.

In an empirical examination of emotional development in the first year of life, Sibylle Escalona[20] begins with the following basic observation: "The extraordinary contrast among babies in their behaviour immediately after feeding highlights the point that the end result of having been fed is by no means always blissful oblivion." She concludes, ". . . even before the baby dimly recognizes a difference between the self and nonself, between mother and anything else, and before he gives signs of anticipation or memory, the quality and range of his experiences may vary in many different ways. The kind and intensity of his expe-

[20] M. Senn (Ed.), *Problems of Infancy and Childhood,* New York, Macy Foundation, pp. 11-93, 1953.

rience must play a role in the establishment of earliest attitudes and basic feelings."

We cannot understand our ways of perception, of action, and of phantasy unless we realize the significance of earliest experiences in their development. Our whole present concept of the world depends on the structure of our neuro-mental apparatus and the vast number of *earlier* experiences superimposed on this apparatus. This has been discussed by me previously in detail as the *configurational state*[21]. Similar problems have been recognized and studied in psychiatry by Schilder[22].

Just as hunger, thirst, irritability, etc., are the subjective psychological sensations that arise from the pressure of internal physiological needs for vegetative maintenance, so *anxiety* encompasses the subjective sensations or signals characteristic of the internal pressure for release of psychogenic tensions. By the nature of the organism, there is a continual dynamic and adaptive process going on, in which the individual maintains his external relation to people and things in a relatively secure state. The need for this secure state arises because, even though vegetative satisfaction is assured, psychogenic tensions can be discharged only when such a relation is present.

An important corollary becomes apparent with a little reflection on this situation. The greater the internal pressure of psychogenic tensions for discharge, the greater is the need for a secure external environment for release of those tensions on the part of the individual, and, concomitantly, the greater the anxiety that will arise when this security is threatened.

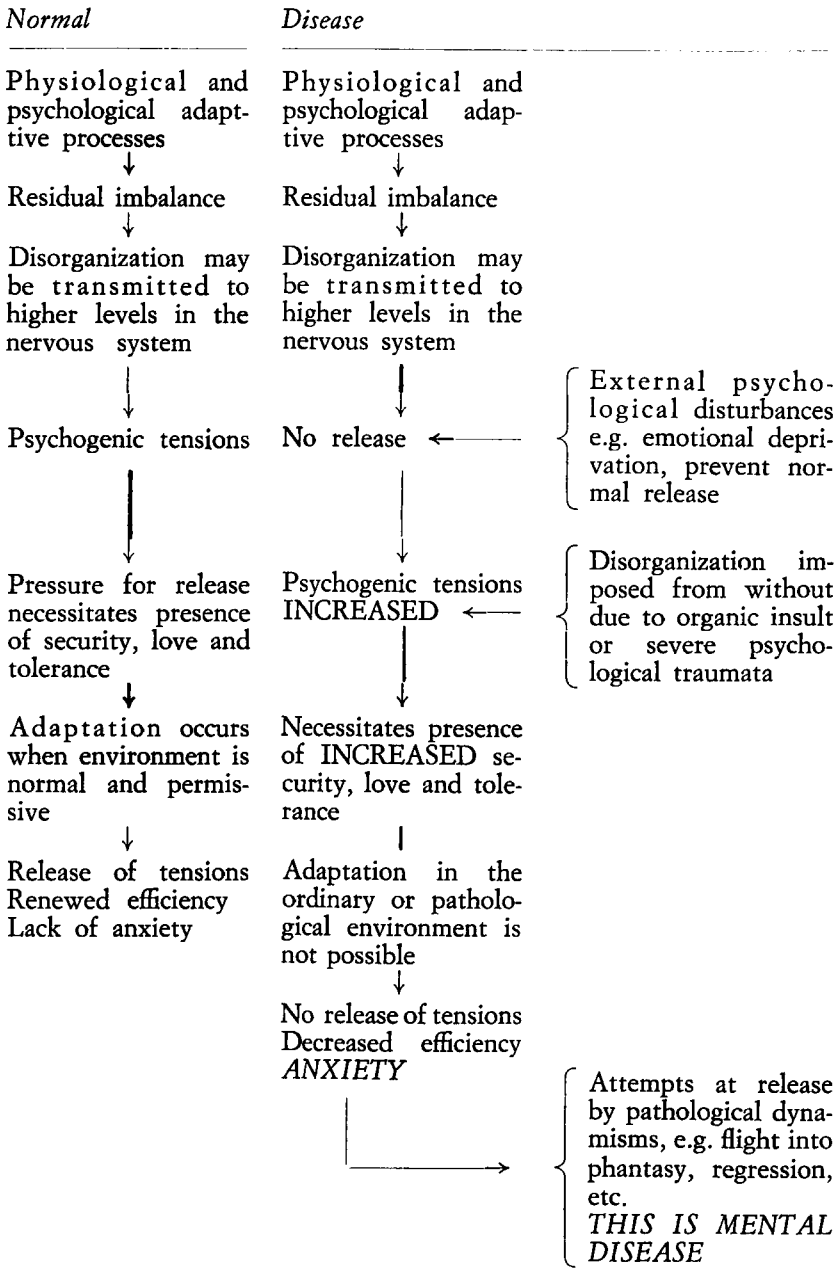
As I have postulated, psychogenic tensions arise whenever imbalance or disorganization occurs, and they are the psychological result of the transmission of this disorganization to the highest levels of the nervous system. Ordinarily, the disorganization or imbalance is the result of either internal physiological or external psychological adaptive processes. However, it is possible for disorganization to be induced from without by organic insults or by paralyzing experiences that are purely psy-

[21] R. D. Chessick, "Application of Neurological Studies etc." cit.

[22] P. Schilder, *Mind, Perception and Thought,* New York, Columbia U. Press. 1942.

Figure 1

MAINTENANCE OF FUNCTION IN NORMAL AND DISEASED STATES



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chological in nature. These facts help to explain the need for security, the dependent attitudes, along with the inability to tolerate change, found in damaged or disorganized nervous systems, whether this damage be of a psychological or an organic etiology, or both, as ponted out by Kurt Goldstein[23]. The increased anxiety, and intolerance of threats to security in these people are due to their need for an unusual amount of security in which to discharge their psychogenic tensions. This need arises out of the increased pressure of these tensions because of the additional externally imposed disorganization, which may be summarized by the diagram (Fig. 1).

I feel it necessary to pause a moment here and warn the reader that the simple conscious psychology presented in this diagram is in no way meant to replace the postulates of psychoanalysis, and especially the valuable insights of Freud into the unconscious forces that move men. All I wish to do is to present for heuristic reasons in this diagram a demonstration of the importance of *both* kinetic and synthetic activity to a man as being necessary to avoid anxiety and find happiness, whatever his own personality problems.

This is emphasized if we fit the diagram into Alexander's scheme of the development of neurosis.[24] My diagram *precedes* the first step of Alexander's scheme, i.e., it only demonstrates how present conflict situations arise. As illustrated in the diagram, anxiety develops from these present conflict situations and provides the driving force behind the flight into mental illness. The explanation of how the symptoms of mental illness specifically arise once there is a present conflict situation is beyond the scope of this paper, and the reader is referred to Alexander's work.

I am now ready to characterize synthetic activity on an adult level. In order to do this, we shall turn to literature, where this concept has been most clearly described. In fact, the whole substance of our diagram has been eloquently presented by Butler, who writes, "All our lives long, every day and every

[23] K. Goldstein, *Language and Language Disturbances,* New York, Grune & Stratton, 1948.

[24] F. Alexander, *Our Age of Unreason* cit.

hour, we are engaged in the process of accommodating our changed and unchanged selves to changed and unchanged surroundings; living, in fact is nothing else than this process of accomodation; when we fail in it a little we are stupid, when we fail flagrantly we are mad, when we suspend it temporarily we sleep, when we give up the attempt altogether we die. In quiet, uneventful lives the changes internal and external are so small that there is little or no strain in the process of fusion and accommodation; in other lives there is great strain, but there is also great fusing and accommodating power; in others great strain with little accommodating power. A life will be successful or not according as the power of accommodation is equal to or unequal to the strain of fusing and adjusting internal and external changes."[25]

Trilling points out the affinity of Freud's thought with the tradition of literary humanism, in that for both the development of the self "is the first prime object of attention and solicitude."[26]

Let us glance at some of the great writers who have been consciously preoccupied with synthetic activity, the establishment of a secure relation between the self and the environment.

In his introduction to the works of Thoreau, Canby writes, "What he wanted was a complete and sympathetic intimacy with his environment... It was not that he loved men less, but rather that he passionately loved nature, of which man, and most of all himself, he regarded only as an extension into the intellectual conscious."[27] This passage emphasizes the great importance that Thoreau placed on his relation to the external environment, and how central a problem this relation has become in his life. His sense of separateness from any secure social niche drove him to preoccupation with synthetic activity, under the influence of high pressure for release of psychogenic tensions.

[25] S. Butler, *The Way of All Flesh*, New York, Mod. Library, 1950.

[26] L. Trilling, *Freud and the Crisis of Our Culture*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1955.

[27] H. Canby (Ed.), *The Works of Thoreau,* Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., pp. XIV, 303, 1937.

Thoreau and Melville are concerned with the relation of man to nature (external environment) and with focusing attention on the great importance of this relation, which man has been grappling with since his origin. One of the basic functions of society is to place the individual in a position of orientation; any person like Thoreau or Melville, who rejects the mores of and a status in established society, is forced to grapple directly with the problem of his relation to the external environment. The average individual by remaining in his niche of society, avoids part of the problem of establishing his own relationship to the external world, and thus avails himself to some extent of the security needed for psychogenic tensions to be released. These people are exemplified by the village farmers in *Walden*[28], the mate, Starbuck, in *Moby Dick,*[29] and the peasants in *The Castle,*[30] described by Jung as "the mass of men who live within the bounds of tradition, which provides convenient substitutes, such as organized religions, for their unconscious submission to the parental psyche. Unconsciously, they identify themselves with the tribe, society, the church, the nation. The mechanism of convention keeps people *unconscious*, and then, like wild game, they can follow their customary runways without the necessity of conscious choice."[31]

It is the "individualist" who chooses to reject a particular social status, or the neurotic who, by his uncontrolled behaviour and difficulty in interpersonal relations, forces himself out of social status, that must face the problem of his relationship to his social environment directly. For these people, synthetic activity becomes a consuming preoccupation.

Thoreau is concerned with the problem of what he calls "economy." He wishes to determine what the minimum of time and effort may be for man to maintain his vegetative needs, leaving him the maximum amount of time available for release of psychogenic tension in conscious, energetic, concentrated

[28] H. Thoreau, *Walden*, New York, Pauper Press, Mt. Vernon.

[29] H. Melville, *Moby Dick*, New York, Random House, 1930.

[30] F. Kafka, *The Castle*, New York, Knopf, 1951.

[31] P. Mullahy, *Oedipus, Myth and Complex,* New York, Hermitage Press, 1948.

synthetic activity. For Thoreau, this release is found in identification with nature and the appreciation of natural beauty. It gives rise to the most inspired passages in his work.

Melville's *Moby Dick* contains allegorical overtones that also suggest preoccupation with the relation of man to nature. Captain Ahab has been struck down by the blind impersonal forces of nature; with the loss of part of his body has come his preoccupation with his relation to these forces. Only Ishmael, who is content to compromise and adapt to the environment remains to tell the story; those who cannot adapt to the forces of nature and who are displaced from their social status (a whole string of characters like Queequeg, Tashtego, etc.) are destroyed by their inability to relate in a secure and homeostatic way to the external environment in which they began. This is the theme of Melville's spiritual adventure, a preoccupation with the interplay of human and natural activities. For example, he writes, "Glimpses do ye seem to see of that mortally intolerable truth; that all deep, earnest thinking is but the intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of the sea; while the wildest winds of heaven and earth conspire to cast her on the treacherous, slavish shore."[32]

The problem of relationship to the external environment, expressed in an adult manner by Melville and Thoreau as the problem of man's relationship to nature, can be interpreted as originating in the need for the security, warmth, and deep emotional contact that is first established in the original feeding situation at the mother's breast. It is here, as previously discussed, that the original impetus to both synthetic and kinetic activity arises.

The nature of synthetic activity, encompassing widespread phenomena of human behaviour and serving to elucidate many seemingly erratic preoccupations, should now be clear. The specialist, whether he is hunting whales in the Arctic Sea or measuring termites' jaws in a basement laboratory, is consciously or unconsciously preoccupied with establishing a secure relation to his environment and defining a niche in society, with the purpose

[32] H. Melville, *Moby Dick* cit.

of release for psychogenic tensions. The intensity of this preoccupation is a measure of the intensity of his synthetic activity.

The vast majority of the population remain settled in a social status from birth, and engage in little deliberate synthetic activity at all, except for what society demands from them to maintain their status. The minority, consisting of "individualists," neurotics, geniuses, and those who have been dealt unsettling blows by physiological, psychological or impersonal natural forces, are led to grapple directly with the problem of their relation to the environment in which they live. Unless they can reach some sort of adaptation, they develop anxiety, which may force them into a pathological type of adaptation—what I would characterize as mental disorder (see Fig. 1).

As a final means of illustrating synthetic activity at the most intense level, let us turn to *The Divine Comedy* of Dante[33], and *The Castle* by Kafka[34]. The basic problem these two geniuses are grappling with is how, in their terms, one may attain a state of "salvation" or "divine grace." It is possible to gain additional understanding of both these writers if one interprets the real meaning of "salvation," or "state of divine grace," as denoting an ideal earthly condition in which there is the perfect homeostatic relation with the external environment, and complete release thereby of psychogenic tensions. In such an ideal state, these tensions are released as quickly as they arise from the body metabolic pool, and thus there is a state of zero pressure on the psychological side, and a perfect freedom from anxiety, as I have already discussed.

Both Dante and Kafka are acutely aware of their situation of separation from society and inability to fit into any social status:

> Midway this way of life we're bound upon
> I woke to find myself in a dark wood
> Where the right road was wholly lost and gone.
>
> ...Dante

[33] C. E. Norton, (Trans.), *The Divine Comedy of Dante*, New York, Houghton, Mifflin, 1941.

[34] *Op. cit.*

What village is this I have wandered into?
Is there a castle here?

...Kafka

By the reasons I have already outlined, they are, therefore, highly motivated to establish some sort of secure homeostatic social relationship either in this world or the next, and their entire dramas are the history of this striving, cast in the structure of the universe as it was conceived to be at the time of the writer.

Dante's drama brings the mind from a state of complete loss of security through the lowest and most anxiety-ridden regions of the psyche, to those regions where there is already some hope for discharge, and finally into the situation of "salvation." All this is cast in the allegorical form of a religious experience communicated through divine revelation; but this is only the verbal casting of an essentially non-verbal adjustment that Dante had to work out in his own mind. In other words, the state of beatitude or heavenly grace consists for Dante in contemplation of the Divine Works, and a complete identification and homeostatic relation with the Divine Nature Itself. This is almost the identical picture with Thoreau's situation, except that the work of the latter is cast more in the romantic ideas of his day, rather than the formal religious ideas dominating medieval times.

Kafka, living in the most cynical and disillusioned age, perhaps of all time, cannot write of religious experience or natural beauty, since these are obsolete symbols, and rarely are directly experienced today in our murky cities. Instead, Kafka must come closer to the basic situation and use a symbolism that has cogent meaning in terms of our own experience. As Brod, his intimate friend and critic, interprets the "castle," essential and ultimate goal of the hero of Kafka's brilliant book, "What is the meaning of this *Castle* with its strange documents, its impenetrable hierarchy of officials, its moods and trickeries, its demand (and its absolutely justified demand) for unconditional respect, unconditional obedience?... This 'castle' ... is much the same thing as what the theologians call 'grace', the divine guidance of human destiny..."[35]

[35] F. Kafka, *op. cit.*

Great works involving dramas of salvation become more intelligible when one realizes that "salvation" itself, at least partly, means for the authors the achieving of a secure relation to the external environment whether on earth or in heaven. The psychogenic tensions may be safely released and exert no pressure, with the resulting absence of anxiety. This is the crucial problem for these great writers, who, perhaps, because of their very genius, have difficulty in establishing a fixed niche in society. They represent examples of intense synthetic activity as I have defined it.

In summary, the basic problem of twentieth century man is presented by Kierkegaard as an anxiety or dread or restlessness or anguish that increases as science demolishes systems of belief previously thought of as inviolable. Man, with his increased leisure, remains unhappy because successful synthetic activity must occupy that leisure if psychogenic tensions are to be released. It is the task of modern psychiatry to point these facts out to modern philosophers. It is the paramount task of philosophers not to recommend regressive "leaps of faith" to us or to take refuge in mystical "systems," but to help us examine human value systems in order to guide us towards those forms of synthetic activity that are most effective, most gratifying, and most beneficial to human individuals and to the species as a whole.