Life and Life Energy:

An Essay in Psychology Roy Lisker 1960 - 2004 -2012 Chapter One

(i) Introduction

We advance the hypothesis that there is, in *Life* (sentience), a form of psychic energy which we can call *life energy* that enters fundamentally into the process of psychological adjustment. The word *emotion* refers directly to the manifold transformations of psychic energy in the progression of states of adjustment. Although it shares many of the characteristics of material or physical energy, this dynamic force underlying consciousness is of a different nature.

That they differ does not mean that they can be treated independently: "psychic" and "material" energies overlap in the interactions of brain chemistry which modern research in

biochemistry have correlated with recognizable emotional states.

Although the science of "psychopharmacology" is still in its rudimentary stages, this has not prevented the official institutions of the psychiatric profession from asserting that a class of drugs ('neuroleptic' or 'psychotropic') can cure or relieve highly specific emotional pathologies. Indeed, there is an entire section of the psychiatric profession which has abandoned the study of emotional health, to investigate its' chemistry!

Evidently the psychiatric practice has gone algorithmic! A rigorous functional association of symptoms to drugs underlies the robotic computation of prices that now passes for medical practice in this field. It could be better done with computers (and often is).

Granted: there will always be a debate at the heart of
Medicine over the relative therapeutic merits of 'personal' versus
'impersonal' methods for diagnosing disease. It is neither
unscientific nor unhealthy that psychiatry would have finally
rebelled against the wild, self-righteously unquantifiable 'personal

judgments' of psycho-analysis and its offshoots. Yet this has been replaced by a therapeutics that is equally questionable: an excessive reliance on dubious diagnoses based on the quantifications of the infant science of psychochemistry. This degree of abdication of medical responsibility in the name of the infallibility of a dubious recipe book (e.g., the series of DSM manuals) is totally deplorable.

Many psychiatrists have disowned this extreme reductionism.

¹ We also must oppose this direction of psychotherapy, without disavowing its positive achievements: were it not for Thorazine, our societies would still be funding the ubiquitous madhouse!

(ii) Free Will and Determinism

The hypothesis of a living psychic energy leads to numerous insights. I will endeavor to show in a convincing manner, how the hypothesis of an underlying living energy at work in the processes of psychic adjustment makes a decisive contribution to the

¹ Read, for example, Daniel Carlat "Unhinged: The Trouble with Psychiatry"; Simon and Schuster 2010.

philosophical debates over the existence of free will, volition and intentionality. Moving away from the extreme poles of free will versus total determinism in the description of sentient behavior, I make the assertion that there exists, within the living nature, an intrinsic creativity, this faculty of creativity being present not only in human beings but in all animate entities. Even plants have imagination!

Thereby are all living beings simultaneously determined and free: determined in the sense that body and mind remain subject to all the fundamental forces of nature: gravity, electro-magnetism, chemical interaction, atomic, and so on; free in the sense that psychic energy manifests itself as a creative force, capable of initiating phenomena in a way that transcends the basic physical constraints of space, time, matter and the force fields.

(iii) "Life" defined

There are few words on which there are bound to be as many disagreements as to their meaning as that of "life". (Not to be

confused with the idiom "The meaning of life", in which "meaning" signifies "purpose"). One unavoidable characteristic that all scientific definitions of "life" must have in common is that they must be self-referencing². Any definition must include or account for the phenomena of consciousness, understanding and morality; and all such definitions must derive from, and include, our own consciousness and intellect.

The definition I am proposing goes beyond even simple self-referencing: I will be explaining one undefined term by substituting another! Although this looks like a shallow play on words, I will give arguments to show why it is not. For me this definition is scientific; I expect many people to disagree with me:

Life is that universal phenomenon which, when found in association with a physical body, it is immoral to injure.

Replacing "life" by "morality" would appear to be begging the question. In my estimation there is only one way to avoid

_

² No biologist or philosopher would entertain a definition of a living being which somehow excluded themselves!

circularity: one must evoke the existence of a moral faculty; this conclusion is unavoidable. This definition is scientific in the sense that it is based on the universally acknowledged observation that human beings never feel that it is right to injure a living creature without a reason for doing so. One's freedom to act within its requirements are limited, and , alas, often all too easy to invent.

To begin with: the above definition can be interpreted as a restatement of the ancient Talmudic injunction: *Do unto others* what you would have them do unto you.³ The word "others", normally applied only to human beings, can by a natural extension be taken to include all living creatures, including the Archaea and those who may exist on other planets yet unknown to us.

Simply stated: if one is sincere in one's desire to follow the Golden Rule, one must have some way of determining that the being one is acting upon is not a robot, or a film, or a fantasy, but some entity truly capable of being harmed by one's actions. *How*

_

³ Cf Rabbi Hillel: "That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. That is the whole Torah; the rest is the explanation; go and learn." (circa 70 BCE)

does one come to know this? How can one say in confidence that there must exist a Kantian Categorical Imperative that governs equally my own thoughts and feelings, and those of the entity I am faced with, unless I have some direct evidence that we share the same nature?

Should one feel inhibited when banging a nail into a piece of wood on the grounds that it may be a sentient being? Why do we not normally feel guilty from the thought that something within the nail might be injured?

If a house is on fire and all of its inhabitants have been rescued, shouldn't one grieve over the possibility that the wood, glass, steel and concrete in the house are all experiencing suffering? There must be some way of *knowing* that the beings that have been rescued are, in this respect, *more sentient* than the house itself!

It is from such considerations I have been led to assert (both by logic and through direct experience) that all sentient beings possess a sense, as concrete as sight, taste, hearing and all others, through which they can actually feel and even see that the object they are dealing with is alive.

I've called this the moral faculty.

Briefly: the injunction to *Do No Harm* (and other reformulations of the same idea) can only apply to entities for which it is possible to do harm, namely those that experience injury, suffering and death. It assumes that there exists a way of distinguishing animate from inanimate activity. Otherwise all such injunctions are meaningless. True moral conduct must be based on a direct perception of the living nature of others. Since the author does not believe that the Golden Rule, the Hippocratic Oath, or the Categorical Imperative are meaningless, he concludes that such a faculty must exist. One is not always conscious of its presence, yet it determines all moral behavior. Sometimes one is very conscious indeed of the phenomenon, and it is given the names of "love", "empathy", "telepathy", etc.

9

Another implication of this point of view is that we exist in a plenum of life energy or life force that extends far beyond the individual. To assert that we share in a universal nature does not limit our freedom; quite the contrary. If one adopts the viewpoint that individual minds are subsumed with a universal mind, notions such as freedom and determinism become particular instances of a universal phenomenon of creative will.

Note that, as a discipline within Psychology, Psychiatry has never felt comfortable with the possibility of *real* mental freedom. In The *Interpretation of Dreams* Freud invokes a law of psychic determinism to support his quite arbitrary and far-fetched hermeneutic schema of image -to-symbol translations of the contents of dreams:

"The authorities are wrong only in regarding the modifications the dream undergoes when remembered and put into words as being arbitrary, impossible to interpret further, and so very likely to put us on the wrong track in understanding the dreams. They underestimate the factor of determination in matters of the psyche. Nothing is arbitrary there. It can be shown quite generally that a second train of thought will promptly take over the determination of an element left undetermined by the first. I try to think of a number quite at random;

it is not possible; the number that occurs to me is unambiguously and necessarily determined by thoughts within me that may well be remote from my present intention." (Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams pg. 344. All references are to the Bibliography at the end of each chapter.)

The well-worn example (used as evidence for the existence of unconscious processes) of being unable to trace the origins of a number that pops into the mind (Stanislavski invokes the same analogy in An Actor Prepares) is not really what we're talking about when we speak above the creativity inherent in the living nature. In this instance we agree with Freud, that "broken symmetry" phenomena of this sort have their origins in some kind of unconscious mind. The way this works is not clear. We are inclined to speculate that that there may exist structures in the brain, reflexes perhaps, that incorporate random number generators. Indeed this must be so, given that natural selection must, at an early stage of Life's presence on Earth, have be forced to invent mechanisms for symmetry-breaking and decision making. Every living creature must choose between options on a moment-bymoment basis. ⁴ An important idea adapted from particle physics, symmetry breaking occurs when a simple choice between equally likely options leads to far-reaching consequences. The classical example is the following: the dining table for a banquet is so arranged that the wine glasses are symmetrically placed half-way between the large dinner plates. The first person to select a glass will determine the direction, to the right or the left, in which all other glasses will be picked up.

For us, free will is not a breaker of symmetries. It does not therefore disturb us overmuch to learn that it has little or no part in pulling a number, word, color or sound out of a box. To our understanding, free will makes its presence known in the resolution of essentially spiritual quandaries, dilemmas, paradoxes, and obligations and urgent needs, whatever oppresses our innate freedom by a psychological bondage.

⁴ Despite the logical conundrum, Buridan's Ass will not die of starvation!

Middle Way, Golden Mean, Third Path solutions are closer to what we mean by essential creativity in decision making and the directing of life energy. This is the deeper meaning of the injunction in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the peacemakers". A mediator or peace-maker is someone who sets out to find a third alternative between two hostile parties in active conflict. The qualities of imagination, patience and dispassionate inquiry, combined with the intention of genuine good-will, indicate the ways in which a creative response to a living situation differs from pulling a number out of a hat.

(iv) Mind, Brain and Psycho-chemistry

One can understand the current rage for reducing feeling to chemistry by recalling a perennial theme in the history of Psychiatry as a science: its' many attempts to side-step Philosophy. By relegating the investigation of emotion as a subject in its own right to a sub-branch within the science of brain chemistry, Psychiatry seeks to restrict the focus of inquiry to whatever is

quantifiable in physical terms. To us this has about as much merit as Pythagoras' claim that everything in the universe comes from Number.

To be fair, herein medicine is only doing what it does best. It isn't concerned with "deep questions". Established over thousands of years, the standard paradigm of medical research begins by setting up a classification scheme for diseases on the basis of symptoms. ⁵

In modern psychiatry, these schemes are translated into the hierarchic lists of 'dysfunctions' of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manuals of Mental Disorders (DSM I to IV) ⁶

In its mechanistic certitude the therapeutics in the DSM manuals differ little from the behaviorist's stimulus/response paradigm, although the new mantras are being chanted in the language of dysfunction/drug.

⁵ This is not without interest in itself, because it shows that even in the Ancient World, when it was not understood that many diseases originate from micro-organisms, the analogy between biological and medical classification schemes was recognized.

⁶ DSM-V is projected for 2013

Effacing "mind" as an attribute of "body", collapsing
"psyche" into "soma", cannot begin to capture the many
dimensions of mental activity. In a rudimentary way, one may
analyze the functions of the human psyche into:

- (1) *Intellect* (understanding)
- (2) Volition (will)
- (3) *Judgment* (conscience)
- (4) *Imagination* (association of ideas, insights, hypotheses)
- (5) Sensation (physical and mental)

Both body and the mind share in sensation; and, to some extent, in imagination (psychosomatic symptoms, conditioned reflexes, etc.). However there are no somatic equivalents to understanding, will and conscience.

It could be argued that *intellect* can be studied by Cognitive Science; yet this gives no insight into *understanding*. A student can recite a poem, word by word, without a single mistake, yet have no understanding of what it means. "Semantics" is acknowledged to

lie outside the orbit of Information Theory; why should it be any more welcome in Cognitive Science? We do not normally attribute "thinking" or "understanding", to a muscle, tissue, blood vessel or bone; nor do we ascribe "will power" or a "sense of justice" to a ligament or lymph node. "Conscience" has a special place in this schema as it contains the moral faculty: it extends the boundaries of psyche and self to admit the existence of other living beings.

Cognitive Science will, as it should, continue to explore those aspects of mind co-extensive with the brain, such as the activities of computation in which the brain functions as a computer and no conscious effort need be involved, or the relationships between perception and sensation revealed by psychophysics, the nature of memory and neurological phenomena such as those so dramatically illustrated in the works of Oliver Sacks and Vilayanur S.

Ramchandran.

Yet if everything mental could be explained away by physics and chemistry, the philosophical dispute would not be between

Determinism and Free Will, but between classical and quantum physics, between the determinism of Newton's science and the qualified randomness of the Uncertainty Principle.

(v) Emotion

Despite intellectual understanding, conditioning, reflexes, and all but the strongest physical sensations, emotion is normally the dominant factor in human behavior. While logic produces only a neutral recognition of certainty, and imposed pain translates into resentment and resistance, only emotion carries conviction. As long as emotion itself has not found some accommodation with one's intellectual judgments and understanding, emotion must prevail in the long run. I am thinking in particular of prejudice: I can know and believe all the arguments for ethnic equality, but until the emotional basis for racial discrimination are present, I will continue to be prejudiced and act in a prejudiced manner. These observations apply to all forms of opinion, notably fixed ideas.

Emotion has a basis in both the psyche and the body and cannot be fully understood exclusively in terms of one or the other. Likewise, one cannot expect that emotional illness can be cured by the nostrums in some biochemical catalogue. The process is somewhat indirect: psychotropic drugs may relieve symptoms long enough for thought to be consciously redirected onto more wholesome paths. Yet consciousness, sensation and emotion must be deemed primary, brain chemistry being merely the technology whereby intentionality is realized. To 'feel better' may be the indispensable initial phase for the cure of disease, yet it can never be anything more than symptom relief, not the cure itself.

Psychopharmacology itself admits to an inability to discriminate between *euphoria*, associated with dopamine uptake, and *anti-depression*, associated with serotonin. One can reasonably ask if an emotion named "anti-depression" actually exists. (Robert Julien; Peter Breggin). Thus, confusion reigns in this area of medicine between "feeling good" (or "feeling good about oneself"

which can be increased by donating an old sweater to the Salvation Army) and "curing depression"; which requires working through one's grief at the loss of a loved friend or relative. There is also a condition which I've designated as "right depression", defined as the healthy response to one's mature awareness of a world filled with war, violence, famine, epidemics and injustice. ⁷

Everything can be abused by excess: even this kind of 'depression' can become pathological. Though safe in London, Simone Weil is said to have starved herself to death from being overwhelmed by the horrors of WW2. It is claimed that Virginia Woolf drowned herself for the same reason. We are aware of traditions in other cultures in which setting oneself on fire is seen as a legitimate political strategy, yet in the Western world it more commonly interpreted as a state of extreme hysterical derangement linked with too much of what I am calling 'right depression'.

_

⁷ One somehow feels that there *should not* be a drug for this condition!

The sad truth is that it is this essentially healthy mental state of 'right depression' which most of the commercial palliatives and psychological pain-killers are designed to relieve: drugs, tobacco, alcohol, mindless entertainment, promiscuity and so on. Perhaps we need a new word altogether, to cover the various shades of meaning contained in the word "depression".

One could, of course, turn logic on its head, and define depression as the emotional state relieved by serotonin uptake!

(vi) Psychoanalysis

Not all current theories of the mind are reductionist, that is to say, ones which reduce thinking and feeling to chemistry and physics. There exists a theory of emotional states, based, so it claims, on observation, but really more on literature, which continues to exercise great influence in medicine, human relations, fiction, theoretical psychology and education. We refer to Freud's psychoanalysis and its many associated confessions. To many people it continues to function as the paradigm of a scientific

theory of the origin of neuroses, that is to say the emotional pathologies now given the ridiculous appellation of 'dysfunctions'.

The persistence of an idea over a long period of time is wrongly interpreted by the popular mind as sufficient evidence of its credibility. Despite 500 years of attacks on the account in Genesis of the creation of the world, millions still believe in its literal truth. Stalinism reigned over much of the world from 1922 to 1991 and is still going strong in North Korea, Vietnam, Cuba and China. The appeal of Astrology has not diminished since its invention in Babylonia 5000 years ago.

Psychoanalysis has long outlived its lack of credibility.

Numerous exposes have demonstrated that it lacks any foundation in scientific method, observation, experiment or therapeutic effectiveness (Fisher and Greenberg; Dawes; Crews; Masson and others). Yet its presumption of authority, though considerably tarnished, continues to emanate its aura of confusion. As an ideology it is more a religion than a science.

Psychoanalysis exists in both popular and professional brands. At a certain moment in history the popular version conquered Hollywood; it continues to infect the film industry. It has also spawned numerous pathologies of its own, most notoriously the False Memory Syndrome diagnosis. The continuing popular endorsement of the Freud/ Jung paradigm is in line with its ready adaptability to stereotypes, prejudices and superstitions, its arrant sexism, its ad hoc 'systems' of interpretation, and its gross fascination with unnatural sexual desires.

Yet less scientific evidence exists for the Oedipus Complex than for the divine nature of Christ, for which there is no evidence whatsoever. One is dealing with a delusional system, that is to say an ideology.

Ideologies may enshackle the minds of entire civilizations for centuries, even though there may have been no more corroborative evidence for them at their beginnings than in their fading away. Still, ideologies have some positive benefits. The successful ones are often a brilliant synthesis of a wide range of philosophical and ethical thought. Our experience with Christianity, Islam, Communism, Psycho-Analysis and so on, show that they can, by means of an ingenious syncretism of incompatible belief systems, carry into the future the spirit of the age from which they originated. Unfortunately ideologies then proceed to petrify a thriving context of intellectual discourse into a sterile catechism of dogma, that is to say some reductive, over-simplified doctrine.

Christianity began as a magnificent synthesis of Hellenistic philosophy and Semitic religion in the period of the greatest flourishing of both. It combines Stoicism, Jewish monotheism, the fertility cults of the Ancient Near East, Platonism in the concept of the Trinity, neo-Platonism in magical rituals of purification, and the Persian/Hellenistic institution of a god-king.

This heavy burden of syncretism is leavened with charming metaphors and fables drawn from a 3000-year tradition of wisdom literature going back to ancient Sumer and Egypt.

Likewise, the synthesis of psychotherapy which goes under the name of "psychoanalysis" is a fascinating, if exotic redaction of all the components of the rich ferment of ideas in 19th century psychology: Mesmer's discovery of hypnosis; the study of reflexes; the evidences for an unconscious mind; the views of John Locke and others about the free association of ideas, and even the synthetic apriori of Immanuel Kant in its positing of the innate structure of id, ego and superego.

Yet how many patients who voluntarily place themselves in the hands of psychiatrists know, or even care about the thought of Mesmer, Pinel, Esquirol, Braid, Bain, Hamilton, Kraepelin, Charcot, Bernheim, Janet, Laycock, Maudsley, William James and others?

How many are content in their belief that Sigmund Freud was the first to describe the structures he claimed exist in the human

psyche, when in fact every one of his notions was lifted, without attribution from his predecessors in the last century? We will come back to this in another section of this chapter.

(vii) A Scientific Psychology of the Emotions

Despite their anti-materialist bias, the author maintains that the ideas presented in *Life and Life Energy* can form the basis for a credible scientific psychology. Though we posit an opposition of psychic and material energy, we also maintain that the mind can be rigorously investigated in accordance with the principles of science.

Such things as happiness versus unhappiness, conscience, fear, trust, or attitudes towards death, do not enter into the concerns of cognitive science. Although the origins of moral principles cannot be investigated by experimental psychology, the effects of such principles on behavior can. Inevitably, the domain of Psychology must overlap with Philosophy and Religion.

The hospital-employed bioethicist is a recent and welcome development. It is gratifying to learn that hospital culture now acknowledges that there exist critical situations in which decisions cannot be made on the basis of scientific data alone, and require input on issues involving morality and religion, lifestyle, ties of affection, beliefs about responsibility, perceptions of levels of disability and suffering, that is to say, the whole gamut of reasons for living. The fact that science has never been able to answer the questions that are most basic to the human condition hardly gives scientists the right to assert that such questions are nonsense!

Medicine cannot be a "pure" or "hard" science in the manner of chemistry or mathematics. One cannot draw a line of demarcation between sickness and health in the same way that one can distinguish alkalis from acids, or rational from irrational numbers. This is the strongest objection that one can raise against the mechanistic linkage of the "dysfunctions" in the DSM catalogues to the recipes of the psychiatric pharmacist. The

profession of the bioethicist demonstrates that not even physical medicine can be reduced to a sub-discipline of organic chemistry!

Medicine is a mode of interaction, a dialectic between basic science, the individual, society, humanity and history.

The following proposition constitutes the definition of mental health that will be applied in this treatise: the central issue of mental health is that of bringing to fulfillment the attributes of the living nature of the individual mind. To us this is the core ingredient underlying all notions of mental health. Such fulfillment is of course delimited and influenced by physical constraints, including brain chemistry and genetics, climate, physical laws, etc. In no way can it be co-opted by them.

To this extent the identification of mental health is on more certain ground than that of physical health. There will always be considerable disagreement as to what goes into the definition of a healthy body; but mental health can be simply understood as the working through, assimilation and elimination of all unconscious restraints inhibiting conscious awareness. ⁸

Three principal attributes of a fully realized person are compassion, realism and (inner) freedom. Compassion overcomes the narrowly restrictive confines of an ego-centric self-conscious mentality, through establishing communication with all other living creatures. In this way one's spiritual universe becomes multi-dimensional.

Realism lays the foundation for intelligent action, while inner freedom allows one to rise above the unceasing turmoil of acquisition, preservation and loss of external objects.

All of the truly enlightened world religions, philosophies and ethical codes provide ways of developing these qualities. I will not be assessing the merits of the various paths to enlightenment. This task has been done many times through the centuries and I would not be contributing anything original by doing so.

_

 $^{^8}$ A technical definition of the *Unconscious* will be given presently.

Rather, the focus of interest in this essay is the analysis of the psychological mechanisms underlying the transformations of the personal sense of identity.

This process of destruction and re-establishment of the concept of identity will be shown to progress through a succession of rigorously articulated phases. Depending on the context, I will be referring to it as the Rebirth Mechanism, the Rebirth Cycle, the psychic process, the mechanism of adjustment, and so on. We postulate boldly that it is intrinsic to the all the myriad manifestations of life throughout the universe! One finds the basic constituents of the Rebirth Mechanism in animals, plants, even in micro-organisms. This is a living universe that we inhabit and share, eternally engaged in its dynamic of awareness, creativity and self-definition.

(viii) The Unconscious Mind

It is commonly believed that conscious reactions start up instantaneously with changes in the external environment. This

view is mistaken: the contents of consciousness are transformed along the axis of time through a process of coming to recognition and assimilation. Studying the actual nature of psychological transformation provides a unique avenue for understanding the phenomenon which, since well before Freud⁹, has been called the *Unconscious Mind*.

Consciousness does not re-establish itself spontaneously after each encounter with the external world. Its re-emergence in all living creatures requires a slow gestation in the forward direction of time.

A quote from Stephen Hawking's A Brief History of Time:

"There are at least three different arrows of time. First there is the thermodynamic arrow of time, the direction of time in which disorder or entropy increases. Then there is the psychological arrow of time. This is the direction in which we feel time passes, the direction in which we remember the past but not the future. Finally, there is the cosmological arrow of time ...the direction of time in which the universe is expanding rather than contracting." (Hawking, pg. 145.)

⁹ Psychologists and philosophers had analysed and investigated the phenomena of unconscious mentation for two centuries before the Freudians made them public property. The situation is analogous to that of the 15th century: astronomers and navigators knew very well that the earth was round before Columbus set off on his voyages of exploration. His discoveries made this fact common knowledge.

In a manner analogous to that of physical procreation, this process of spiritual gestation moves through stages which may be roughly identified with insemination, conception, pregnancy and birth. This parallel construction of the two processes is reflected etymologically in words such as "concept", "conception", "conceptualize" and so on. In both situations one is dealing with the emergence and formation of personal identity. The creation of a new living creature, the readjustment of the contents of consciousness, and the formation of new ideas, can all be subsumed under a single verb: to conceptualize.

The fertilization through external inputs (pleasant, neutral or painful), of thoughts, experiences or primitive suggestions; the development through stages of latency and conflict in the womb of the unconscious; and the eventual emergence of fully reified concepts into the light of conscious awareness, all recapitulate the pattern one naturally associates with the conception and birth of

children, that is to say, new living forms with autonomous destiny and volition beyond the control of their engendering parents.

The state between the cessation of awareness of a former identity and the re-establishment of awareness of self is intrinsically unconscious. It is here that we should look for evidences of the unconscious mind.

What this means is the following: within the perpetually renewed drama of the journey through annihilation of the contents consciousness, through the many stages of pregnancy from onset to anxious turmoil to the rebirth of awareness, there exist states that are essentially unknowing, unfeeling and, in some sense, transitional between death and life.

Any disruption, any hindrance, any damage or sabotage of the normal functioning of this "rite of passage", will lodge an unconscious region in the conscious fabric, much like a bullet lodged in a wound. If this unconscious region is present in some fundamental arena of thought and feeling it may, like a disease or poison, extend its tributaries through the entire personality of the individual, operating against the adjustment mechanism itself, enfeebling mind and body, spawning peculiar psychosomatic and psychomotor dysfunctions, as well as learning handicaps that can be explicitly measured.

(ix) The Unconscious Mind through the Ages

A brief survey of the history of the concept of an unconscious mind

The idea of an unconscious basis governing conscious emotion and behavior is of great antiquity. It appears in the writings of the philosophers of classical Greece and India; it can also be found in the belief systems of peoples far from the Eurasian tradition. One example is noteworthy: evidently the Huron Indians made an association between dreams and unconscious desires in a manner that recalls Freud:

...In addition to the desires that we generally have that are free, or at least voluntary in us, which arise from a previous

knowledge [...] the Hurons believe that our souls have other desires which are, as it were, inborn and concealed. These, they say, come from the depths of the soul ...

... Now they believe that our soul makes these natural desires known by means of dreams, which are its language. Accordingly, when these desires are accomplished it is satisfied; but, on the contrary, if it be not granted what it desires, it becomes angry, and not only does it not give its body the good and happiness that it wished to procure for it, but often it also revolts against the body, causing various diseases and even death..." (Altschule I).

The ancient Hittites used dreams for psychiatric diagnosis.

Like many civilizations (down to our own times!) they believed in a "sin" theory of mental illness. Dreams were interpreted by the priests as evidence of crimes that were being concealed or had been forgotten.

The famous physicians of antiquity, Galen and the collective Hippocrates, make allusions to an unconscious mind. As Galen uses the term it appears to mean what nowadays we call reflexes.

The Hippocratic physicians, on the other hand, point to the content of dreams as evidence of an unconscious will:

"Just as in the waking state the face is flushed, and the eyes are red, mostly when a man is afraid and his mind contemplates some evil act, even so the same phenomena are displayed in sleep. But they 34

cease when the man wakes to consciousness and the blood is dispersed again into the veins. ".

The oft cited passages from the dialogue *Meno*, where Plato develops his theory of knowledge as recollection, suggest that memories from previous lives lie deeply buried in the unconscious mind. This doesn't, of course, provide any insight into the ways in which the unconscious mind operates in daily life. Furthermore the "evidence" in the Meno, as in so many of Plato's Dialogues, is definitely *ad hoc*, that is to say, tailored to fit his philosophical agenda.

However there is a passage in *The Republic* in which dreams are connected in a direct manner with the existence of an unconscious source of images, ideas and drives:

"There exist in every one of us, even in some reputed most respectable, a terrible, fierce and lawless brood of desires, which it seems are revealed in our sleep."

By the middle of the 19th century the existence of mental processes preconditioning consciousness was well established in psychiatry. Evidence indicating that consciousness was only the

final stage in a causal chain had accumulated in the research of psychologists, biologists and philosophers for 3 centuries. (Hunter and MacAlpine, Shorter, Altschule I and II, Kraepelin)

The notion that dreams may have symbolic or latent content originates in the 16th century. Johannes Weyer, a 16th century

Dutch doctor known for his writings against the witchcraft superstition, ¹⁰ had observed that the waking pronouncements of the mentally ill often reflect thoughts that had previously cropped up in dreams. (*Altschule 1*).

From Aristotle onwards, the *free association of ideas and*thoughts has been a lively and controversial subject for

philosophers, scientists and writers of fiction (viz. the "interior monologue" of Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Henry James and others). In the 18th and 19th century it was studied by

_

Wikipedia, June 2012: "Johann Weyer (in Dutch Jan/Johan/Johannes Wier, in Latin Ioannes Wierus and Piscinarius), (1515 – 24 February 1588) was a Dutch physician, occultist and demonologist, disciple and follower of Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa. He was among the first to publish against the persecution of witches. His most influential work is De Praestigiis Daemonum et Incantationibus ac Venificiis (On the Illusions of the Demons and on Spells and Poisons, 1563)."

philosophers such as John Locke, David Hume, David Hartley,
Alexander Bain ,and William Hamilton. J.F. Herbart developed a
baroque theory of apperceptions. These are ideas that fall through
a kind of psychic continuum and coalesce like the hooked atoms of
Lucretius. The importance of the phenomenon of the association of
ideas for 18th and 19th century psychologists is described in *Man Above Humanity* (Walter Bromberg, Lippincott, 1954):

"The associationism of Hartley and Hume which led to empiricism and the detailed study of sensation, the faculty psychology based on Christian Woolf's ideas (1734) and developed by many to a high point in the first half of the 19th century, had not yet been incorporated into a science of mental therapy."

The French doctor *F.J.V. Broussais* applied Hartley's ideas to the treatment of mental illness in a textbook published in 1828. In 1845 the German doctor *Ernst Von Feuchtesleben* described the ways in which the characteristic patterns of free association break down in severe mental illness, a phenomenon familiar to us today as a property of schizophrenia.

The major medical discoveries of the 19th century relevant to the hypothesis of an unconscious mind came from the study of reflexes. In Galen himself one finds a neuromuscular theory of reflexes, still accepted today as valid in its essentials. The first models for the 'stimulus-response' mechanisms dear to Behaviorism are credited to René Descartes in the 17th century.

In 1844 the physiologist *Thomas Laycock* maintained that *all* aspects of consciousness were merely collection of reflex actions culminating in what he called 'ideagenous changes'. He was also the first psychiatrist to suggest in his writings that hysterical symptoms were rooted in childhood experiences.

The term *Unconscious Cerebration* first appears around 1842¹¹, in the writings of the doctor and phrenologist W. C. Engledue. In his system consciousness was nothing more than a side effect of an overwhelmingly unconscious process. His ideas were further elaborated by William Benjamin Carpenter between 1852 and 1855.

1

¹¹ Cerebral Physiology and Materialism, with the Result of the Application of Animal Magnetism to the Cerebral Organs: An Address Delivered to the Phrenological Association in London, June 20, 1842

The Engledue-Carpenter theory of unconscious cerebration is described in Laycock's treatise *Mind and Brain: On the correlations* of consciousness (1860). His own theory of reflex mentation laid claim to greater accuracy on the basis of evidence he'd accumulated in the 20 years since he first proposed it.

It does not appear that any real progress has been made in the last 150 years to resolving these opposing views, between the somatic theories based on physiochemical processes versus the psychological theories based on psychic determinism.

In addition to the names already mentioned one can include those of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Charles Creighton, Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, and Alexander Bain. Writing in 1859, the philosopher William Hamilton presented 3 arguments in defense of the existence of an unconscious mind (*Hunter and MacAlpine*, pg.?):

[&]quot;.. I shall first of all adduce some proof of the fact that the mind may, and does, contain far more latent furniture than consciousness informs us it possesses. I shall distinguish 3 degrees of this mental latency..."

Hamilton's 3 degrees are:

- (1) Habits;
- (2) Extraordinary states such as madness, delirium, the hypnotic stages of somnambulism and catalepsy;
 - (3) The processes of free association of ideas.

The modern way of looking at the unconscious mind was defined by the great English psychiatrist, Henry Maudsley. His major treatises are: *The Physiology and Pathology of Mind* (1867), and *Body and Will* (1883). Maudsley enunciated the following set of principles:

- (1) Unconscious mentation produces associations between ideas and reflexes;
 - (2) Learning is largely an unconscious process.
- (3) Painful thoughts are shunted into the unconscious.

 That is to say, Freud's repression hypothesis (which has not stood the test of time)
- (4) One can find a serious divergence between motives apparent to an individual and his deeper motives.
- (5) The stages in the thought process are largely in the unconscious.
 - (6) Consciousness is not co-extensive with Mind.
 - (7) Psychosis is the manifestation of cerebral activity in

the unconscious parts of the mind. He speaks of the unconscious as "having surprised and overpowered the conscious life".

(x) Identity and Conflict

The mental image/sensation of one's self, or Selfhood, is under constant siege from external challenges: changed circumstances, threats to one's security, expectations good and bad, reflections, personal doubts and so on. The restoration of identity requires a perpetual readjustment of assumed convictions.

The resistance that must be overcome which allows one to forsake a former notion of selfhood to a new one, is akin to the inertia of material bodies.

All identity crises, both grand or trifling, are simultaneously feared, rejected and embraced, creative and destructive. They provoke resistance, yet at the same time supply the spark to ignite the process of adjustment leading to the birth of the new individual and a new understanding. All change is thus Janus-

faced: while threatening one's cherished beliefs, external challenges also hold open the promise of adventure.

This dual phenomenon of destruction/rejuvenation in psychological adjustment leads inevitably from extrapolation to the possibility of transmigration, that is to say, the passage of the individual from one body to another through death and resurrection. This hypothesis is neither defended nor denied in this essay; the author happens to believe that it is true.

(xi) Psychic Energy

Life-energy as creative energy manifests itself through the psychic mechanisms of rebirth. Being the vehicles of personal growth, what they bring to fulfillment is something not previously seen in the world, authentically new.

Those of us who are blessed with a life-long devotion to serious music frequently have the experience of listening to one of Mozart's String Quartets (for example) and finding that one is unable to predict what the next harmonic effect or turn of phrase.

Then, when we hear it, we are astonished to find that it is both thoroughly original yet, at the same time, thoroughly appropriate.

This experience is the aesthetic correlate to the creative originality of psychic energy in the re-adjustment process.

Standing in opposition to life-energy is material energy:
mechanical, thermal, chemical, electrical, gravitational, and atomic.
These natural forces are the activating element in all
transformations in the configurations of physical matter. The
transforming powers of physical energy are conservative: this is a
basic law of nature. They are not creative in the same way that lifeor psychic- energy is.

Creativity is the indispensable requisite to personal fulfillment. Yet, because all actions are constrained to be actualized by the physical body, the realizations of sentient states must eventually be translated into the standard cycles of transformation of a universe governed by dynamic laws, that is to say the cycles of potential and kinetic energy in the physical world.

The conservative restrictions of the transformations of material energy on the free activity of the mental life produce a kind of debasement of living energy to its physical correlates.

External oppression or internal mental shackles cause great spiritual suffering, what is called oppression. In the cyclic unfolding of the stages of adjustment, the basic personality disorders replicate the basic cycles of transformation from potential to kinetic energy of the physical world. The "debasement" of psychic to physical energy occurs when the Rebirth Mechanism is halted or sabotaged by painful or traumatic experiences. We will have more to say on this subject later. At this point we wish to draw upon the close analogies that exist between inanimate and animate entities, as exemplified in dead or living bodies, and the mental states that may also be thought of as "living" and "dead"

(xii) The Psychologically Inanimate

It is possible to extend the dichotomy between the animate and the inanimate, so that it incorporates psychological as well as

physical phenomena. The concepts of energy, and energy conservation, were developed through the 19th century. They were enunciated in their modern forms by Hermann Helmholtz (Helmholtz, pg. 3). They may, by analogy, be extended to phenomena in the sphere of concepts, emotions, and psychic states. Modern Information Theory is one attempt to do so, though only in the sphere of factual knowledge, not emotion.

It is customary to talk about "dead", "unresponsive",

"lethargic" or "apathetic" mental climates, emotional

configurations, or levels of intellectual discourse. The

identification of living energy with inherent creativity, and

material energy with conservative, deterministic or random

phenomenon can be extended to all the domains of human

experience, cosmic, spiritual and intellectual. There appears to be

more than an analogy at play: the dichotomy between living and

mechanical energy, notably in relation to the cycles of

pattern deep within the universal order.

One responds immediately to active," living" surroundings.

When confronted with a hostile or unresponsive reception one realizes at once how much recognition from our external surroundings is needed to give meaning to life. Anyone delivering a lecture will sense when his ideas are being absorbed or understood by his audience, or when they are being blighted or killed by distraction, incomprehension or indifference.

We respond acutely and immediately to neglect, rejection, ignorance, stupidity, to debasement as objects to be exploited for gain. Likewise, even the very worst of human beings automatically responds to genuine understanding, compassion, intelligence, insight, that is to say all of the *living* mental qualities.

This point is important and should be emphasized. There would some positive response (however minute!) to *authentic* compassion or understanding even from a Hitler, Stalin or

Milosevic. If Hitler had ended up where he really belonged, in a mental asylum, one might even have been led to feel sorry for him! Reading the biographies of such monstrous dictators one realizes that every one of them was overwhelmed by panic and fear to an extent unimaginable to the rest of us. It may be naive to attribute any sort of conscience to such people (though Shakespeare does so in his portraits of Richard III, Macbeth, Claudius and others). Sharing as they did in all the attributes of a common humanity, (this *indeed is what is most monstrous about them!!*), they would have responded positively, if microscopically, to an empathetic presence.

We will therefore not hesitate to describe certain psychological phenomena as animate, or living, and others as deathly, lifeless, inanimate, reactionary, sterile, unconscious, blind. One could draw up an inventory of phenomena properly belong to the sphere of the psychological inanimate.

In our view it is co-extensive with mental illness.

The psychological inanimate includes unwholesome states, backward and entrenched fixed ideas, reactionary thinking, and all the syndromes of denial, delusion and obsession.

(xiii) Empathy and the Moral Faculty

We make the claim that within all living creatures there exists a faculty of perception, that is to say, a autonomous sense which, even as our eyes distinguish red from blue, can detect the presence of life in a physical object such as a plant or body, certainly in fellow human beings.

The author believes that, although this is debatable, this faculty can be further developed to include a limited telepathy; the persons who've done this to the fullest are deemed arhats, sadhus, saints (the real ones, not those who serve the political agenda of the Catholic Church). For most of us this faculty is manifested in the form of empathy. Our hypothesis boldly projects this faculty over the whole of the living kingdom, that is to say, we make the claim that it exists in all animals, and all plants, down to the level of the

48

micro-organisms. The powerful empathy between pets and pet lovers is another evidence for this assertion.

The emotional affect associated with this sense faculty is

Love. We restate the above in the form of a fundamental principle:

The automatic distribution of our perceptions into the categories of Animate and Inanimate lies at the foundation of all emotional relationships between animate beings.

Simply stated, we love other living creatures, whether people or pets, and even the flowers in a garden, because we see what is alive in them. If this is true for animals, how much more is applies to relationships between human beings? Certainly everyone has had the experience of sensing the presence of a family member, or someone very close to us, standing in another room, or even outside in the street. When this perception is particularly strong, we may even know that this individual is in an adjoining room without being able to see him! Spiritually advanced persons live in this ambiance, an experience shared by everyone.

In this essay it will be our intention to establish the connection between mental illness, neuroses and psychoses, and the presence, in the Unconscious, of entities, (The Freudians call them "complexes") composed of feelings, memories and ideas, that inhibit the process of psychic adjustment, and blight the moral faculty, blinding the perception of empathy. The origin of these is in traumatic experiences.

Traumatic experiences incorporate into the mind the very blindness of the material cosmos!

One can think of this as the direct transmission into our own consciousness of a kind of blind spot, which we speak of as an unconscious region in the mind. Through the lasting effects of painful interactions with events or persons, a lifeless region takes root, then blossoms within the mind. Itself unresponsive, it is a source of spiritual suffering, while at the same time hindering fully aware, creative, and totally responsive adjustment to external reality.

All of these claims will be discussed and further elaborated in the following chapters.

Bibliography

- (1) Editor, Peter Gay: The Freud Reader; W.W. Norton, 1989
- (2) Roy Porter : The Greatest Benefit to Mankind-A Medical History of Humanity
 - ; WW Norton; 1997
- (3) Ramchandran, Vilayanur S, coauthor Sandra Blakeslee: **Phantoms in the**Brain: Probing the Mysteries of the Human Mind; Harper Collins,

 1998
- (4) Peter R. Breggin: Psychiatric Drugs; Hazards to the Brain; Springer, 1983
- (5) Peter R. Breggin: Toxic Psychiatry; St. Martin's Press, 1994
- (6) Thomas J. Moore Prescription for Disaster; the hidden dangers in your medicine cabinet; Simon & Schuster, 1998
- (7) Richard Hughes and Robert Brewin; **The Tranquilizing of America**; Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, 1979
- (8) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th Edition (DSM-IV); American Psychiatric Association, 1994
- (9) Masson, Jeffrey Moussaieff: Against Therapy: Emotional Tyranny and the Myth of Psychological Healing; Atheneum, 1988
- (10) Robyn M. Dawes: House of Cards: Psychology and Psychotherapy Built on Myth; The Free Press, 1994

- (11) Altschule, Mark D. (I): Roots of Modern Psychiatry; Grune & Stratton 1965
- (12) Altschule, Mark D. (II): **The Development of Traditional Psychopathology**; Wiley, 1976
- (13) Richard Hunter and Ida MacAlpine: **Three Hundred Years of Psychiatry 1535-1860**; Oxford UP 1963
- (14) Bromberg, Walter: Man Above Humanity; Lippincott, 1954
- (15) Freud, Sigmund: **The Interpretation of Dreams**; Translator Joyce Crick; Oxford UP 1999
- (16) Crews, Frederick: Unauthorized Freud: Doubters Confront a Legend; Viking, 1998
- (17) Crews, Frederick: **Physician Heal Thyself**; essays in the NY Review of Books, Oct 29, Sept 13, 2011
- (18) Hawking, Stephen: A Brief History of Time; Bantam 1988
- (19) Arabella Melville & Colin Hohnson: **Cured to Death; the Effects of Prescription Drugs;** Stein & Day, 1983
- (20) Harold L. Lennard, Leon J. Epstein, Arnold Bernstein, Donald C.
 Ransom: Mystification and Drug Misuse; hazards in using
 psychoactive drugs; Jossey-Bass, 1971
- (21) Shorter, Edward: A History of Psychiatry; John Wiley, 1997
- (22) Fisher, Seymour & Greenberg, Roger P.: The Scientific

 Evaluation of Freud's Theories and Therapy; Basic Books, 1978
- (23) Julien, Robert M.: A Primer of Drug Action; WH Freeman, 1992
- (24) Kraepelin, Emil: **One Hundred Years of Psychlatry**; Philosophical Library, 1962
- (25) Helmholtz, Hermann von: **Selected Writings**; Editor, Russell Kahl; Wesleyan UP, 1971
- (26) Bernheim, Hippolyte: **Hypnosis** ,1884; trans by Christian A. Herter, 1964; University Books

- (27) Bogousslavsky, Julien: Following Charcot: A Forgotten History of Neurology and Psychiatry; Karger, 2011
- (28) Henri Ellenberger, **The Discovery of the Unconscious**;
 Basic Books, 1970
- (29) William Sargant: The Mind Possessed; Lippincott, 1973
- (30) Roy Lisker: **Shrinking Expectations**, Ferment Press, 1987.
- (31) Edward Shorter: From Paralysis to Fatigue; A History of Psychosomatic Iliness in the Modern Era; The Free Press, a division of Macmillan; 1992
- (32) **Medical Fringe & Medical Orthodoxy, 1750- 1850**; edited by W.F. Bynum & Roy Porter; Croom Helm; 1987
- (33) Mind & Body in 18th Century Medicine; L. J. Rather; U. CAL, PRESS;1965
- (34) The Medical Enlightenment of the Eighteenth Century; edited by Andrew Cunningham & Roger French; Cambridge University Press; 1990
- (35) Pierre Janet: **The Major Symptoms of Hysteria**; 15 Lectures; Macmillan, 1913
- (36) Carlat, Daniel: Unhinged: The Trouble With Psychiatry;
 Simon and Schuster, 2010
- (37) Watters, Ethan: Crazy Like Us: The Globalization of the American Psyche; Free Press, 2010