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## Twentieth Century System of Psychology: Psychoanalysis

### Introduction

Working models in psychology theory can be as varied as the number of authors who write on the subject. Like all fields of psychology, psychoanalysis is still relatively new and those involved in the field are still testing and applying the theorems put forth by earlier writers in an attempt to determine a best-fit practice for helping people master the world around them. Regardless of the theory chosen the professional must make sure that that which is purported as a usable theoretical paradigm is congruent with one's own personal values, personality, and professional skills. The remainder of this paper will focus on psychoanalysis, from Freud to modern day thought. Discussion will also be presented regarding Brennan's four dimensions or systems of psychology with respect to their similarities, differences, and applicability in the advent of the twenty first century era of psychoanalysis.

#### Sigmund Freud

No other psychologist, psychoanalyst, or therapist has been more revered or more frowned upon than has Sigmund Freud. Alone he brought to the world of human behavior the concepts of the

ego, id, and super ego, which have become a mainstay in the process of understanding psychopathology. Having had an opportunity to read the *Ten Theories of Human Nature* by Haberman and Stevenson (1998), this reader found Freud's way of thinking to be not only interesting but also somewhat unscientific and embedded with the notion that all human behavior is a result of conflict and based on individual and group aggression. Although Freud discusses many different philosophical views, some of which I am in agreement and others that I am not, he provides the psychology *intelligencia* of academe a basis for discourse, a tempting stage on which to rebel against the *patriarchalism* of psychoanalysis.

For the most part Freud's theory on psychoanalysis has been extremely beneficial to the treatment and understanding of the human mind; and his views on psychoanalysis are used throughout the world. This reader is, however, somewhat critical of a few of his ideas or postulates. To believe that all mental problems are sexual in nature is a difficult assumption to understand, master, or accept. Unlike that which is reported by Freud, and without question, there are many existing or pre-existing disorders wherein sexual thoughts and desires might possibly be irrelevant in terms of treating the person as a whole. He places too much emphasis on sex, and its repressive nature, as being the root of all psychological problems. Further, the human mind

is far too complex to explain human behavior by way of one variable, namely, repressed sexual memory. His theory is much too general and simplified, thus leaving little room for exceptions to his rule. Finally, Freud relies too much on singularly observed therapeutic achievements for measuring behavioral change rather than collecting empirical data to support his claims. At best, therefore, his claims have a tendency to be flawed and inaccurate in areas.

Another area of disagreement is with his theory of talk therapy. Reaching into the unconscious mind, for this reader, and bringing back tragic thoughts to the conscious mind has shown to have little significance in the treatment of symptoms. Following Freud's pattern of observational therapy is not representative of therapy, rather forms of counseling and behavioral advice.

Although this reader disagrees with Freud's theories of psychoanalysis there is agreement with the basic concepts. The unconscious is a powerful part of the mind and therefore oversees a variety of defensive mechanisms including repression, dissociation, sublimation, and projection. The possibility for the conscious to block out disturbing tragic thoughts to the unconscious is real and well evidenced by other theorists. The process is part of the unconscious and conscious mind working together to maintain a well-balanced state of mind.

Personally, this reader likes Freud's theory on the structure of the human mind and the id, ego, and superego, which demonstrates quite effectively how the human personality is formed. Freud sets forth basic model explaining how the thought processes works in the unconscious, preconscious, and conscious mind. However, all three components need to be well balanced in order to have a goodly amount of psychological energy and to ensure reasonably good mental health.

#### Psychoanalysis Defined

Although Freud is considered to be the "Father of Psychoanalysis" other theorists have greatly broadened the defining field of psychoanalysis. Unfortunately many psychologists, therapists and psychiatrists have a tendency to view the psychoanalytic process as one of dealing strictly with abnormal or dysfunctional psychological development. On the contrary psychoanalysis also deals with normal functioning as well (Brunner, 1973) from the perspective of unconscious thought. According to Brunner, as well as theorists such as Horney (1939), Erickson (1993), and Jung (1981), the power of unconscious mental activity with respect to influencing conscious thought and behavior is seen in both healthy and dysfunctional people. As such the psychoanalytic process permits us to have a more accurate and rounded picture of a person's mental life and behavior. The psychoanalytic approach to human

behavior is, therefore, a means whereby a person's mind is defined by way of individual needs, fears, conflicts, and motives from childhood throughout life. More succinctly, psychoanalysis is a study of the life history of an individual.

A discussion of psychoanalytic theory cannot exist, however, simply by stating that the entire process is a study of life. Psychoanalytic theory, although not as empirically tested as some would like, provides a great deal of insight into human behavior from many perspectives. Unless one understands the legitimacy of this dynamic approach then one is simply opinionated about its true significance regarding understanding human behavior. Unlike behavior, cognitive, and biomedical therapies, psychoanalysis begins with problems based on childhood conflicts that are now deeply buried in the unconscious. The analyst's job is to uncover these conflicts and re-examine them in adulthood. What this generally implies is that the person is basically unaware of many of the factors that determine their dysfunctional behavior - or even functional behavior to be exact. Going untreated the unconscious factors can create troubling personality traits, unhappiness, work problems, and or relationship problems. Psychoanalysis, as a treatment modality, will trace back the conflict situation to its probable origin, recommend change, and assist the individual to deal with the realities of adult life. With the assistance of

the analyst the patient will learn to examine the conflict from both an intellectual stance as well as an emotional one. In attempting to understand the psychoanalytic process it is important to understand that this process is not a 'self-help' process as individuals are rarely able to delve into their own unconscious mind. Therefore, it becomes the job of the analyst to help the individual look into the unconscious mind and assist in rejecting, refining, and correcting dysfunctional feelings and behaviors.

In order to uncover that which is hidden in the unconscious mind proponents of psychoanalysis believe that there are certain obstacles that must be removed. These obstacles have been protected the individual's conscious mind through the use of what is commonly termed defense mechanisms, namely, regression, displacement, rationalization, repression, and reaction-formation (Bernstein & Warner, 1981).

Today the Freudian model is often criticized for its procedural strictness and for its theoretical harshness. For many modern day analysts feel that psychoanalysis relies way too much on ambiguous data from free association and dreams analysis without having an empirical base from which to initiate standards of treatment. Unfortunately in today's economic environment the cost of psychoanalytic treatment is almost prohibitive as tradition psychoanalytic treatment oftentimes

takes years to complete. As a result other forms of psychiatric and or psychological care are sought. In addition much of the Freudian subject matter has fallen into non-use wherein childhood experiences are being replaced by problems currently affecting the individual. The lingering questions placed before all psychoanalysts in today's world are what direction will psychoanalysis take and what type of society is to be served (Etchegoyen, 1998). Whether or not there can be a resurgence of the psychoanalysis treatment modality and a new compelling perspective of the mind created is the question now facing analysts, biologists and educators. Maybe biology can rekindle the investigative curiosities of the psychoanalytic profession and maybe it cannot; or will psychology continue to move away from the very strict and cohesive psychoanalytic approach such to a more cohesive approach as purported by Brennan (2002).

#### James Brennan and Twentieth Century Psychology

Having had the opportunity to review the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of Brennan's book entitled *History and Systems of Psychology* and especially the Epilogue section, along with several other publications by Brennan, this writer is yet unsure as to what take Brennan has on the psychotherapy milieu. He does not espouse a total psychoanalytical approach nor does he adhere strictly to the tenets of behaviorism, humanism, cognition, and the like. In the evaluative mind of this writer Brennan's

approach to psychology is not singular but more on the basis of a 'cocktail' or the blending of ingredients. This is quite different, however, from what has often been labeled an eclectic approach to psychology. With Brennan's four dimensions psychoanalytic theory would, or should, become a blending of theory, practice and research. Further, what is significantly important on Brennan's approach to empiricism and psychology, visa via the four dimensions, is that the entire field of psychology will not be determined by arguments of what are the best ingredients but in the relevancy of psychology to the lives of individuals and life of society as a whole and that diversity and pluralism are the fundamental ingredients of acquiring knowledge. In today's society, I believe, Brennan is attempting to educate his readers by emphasizing that the attainment of knowledge, conscious or unconscious, through psychoanalytic or Gestalt methods is not brought about through forces outside the individual. Being very pragmatic what this means in today's world of mega technology and advanced scientific development is that an individual cannot resolve one's conflicts, fears, and disappointments through the use of drugs such as Prozac, Zoloft, and Viagra. Brennan would argue that these drugs fail to resolve the individual's real problem, as they do not shed light of why one is suffering from a particular dysfunction. In order to fully understand the elements underlying the dysfunction the

individual, according to Brennan, would have to have to acquire knowledge, possess the essentials of mentalism, understand the mind, and be aware of how the dysfunction was acquired. Taking drugs alone, therefore, would be, according to Brennan, nothing more than a quick fix for the purpose of efficiency. Going out on a limb, this writer would view a non-Brennan approach to rushing out to treat symptoms as systematic of an antiseptic and depressive culture wherein mentalism and knowledge are reduced to neuron malfunctions and chemical secretions. In contrast Brennan would view psychotherapy as the relying upon human freedom and the power of language. Taking the literary license even further this writer fully believes that Brennan's theory regarding psychology and the psychoanalytical school in particular is that the structure and validity of scientific psychological theories is that any rational action presupposes knowledge and that no one can proceed rationally unless they know what they are facing. In other words, and according to Brennan, having a source of knowledge.

Although not specifically referenced by Brennan he brings to light a basic distinction between contexts of discovery (acquisition of knowledge) and the context of justification (acquiring or sources of knowledge) to which he adds the context of application (the problem of science). In doing so he defines empirical and theoretical terms in a very precise manner.

Accordingly scientific verifications are organized into three levels (basic, empirical, and theoretical).

Whether or not a therapist is from the school of psychoanalysis, behaviorism, cognition, or Brennan's third force movement, one salient fact remains, namely, that the individual is a composite of social, environmental, psychological, biological, and cultural factors. To believe one singular approach to psychology can adequately define and treat all influences when behavior becomes dysfunctional is not only limited but also professionally naïve. As this paper is about psychoanalysis it is imperative that the reader remember that the most fundamental concept of psychoanalysis is the idea that the unconscious mind is a vast reservoir for what Freud called repressed memories of traumatic events wherein conscious thought and behavior are continuously influenced. Although scientific evidence is lacking for this concept there is adequate evidence to support the concept that conscious thought and behavior are, indeed, influenced by unconscious memories and processes. These processes are, according to Brennan, knowledge acquisition, the mind, and the source of knowledge.

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