

Depression

A Comprehensive Theory

Ernest S. Becker

Essential Papers on Depression

Depression

A Comprehensive Theory

Ernest S. Becker

e-Book 2018 International Psychotherapy
Institute

From *Essential Papers on Depression* edited by James C. Coyne

All Rights Reserved

Created in the United States of America

Copyright © 1985 by James C. Coyne

Table of Contents

[THE FUNDAMENTAL IMPORTANCE OF MEANING](#)

[GUILT-LANGUAGE](#)

[JEALOUSY-LANGUAGE](#)

[RANGES OF OBJECTS AND MEANING](#)

[THE SYNDROMES AS STUPIDITY: A SUMMING-UP](#)

[REFERENCES](#)

[Notes](#)

Depression: A Comprehensive Theory

Ernest S. Becker

Schizophrenia sums up man's coming of age in society. In order to understand it we have had to trace a lengthy picture of the process of becoming human. Depression is much more simple. Unlike the schizophrenic, the depressed person has not failed to learn secure answers to the four common human problems. His dilemma, if anything, is somewhat of a paradox: he has learned these answers *only too well*. He has built himself so firmly into his cultural world that he is imprisoned in his own narrow behavioral mold.

If the theory on schizophrenia has been hampered by an ingrown psychoanalysis and nearly stifled by the medical affiliations of psychiatry, what are we to say about depression?

“Incredible” is the only word that comes to mind—absolutely incredible. The only thing to which the theory of depression—largely a psychoanalytic one—can be reasonably compared, is to the Eskimo explanation of *piblokto*. How else can we make sense out of the classification of “wet” and “dry” depression— depending on the amount of the patient’s saliva? How else can we consider subdivisions like “shame depression,” “guilt depression,” and “depletion depression”? How else can we justify the magical use of electroshock, an idea inspired from slaughterhouses (Szasz, unpublished paper)—the sometimes therapeutic effects of which no one understands?

The psychoanalytic theory of depression, let it be admitted, has a certain alchemical beauty. The patient is designed on the model of a hydraulic machine, with certain outlets, and pipes which double back. There are control faucets and other

“emergency dyscontrol” valves.^[1] The center of the machine is a tank, with a reinforced, galvanized false bottom: It is here that the patient stores a hard core of “coercive rage.” The various pipes, channels and outlets, and those that double back into the tank, transport this rage, as well as guilt, and “guilty-fear,” in different directions. The depressed patient is considered to be a poorly socialized child—not fully adult. He retains, it is thought, unnatural dependencies, as well as strong aggressions created in his early years. All this is stored up in the tank. The apparatus is activated when the “overgrown child” meets a severe frustration—usually loss of a loved object, or some strong threat to his own satisfactions. It is then that he strives to make an adaptation. To avoid sketching the complex workings of the hydraulic machine, it is sufficient to note that the adaptation does not work. The various instinctive energies go

off in all directions, and the patient is finally undermined by one that turns back, that can find no outlet. Thus, the primary cause of breakdown in depression is thought to be self-directed aggression. The patient bogs down into a pitiful self-accusation, whiningly protesting his worthlessness, his evil, his need to be punished. He seethes with hate, self-pity, stunted rage, and childish dependency. But this amalgam is not solvent in the tank, with the result that the mechanism can trickle to a stop. The depressed person can abandon all activity, let himself slide into the surrender of death.

For the most part, this model represents the advanced theoretical cogitations of the psychiatric profession on a perplexing human phenomenon. This much must be said: It is not easy to comprehend why anyone would opt out of life. It is understandable that we would be quick to look for

some basic genetic taint, some stunted early development, that would mark such an individual off from others. But the matter is not quite so simple: The fact is that a good proportion of depressed patients have led mature and responsible lives; some have achieved notable success, financial and personal. We distort our vision if we use the above theory to explain why these people become abysmally depressed.

It is amazing that human action could have been so consistently and thoroughly conceived in instinctual and compartmentalized terms. It is to the credit of some psychoanalysts that they themselves have begun to break out of their own inherited theories, and to range more broadly for an explanation of depression.^[2] This is part of the natural development of ego psychology. As the view of man as a cultural animal shaped by learning takes over from the older instinctive

explanations, the way is clear for a full theoretical revolution. If the ego is the basis for action, and if a warm feeling of self-value must pervade one's acts, then it is only a step to focusing on the really crucial dynamic of a breakdown in action, namely, the undermining of the individual's sense of self-value.

Sap the individual's sense of self-righteousness and he is drained of his life-predication. This is the all-pervasive "slipping-away," the unspeakably, unbelievably "Frightful"—to use an apt word of Binswanger's.

Adler very early saw the importance of self-esteem in depression.^[3] More recently, Bibring (1953) signaled a truly radical break with the older theory in psychoanalysis, by postulating that an undermining of self-esteem was the primary focus in depression, that it was principally to be

understood as an ego-phenomenon, and only secondarily as a consequence of self-directed aggression.

It would be impossible to overestimate the significance of this shift in emphasis. In spite of Bibring's own protestations to the contrary, theories about the role of orality and aggression are now as outmoded as the hydraulic-tank model. If self-esteem is the primary focus of depression, then it is evident that cognition plays a larger role in its dynamics than does physiology. An ego-based theory of depression broadens the area of explanation from a purely "intra-psychic battlefield" to the entire range of social phenomena. Since the ego is rooted in social reality, since self-esteem is composed of *social* symbols and *social* motives, depression becomes a direct function of a cognitively apprehended symbolic world. Nothing less than a full sweep of

cultural activity is brought into consideration in the single case of depression.

Little wonder, then, that more recently a crucial sociological dimension was added to the theory of depression—again from within psychoanalysis (Szasz, 1961, pp. 280-291). In the classical formulation of depressive, mourning and melancholic states, Freud had presented psychoanalysis with a model (1917). He postulated that since the ego grows by developing responses to and identifications with objects, the loss of an object was a threat to the ego. This, Freud reasoned, was the basic dynamic of mourning and melancholic states. The loss of an object in the real world meant a corresponding depletion in the ego; to relinquish a loved object was to subject oneself to a sometimes massive trauma. Freud theorized beautifully on the rather elaborate procedures that society sets up to ease

this relinquishing of objects: the funeral rites, mourning rituals, and so on. There is nothing fundamentally wrong with Freud's view of depression^[4]—it explains a good deal. Its principal drawback is that it is used to explain too much.

Szasz's objection to the traditional view of depression is precisely its insistence on the *predominant* importance of object-loss in unleashing dependency cravings and hostility. He proposes to emend this by stressing that the loss of "game" is fully as significant in depression as is the loss of object. "Game," in this context, is a series of norms or rules for significant action. And for the symbolic animal, there is nothing "playful" about significance. Szasz says:

...persons need not only human objects but also norms or rules—or, more generally—games that are worth playing! [And he observes at greater length:] It is a matter of

everyday observation that men suffer grievously when they can find no games worth playing, even though their object world might remain more or less intact. To account for this and similar events, it is necessary to consider the relationship of the ego or self to games. Otherwise, one is forced to reduce all manner of personal suffering to consideration of object relationships ... Conversely, since loss of a real or external object implies the loss of a player from the game—unless a substitute who fits exactly can be found— such loss inevitably results in at least some changes in the game. It is thus evident that the words “player” and “game” describe interdependent variables making up dynamic steady states—for example, persons, families, societies, and so forth (1961, p. 282).

With this broadening out of traditional object-loss theory, there is no longer any valid pretense for keeping the phenomenon of depression within medicine. Psychoanalysis is fully linked here with social science. Since, as Szasz insists, objects and games are inseparably joined, self and society

must be seen as a single phenomenon. People “create” objects by acting according to social rules. They “create” themselves as they create objects. Social rules and objects provide man with a staged drama of significance which is the theatre of his action. Man discovers himself by making appeal for his identity to the society in which he performs. To lose an object, then, is to lose someone to whom one has made appeal for self-validation. To lose a game is to lose a performance part in which identity is fabricated and sustained.

We noted before that answering the four common human problems gave the actor the one thing he needed most: the sentiment that he was an object of primary value in a world of meaning (Hallowell, 1955). Data from anthropology support this fundamental place of self-esteem in human action. It seems that nowhere on this once-vast globe has man been able to act unless he had

a basic sentiment of self-value. Unless the individual feels worthwhile, and unless his action is considered worthwhile, life grinds to a halt. Whole cultures have begun to expire in this way: Melanesians, Marquesans, reservation Indians, and, for a time after 1929, the world of Wall Street.

THE FUNDAMENTAL IMPORTANCE OF MEANING

Self-value, then, and objects, are inseparable from a drama of life-significance. To lose self-esteem, to lose a “game,” and to lose an object, are inseparable aspects of the loss of meaning. Meaning, we saw, is not something that springs up from within man, something born into life that unfolds like a lotus. Meaning is not embedded in some obscure “inner human nature,” not something that is destined to be developed by successively “higher forms of life.” There is, in short, nothing vitalistic or mysteriously emergent

implied in the idea of meaning. Meaning is the elaboration of an increasingly intricate ground plan of broad relationships and ramifications. It is the establishment of dependable cause-and-effect sequences which permit ego-mastery and action. Meaning is at the heart of life because it is inseparable from dependable, satisfying action. Man embroiders his cause-and-effect action sequences with an intricate symbolism: flags, commandments, lace underwear, and secret-codes. The result is that particular kinds and sequences of action take on a life-and-death flavor. The dependable becomes the indispensable; the satisfying becomes the necessary. Man's symbolic life is an imbibing of meaning and a relentless creation of it. This symbolic elaboration of meaning is *Homo sapiens'* "home brew," so to speak, brought by him onto the evolutionary scene and manufactured solely for his use and delight.

By means of it, man intoxicates himself into the illusion that his particular meaning-fabric, his culture's concoction of symbols and action, is god-given and timeless. In his imagination, man fuses symbols and action into a cohesion that has atomic tenacity.

Let us review here briefly how this comes about. Initially, meaning does not need language. We stressed that it exists in behavior. For energy-converting organisms, action is primary. Forward-momentum is enough to build meaning, and possibilities for forward-momentum exist in nature, in the animal's instinctive behavioral *umwelt*, in the world cut out for his perception and attention. Instinctive action gives experience which, in turn, provides meaning simply because it commands attention and leads to *further* action. But for the symbolic animal a complication enters: language replaces instinctive readiness. Man

grows up naming objects for his attention and use. Language makes action broader and richer for the symbolic animal. But something curious occurs in this process: Language comes to be learned as a means of acting without anxiety. Each of the infant's acts comes to be dressed in words that are provided by his loved objects. As a child, lacking a word, he lacks a safe action. Action and word-prescriptions become inseparable, because they join in permitting anxiety-free conduct. Growing into adulthood, the individual has built his habits into a self-consistent scheme. To lack a word is then to lack a meaningful action: the simplest act has to take on meaning, has to point to something beyond itself, exist in a wider referential context. We become paralyzed to act unless there is a verbal prescription for the new situation.^[5] Even our perceptions come to be built into a rigid framework. Man loses progressively the capacity

to “act in nature,” as he verbally creates his own action world. Words give man the motivation to act, and words justify the act. Life-meaning for man comes to be predominantly an edifice of words and word-sounds.

Now, the upshot of all this is crucial for our subsequent discussion of meaning-loss. It is simply this: When action bogs down—for any animal—meaning dies. For man, it suffices that verbal or purely symbolic action bogs down in order for meaning to die.^[6] Having refined meaning with symbols, he is hopelessly dependent on the coherence of the symbolic meaning-frame work. He is a slave to his own delicate handiwork. In other words, if the individual can keep verbal referents going in a self-consistent scheme, action remains possible and life retains its meaning. If he cannot, if the integrity of the symbolic meaning-frame work is undermined, external action grinds

to a halt. Let us see how this works in depression.

GUILT-LANGUAGE

Part of the reason for the grotesque nature of early psychoanalytic explanations of depression was the original grotesqueness of a major feature of the syndrome: the delusional self-accusations. That an individual would so malign himself without apparent cause seemed explainable only by postulating that he was intent on reducing himself to nothing—that his control over some deep seated aggressiveness had gone awry, and that this hate was now turned “against himself.” This kind of interpretation is a blunder that we noted earlier in connection with the schizophrenic’s imagined “sexuality”: the patient’s preoccupations are accepted at almost face value as part of an explanation of his condition. Thus, while pretending to “get behind” what is going on,

the theorist actually is taken in by appearances. Perhaps this is inevitable in a complex young science. Perhaps, too, as James noted, it is difficult to back away and look clearly at data in which one is heavily invested, which strike at the core of one's own human susceptibilities.

The whole matter now has to be recast. Instead of asking "Why does the patient feel so humiliatingly guilty?" the question should be: "What is the patient trying to accomplish *with this particular language*? Two things, obviously, which everyone is always trying to accomplish, albeit with different means. They bear repeating: (1) The patient is trying to keep his identity self-consistent. (2) The patient is trying to entertain and elaborate the meanings of things. He is, in short, attempting to keep action going in the only way the human animal can. Depressive self-accusation is an attempted unplugging of action in

the face of the Frightful, of the possibility that one's whole world will slip away.^[7]

Take, as a direct example, a situation recently observed in Ghana by the anthropologist and psychiatrist M. J. Field (1960). Before Field's study, it used to be thought that depression was rare among the "simpler" peoples, and this for several reasons. For one thing, traditional societies enjoyed firmly institutionalized rituals and practices that provided dependable and ready "catharsis" for object-loss. Society united in working off anxieties attendant on the departure of one of its members; the bereaved person was supported by everyone in his grief. In sum, he lost an object only to gain—at least temporarily—a whole social performance world.

For another thing, it was thought that the absence of a Christian tradition of sinfulness

lessened the accumulation of guilt so prominent in the depressive syndrome. And perhaps still another reason offered for the supposed rarity of depression in traditional society was the lingering myth that only industrial man was heroically subject to the psychic burdens of a complex, technological civilization.

But contrary to all this accumulated mythology, Field's study of rural Ghana shows that depression can be quite common in any disintegrating, individualistically anarchistic, or unreflective society. Depressed women in considerable number travel to Ashanti religious shrines, and there hurl accusations of vile witchcraft against themselves. They present a guilt-laden syndrome quite like that of our culture. The explanation is not far to seek and, as Field postulates, depression and witchcraft have probably had a long historical connection.^[8] The

self-accusation of witchcraft seems to provide the perfect justification for failure and worthlessness. In the case of the Ashanti woman the picture seems quite clear. She raises large families with extreme care, is an excellent housekeeper and businesswoman as well. There is enough significant activity in her life to provide ample self-justification. But often the fruit of her labor is lavished by the husband on a younger bride, when the wife grows old.

This cruel turnabout is tolerated by the culture, and evidently it is a principal cause of anxiety on the part of aging wives. But the wife seems to have little say in the matter. How is she to justify this utter subversion of life-meaning? A life-plot that had consistency, integrity, and full social support is suddenly undermined. Fortunately, the culture itself provides a ready rationalization. Verbalizations are ready-made

with which to construct a framework of meaning and justification; the continuity of the staged drama of one's life-experience need not be broken: the woman can simply acknowledge that *all along* she has been a witch. Thus the circle is closed: "I have become useless because I have always been evil. I deserve this fate. I deserve to be hated."

Field's observations on depression and self-accusation of witchcraft in Ghana can be safely generalized to depressive self-accusation in *any* culture. The individual gropes for a language with which to supply a meaning to his life-plot when all other props for meaning are pulled away. The alternative to this—namely, the realization that perhaps life *has no meaning*—is much more difficult to come by.^[9] This apprehension is given to very few. It is even easier to speculate that *all* life may be in vain, than to admit that *one's* life has been. It may seem paradoxical that even in the

extreme case of opting out of life, a meaning must be supplied: "Let me die *because* I am worthless." But this is no paradox. It is merely a continuation of the inescapable burden of fashioning a coherent identity to the very end.

The ego, after all, as we saw at some length previously, strives to create a continuity of integrated experience. As Erikson's work so eloquently shows, the identity is a painstakingly fashioned work of art.

it is symbolically constructed, and continually refashioned, never complete. In this sense, the individual can be compared to a movie director who is saddled with a lifetime job of staging a plot, the outcome of which he never knows. Indeed, he never knows what will happen in the *very next* scene, but he must strive to give the whole thing credibility and self-consistency. This he can only

accomplish by reworking the previous material as new events joggle his creation. When one gets down to the last twenty years of this life drama, it becomes more and more difficult to justify abrupt changes in continuity: there is too much preceding plot for it to be remanipulated with ease. Whole portions cannot be reinterpreted with credibility, much less restaged. Hence, if the continuity is radically undermined the individual grasps at whatever straws his ingenuity can muster. No movie director would accept such an assignment, yet each individual is burdened with this ultimately and perilously creative task. This makes understandable the remark that an individual cannot know if his life has been satisfactory until the moment before he expires. It is symbolically reappraisable until the very last second. The proverbial drowning man whose life passes in review is merely exercising the last impulsion of

the reclaiming artist.

When sharp changes take place in one's object world, the identity problem becomes severe: One's whole performance is in jeopardy. The identity has to be maintained even though an object which validated it is no longer available or a series of actions on which it was predicated is no longer possible or satisfying. In a desperate attempt at rearrangement, a proper framework of words is sought, which will sustain both the accustomed identity and the habitual action. Self-esteem, symbolic integrity of the identity and the life-plot, and the possibilities for continued action must all be provided for. This is no mean job, and the burden of it all is on *the proper word formula*. In the face of a frustrating problematic situation the individual has recourse to thought. The situation is juggled around, dissected, spread out, reworked, recombined— in fantasy—until a prescription for

forward-momentum is hit upon. Basically, the individual has two alternatives: justify somehow a continuation of action in the old, habitual framework; or scrap the old action, habits, meanings entirely, and try to build a new framework of meaning. Obviously, this latter alternative cannot present itself as an immediate behavioral possibility; it means the abandonment of one's accustomed world, the suspension literally in a void, a plunge into the massive unknown, into the gaping chasm of anxiety.^[10] Self-accusation, then, can be understood as a meaningful behavioral prescription within a *closed* behavioral world.

We know there is nothing straightforward about a rationalization. But it has taken us some time to realize that neither is there anything direct and explicit about most communication. Language grows up as a way of gently coercing others, of

getting them to satisfy our needs. Primarily too, language grows up as a way of allaying anxiety of object-loss, separation, abandonment. Sullivan defined the self-system as a series of “linguistic tricks” by means of which we keep our world satisfying. But in each culture people communicate different things: the range of knowledge differs, and the kinds of things people become anxious about differ. Thus, stupidity and anxiety form a sieve through which explicit communications are filtered. Meanings tend to dwell under the surface, to explode in angry gestures, to linger in facial expressions, to be contained in an emphasis or a word arrangement that has nothing to do with the dictionary sense of the words. It almost seems as if “symbolic animal” is a misnomer: People are so inept at understanding and communicating their desires: the important problematic aspects of interpersonal situations are rarely made explicit.

The reason is not far to seek: The individual doesn't know the performance style into which he has been trained; he doesn't know why he feels anxious at certain eventualities; he doesn't know why is trying to get the other person to do *just this* particular thing. In sum, most people, not knowing what has made them what they are, or made them want what they want, amble through life using hieroglyphics in a jet-age.

Jurgen Ruesch (1948) thought that the really mature person should be able to express symbolically all his desired meanings, including physiological urges. It remained for Thomas Szasz (1961) to show that when the individual does not control meanings symbolically, we call him "mentally ill." He showed that the prototype syndrome on which modern psychiatry was nourished reflected a failure in communication. Hysteria is, in effect, stupidity. It bespeaks a failure

to control symbolically the problematic aspects in a blocked action situation.^[11] Each culture and each family unit places a burden of ingenuity on each individual they shape. Every individual has to keep action moving under sometimes severe vocabulary limitations. The rub is, that when the individual shows himself truly ingenious, we usually label him “mentally ill.”^[12] Thus it is with the hysteric who uses “body-language”; as well as with the depressed person who uses “guilt-language.” Depressive self-accusation, in sum, amounts to a *search for a vocabulary of meaning* in the form of language substitute, a type of stupidity by someone poor in words.

Since psychiatrists as a whole do not understand what the patient is doing with this language, they often make his situation worse. They imagine that the “burden of guilt” would be relieved if he could release his “pent up anger”

(remember the hydraulic-machine model). Hence, the psychiatrist explores with the patient valid reasons for hating his objects, hoping thereby to “bring up” the anger, this *may* result in bringing some critical clarity onto the situation. On the other hand, it may dissipate the guilt language, *which is the primary unplugging*. It may also fixate the patient onto his past, which is the one thing that is irrevocably lost, *because the present is so hopeless*. One patient complained that five years of talking with psychiatrists had made her illness worse precisely because it led to increased rumination about the past (Schwartz, 1961). If the psychiatrist is going to undermine the very creative efforts of the patient, then he should also take the next logical step, namely, help the patient break out of his constricted object range, and create a new life. “But the psychiatrist is not God.” Let us, then, realize this and begin to act on the

basis of it. In view of all damage that can be done in psychiatric consultations, perhaps after all the electroshock machine is the lesser of evils at the present time. By temporarily blotting out the patient's memory it allows him to discover to world anew (cf. Kelly, 1955, Vol. 2, pp. 905-908).

JEALOUSY-LANGUAGE

We are coming to understand that the language-thesis holds true for some forms of jealousy. Take the woman in our culture who helps her husband through college, but has to give up her own adumbrated career in order to do it. Subsequently she may find that her husband, increasingly successful, spends less and less time at home, takes her less into his confidence. She finds herself growing old, her children married, her husband distant and independent. She is in roughly the same position as the Ashanti woman,

except that she has no witchcraft tradition to fall back on for ready rationalization of her sense of utter uselessness and worthlessness. However, the culture provides her with another language for protesting the gradual undermining of her self-esteem and identity, namely, the possibility that her husband is “cheating on her.” To be adulterous is to fail to uphold one’s part of the marriage bargain. This is obviously *the closest she can come* to adumbrating that he is “cheating *her*,” since the culture *does not give voice* to the idea that the frustrated career wife of a successful businessman *should* feel cheated when she has been well provided for. She may go to any length to imagine adulterous affairs of her husband, even in her own home while she sleeps upstairs. She senses that her world has been undermined and that she is being “defiled” literally at her very doorstep. But it is noteworthy that in these cases the woman

rarely attempts to surprise “the lovers,” even though ample opportunity presents itself. It is as though one fears undermining a rationalization that so perfectly sustains meaning. If the jealousy-language were to fail, one would be struck dumb.

Jealousy has manifold uses, as many investigators have determined. It can be a “defense mechanism” to cover one’s own insecurities (Langfeldt, 1951). It can unplug action and bolster self-value in any number of ways (Shepherd, 1961). Minkowski, aware of the multiform uses to which jealousy can be put, made a distinction between jealousy based on the love relationship, and that based on other aspects of the interpersonal situation (1929). It is precisely this jealousy “inauthentique” that arises to unplug an intolerable situation when communication breaks down. Tiggelaar gets right to the heart of the matter: “This so-called jealousy seems to rise

only from the bare personality, from the personality which is excluded from normal communication, especially owing to a fundamental change" (1956, p. 538). Inauthentic jealousy, in other words, like the body-language of the hysteric and the guilt-language of the depressed, is a pure creation of ingenuity in a hopelessly blocked situation. By means of jealousy-language the individual *draws himself* into a situation that excludes him; he creates a bond of self-reference, spans a serious and threatening breach in his world.

We are very far here from Freud's insight into the jealousy accusations of a 53-year-old woman patient (1920, pp. 213-218). One has only to read this case closely to see the possibility of a picture quite different from the one Freud imagined. He thought that the woman's delusional accusations of unfaithfulness, directed to her husband, were a

mere cover for her own unconscious desires to commit infidelity with a younger man. But it seems obvious that, on the contrary, the woman's whole situation in the world was involved: her children grown up and married; her husband deciding to continue operating his factory instead of retiring and joining her at home. The young career girl with whom she imagined her husband having an affair had defied social convention, and had entered a man's world. She took business training rather than the domestic service customary to her class. Now she had a position at the factory as *a social equal* of the men, and was "even addressed as 'Miss.'"

One cannot make out, in Freud's account, any evidence for the woman's infatuation with her son-in-law—the desired infidelity that Freud claims he detected. Indeed, he says it was "unconscious." In a short two-hours of interviews

with Freud, the woman had let fall only “certain remarks” which led Freud to his interpretation. Now, it is possible that this woman sensed the attractiveness of this young man, and assayed her own possible appeal to him, as women are wont to do. Perhaps this was the hint that Freud seized upon in the interview. It is possible too that at 53 she sensed the decline of her only (cultural) value to men—her physical charm. Whereupon she had only to compare herself to the girl at the factory who had chosen other means of performing in the male world. Thus, the wife, by accusing her husband of infidelity, may have been expressing a threat to her self, as well as giving oblique voice to the idea that the culture had cheated her. Now she was no longer attractive to men, *nor* could she ever have any active place in her husband’s world. He had *chosen* not to retire, but instead to remain at the factory. She had no choice. As I read this

woman's jealousy-language, it is a protest against cultural injustice: The world belonged to men, and to certain courageous women who opted for a career in that world.

It is typical both of psychoanalytic theory and of Freud personally, to have reduced this whole complex matter to a mere "unconscious" urge to fornication. Freud, as he demonstrated in his own life, in his actions toward his own wife (Fromm, 1959), could not have understood a female protest against inequality and a threat to self-value in a man's world. An inchoate female cry against helplessness and potential meaninglessness is thus reduced to a ubiquitous sexual motive. Reducing everything to supposed instincts keeps the cultural world ethical and right. A real understanding of the complex human situation is sacrificed to the smug interpretations of an encapsulated theory—and to the morality of a

Victorian world.

RANGES OF OBJECTS AND MEANING

It is pardonable for the theorist to make the error of narrowness when he is attempting to understand what is behind stupidity-languages. Stupidity-languages do make the person using them seem childish, whining, and somehow culpable in himself, the person provides a sorry spectacle when he tries to keep his world from caving in upon him with only the limited means at the disposal of his ingenuity. Thus it is logical to look for selfish motives in those who show themselves cognitively limited and childish. Perhaps this is another reason why theory has so long been hampered.

But people are not fated to *remain* childish, they are *kept* childish by parents and by culture. We train them to live in a certain kind of world,

and to accept it dumbly. The culture, in other words, creates certain kinds of bondage from which people cannot be released without threatening others. Can a wife be released from a marriage contract when her husband begins neglecting her? Can she begin life anew at 40 when she has not previously provided herself with the wherewithal? Can a factory-operator's wife suddenly join him at 53, untrained as she is, and basically unwanted in a man's world? Anthropology has provided us with the knowledge that there are any number of possible arrangements for human action, and that they all work—for better or for worse.^[13] We have discovered that the word "natural" does not apply to human relationships: these are all learned. When we say that an individual's world "crumbles" we don't mean that his "natural" world crumbles—but rather that his cultural world does.

If he had been taught to operate in another kind of world, it would perhaps not have crumbled. The Ashanti could have drawn up rules forbidding the taking of another wife, and the witchcraft depression syndrome would certainly be much reduced.

We saw that theorists have considered object-loss to be the principal cause for depression, and have overlooked the importance of “games” and meaning. One reason for this error of emphasis is that some cultures provide only a narrow range of objects and games. The result is that the object and the limited meaning come to be inseparable. That is to say, the more people to whom one can make appeal for his identity, the easier it is to sustain life-meaning. Object-loss hits hardest when self-justification is limited to a few objects. But object-loss is not crucial—or even necessarily important per se—when there is the possibility of

sustaining one's conduct as before. Action is the basic problem in object-loss, and people devise ingenious ways to sustain it. An excellent illustration is the phenomenon of vengefulness. Harold F. Searles (1956) showed beautifully that the revenge process can serve as a way of *keeping the object*. It cannot be overstressed that an object is never an object per se, in isolation. It is a means of coming in contact with the world, it permits action. By definition, to constitute an object is to create a behavior pattern. To lose an object *is to lose the possibility of undertaking a range of satisfying action*. This is foremost. In addition, for man, the object is a private performance audience. It is a locus to which is addressed the continuing identity dialogue of the self and experience. The continued presence of the object, in other words, serves as a purchase to the symbolic elaboration of the self. The object need not be present in the

outer world; one needs only to have developed behavior patterns toward it, or modeled on it, and to keep its image in mind. Thus, the object, exists on an internal-external continuum, it reflects a *process* of growth and activity in the actor. Just as the “external pole” serves as experiential contact with the outer world, so does the “internal pole” permit a continual fashioning of the identity. Hence we can see that object-loss means not only external performance loss, but inner identity loss as well. This bears repeating, because it enables us to understand the phenomenon of vengefulness. To hate and to seek revenge *is to create a continually present object*. Searles says that the vindictive person “has not really *given up* the other person toward whom his vengefulness is directed: that is, his preoccupation with vengeful fantasies about that person serves, in effect, as a way of psychologically *holding on to him*” (1956, p. 31).

Vengefulness is a type of continuous performance, a way of maintaining an object that otherwise would not be there.

Initially, what we call the “superego” is the “internal pole” of our objects. We address our performance to them, by saying “See how well I am doing, as you would wish me to.” Both action and identity are potentiated. The revenge-object is merely a variation on this. We keep it in order to be able to say: “See how great I have become, as you did not think I could become,” etc. It has often been observed that the motif “I’ll show the folks back in my home town” is a primary impetus to success. On the primitive level, revenge murders of the death of a loved one is simply a variation on this. One continues to perform *as if* the object were still there. The automatic nature of primitive revenge shows how important it is to *keep some kind of behavior pattern*, which serves in effect to

keep the object. Vilification of the dead in mourning ceremonies is also a way of keeping behavior patterns toward the object. To remain silent is to be swamped by the action void.

Finally, “showing the folks back home” keeps the identity rooted in time, gives it the all-important duration and continuity. If one could not *keep* objects, the identity would have to be continuously recreated in the present. One would be in the position of Sartre’s gambler: the entire past accretion of meanings would be severed. The identity owes its very existence to its rooting in the past.

We have a hard job—in our culture—in realizing how inseparable are object-range and performance-possibility. But consider the situation in traditional society. There the extended family is the rule, and not the small, tight, nuclear

one that is familiar to us. The consequence of this is that the life-chances and life-meaning of the individual do not depend on a few parental objects. Meaning is generalized to a whole range of kin. The extended family provides a continuing source of esteem and affirmation for the individual actor, *even though significant figures drop out.*

In our culture we are familiar with the person who lives his life for the wishes of his parents and becomes depressed when they die and he has reached the age of forty or fifty. He has lost the only audience for whom the plot in which he was performing was valid. He is left in the hopeless despair of the actor who knows only one set of lines, and loses the one audience who wants to hear it. The extended family takes care of this problem: Even though it makes rigid prescriptions for the behavior of each individual, still each member can count on an audience for his

continuing performance even after his own immediate parents die.

Thus, culture designs the action scene, and outlines the kind of crises to which the individual will have to adapt. One of the sharpest exposes of the grip in which culture holds the individual, and the breakdown which results from that grip, is Edmund Volkart's study of bereavement (1957). Volkart points out that restriction of the identity-appeal to only a few objects is a type of "psychological bondage." We train people to "love, honor, and obey" only a few others. And when death or some other train of events leaves the haplessly loyal person in the lurch, the psychiatrist is apt to hold a microscope to his body chemistry, or measure his saliva. Instead of providing for continuing life-designs, instead of training people in critical self-awareness, we actually facilitate the subversion of life-meaning. Volkart does not soft

pedal this major personality issue, and I can do no better than to quote him directly:

Any culture which, in the name of mental health, encourages extreme and exclusive emotional investments by one person in a selected few others, but which does not provide suitable outlets and alternatives for the inevitable bereavement, is simply altering the conditions of, and perhaps postponing, severe mental ill health. It may, in the vernacular, be building persons up for a big letdown by exacerbating vulnerability (1957, p. 304).

In other words, in our culture we champion limited horizons—a limited range of objects—and call people “mentally ill” when they suffer its effects. We make no provision for sustaining meaning when the bottom drops out of someone’s life. When a woman’s children marry, when the mirror begins to reflect the gradual and irrevocable loss of her charm, her performance as a responsible person, culturally desirable, is over.

She may find herself left with no part to play, as early as her late 30's—with nothing to justify and sustain her identity. Since this utter subversion of meaning usually coincides with menopause, psychiatry has labeled the depression that may occur “involuntal depression.” Medical psychiatry has only recently come to focus on social role;^[14] clinically, it was easier to imagine that the depression is somehow due to bodily changes. Or, the psychoanalytic theory might see this as a pampered self-pity over the imagined loss of sexual capacity, over the inevitable diminution in instinctual vigor.

Thus, in sum, we bring people up to be uncritical children, and wrench them with electroshock when their lives fail. We draw a portrait of man as a creature of instincts, and examine him pityingly and cynically. All this we do, in the name of “scientific” medical psychiatry,

because most of us find the unexamined life worth living.

Students of epidemiology first took to studying the social distribution of types of illness in the hope of turning up some answers. Since clinical research did not provide any real understanding of the etiology of depression and schizophrenia, it was hoped that perhaps social research might. These early hopes proved elusive. Fact does not precede theory, and no amount of counting can ever explain. But statistics on epidemiology did provide some kind of picture. It now seems generally agreed that depression occurs more frequently among persons with cohesive family groupings; among women, who are more cohesively identified with close ingroups; in higher socio-economic statuses; in highly traditionalized groups; and among professionals.

Schizophrenia, on the other hand, presents a radically different epidemiological picture. It occurs more among men than women; in the lower socio-economic brackets; among dislocated peoples—that is, generally where group membership and identifications are weakest.

Mental illness, as we have been surveying it here, is a form of cultural and individual stupidity, an urge to meaning by those poor in command over vocabularies. If this thesis holds up we should expect some confirmation from the epidemiological picture: action varies according to class, as does awareness; possibilities for self-justification as well as degree of cultural indoctrination vary by class. Indeed, the class picture does seem to give some kind of consistent reflection of the views we have detailed.

If depression is a form of meaning-stupidity in

an overwhelmingly frustrating situation, we would *expect* it to be more prevalent in the upper classes, among women, and among people in close identification with others. These are all people who feel that *they should* find their situation acceptable—but who somehow do not. The upper classes, having achieved socially approved success, have no reason to be unhappy. Women are given their status in the social structure as a matter of course, and should not question otherwise. People in close and “loving” identification with others are taught that they should derive all their life satisfactions from the quality of these relations, and from the pattern of rights and obligations which they entail. All the more reason that guilt should present itself as a natural alternative for deep-seated dissatisfaction: one can well believe himself guilty for not being content where he *should* be content. On the other hand, among the

lower classes, dissatisfaction need not necessarily terminate in depressive self-accusation. Any number of scapegoats can be found and other rationalizations used, to justify failure: the rich, the boss, the low status of women in the lower class *as compared with* the upper, “bad luck,” “hard times” and so on (cf. Prange and Vitols, 1962). In terms of alternative vocabularies of meaning, the lower classes, paradoxically, are less “stupid” than the upper.^[15]

But the situation is quite different with the lower-class schizophrenic. He lacks even that meaning which belongs to his own class—since he has failed to learn to interact effortlessly. He joins a personal “poverty” to a class poverty; and it has been observed repeatedly that the extreme schizophrenic is more obedient and conservative in accepting ideal formulas for proper behavior than are his peers. He tends to conform to

idealized behavioral standards which deprive him of the possibility of easy scapegoats available to those who flaunt standards.

The upper-class schizophrenic, on the other hand, is in a more fortunate situation. In the first place, he can effect *some measure of correspondence between his fantasy world* and certain specialized symbolic achievements provided by society. He has more of a chance of having his fantasies fed, and his identity somewhat validated. Clifford Beers, for example, could assume the identity of a mental-hygiene reformer, and create some measure of conformity between his omnipotent fantasies and the real action world. [16] Possibilities of symbolic self-justification are more available to upper- than to lower-class schizophrenics. Also, it is worth noting that the upper-class schizophrenic can usually extend his identity back in time, to include family traditions,

roots in the Old World, illustrious ancestors, and so on. This socially supported extension of the self in time gives some experiential depth to the personality, and helps buffer present ineptitudes (Strauss, 1959, Chapter 6). The lower-class schizophrenic, on the other hand, has no such time depth to his identity, and must rely solely on fantasy and on the unrewarding contemporary situation. Rogler and Hollingshead observe bluntly on the extremely stressful and unrewarding nature of lower-class life: "The afflicted individual moves from an unpleasant world into an unreal world of fictions. These fictions may be equally unpleasant. Class V individuals are trapped" (1961, p. 185).

THE SYNDROMES AS STUPIDITY: A SUMMING-UP

Meaning-poverty then, depends on the type of stupidity. For the schizophrenic, shallowness of

meaning, is a result of behavioral poverty; it reflects insufficient participation in interpersonal experiences. The depressed person, on the other hand, suffers instead from *a too uncritical participation in a limited range of monopolizing interpersonal experiences*. Here are two kinds of failure of the humanization process: the individual who has not been indoctrinated into his culture, and the one who has been *only too well* imbued with a narrow range of its sentiments. If both of these individuals end up in our mental hospitals, perhaps we cannot blame the psychiatrist for juggling chemicals and ignoring culture.^[17] The problem seems to be individual rather than cultural. But this is only because one has a narrow medical view of human behavior. Individual and culture are inseparable. The individual finds answers to the four common problems in a cultural world. He finds himself enmeshed in the

answers provided for by social institutions—by a whole accumulated tradition of cultural learning. In view of this the psychiatrist may object that it would be much too big a job for the medical practitioner to bring under critical fire the institutions of his society. How can he undertake to determine how people “should be” brought up? Quite right, he cannot. This is the task of a broad, unified human science.

Happily, after 50 years of incredible deviousness, the data of the human sciences are starting to emerge, their relationships are becoming clear. If this revolution, like any other, is to be successful, no vested institution can escape critical review. Nature—in her constitution of *Homo sapiens*—seems to have framed the four common human problems. But man—by his cultural and social world—frames the answers. Nothing done by man for man cannot be undone

and redone. It suffices to design the problem.

This seems a good place, then, to round out conceptually our whole discussion of schizophrenia and depression. We might say that the stupidity of the schizophrenic lies in the fact that he *may* have simple *awareness* of multiple vocabularies of motive, but no corresponding firm and broad range of interpersonal behaviors. Hence, he has poor control over these vocabularies. The depressed person's stupidity, on the other hand, resides in the fact that he has firm patterns of interpersonal behavior, but a narrow repertory of explicit vocabularies of choice.

Now, one thing will be immediately obvious about this kind of sharp classification: it can rarely exist in reference to human nature as we have traced its complex development. Schizophrenic and depressive types merge into one another and

overlap. They represent different kinds and degrees of adaptation to ranges of objects and events which are not mutually exclusive within one behavioral system. Thus we can see, at the end of this four-chapter presentation of the two major “syndromes,” that they are not syndromes at all. Rather, they reflect the typical problems that man is prone to, the restrictions, coercions, the lack of control over behavior, and the confusions in symbolic reconstruction of himself and his experience. All this blends in varying proportions in the individual personality. If we can only rarely see clear “types” emerging from this, then there is all the more reason to reorient our approach to labeling the human personality.

“Depression: A Comprehensive Theory,” reprinted with permission of The Free Press, a Division of Macmillan, Inc., from *THE REVOLUTION IN PSYCHIATRY*, by Ernest S. Becker.

REFERENCES

- Bibring, Edward (1953), "The Mechanism of Depression," in *Affective Disorders*, Phyllis Greenacre (ed.) (New York: International Universities Press).
- Field, M. J. (1960), *Search for Security: An Ethno-Psychiatric Study of Rural Ghana* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press).
- Freud, Sigmund (1917), "Mourning and Melancholia," *Collected Papers*, Vol. 4 (London: Hogarth Press, 1946).
- (1920), *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (New York: Liveright).
- Fromm, Erich (1959), *Sigmund Freud's Mission* (New York: Harper).
- Hallowell, A. Irving (1955), *Culture and Experience* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press).
- Kelly, George A. (1955), *The Psychology of Personal Constructs* (New York, Norton), 2 vols.
- Langfeldt, Gabriel (1951), "The Hypersensitive Mind," *Acta Psychiatrica and Neurologica Scandinavica*, Supp. 73 (Copenhagen).
- Minkowski, Eugene (1929), "Jalousie Pathologique sur un Fond D'Automatisme Mental," *Ann. Med. Psychol.*, Vol. 87, part 2.
- Prange, Arthur J. Jr. and Vitols, M. M. (1962), "Cultural Aspects of the Relatively Low Incidence of Depression in Southern Negroes," *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, Vol. 8, no. 2 (Spring), pp. 104-112.

- Rogler, Lloyd H. and Hollingshead, August B. (1961), "Class and Disordered Speech in the Mentally Ill," *Journal of Health and Human Behavior*, Vol. 2 (Fall), pp. 178-185.
- Ruesch, Jurgen (1948), "The Infantile Personality: The Core Problem of Psychosomatic Medicine," *Psychosomatic Medicine*, Vol. 10, pp. 134-144.
- Schwartz, D. A. (1961), "The Agitated Depression," *Psychiatric Quarterly*, Vol 34, no. 4 (October), pp. 758-776.
- Searles, Harold F. (1956), "The Psychodynamics of Vengefulness," *Psychiatry*, Vol. 19, pp. 31-39.
- Shepherd, Michael (1961), "Morbid Jealousy: Some Clinical and Social Aspects of a Psychiatric Syndrome," *Journal of Mental Science*, Vol. 107, no. 449 (July), pp. 687-704.
- Strauss, Anselm (1959), *Mirrors and Masks, The Search for Identity* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe).
- Szasz, Thomas S. (1961), *The Myth of Mental Illness: Foundations of a Theory of Personal Conduct* (New York: Hoeber-Harper).
- Tiggelaar, J. (1956), "Pathological Jealousy and Jealousy Delusions," *Fol. Psychiatr. Neerl.*, Vol 59, pp. 522-541.
- Volkart, Edmund (1957), "Bereavement and Mental Health," in *Explorations in Social Psychiatry*, A. H. Leighton, J. A. Clausen, and R. N. Wilson (eds.) (New York: Basic Books), pp. 281-307.

Notes

- [1](#) This model is reconstructed here with some artistic license. Admittedly, it is subjectively satirical, but the theoretical literature is there for all to see. For a sampling: Greenacre (1953), Hoch and Zubin (1954), and Rado (1951). For what seems to me a singularly sterile, reductionist approach conveying psychiatric scientism at its most forceful, see R. R. Grinker, Sr., *et al.* (1961). For example, buried on page 96, we find that a person becomes depressed because of object-loss and low self-esteem, which hypothesis renders completely redundant the arid tables and charts which stuff the book.
- [2](#) Among others, Mabel Cohen and her co-workers have taken steps to broaden theory. See Myer Mendelson (1960). Also, Rado's recent views (1961) tend away from the libidinal formulation.
- [3](#) But the modern Adlerian view of depression still sees the depressed patient predominantly as a spoiled child, rather than as an adult whose world may have gone wrong (Kurt Adler, 1961).
- [4](#) The sociological explanation of funeral and mourning rites is that they serve as the social dramatization of solidarity at the loss of one of society's performance members. Ceremonies of mourning serve to reaffirm social cohesiveness even though single performers drop out of the cultural action plot.
- [5](#) I am of course omitting consideration of the nondiscursive arts, and of action reduced to subconscious habit.
- [6](#) Cf. D.O. Hebb's observation that for man, cognitive processes in themselves have immediate drive value (1955), (an

observation which indicates that psychology is belatedly emerging from its long scientific moratorium; it is over eighty years since Alfred Fouille elaborated the notion of *idees-forces*).

- 7 In this use, it is an inept attempt at coping—a feeble coping in Goldstein’s sense— which, as previously noted, may avert a truly catastrophic breakdown.
- 8 Depression has also probably had a long historical connection with the self-effacement of mystics. John Custance (1951, pp. 61-62) compared his experiences during depression with the self-flagellation of Madame Guyon and St. Theresa.
- 9 Others make a similar observation: “Acknowledgment of personal sin or confession of guilt may sometimes be a defense against the possibility that there may be no meaning in the world ...Guilt in oneself is easier to face than lack of meaning in life” (Lynd, 1958, p. 58). But I would not say “defense,” rather, simply, *the only language* one knows. M. Schimberg observes also that “Guilt implies responsibility; and however painful guilt is, it may be preferable to helplessness” (1956, p. 476). For further remarks which are very much to the point of our discussion, see Charles Orbach and Irving Bieber (1957).
- 10 The nausea that sometimes accompanies depression may be due to the inability to place the world into meaningful interrelationships. This is the existential view— nausea as a reaction to meaninglessness. Alonzo Graves noted that he suffered attacks of nausea while engaged “in reflecting rather definitely over my situation and outlook” (1942, p. 678).

[11](#) This is also very clear on the primitive cultural level, where hysteria is a common “syndrome.” Cf. for example, Seymour Parker (1962).

[12](#) Ingenuity in an infantile or “primitive” type of personality is often more clumsy. Cora Du Bois (1961, pp. 153-158) reports one case of “madness” from Alor that looks very much like the hysteric’s “illness-language.” This woman’s attacks began a year after the death of her husband, when she was 35. She often repeated, in private, “This madness gives me much trouble.” In view of her personal situation, and the abysmal cultural level of Alorese life, the phrase “This madness” seems very much like what Sullivan called the hysteric’s “happy idea” (1956, p. 205), i.e., the ingenious language the hysteric hits upon to unplug a situation he does not understand.

[13](#) In the light of our subsequent discussion on variations in range of objects provided by various cultures, see Seymour Parker’s paper on the difference in symptomatology between the Eskimo and the Ojibwa (1962). Given the Ojibwa’s narrow range of objects and upbringing, depression, as Parker notes, is a logical reaction to frustration. The broad range of objects and the communal life among the Eskimo, on the other hand, seem literally to make impossible a depressive reaction (as we understand it here.)

[14](#) Arnold Rose has correctly stressed the social role aspects of “involutional depression,” namely, the loss of meaning (1962). His paper is part of a broad and growing attack on the narrow psychiatric jurisdiction over human failure. Its opening paragraph contains the keynote of this attack (p. 537). For some excellent case histories

which reveal the restriction of interests to a few objects, the restriction of awareness, and the sudden undermining of occupational role, see: William Malamud, S. L. Sands, and Irene T. Malamud. (1941).

[15](#) In a random observation, it seems that even the suicide notes left by individuals in the various classes vary in verbosity. A mere cursory scanning of the literature—which may be erroneous—seems to reveal that upper-class notes are invariably curt, containing little vocabulary other than that one is “tired” of living. Lower-class notes seem verbose in accusations of specific individuals, and sometimes of definite circumstances. See H. P. David and J. C. Brengelmann (1960).

[16](#) See C. W. Beers (1960). It is noteworthy that when Beers smuggled a letter to the governor of the state, the governor read it and replied to it. Szasz opines that a letter signed “Clifford Whittingham Beers” would be attended to; whereas that of a hypothetical lower-class schizophrenic patient, say, “Joe Kowalski,” would not (personal communication, cited with permission). The class difference in possibilities of self-justification made itself felt immediately in Beer's case.

[17](#) A *note on mania*: Mania, often found to alternate with depressive states, offers a picture of such puzzling lack of control that even Harry Stack Sullivan thought it due probably to a physiochemical disorder. (This is all the more strange for one who saw schizophrenia as an interpersonal problem.) The manic, in his states of hyperactivity, seems to go out of control and will often do things that normally he would never do. Perhaps most annoying to the others in our culture is the manic's

tendency to indiscriminate sexual activity and heedless squandering of the hallowed bank account. There are various degrees of mania—in our culture it has been observed that salesmen are often recruited on the manic continuum. An individual can spend an entire lifetime as a “successful” manic, earning high achievement and recognition, and even extreme states are not recognized by others as “abnormal” (Allers, 1961, pp. 62-64). Often the manic signals himself by becoming depressed due to some setback in his plans, and then he earns a diagnosis of “manic-depressive.”

All this is well known; the problem is what to make of it in behavioral terms rather than in physio-chemical ones. There are some interesting suggestions. In the first place there seems to be general agreement that the manic—like the depressed—has a very loose grip on his self-esteem. Despite the manic’s appearance of boundless self-confidence, Federn (1952) noted that underneath was a weak ego. Kurt Adler says of the manic that he “intoxicates himself with false courage” (1961, p. 60). Generally, the manic seems as uncritical of his performance world as is the depressed. He is just as much caught up in it, and performs wholeheartedly on the basis of a narrow range of rules. The manic seems to intoxicate himself with an adroit, superficial performance of the rules, with the immediate stimulus of the moment (cf. Graves, 1942, pp. 672-673). He seems to carry himself along by his fluent command of the cultural fiction. This kind of immature and flighty omnipotence—not grounded in substantial ego-strength—is very much akin to the schizophrenic who is carried along to similar omnipotent feelings by mere word sounds: we seem to

have here a difference between word-sound stimulus and “total organic sense”. It is noteworthy that adolescents experience quick successions of omnipotence and extreme inferiority (Eissler, 1952, p. 104). This seems to indicate new behavior that does not have a firm basis in self-feeling: it seems as though the symbolic self, with a glib command over performance, is attaining to heights that the individual cannot really feel to be a part of himself. The adolescent stands torn on this very threshold: possibilities of unmeasured increase in social experience of self-value, and in new ranges of behaviors, versus the accustomed experience of low self-value in the home, and the narrow range of objects and behavior it permits. The depressed phase is merely a surrender to the narrow object range. In this sense the manic is continually juvenile; to himself he is always unproven in the world.

As for the florid end-state of mania, this is analogous to the schizophrenic end-state. It is an extreme case of lack of control of a certain kind of being-in-the-world. Mania certainly should not be explained by splitting languages, and searching for a physio-chemical explanation. Past a given point, the whole organism can go out of control *behaviorally*, as the schizophrenic loses his world behaviorally. There seems to be no more need to split mind and body in the study of mania than in any other syndrome.