

G. Doron

# Psychotherapy and Self-Determination on the Humanistic Study of Psychotherapy

*Continued from last month*

Students coming to study psychology because of their interest in human beings and humanistic sciences, find themselves in this manner expurgated and disappointed. Their real motive for coming to study psychology is because they are interested in the actualization and growth of human beings. But they are given everything except dynamic human psychology. Students who arrive to behaviouristic departments of psychology are forced to submit to demands of a mechanistic curriculum and are presented with the choice of either adjusting themselves to an academic psychology, and in this manner becoming inadvertently the carriers of this societal alienation - (absolutely unrelated to the centre of their interest), or to drop out from their studies altogether. If they soldier on, without even being fully aware of what happens to them, they are soon sucked into this anti-humanistic, ideological super-structure - presented in a pseudo-scientific form and, without realising it, they are carrying-on a life negating act which perpetuates and totalizes a system of alienation.

However, recent developments in dynamic and humanistic psychology bring increasing pressure to change the sterile and de-humanizing character of academic psychology, to bring it closer to the reality of human experience and developmental needs.

Marie Jahoda (1) notes about the reasons of the failure of behaviourism:

*Behaviourism failed and, in so failing, delayed the development of psychology for two reasons: first, it wished to explain everything by a simple mechanism and, second, because it tried to be consistent in an impossible task: to build a psychology without including man in full complexity, with conscious and unconscious motivation and experiences for which introspection is an essential methodological tool which helps to unravel meaning, conflict and purpose.*

D. Bakan notes (2) that both academic psychology and Gestalt psychology avoid the probing of the unconscious:

*Psychology had two alternatives: either to widen its investigations to take account and to study the role of unconscious motivation on the thought processes, or to detour. Academic psychology detoured; and detoured in two ways: It detoured by way of behaviourism, completely neglecting (at least avowedly) the whole method of introspection, and it detoured by way of Gestalt psychology. The former dropped the whole concept of mind,*

*conscious and unconscious. The latter adopted as basic principle that whatever introspection is done should be naive introspection with no probing and no analysis, thus preventing intrusion upon the unconscious.*

As mentioned, in spite of all the emphasis upon scientism, the most creative psychological contributions in our times came not from behaviourism but from clinical studies in psychotherapy, basic child development and psychopathology. This is connected with the attempt to understand the deeper forces of the personality and the concept of the unconscious.

The exploration of the unconscious by psychoanalysis brought some of its most fruitful results, as embodied in dream analysis and the treatment of psychoneuroses.

It is difficult to conceive modern psychology devoid of the psychodynamic and the enormous therapeutic power inherent in it. Any serious clinician who has experience with most difficult emotional problems, can only confirm this. In his sense the contribution of psychoanalysis in modern psychology is truly revolutionary. And this without ignoring the wider developments of post-Freudian psychotherapy - which complemented theoretical contributions and put the emphasis on a person centred psychotherapy.

In a discussion about the scientific concept in psychoanalysis, Professor Hutten (Professor of Physics, University of London) states (as quoted by Guntrip) (3) in a paper entitled *On Explanation in Psychology and Physics* in *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, May 1956, the following:

*... before we can explain anything we must specify the concepts used for this purpose, and, in general, provide a model. (Ibid. p. 73) Psychoanalysis provides a genetic-dynamical model of the mental processes and the forces involved in them. (Ibid. p. 75) As a minimum outline of 'the model' he cites three assumptions, that most mental activity is unconscious, that it is concerned with basic conflicts concerning the ambivalent love-hate of infantile sexuality, and that it can be investigated by means of free associations in transference situations. The model itself functions, in a way, as a non-formalized theory (Ibid. p. 74) We can discuss and criticize psycho-analytical explanations only against the background of the genetic-dynamical or some similar model. (Ibid. p. 76) He points out that in this context we speak not about causal laws but about the aetiology of a symptom or illness. Similarly, instead of description and prediction, we have diagnosis and prognosis . . . Unlike mass points human beings have a history, and we cannot possibly hope to predict their future from the present alone. (Ibid. p. 76)*

By ignoring the human awareness and the dynamic unconscious, behaviourism not only delayed the development of modern psychology but it attempts now to elevate its de-personalization of psychology into a method of therapy. In this it treads on even

more dangerous ground. It is not only the inner contradiction in terms of the absurd of making the negation of the real human experience into a method of therapy. The main danger is the philosophy and attitude of man into which the society is gently chaperoned in this manner.

Although 'Behaviour Therapists' try to deny that they are mere 'technologists', the very way they relate to people as things to be conditioned presents a blatant technological approach. There is an inherent contradiction in 'Behaviour Therapists' declaring themselves 'psychotherapists' in everything except that they 'structure everything from the point of view of learning theory'. Insofar as Behaviour Therapy is structuring everything rigidly into the frame of a learning theory, *It negates the possibility of appearance of the therapeutic process itself*. Psychotherapy, by its very definition, is to facilitate the personality growth and development, through offering a relatively unstructured situation. It is largely based on the personal work of *the individual himself, providing conditions for the emergence and the working-through of his own development*. Psychotherapy aims to help a person to express *his own* feelings and emotions, to express *his own authentic self*, rather than to manipulate him. Psychotherapy, by its basic tenets, leads to an increased inner freedom, while behaviour therapy leaves the person without any basic change in his personality structure, in his basic relationship capacity - or spontaneity. His active dealing with, and mastering of life, is not only not released but, quite to the contrary, he is again mechanically manipulated, reinforced in a passive way - which precisely the source of his unhappiness and neurosis - which produced the helplessness for which he came for therapy.

Contrary to this, the dynamic process of psychotherapy is the opposite of this systematic de-humanization, it allows for *the regaining of the vital sense of self* through another human relationship, it allows for the regaining of *the very sense of realness* stripped away from people.

The opposition and dichotomy between dynamic and humanistic psychology on one hand, and manipulative technologicistic and behaviourism on the other, characterises the historical conflicts today between progress and reaction, between humanization and alienation, between democracy and corporate control.

Society can develop towards increased and monopolistic control of minds of people and their behaviour - or can move towards increased freedom and self-determination in which the individuals make their own lives. Rogerian theory is also orientated very much towards this self-determination, although does not analyse explicitly the social dimension in psychic repression. This process of psychotherapy leads, however, to the same aim, i.e. to regain the existential sense of inner freedom and fulfilment, which Rogers describes in the following words: (5)

*It is the discovery of meaning from within oneself, meaning which comes from listening sensitively and openly to the complexities of what one is experiencing. It is the burden of being responsible for the self one chooses to*

*be. It is the recognition by the person he is an emerging process, not a static end product.*

What disqualifies behaviourism from the beginning as a method of therapy is the fact that conditioning clashes with the very essence of the psychotherapeutic process - that is the emergence of a full personality growth process. Research in psychotherapy shows that this process can best occur within the context of certain qualitative relationships, i.e. of acceptance of the person as a whole.

*... perhaps the deepest of these learnings is a confirmation of, and an extension of, the concept that therapy has to do with the relationship, and has relatively little to do with techniques or with theory and ideology. In this respect I believe my view to have become more, rather than less, extreme. I believe it is the realness of the therapist in the relationship which is the most important element. It is when the therapist is natural and spontaneous that he seems to be most effective. (6)*

The concept of *health as a mastering process*, as a creative balance between the organism and the environment, is stressed by Kurt Goldstein. It is not understandable by natural sciences alone, but it is essentially a concept of a state of relatedness, of a dynamic actualizing nature. Kurt Goldstein comes near to this in his own definition of health:

*We admit health is not an objective condition which can be understood by the methods of natural science alone. It is, rather, a condition related to a mental attitude by which the individual has to value what is essential for his life. 'Health' appears thus as a value; its value consists in the individual's capacity to actualize his nature to the degree that, for him at least, is essential. 'Being sick' appears as a loss or diminution of value, the value of self-realization, of existence. (7)*

A Maslow mentions Kurt Goldstein, together with Psychoanalysis and Existentialism, as his sources. He summarizes the concept of psychological health:

*The psychological health of the adult is called variously self-fulfilment, emotional maturity, individuation, productiveness, self-actualization, authenticity, full-humanness, etc. Healthy growth is conceptually subordinate, for it is usually defined now as 'growth towards self-actualization' etc. Some psychologists speak simply in terms of human development, considering all immature growth phenomena to be only steps along the path to self-actualization (Goldswin, Rogers). Self-actualization is defined in various ways but a solid core of agreement is perceptible. All definitions accept or imply (a) acceptance and expression of the inner core of self, i.e. actualization of these latent capacities and potentialities, 'full-functioning' availability of the human and personal essence. (b) They all imply minimal presence of ill-health, neurosis, pschosis, of loss or diminution of the basic human and personal capacities. (8)*

Such concern to bring out the meaningful experiences which release the vital person in the process of psychotherapy, instead of mere statistical data, leads to the use of clinical and anthropological - phenomeno-logical methods of study. The following describes the two opposite approaches:

*The first, which is the conventional one, ends up with a series of propositions expressing quantitative relations that are impressive in their statistical work-out but either meaningless or misleading in terms of what has actually happened to the persons concerned. The second course is to attempt a phenomeno-logical description of the change in the inner - and outer-world complexes of these persons, comparing these changes with certain possible changes that have previously been established as desirable or undesirable. The important point about this latter course is that the concern is with the actual experiences of actual persons and with individual fields of possibility. The phenomenological approach does not mean that a level of generalization cannot be attained, but simply that it is necessary to commence with the concrete particular before proceeding to the abstract general. This approach, however, does not meet with the general approval . . . Many research authorities in the human sciences seem to be victim to obsessional needs to reduce the reality of transactions between persons to massified abstractions that conceal far more than they reveal . . . (9)*

R. Phillips points out:

*To the unbiased observer the increasing dependence of experimental psychologists upon complex gadgetry is obviously yet another sign of man's alienation from his fellow man'. He considers the elaborate testing apparatus erected by the experimenter 'as a sort of last ditch defense mechanism . . . (10)*

Defense mechanism of whom against whom? Does it only reflect the subjective emotional defenses of behaviourists from their own dynamism, or is it more than that? Or does it merely reflect the breakdown of meaningful relationships which bedevils the system? Is this a whole system defending itself from social changes?! David Ingleby goes one step further, and develops an ideological critique of the sociological role of this whole system of concepts:

*. . . The mentality we are talking about is not . . . a transitory state of the individual: it is the shared corpus of concepts, attitudes and methods of enquiry into which the 'fully trained' psychologist has been initiated . . . I shall try first of all to elucidate this mentality, and then to demonstrate that it can only be understood in terms of its place in (to borrow Laing's useful definition) the political order . . . the ways persons exercise control and power over one another (Laing 1970, p.107)*

*In other words, I want to consider this mentality not just as a set of ideas viewed by themselves, but as an ideology; the essential difference being that an ideological critique takes into account the interests which a particular mentality is defending. As Mannheim states:*

*The concept 'ideology' reflects the one discovery which emerged from political conflict, namely, that ruling groups can in their thinking become so intensively interestbound to a situation that they are simply no longer able to see certain facts which would undermine their sense of domination. There is implicit in the word 'ideology' the insight that in certain situations the collective unconscious of certain groups obscures the real condition of society both to itself and to others and thereby stabilises it. (1936, p.36) (11)*

By leaving out its main object of study - the human being in his existential and social context, the alienation incumbent in the system achieves its academic sanctification. By negating the human element as its central field of study it assures the continuation of dealing with human beings as depersonalised isolants, as fragmented machines which are 'conditioned' to fit into alienated systems. By leaving out the 'psyche' itself, which in its original Greek meant 'anything which lived' psychology achieves its own absurd. Such a frame of reference, which by its very definitions, denies a priori the independent character of human beings as active individuals, in the process of mastering their lives and social environment, constitutes a reification. By this behaviouristic academic psychology and 'Behaviour Therapy' are in fact *reinforcing* in their objective social function the dehumanisation of the society, they are its ideological carrier as also pointed out by David Ingleby:

*The social function which determines the spirit of enquiry in psychology - whatever convictions psychologists may have about it - is the maintenance of status quo: it seemed that psychology was borrowing habits of thought from natural science and applying them to the human sphere in a manner which was logically quite inappropriate but politically highly functional. . . The effect of the many reifications that occur in psychology is to dehumanise the individual in the same way that the political system dehumanises him i.e. to represent as impersonal, thing-like processes those aspects of people which the political order itself denies. (13)*

A frozen academic psychology thus maintains a frozen society, by denying the dynamism of its individuals as a matter of principle. Just as in an individual pathology, where consciousness is stifled, through forbidding, rigid structures which dominate and hold down spontaneity, so a whole society can be frozen and held back from developing, by outdated anachronistic frames of reference, which *stop conceptually*, so to speak, the actualisation of its human potential. And just as the release of the human consciousness and the enlargement of social awareness fosters the realisation of the individual's life possibilities, so the release of the humanistic content in the academic study of psychology has a major significance for the progress of society. As Laing points out:

*Psychology is the logos of experience. Psychology is the structure of the evidence and hence psychology is the science of sciences. (14)*

The current mushrooming of behaviour therapy, which is mainly interested in conditioning individuals, as a sort of treatment, raises basic ethical questions, which can have far-reaching political implications. Marie Jahoda warns in this respect:

*Psychology as the science of how to manipulate man according to somebody's master plan is the spectre that haunts me when I look to the future. There are two fundamentally opposed ways in which the psychologist could look at man. The behaviourist psychologist regards man as 'a mere artifact' whose behaviour is solely determined by inborn characteristics and external influences: a totally-mechanistic view of human nature. Alternatively, psychologists could adopt the psycho-analytical viewpoint which regards man as an active, purposeful individual who constantly seeks to shape his environment, is capable of making personal choices and decisions, has a capacity for self-awareness and is no mere automaton. If you insist on treating man as you treat a rat or a pigeon in the laboratory, he will in the end act as one . . . The problem with behaviourism is not that it is wrong but that it may become true. (15)*

Recently there has been a systematic attempt to introduce behaviouristic 'shaping up' technologies, even in education, particularly in the United States. The spirit of this is not much different from recent trends of giving drugs to hyperkinetic, under-privileged children.

Sheldon Litt brings a range of recent experimental data (including experiments with chimps), demonstrating clearly how behaviouristic conditioning, applied in education (in the so-called 'shaping up' methods), not only *does not* increase creativity, but actually inhibits and destroys it. (20)

This, of course, corresponds with what we find in clinical work, as the very essence of neurosis is suppressive and repressive conditioning, instead of the free development of the spontaneous personality, which can only be granted through self-determination, in democratic/self accepting atmosphere, Self-realisation and spontaneity go hand in hand with self-determination.

Rather than mechanizing even more education, we need the enhancing of the free spirit of discovery, for its own intrinsic pleasure. Although the 'shaping up' technologies may be in line with interests which try to increase corporate regimentation, the real aim of education is precisely the opposite, i.e. increasing the independence of the individual, his creative initiative and ability for critique, to release his fighting capacity for fulfillment and happiness.

In a similar way in psychotherapy behaviour therapy, by its very manipulative character, is a 'shaping up' technology which can maintain and service social and

emotional repression, rather than removing it. The way in which the behaviourist relates to his 'patient' - as an object to be manipulated and reconditioned, rather than a whole person in his own right - reinforces the authoritarian self-alienating social structure, from which the patient came, which he internalised at the core of his neurosis and emotional disturbance, the social structure which is *the real patient* for cure.

Just as on a personal level, the spontaneous sense of self can be regained only through a re-humanisation of relationships, to replace deprivation and the deadening of personality i.e. the alienated relationships which became the personal mode of existence, by a different internalized interpersonal system, so, on a social scale, one needs eventually to get rid of the whole structure and system of values which allow people to be exploited, conditioned and controlled by others i.e. the class system of the society as a whole.

## References

1. Marie Jahoda: *Social Psychology and Psychoanalysis: A Mutual Challenge*, Bulletin of British Psychology, 25, p.271 (1972)
2. D. Bakan *On Method* Jossey-Bass Inc (publishers) San Francisco, 1969, p.97
3. Harry Guntrip: *Personality Structure and Human Interaction*, London, The Hogarth Press, 1973. P.153
- 4.. This, of course, can fit perfectly the philosophy of a system which relates to people as 'deadened' objects, only suitable for market manipulation.
5. Carl Rogers & B. Stevens: *Person to Person* Real People Press, 1967, p.52
6. Ibid. p.101
7. K. Goldstein: *Health as Value in New Knowledge in Human Values: Ed. A. Maslow*, Harper & Bros., New York, 1959, p.183
8. A. Maslow: *Toward a Psychology of Being* Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., New York 1968. p.197
9. David Cooper: *Psychiatry and Anti-Psychiatry* Tavistock Publications Ltd. 1967
10. R. Phillips: *Psychology: A New Science* the Bulletin of B.P.S., April 1968 p.p.83-87
11. David Ingleby: *The Psychology of Child Psychology* unpublished draft.

---

# Letters to the editor

Dear Vivian Milroy,

I have learned two lessons since I became involved in the growth movement, viz:

1. Critics are to varying degrees correct in their judgements;
2. If it is listened to criticism can be educative.

Adam Jukes and Laurence Collinson do not appear to relate to these lessons judging from their public reply to Yvonne Craig's letter (Self and Society Vol IV No.8) and I feel that their

case is defensive and the worse for it.

The central point which Yvonne makes is not new and I was not over surprised that it proved such a sensitive one as far as the ITA was concerned. I would be interested to hear other members' views on this subject.

Yours sincerely,

**John Desmond**  
London E.5