Psychoanalysis as a Cross-bearing*

By T. F. MAIN

The term "psychoanalysis" has a triple usage. First, it describes a connected body of observations about unconscious mental processes, systematically classified and more or less colligated and brought under general laws. This first meaning places psychoanalysis among the sciences, but a difficulty at once arises; for the phenomena with which psychoanalysis is concerned, and the methods used to study them, are so different from those upon which our tradition of science was first based that the question arises whether it is science at all.

Second, the term refers to a technique for investigating unconscious mental life. This technique can be learned, as can all techniques of investigation, by any apprentice with reasonable ability. A second difficulty is now met, for this ability is not the same as that required for the physical sciences. It is possible to have an excellent mind for physical science and yet to be a duffer at psychoanalysis; and vice versa. This state of affairs is not inevitable, but it raises an important problem about the nature of abilities.

Third, the term is used to describe a method of treatment for mental disturbance. We doctors are usually most concerned with this third usage, but it is the one Freud valued least, for he was primarily concerned with inquiry, discovery, knowledge and investigatory technique, but only secondarily with therapy.

These three meanings of "psychoanalysis", a body of knowledge, a technique of investigation, and a treatment, need sorting out whenever the term is used, otherwise misunderstanding may arise.

In this communication I shall be concerned with psychoanalysis not as a treatment but as a scientific standpoint, derived from the technique and its associated body of knowledge, from which to view human affairs. Like the chemical viewpoint, the psychoanalytical viewpoint is definite but of course limited to certain matters. It is there and always available, like the chemical viewpoint, no matter what human behaviour may be under study, and, like the chemical viewpoint, it does not conflict with any other; rather it is in addition to others and seeks a part of the truth. Nevertheless, the differences of psychoanalysis from other sciences in its field of study, its methods and the talents required need emphasis, and I propose to discuss these.

Psychoanalysis cannot but cause disquiet to those material scientists who believe that their field of inanimate matter and their methods forged in the study of inanimate matter, must form the ultimate field and the final method for all science, even that of animate creatures. To hold that science must ultimately be concerned only with inanimate matter is certainly both fashionable and popular, even though this belief may do serious injustice to nature and to the range of science itself. One frequently hears statements such as, "That's the scientific side—but what about the human side?" as if this latter were not available for science, as if such human matters as envy, ambition, contentment, play, tenderness were not to be thought of as fit for scientific understanding but were to be put a priori beyond the scientific pale. It needs emphasis that this view of science as concerning only hardware, things but not creatures, physics and chemistry but not people, is curiously seductive.

In part this may be due to historical accident. Material science was the first to begin the scientific conquest of our world, and we cannot avoid respecting and admiring the brilliant successes of its methods. We, whose medical education was much founded on them, have every developmental reason to hold them in primary esteem for their usefulness in our art.
Their exactitude and promise are fascinating, even enslaving, whereas, by contrast, the biological sciences, and especially the human sciences, offer us relative inexactness and are conceptually more vague. We may therefore be excused some impatience or irritation at the biological sciences, even some boredom and contempt at their difficulties. But these matters alone do not explain man's tendency to be addicted to material science, and I propose to dwell later on some other reasons for our readiness to be seduced by things. For the moment I simply want to draw attention to the way our devotion to the methods of material science has somehow pushed human problems to one side and awarded them less support in money, prestige and intellectual ability. This has so affected our own profession that even when an important human problem arises—let us say a problem of chronic sadness—there are many who would prefer to ignore its intangible human origins and the pains of its experience but be quite ready to study its hardware origins and results, its chemistry and physics, as if only those latter could be scientific. Such is the fashion and the common preference for inanimate objects that it is truly difficult for some to accept the possibility that science can respectably include the study of human experience, the fears and passions and altruism and disappointments which every day surround us. For some the "natural" sciences are synonymous with the sciences of inanimate matter, and biological and psychical phenomena are thus regarded as not "natural" at all. This leads a few to an extreme position from which all observations described in terms other than of the sciences of things or arrived at by methods other than those borrowed from the sciences of things cannot be truly scientific. This a priori readiness to select and admit for study only certain phenomena, and to rule others out of court, to insist that the method of material science must be the method for all science, together with the belittling of other methods of arriving at knowledge, is itself, of course, unscientific. Not only does it dictate to the facts rather than attempt to respect and understand them, not only does it require all facts to suit one method rather than seek to devise methods to suit facts, but by its insistence on only one method it turns its back on the major matters of human experience, simply because these cannot be ordered according to the principles of inanimate matter. We psychiatrists who are so indebted to the methods of material science for our work have also to recognize their utter inadequacies for ordering human experience.

We can make a semantic choice, of course. We can either declare that the experiencing of human life is not a matter for science at all but for humanists and philosophers; or we can seek to enlarge the definition of science by legitimizing, and tolerating other methods than those of material science, and by accepting that these methods must be different if they are to succeed in furthering our understandings. Pragmatically it hardly matters which we choose. Psychical experience remains there, neither material nor objective but indisputably psychical and subjective. And we psychiatrists can only avoid awareness of it in our daily work by major feats of blindness. Psychical experience can never be understood from a materialistic viewpoint because it is of a different order of fact from material fact. This is not to deny that there is always also both a chemistry and a physics of everyday life, but only to emphasize the obvious—that human subjectivity can never be described except in psychological terms.

The biological sciences provide us with a different but equally valid viewpoint for the ordering of human activity. Just as it is true that man has a chemistry and physics, it is also true that he has lungs and nerves and protoplasm, a physiology and a heredity, that he behaves, and that he is a member of the animal kingdom. From this viewpoint we are allowed to see and discover quite different aspects of the truth. The methods of biological science and its ordering principles, as seen for instance in neurology, virology and cellular pathology, differ indeed from those of the material sciences, and many biologists feel apologetic about this. They find it difficult to accept that the subjects of their study rarely allow the same exact measurements which are suitable for the inanimate matter of the material scientist; but in so far as biological science investigates by sensory perception and with instruments and experi-
mental methods based on this, it is allowed some respectability. It is true that certain purists among physical scientists regard biological science as inferior, not quite science at all, but doctors are in debt to the biological viewpoint and comfortably use it in their studies not only of cellular and organ systems and environments but of individual and family behaviour and of ecology. Somewhere within the vast range of biological science we have to place the behavioural sciences, which our own art of psychiatry begins increasingly to use with great profit to our preventive and therapeutic skills.

The biological sciences have enriched us enormously, but like the material sciences they also have a finite and limited field. They have immensely furthered our understanding of the general nature of man as an animal, and in great detail, but they have not yielded much about the singularity and uniqueness of man, and they yield next to nothing about his inner psychical experience. It is, of course, illogical to expect them to do so. Their methods and studies are concerned with observing from outside, with outward behaviour and expressions, with external responses to sensory stimuli, recorded by the use of the observer's organs of external perception, and accompanied by deliberate and careful efforts to control and exclude not only mathematical chance but the affects of the observer and their derivatives such as anger, pity, horror, resentment, love. This exclusion of affect is absolutely necessary if the data sought are to be reliably objective. Objectivity is relatively easy for the material scientist, because the stuff of his work is inanimate, but many biological scientists have to struggle hard to maintain it. This problem—how to experience the creature of study as separate from oneself, outside oneself, different from oneself, an object of study and not a subject of experience, is far from easy. How to observe it coolly, how to record the behaviour objectively without being moved by compassion or hatred, without dread or gratitude, without distaste or sympathy, without identifying with it? These problems particularly occupy all workers who are concerned to observe and record human behaviour. Without some solution to them the surgeon (for instance) whose daily work concerns suffering, terror and pain, mutilation and death, blood and faeces and urine, could not work with cool skill. Like the biological scientist, he must detach himself somewhat from the creature he deals with, defend his own objectivity, and persistently avoid any great identification with his patient's sufferings; for he has to be concerned primarily with their bodies.

This need to objectify behaviour is essential, if the biological scientist is to continue his contribution and remain reliably within his field. But we may notice that in order to do so he deliberately dismisses a particular aspect of his capacity for experience, and that he does so because he would otherwise become involved in his own feelings and be in danger of colouring his percepts and cognitive processes. It is this capacity for subjective feelings which the material and biological scientists find harmful for their methods, and which they seek to isolate from the perceptive and logical aspects of their mental function. It is proper for them to do this in their attempts faithfully to observe human phenomena from the outside by external perception uncoloured by affect. It is to be noted that their methods deliberately eschew the use of such mental processes as identification, sympathy, empathy, mental fusion with their subject of study or any attempt to gather by such methods data samples about what it is like to be that person on the inside. The methods of biology, disciplined and refined, have considerable reliability and have paid great dividends, and although their limitations at understanding the experience of being human needs full recognition, so does their immense scope both now and for the future. If the biological viewpoint cannot illumine all, it nevertheless illumines much.

The psychoanalytic viewpoint does not primarily concern the senses by which man perceives external reality, nor man's responses to his external environment, nor his external behaviour. There are, of course, psychologies which do so, and these seem to be related to the biological sciences in that they may be less concerned with inner psychical experience than with external behaviour. They are, of course, essential and important, and they use appropriately the methods of biological science, ob-
The psychoanalytic viewpoint is different in major ways from psychologies concerned with performance and behaviour in the external world, for it is directed by contrast at what man experiences within himself, with his inner subjective processes. It does not, as they do, take man as the object of observation, but views him as a subject of experience which is to be illumined and studied. It is concerned with psychic reality.

Man's feelings, yearnings, thoughts, daydreams exist. They have a life and a reality of their own, and they are not necessarily derived from the immediate objective perceptions by which he experiences the world around him, nor are they revealed reliably by his external behaviour. He has an abiding inner experience of his own, no matter what his environment, for he is not a mere reactor to stimuli from the world around him. We also know that he obtains recognition of his inner experiences, his feelings and thoughts, by processes which have nothing to do with the organs of external perception. This psychic reality, this inner world can be subsumed under certain general laws, but it differs in content in everyone. The fact is that it is dependably there. That a person knows what he himself experiences, and knows what he feels or thinks is a fact, but it is not one which another can easily appreciate, and it is unwise to expect that words alone can communicate with accuracy even the facts of conscious personal experience to another, let alone half-formed thoughts and fantasies and still less unconscious thoughts and fantasies. But our greatest difficulty arises out of the fact that we can know only our own experience, and that our ability to understand and make inferences about the experience of another is limited by the range of our own experience of ourselves. If we hear of another's happiness and have never had any experience of happiness ourselves we can deal with his communications and behaviour by hearing and noting and recording it and perhaps by making laboratory experiments to examine and to confirm and to reproduce other examples of it, then can submit these to statistical treatment, and attempt explanations about it and then we can study its incidence in the world; but we can never understand it. We can hear about but we cannot understand anything in others unless we have first understood it in ourselves.

People vary considerably in their capacity to understand themselves, and this is why talents for understanding others also vary. It is to help this situation that psychoanalytic training includes a personal psychoanalysis. The analyst thereby seeks to increase his awareness of the psychic reality within himself, to become more able to recognize his own primitive forms of thought, his elemental anxieties, and guilts, and loves and the sophisticated mechanisms which hide these, in order to understand such matters in others.

The deepest possible awareness of one's own psychic reality permits sensitive and intense but temporary and controlled identifications with others, and allows the gathering of frequent samples of their experience for submission to later thought process. These identifications, although made deliberately, are by no means reliable and have to be tested and justified before they can be regarded as reasonably sure. In the first place they must be tolerated as raw data and must not form the basis of subjectively determined behaviour response. The psychoanalyst is required to stand the strains inherent in sensitive identification, of sadness, despair, panic, rages without defensive manoeuvre within himself, and without taking action in response to the strains. His job is not to respond with pity or reassurance, advice or comfort, or to seek to modify the strains, but instead to experience the phenomena in all their depth and then to submit the raw data of identification to tests of thought. If they pass the scrutiny of thought, the psychoanalyst's observations can then be submitted to experiment—the experiment of interpretation—and the results of this test can now be observed and brought under logic, and into order with abstract principles.

I have stressed this matter of deliberate identification as the first step in collecting data, because this feature—the use and collection of subjective experience in a controlled manner—
is unique to psychoanalysis. It is, of course, absent from the methods of material and biological science, determinedly and appropriately absent. I am aware that this matter of identification—a cardinal sin in material and biological method—gives the most difficulty to other scientists about the respectability of psychoanalytic method. They themselves may be fairly sensitive in making temporary identifications in their daily lives, even very good at thus sensing the feelings of people in their own families, but this gaining of awareness by identification with the subject is not to be found among their ideals of work with objects—and cannot and should not be. In their work the ideal is objectification, reification and reduction to a reading on a scale, whereas affects, which defy measurement, are a menace to their searches.

It is in defence of these different and often hard-won work-ideals that there arise accusations and moralizings and preachings and condemnations; for scientific ideals often become blind moralities, intolerant and apostolic.

This feature of method, sensitive identification with the experience of another, is related to a second feature which distinguishes the psychoanalytic viewpoint from that of other sciences. This second involves the nature of intellect and of thought itself, and arises out of the difference between coenaesthetic and diacritic perception, coenaesthesia indicating the general sense of being alive, derived from bodily impressions and emotions and involving the autonomic system, while diacrisis indicates the differentiation of perceptions derived from peripheral sense organs and their impressions, the localizing of them and their manifestations in cognition and conscious thought. It is to be emphasized that diacrisis is not involved in emotional experience, although it may operate on the external signs of it in oneself or others.

The diacritic organization with its differentiating function can lead to clear intellectual work on the several incoming perceptions. This clarity is maintained with more or less effort by the diacritic act of differentiating the intellect from other mental processes, and especially from affective experiences. Diacritic perception and thought is seen at its clear and emotionless best in mathematics and higher physics, but it is used much in applied science and we use it ourselves in psychiatry to isolate and examine phenomena and to attempt exact measurements of single features of life. We must notice, however, that diacritic thought functions by isolating, distinguishing and intellectually manipulating separate pieces of experience derived from without, but that it ignores the non-differentiated elements of inner experience, particularly affects, which produce the personal sense of being alive. Diacritic thinking concerns inanimate things, and deals with all phenomena as if they were inanimate because it cannot sense living. It therefore has to deal with phenomena drawn from living creatures as if these phenomena were inanimate, single, and separate. This is both its scope and its limits. Its values for us are plain enough, however. Diacritic thinking about man has given us enormous information about his parts and the things of his life, especially where they could be measured, or converted into a measurement, his physiology, his diseases, his behaviours, his symptoms and his statistical frequencies. Hand in hand with diacritic thinking goes our tradition of Western learning, which prizes the intellect, logical functioning, accuracy of perception and academic achievement. It is in this tradition that we use teaching methods which require the further study of facts given from without, but we do not steadily aim at giving the individual the ideal of valuing and studying and deepening his own subjective experience of himself and what it is uniquely like to be him; for by definition the diacritic functions concern events outside the self.

Coenaesthetic perception, not being related to the scrutiny of differentiated and clarified percepts but to the sensing of total experience, including affects, from within, does not make use of clarified perceptions during experience of another, nor of the logic by which diacritic perceptions are ordered and related, but only with coenaesthetic appreciation of the other in so far as the other affects one's own total experience of one's own life at the moment. This primitive form of perception, the first to appear, is as sure and true and reliable as diacritic perception, but it is not in the same form, it is subjective and is not easily worked on by the intellectual processes available for the logical
manipulation of isolated diacritic phenomena. The coenaesthetic ego lacks the clarity and precision of the diacritic ego, but it is no less sure of what it perceives, and it is the only part of ourselves which can appreciate, by temporary but naive and unguarded identification, the living experience of another.

The diacritic ego using clear differentiated perceptions can think with reductionist logic about people, but only as inanimate things, objects of study, depersonalized instances, cases, collections of mechanisms, systems, producers of behaviour. The coenaesthetic ego is concerned with emotion as a raw material, contains the general sense of living, and allows us, by identification, to sense others as living, feeling and sensing people, but it cannot use this experience for thought. Our capacity for coenaesthesia ultimately provides us with our only raw material of the inner experience of others, but that is all; we can only feel it and be moved by it, but we cannot think about it. If it is to be thought about, this raw material about the inner experience of another has to meet the conscious awareness, the conceptual ability, the critical and logical functions of the diacritic ego. Otherwise it cannot be thought about and the experience of it will merely have been that of a sensitive artist in vague reverie. Only after the raw material has been offered to the ordered thought of the diacritic organization can it become thoughtfully observed data fit to be submitted to the experiment of interpretation.

This is a difficult feature of the psychoanalyst's work, and it contains dangers and dilemmas. The work of his diacritic ego can only deal with inanimate phenomena, so if the psychoanalyst operates unduly this way, that is to say thinks too hard, he will lose sensitivity for and contact with the raw material of inner experience. The work of his diacritic ego is needed for its logic and its consciousness, but as it can only deal with the experience offered it as if this were inanimate matter, the danger is that the psychoanalyst in his concern to gain intellectual understanding may lose the feel of the living coenaesthetic material. On the other hand, if he confines himself to coenaesthetic effort about his vivid living experience, and does not think, his material will be lost to scientific scrutiny. One danger is of being clever but insensitive; the other is of being sensitive but unthinking.

Thus the psychoanalytic method has to involve a fluctuating mental process: first the subjective appreciation of another person's experience, using sensitive and deliberate identification (which I want to distinguish absolutely from mere projection of subjective feelings); then a determined reaching out for objectivity about the experience, by submitting it to the thought, logic and scientific conceptualizing and ordering of the diacritic organization; then (again diacritic) the test of reality, the experiment of interpretation; this experiment in turn being assessed first by the coenaesthetic and then by the diacritic processes I have just described. This method of appreciating and then thinking is unique in science. Its uniqueness lies not in the use of the diacritic functions (which is common to all sciences) but of the coenaesthetic, for it is through these latter, and only through these, that man can gain access to the psychic experiences of another. The nature of the phenomena and of the human mind makes this so; and the claims of psychoanalysis to be a science rest not on the way it respects the phenomena, but on how it deals with the raw phenomena by diacritic thought. It is, of course, the coenaesthetic element which most disturbs those diacritic thinkers who have lost contact with their own coenaesthetic experience, and who, therefore, cannot appreciate that it exists and that others know it surely and certainly. And this brings me to the subject of talent in psychoanalysis.

It hardly needs saying that coenaesthetic perceptiveness varies between individuals as much as the intellectual capacities for logic, cognition, and the other elements concerned with diacritic organization. Sometimes high coenaesthetic and high diacritic talent go hand in hand, but it is not very common to find them together in high order. One reason is that in infancy and childhood there is often conflict between them, especially during the development of a reality sense. Moreover, each can be enhanced, or retarded by different kinds of upbringing and education. At one exaggerated extreme we can have the man of high intellect, sharp, clever, logical and yet somehow dead...
inside, a brilliant empty shell; who spurns feelings and is unresponsive to people and events except by logic. At the other extreme we have the vague artist, talented in creativeness, sensitivity and intuitiveness both about himself and others but hopelessly inefficient in the world around him. Most people use both forms of perception, but it is because of important variations in the proportionate use of them that I made my earlier remark about the talents required for psychoanalysis being different from those for physics.

Our present methods of selection for higher education concentrate on high diacritic ability, and many graduates from universities although impressive in it have indifferent talent in coenaesthetic directions. Because of historic forces, and because of the difficulties of thinking except in diacritic fashion, our training methods remain largely devised for the improvement of diacritic process, and the disparagement of coenaesthetic function, even in matters of human affairs where coenaesthesia is a basic matter. If we are to enlist high coenaesthetic talent, we need other, additional, selection methods, and training methods which will squarely face the dangers of conjoining coenaesthetic perception with diacritic discipline in too great or too little amount.

All this, however, is a matter for science and for education in it. Now we have to remind ourselves that we psychiatrists are not scientists but practitioners, artists who employ science for the purpose of healing.

No doubt the perfect psychiatrist would be superb in biophysics and biochemistry, in physiology and pathology and pharmacology, in neurology and medicine, in behavioural science, a psychologist, a sociologist, a social psychologist and an anthropologist at the level of the individual, the family, the community and local and national ecology; and he would also be an expert psychoanalyst. This paragon, who would use his knowledge selectively and appropriately and with great skill to all human situations and at all ages, cannot of course exist, for human capacity is too small; but our Association can contain all these virtues. The variety of people and of talents means that some of our fellows will be mixtures of high skills and major ignorances, enthusiasts in sub-specialties, inevitably vehement and devoted essentially to one viewpoint. Each can be tolerated, even actively required to pursue his directions to the utmost; but for a general psychiatrist and for a general psychiatric training we need something different.

To develop as a skilled art, psychiatry needs a general education in the use of both diacritic and coenaesthetic functions for the diagnosis and treatment of human distress. If our therapies are to be fitted to our patients and not our patients to our therapies, the general psychiatrist, without being an expert in any, needs a wide range of fairly good skills, derived from the three viewpoints I have mentioned; for in his professional work he will meet a variety of disorders, upsets of material process, biological and behavioural reactions to disturbances in the material and human environment, and internal psychical disturbances.

He will need training in these viewpoints by several experts who will aim to make him, not a material scientist or a biologist or a psychoanalyst, but a psychiatrist who can apply all three viewpoints appropriately to the particular setting in which he works. Like a sailor who needs to seek not only bearings but cross-bearings to find out the truth, he will welcome material science, biology and psychoanalysis, as offering three different but non-contradictory viewpoints yielding different kinds of truth, with each always available and legitimate. Sometimes one viewpoint will be important for him, sometimes another. Which one will not be decided by the enthusiasms of his teachers but by the facts before him. The most we can hope for is that he should be trained to notice them.

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