

## BEYOND THE COUCH : PRESENT AND FUTURE MAN\*

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'The greatness of a nation consists not so much in the number of its people or the extent of its territory as in the extent and justice of its compassion'.

Port Elizabeth Horse Memorial

My predecessor in this office, when he addressed us at the last medical congress, reviewed psychiatry in the past. I can add nothing new to his review, and both for this reason and the fact that we are living in a rapidly changing world, I should like to project myself into the future and take a look at man as he is likely to emerge from the influences we see operating today.

This excursion may have the appearance of idle speculation, but if the further evolution of man is to rest on the processes set in motion today, we dare hope to guide this evolution through a continuous awareness of the trends of our actions and plans.

Organic evolution has brought man to his present status, and it can probably take him little further. He is now being challenged by his intellectual capacities and the accumulated knowledge and experience of our civilization, to choose his future course, although it may only be in a lateral direction.

The position does not, essentially, present man with a novel situation. From the time in evolution that he acquired the capacity to weave fantasies, to live and build within his mind and to translate these images into ever-changing and extending patterns of words, plans and actions, man has been carried along the path of ceaseless evolutionary change by the creativeness that has raised him above the level of the rest of the animal kingdom and given him his uniqueness. What is new is man's greater awareness of himself both as a unique entity, and as the instrument of his own further change.

He has no choice but to change. The restrictions imposed by social and political circumstances and the conflicting views and attitudes of his fellow-men, cannot subdue or stifle the creativity that is in man. On the contrary, they tend to promote it. They may cloak and obscure his 'changingness', but sooner or later the changed form of man erupts through all the restraints and restrictions of his environment and becomes vividly manifest.

The seduction of nature, the challenge of a changing, evolving environment, the clash of opinions in his society, the hunger for knowledge and understanding, the embarrassment of his ignorance and the spur of competition, all help to inspire man's creativeness and changingness. But it is innate in his evolving nature, to create and change.

Man does not consciously intend, determine and design his future course, nor yet his changingness. It is of the essence of his uniqueness. What his learning and collective experience challenges him to do is to recognize, acknowledge and hail the innate changingness that expresses his unique creativeness. This awareness gives man his freedom, rescues him from the rigidity that is the past and spurs him on to eternal renewal and youth.

He is seldom aware that he is changing, and in fact resists change, but when he looks back he cannot but see the change that has taken place.

Man's evolution has taken him far beyond the compulsion to uniformity which is imposed by the herd instinct. Overriding the urge to uniformity is the restless need to seek expression for his imagination and creativeness, and to experiment with forms, ideas, conventions and mores. This is the spirit of man, which, sooner or later, overthrows all threats, restraints and prohibitions.

Man must be ever adjusting to his environment, but he is also continually changing it and himself.

It is important for our future that man must ever be aware that he is on the move, changing, and that this represents his essential, if not his only, freedom. To know and feel this essence is to give him the endurance to withstand tyranny, whether it be moral, social or political, and to sustain him in his hope of future fulfilment.

If we, as psychiatrists, could look up from the couch to the beyond, and in the vision of a massive humanity that is ceaselessly searching for self-expression and fulfilment, pushing through barriers between man and man, and man and his environment, see our role in this wider context, we could give of our help more widely. The faint and faltering, the doubting and resisting need our insights and lead, to arouse in them the awareness of their heritage and mission, to spur them in their struggles to self-fulfilment and to support them when their strength and courage fails them. We need to find a place in the larger world with its larger issues.

Admittedly our first concern must be our patients, but for perspective it is important to work within the framework of a world as we know it and intend it. It is true, of course, that a patient's serious emotional difficulties have their roots in his early life, but when he is set free and joins the concourse of man, he must contribute to and share a common awareness of man's destiny.

We shall be more than technicians when we step out of our narrow professional roles and point to the vision of man, urged by a hunger for love and light, ever returning, demanding and forcing fresh advances and adjustments. There is no room for despair or licence in this vision. It is man committed to the freedom to evolve, within the ambit of mutuality and responsibility of human relationships.

Man is conditioned by his human relationships and his environment, but he is also a conditioner of both. He is moreover tethered to his past and is to that extent unfree in his present responses. And if in the midst of these imponderables is cast man, the inspired creator, innovator, experimenter, the picture of man that emerges is of a fascinating kaleidoscope of changing patterns of behaviour and aspirations.

This image of man is opposed by Professor Skinner<sup>1</sup> and the school of behaviourists. They are intolerant of the disorder in which man lives, of the unpredictability of his present and the inscrutability of his future, and are impelled by their need for order and certainty to clamp a regulated world upon future man. They visualize him strutting this world like a 'Skinner pigeon', responding reflexly and mechanically to the stimuli to which the behavioural engineers have conditioned him.

\*Presidential address to the meeting of the National Group of Neurologists and Psychiatrists of the Medical Association of South Africa, Port Elizabeth, June 1965.

This is such a caricature of man and a travesty of his creativeness, that it could be entertaining as fiction. Professor Skinner has presented it however as his considered view of future man and has created alarm in some minds as to the misuse to which the control of man's behaviour could be put.

In the famous symposium in *Science*, in 1956, Professor Skinner first selected certain value goals (healthy, happy, secure, productive, creative people) as meritorious and therefore desirable for reinforcement by behavioural science. Then, recognizing that the ultimate goal of human endeavour was survival, he vested science with the task of predicting the survival value of cultural practices and of reinforcing those which strengthen survival.

He has visualized a community (*Walden Two*) which makes a choice of goal and is thereafter committed to it, prevented from leaving it by a continual reinforcing of rewards by the behavioural engineers in charge. The goal is 'a world in which there is food, clothing, and shelter for all, where everyone chooses his own work and works on the average only 4 hours a day, where music and the arts flourish, where personal relationships develop under the most favourable circumstances, where education prepares every child for the social and intellectual life which lies before him, where—in short—people are truly happy, secure, productive, creative and forward-looking'.<sup>1</sup>

Professor Skinner sees in operant behaviour man's opportunity for leading a natural and happy life, and is undisturbed by the consideration that when man decides to enter the 'Skinner world', he has made his first and last choice and has lost forever the capacity for spiritual rebirth and renewal.

Professor Rogers opposed Professor Skinner. He sees man as self-responsible, progressively self-actualizing, becoming creatively adaptive, with his goal always a step ahead. He would apply behavioural science and his client-centred psychotherapy to this end and would grant certain individuals or groups a minimum of power or control, circumscribed by the 'authority to establish certain qualities of interpersonal relationships'.<sup>2</sup>

He considers that this would produce a social system 'in which values, knowledge, adaptive skills and even the concept of science would be continually changing and self-transcending. The emphasis would be upon man as a process of becoming.' There would be 'a continuing subjective choice of purposes', to be implemented by the behavioural sciences.

He sees the safeguard against the tyrannical use of behavioural science, as portrayed in George Orwell's *1984*, in man's freedom to keep changing himself.

Unrepentantly, Professor Skinner questioned whether a person ever becomes self-directing and whether he ever makes a truly inner choice of idea or goal. He believes that man is governed by external conditions, and that their goodness or acceptability will be determined in time. He places his faith in the democratic heritage of man to protect him from abuse by the behavioural engineers, though he postulates the necessity for a counter-control which would be supported because it will be reinforcing.

At a later symposium, on the social responsibilities of the psychologist, at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association in 1963, Goldiamond<sup>3</sup> pointed out that human behaviour cannot be static and predictable, if only because we live in an evolving milieu, with a succession of fresh stimuli, in the form of new inventions, ideas and advances affecting behaviour. It is the primitive, not advanced society that is predictable. And if it is not predictable it is not controllable.

There is no saying to what changes the evolving milieu will bring society, but there is no need to fear that because the changes are not planned long in advance, they will not be rational. Man cannot plan beyond his stretch of reasoning and understanding. And even his reasoning changes with his changing moods and needs. His fluidity sets a time limit to the validity of his goals.

Man may be measurable, but the measure only applies for a fleeting moment. He is ever changing physically and emotionally. And apart from this fluidity, there is the spirit of man which is neither a measure of his physical and emotional self, nor yet of his environment and history. It is part of his unique-

ness and creativeness. Spiritual man defies prediction and control. Neither Skinner's *Walden Two*, Huxley's *Brave New World*, nor Orwell's *1984*, can contain him for long.

Man's physical inventions may destroy him at some future date, but no organization will ever gain permanent control of his continually renewing mind. He may be a 'Skinner pigeon', but he is also a spirit.

Professor Skinner appeared to be more than a little embarrassed at the notion of reducing man to a conditioned pigeon in his Utopia, but bravely, tenaciously and skilfully he attempted to justify his vision on the basis of a secure and pleasurable life for its denizens. It is more than probable, however, that he would hate to be that pigeon and that he does not expect his Utopia to materialize in his life-time. In the meantime he has stirred up the dove cotes, and how amused he is at the questioning and angry fluttering of the, as yet, free pigeons is his secret. On the surface he is treating it all with impressive earnestness.

It is a law of Nature that living things must adapt or perish. The law carries a different implication however for man than for the rest of the animal kingdom. For man goes forth to meet the challenge of his environment. With each generation he learns to comprehend and use it better for his needs, and his needs keep changing with his growing understanding and changing environment. Man and his environment interact reciprocally. By contrast, other animals await the challenges of nature passively and incomprehendingly, compelled by the life urge to adapt, but incapable of setting their own patterns and pace.

The oversight of this difference between man and other animals underlies the error of the behaviourist in equating the two. The experimental pigeon, mouse, dog and monkey are more or less fixed biological entities, responding physiologically to their environments. The experimenter changes the environment and in time effects changes in his experimental animals. Man is, however, neither fixed nor passive and is himself the manipulator of his environment.

We need not seriously concern ourselves with Skinnerian fears of manipulation by behavioural engineers, nor, for that matter, with manipulation by any other agencies seeking an advantage in the immediate exploitation of man, in taking stock of man's current evolutionary processes.

From time to time, massive influences, with the force of tidal waves, hit the shores on which man stands, sweeping all argument and resistance before them, changing irrevocably his values, orientations and directions. These processes start as little feelers from the needs of man, their relationship with one another and with their changing natures and environments, gathering volume progressively, until they become overwhelming and inexorable. These are the forces which, whether we clearly intend them or not, or whether we comprehend them at the time or not, are giving shape to future man. In retrospect they stand out as historic landmarks.

Perhaps the most fateful process that man has evolved in the past century is a social ethic which has grown out of the medical and technological advances of this period. To the extent that they have brought salvation and aid to man in his manifold needs they have aroused the recognition that his inventiveness ultimately serves the purpose of establishing, furthering and restoring man, whatever his status and location. This awareness has inspired the foundation and growth of social and philanthropic organizations and motivated worldwide legislation to improve and ensure man's well-being and security.

'Ethics is a consequence of social evolution and a main contributor to further social development. Relativity in ethics is still very much present, but the situation is not chaotic. Ethics are relative to a process which is both meaningful and of indefinitely long duration—that of evolutionary progress.'<sup>4</sup>

This social ethic, as far as can be judged at present, is cutting across the mechanics of natural selection. It tends to preserve and protect the less robust members of the community, physically and mentally, throwing a growing burden of support and responsibility onto the better endowed.

Advances in medical science have reinforced the inherent growth potential of communities by reducing infant mortality

and extending man's span of life. The resulting explosive increase of the world's population challenges the security of land-owning, settled communities, on the one hand, and the ability of mother Earth to provide for the increasing numbers, on the other. Future advances in nutritional science may keep step with the mounting demand, but will surely change man's eating habits and possibly influence his form and psyche.

Technical advances in many fields, climaxing in automation, have emancipated man from the toil which was the daily lot of his ancestors. The tasks that remain to be done by man himself have an increasing number of hands to perform them. The consequence is that a booming economy, like that of the USA, has an irreducible percentage of unemployed, and men all over the world face the problem of utilizing leisure no less than keeping up with technical advances of the day. Man's energy is being directed more and more away from the struggle to survive to that of the quest for diversion and amusement. This search for pleasure and the inadequacy the average man feels in grappling with the machines and computers that come upon the scene daily, tend to generate in him a feeling of flaccidity and puniness. They make human life a day-to-day existence rather than an inspired, exciting, forward-looking, and planned living process.

The progressive industrialization of communities and the growing complexity of commerce have increasingly reduced man's opportunities for individual enterprise, consumed his individuality and forced him into taking up subservient positions in the ever-extending industrial and commercial organizations. The towering size and complexity of these organizations have been outrunning man's capacity to maintain central control, and if it were not for the advent of computers, control would inevitably have passed in increasing measure from the centre to the periphery. The computer will thrust man back to his place as a cog in the industrial machine. Today, he drudges through the days at the conveyor belt, bored to exhaustion. Tomorrow, his spurious salvation will come from shortened hours of work and automation.

Outside his work, social progress has provided him with free education, increasing free health services and virtually free entertainment (radio, television) and insurance against unemployment and old age. These features of modern society have further abbreviated his independence and self-reliance and reduced his self-image.

Political progress has emancipated man from the domination of the mediaeval king and his barons, but he has had to pay dearly for this freedom and the vote that followed. He has become enslaved to the machine and organization instead. The tyranny of a person has been replaced by that of an impersonal machine and organization. It is questionable whether he has gained much in security and self-respect in the process.

There can be no foolproof formula for the future happiness and satisfaction of man, but in freedom, emotional, social, political and religious, the manifold avocations, activities and institutions of a free community provide all the opportunities the individual needs for self-fulfilment. The very existence and range of these many facets of a community's life, demonstrate how wide the net must be cast to encompass all the requirements of the individuals comprising it.

The key to man's future individual and social development is that he should possess the right to influence, modify, and extend the way of life, the conventions, the institutions and the ethics of his community. If, for both his own and the community's peace, the individual must conform or adjust to the pattern that reflects the community's way of life, the community that is animated by a basic respect for the personality and rights of the individual wins an automatic, living, reciprocal and mutual conformity from him. Where uniformity is demanded there is no freedom, only the unhappy choice between submission and excommunication.

The ultimate implication of freedom of expression is that with entitlement to a say comes entitlement to a vote, whether the council is small or large, local or national. This is democracy. It is of course no wiser than the wisdom of the people constituting it, but that is the least of its shortcomings. Its most serious, nay, fatal flaw, is the susceptibility of the less mature

and intelligent sections of a community to the sway of the self-seeking demagogue and the wiles of the political propaganda machine.

Democracy's strength lies in the enfranchised masses, and if they are to defend it against present and future threats and assaults it must be one of education's primary functions to inculcate into them a respect for democracy and an enjoyment of the rights and enlightenment that goes with it.

Ignorance however is not the only impediment to an informed and rational democracy. The German nation that was traduced into supporting Hitler was as educated as any at that time. Unemployment, poverty and want, even more than ignorance, create the conditions which invite and encourage the operations of the power-seeker, who starts off posing as the saviour of the poor and ends as their betrayer.

Distance and isolation no longer ensure immunity to a nation's way of life. The world we live in is fast shrinking through the continual acceleration of transport and communication. No one whose security and peace is based on democracy can afford to overlook the existence of these threats in any part of the world. Disturbance in one part of the world undermines the peace in the rest of the world, directly and indirectly.

There is, fortunately, a cultural dynamic evident in our present-day civilization (and not only in the West), that works silently to reinforce the foundations of democracy. The worldwide and progressive attrition of social barriers and class distinctions, together with the increase of educational facilities for the masses, have sown in mankind the seed of a common humanity and fate, and given people a growing sense of mutual regard and responsibility. This is democracy's ultimate safeguard.

Paradoxically, democracy has given birth to a viewpoint that is its very antithesis. All too often, it comes to be equated with uniformity. In giving all members of a community an equal voice and vote, it has created the presumption of the equality of all men. This was in fact part of the battle-cry of the French Revolution. The machine age has reinforced this presumption, by imposing the uniformity of machines and techniques on the habits of people. But men are not equal in any sense, except in the basic right to expression and opportunity. The kaleidoscopic interests, pursuits and achievements of men point as much to the differences that distinguish them as the basic needs point to their equality. Democracy has the task of respecting and protecting the differences no less than protecting and extending the equal rights.

I hope I may be forgiven for having overstretched the horizons of psychiatry, and taken so much of your valuable time in the effort, but I have felt it important to take one's bearings in the strained and changing world in which we live. It is not simply an academic exercise. It is necessary for conscience's sake and peace of mind to meet the challenges of the day with considered responses. A psychiatrist floundering in uncertainties in relation to his environment and daily life cannot be a model of strength to his patients.

In the ultimate, the control of evolution is in the hands of the individual. If through therapy, or better still, suitable early influences, the individual is freed from the domination of unconscious processes and thereby achieves a clearer awareness of his needs and attitudes, he will be the better placed to deal with the challenge of his future development along rational lines.

If the psychotherapist, sociologist and educationist could concert their activities in their various fields towards the common goal of making the individual continuously aware of himself and his related environment, through education and educational programmes designed to give him psychological insight, the individual would be helped to no little extent in knowing what his problems are, how they arise, how they affect his life and the lives of others, and how they can be attacked rationally. It is for this reason that I have thought it worth while to draw attention to evolving man, and to the dangers overshadowing his path. How to avert them should be everyone's concern and responsibility, and it is my belief that the psychiatrist in particular is challenged to confront the fate that awaits future man.

## SUMMARY

The behavioural psychologist would like so to regulate man's environment that it would win his adaptation to it, and his adjustment would then be perpetuated by the institution of reinforcing rewards. The objection to this is that man's first choice is also his final one and man thus sacrifices to his immediate satisfactions the opportunity ever to renew himself, his needs and goals.

The welfare requirements of the individual are not to be obtained by a uniform pattern of living. The disparities of individual tastes, talents, abilities and capacities are opposed to uniformity. And already there is evident an easing of organizational pressures on the individual to conform to a uniform pattern. The growing complexity of communities is leading not to tighter control of the individual, but to decentralization, and greater individual responsibility and freedom.

The social and legislative processes and the medical and technological advances of the last 50 years, are cutting across the mechanics of natural selection, with the result that the less robust types, physically and mentally, are being preserved and perpetuated.

The decrease of infant mortality and the increase of man's span of life have led to a population explosion. Agricultural land is being swallowed up by expanding towns, and food is

becoming scarcer and dearer. This must affect the eating habits of future man.

Automation and decreasing working hours confront man with the challenge to use his leisure beneficially. He is becoming increasingly more preoccupied with pleasure, luxury and culture, and less with the basic needs of survival that challenged his ancestors. In consequence of this, his growing bewilderment in a world that is being shaped by the scientist and technologist, the diminishing opportunities for individual enterprise through the increasing complexity and integration of commerce and industry, and the mounting social protection developed by governmental and voluntary organizations, man is becoming less sturdy and self-reliant.

Our civilization has reached the stage where it is exercised by the problem of how to transmit the accumulated understanding, experience and learning to succeeding generations, on the one hand, and of how to preserve man's individuality and freedom in his struggles against the demagogue and the technologists, on the other.

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