

THE DETACHED PERSON

A DISCUSSION WITH A PHENOMENOLOGICAL BIAS

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THIS PAPER attempts to describe some characteristic features of the detached person with what might be called a bias toward a more phenomenological approach. This is preceded by a discussion of certain psychoanalytic concepts which provide the background for this bias. It points to the trend in psychoanalysis that plots human existence against an ideal norm and thus conceives the human being mainly in terms of pathology, distorting the total picture by underestimating his vital, though hidden, humanness.

Inadvertently, but steadily, concepts of neurotic phenomena have encroached upon our image of normal man, man as he is, has been, and probably will be. It has become a tacit assumption that we are all "neurotic" in one degree or another. Our refined ideas of neurosis and character have quietly pathologized all men. Far-off primitives are sometimes given the halo of wholesomeness, but one suspects this is due to distance that will not reveal details.

Our inquiry into and discoveries about human nature fanned out from the vantage point of psychopathology before we knew much about normal psychology. Thus our insight into human nature became fused with psychopathology. This was a dilemma. There arose a need to define "normal." But then a worse dilemma was encountered. Was "normal" to be equated with

"average?" To do so seemed to be to apply social criteria rather than scientific ones governed by laws of human behavior. An attempt was made to establish norms out of existing hypotheses about human nature and the experience gained from the study of individuals. Thus, what was created as a norm was in fact a hypothetical ideal. The emphasis on the destructive potentiality of neurotic mechanisms lead logically to philosophical considerations concerning the relation of ethics and neuroses. The problem of psychic health and neurosis was seen as inseparably linked with that of ethics. At its extreme, neurotic dynamisms were equated with destructive forces and evil, and self-realization with maturity that implied a good and moral person. While these particular terms cannot be considered representative of the attitude of psychoanalysts in general, they are nevertheless a reflection of an attitude that is implicitly encountered everywhere.

These concepts neglect the fact that our so-called defensive structure is primarily a means nature has given us to adapt ourselves to the particular world we happen to have been born into. It is part of our equipment for survival and self-preservation and not a pathology. It protects, preserves, and creates. It stimulates growth in one direction and thwarts and stifles it in another.

I believe that once you start with an

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ideal as your norm, it is inevitable that you end with an increasing moral judgmentalism. If you begin to look for beauty of form, you will suddenly see the ugliness of the misshapen. If you look for perfection, imperfections will throw themselves at you with disagreeable force. If you look at a picture from the point of view of what is wrong, you will note what is wrong before you have let it speak to you on its own terms. If we search the human being for his pathology, we are very likely to miss the human being.

Psychoanalysis deals with individuals. It tries profoundly to ascertain the meaning of things for the individual. It has shown that the world is experienced in large part subjectively, in terms of the totality of the person's being and experience. It has shown the profound effects of the person's early world, its people, its atmosphere, its many unspoken rules which the child absorbs, not consciously, but as something that just is—taken for granted. It takes contrast to highlight experience. Looked at from the point of view of the individual, behavior becomes meaningful only in the context of the person's world. A child may be naughty because it rebels against having to be good, or because it finally wants to provoke the parents into setting limits and into establishing a much-needed framework which will make living easier. Our analytic observations impress on us the need for relativistic evaluation. This is, as we know, also true of principles of technique. Active participation by the analyst, for instance, is experienced differently by a patient with a background of neglect and lack of attention than by one who has experienced intrusion to the point of suffocation. A neutral analyst can be felt as a blessing or a mountain of icy indifference.

However, this relativistic message of

what we see, hear, and experience every day has caused a great deal of trouble. To me it spells the need for careful individual accuracy, for refraining from generalizations, and for separating the effect of action from motivation. To others it means moral relativism, a threat to the moral fibre of society. The difficulty here seems to me to be a lack of separation of the two poles of our existence: the meaning of the individual world on the one hand, and that of society on the other—a society which needs its rules and regulations as a framework of existence, without regard to the varying individual needs. We need a framework in which to live just as much as a child wants the security of a routine, no matter whether he balks at going to bed, or does not want to stop playing at mealtime. In other words, an understanding of what something means to the patient has nothing to do with the establishment of values in society. As we know, schools that have overdone trying to meet the individual needs of the child have been a center of destructive confusion; the child wants to know where he is at and does not necessarily appreciate the feeling that the answer lies in him.

Let me illustrate a difference in approach to this basic polarity—individual and society—by briefly sketching some thoughts of Otto Rank¹ and Erich Fromm.² Rank and Fromm started from the same perception of the polar forces moving man: the need for belonging and the need for separateness, unity versus individuality. Rank conceives this polarity as a movement essential to life, each with its experience of fulfillment that, however, leads on to the yearning for the other. Fulfillment of union mobilizes the assertion for separateness, and separateness stimulates the yearning for union. Fromm's description emphasizes the disequilib-

rium, man's existential split. He states that human existence is characterized by the fact that man is alone and separated from this world. (Not being able to stand separation, he is impelled to seek relatedness and oneness. There are many ways in which he can realize this need, but only one in which as a unique entity he remains intact; only one in which his powers unfold in the very process of being related. Fromm states that it is the paradox of human existence that man must simultaneously seek closeness and independence; oneness with others and, at the same time, the preservation of his uniqueness and particularity. For Fromm the answer to this paradox is productivity; for Rank, creativity.)

From here on however, they go in different directions. For Rank the essential of life lies in this interaction of polar forces: A backward and forward movement, an ever-present quality that by its cyclical complementariness is basic to our existence. This duality is nothing one can analyze away, nothing one can adjust, but it consists of forces that one can learn to appreciate. We have to learn to live with our conflicts and splits, for their removal would eliminate the actual springs of life. The more truly the ambivalence is accepted, the more life, or possibilities of life, will be open to the human being.

Fromm emphasizes man's need to overcome disharmony and establish unity and equilibrium between himself and the rest of nature. Man, Fromm says, attempts to restore this unity and equilibrium in the first place in thought by constructing an all-inclusive mental picture of the world to serve as a frame of reference from which he can derive an answer to the question of where he stands and what he ought to do. Fromm mentions religion as one such framework, but this, to him, is an irrational

one. He believes that the mature, productive, rational man—that is, Fromm's ideal of a man—will choose a rational system that does not imply dependence and irrationality. Man must have ideals for guidance, he says. Fromm knows that ideals can misguide, and this is why he asserts that we cannot afford to be relativistic. Ideals must be judged with respect to their truth, the criterion being the extent to which they are conducive to the unfolding of man's power, and the degree to which they are a real answer to man's need for equilibrium and harmony in this world.

Fromm's intensity is directed at exhorting man to change, and to come to his senses sufficiently to change society as society again molds him. Fromm overpaints the blackness of society, as well as the robot responses of the individual. He gets caught, somewhat desperately, in his own pessimistic view of each, as he is totally aware of their dynamic interdependence, hoping beyond hope that reason will penetrate our robot deadness. If, however, we are as dead as he says we are, one cannot see how he can possibly hope for anything to be effective.

I mention Rank and Fromm as examples of modes of approach to the human being. Fromm may overstate his case. But as yet psychoanalytic thinking is governed more by the impulse to discuss individual adjustment in terms of well-defined norms, of ideals, and of equating neurotic with destructive, than it is by a fundamental acceptance of genuine conflict, of opposing forces that want their due.

I want to repeat that thinking in terms of abstract, isolated, ideal norms leads to a moral evaluation and an essentially pessimistic view of human nature. Horney³ too tends to define layers and layers of defensive propositions of pseudo-selves, and analysis was

to her an essentially disillusioning process. Again, let me use Rank as a means of contrast. Rank in seeing neurosis as part of the individual's fight, as a battle not yet won, speaks of the strength of the conflicted individual rather than of his weakness. There is respect and appreciation for the individual's modes of dealing with what, to Rank, are existential conflicts, so that his books seem a eulogy rather than an accusation of the sick individual. Rank admits he overstates his case, but he does it as a rebel.

The ideal norm does not give the individual much leeway for existence. Spontaneity and relatedness and love tend to be so narrowly defined that, despite the fact that self-realization and actualization and developing one's potentiality are the central words, individual ways of being are often discouraged, and, labelled neurotic and self-destructive.

There is no symptom or character trait that does not tell a human story—a story of suffering, of struggling, of coping, defending and attacking. Analysis has to aim initially at self-acceptance arising out of understanding and appreciation of this story. Change comes out of a growing inner awareness of one's vitality and strength, out of a growing hope, which emerges once the shackles of deep-seated resignation have been loosened. A verbal bias that gives the aura of unacceptability to certain behavior or feeling handicaps the unfolding of the story, and is detrimental to the therapist's understanding. More vital functioning arises out of the deeper springs of living, not out of intellectual compliance with what is known to be "right." It means a freeing of our creative ability to design our life in greater harmony with our own needs, our individual needs, not those that are defined in books. Any creative

endeavor does require some feeling of choice. The ideal norm does not give any choice at all. You cannot be a beatnik, a missionary, or a revolutionary. It envisions only a well-adjusted, mature person with a good relation to himself and to humanity.

The delightful Alan Watts⁴ remarked in a discussion following one of his recent lectures that he did not want "to tell people how to live; if they wish to drive their car with one foot on the gas and another on the brake, this is all right with me. It is their concern." I am likely to use a similar phrase with my patients, but I feel his is more apt than mine. Patients have dreamed exactly this dream, and as an attitude to life it not only means that they are afraid of using gas without braking, but also that they have evolved a system that is geared both to their wish to step on the gas and to their need for caution. Choice and finding oneself may be the same. But the word "self-realization" has often another connotation. This comes to the fore in the idea of developing one's potential, and such phrases as the moral obligation to do so. The word is "potential," not one's own way of life. The idea that there is a given potential in us which should be freed never quite sounds right to me. I can well imagine a person choosing a rather unspectacular but peaceful way of life, which need not involve the development of his potential. Man's potential as a human being is enormous. It is the reason for his incredible adaptability and a source of his capacity for survival. Man as an infant can be placed in almost any cultural setting and develop different latent potentialities. Thus I view man's tremendous potential, often untapped, as a source of man's capacity to live and adjust to circumstances in ever changing ways. I don't keep anybody

from developing his faculties if these obviously knock on the window and want air and space. But I do not see it as a moral obligation, or as an inevitable link to the core of neurosis.

With the emphasis on self-realization usually goes a warning against conformity. Conformity becomes an evil word. However, we cannot afford to condemn this phenomenon of society because it causes some trouble for some individuals without giving thought to its function as a stabilizer of society. Our increasing individual problems have to do with the rapidity of social changes, with the disappearance of deep-rooted traditions that in one way or the other have provided a framework of existence. There used to be some continuity between the child's world and the one he stepped into as an adult. Now this continuity is lacking. We do need a framework of behavior, however, and varying styles of conformity are trying to function as the needed substitute. Patterns of behavior have always existed. The fact that modern patterns are less rooted, that they are subject to crazy currents arising suddenly, sweeping furiously, and disappearing just as abruptly, makes them of course more superficial. They are more superficial, but as a means of facilitating the outer aspects of living, as a means of establishing some group identity, some feeling of belonging, they are an expression of the need for a framework of existence. They are no more and no less of a source of conflict than other patterns of society have been in the past.

These remarks are an essential backdrop for an understanding of my particular emphasis in portraying features of the detached person. My discussion is selective and arises out of a therapeutic concern. I will not stress the symptomatology, the meaninglessness,

the despair, and seeming shallowness of relationships. I will stress life where it is reflected, rather than where it is absent. This selective emphasis directs itself against a therapeutic approach that focusses searchingly on the so-called defensive structure without recognizing the danger of throwing the baby out with the bath. This danger is particularly present when dealing with detached persons. The danger lies in the fact that the detached person takes to an analysis of his defensive mechanisms like a duck to water. He is eager to perfect his front and keep his more vulnerable self hidden. The analysis can become part of the defense. The detached patient communicates by various refined methods of indirection. The pertinent material is hidden or at the periphery of his tale rather than in the center. The presenting material is a decoy to deceive and not be taken at its face value. This is, of course, no conscious game of the patient. He himself becomes the deceived victim of his own camouflage. It is thus of particular importance that the therapist understand the coded language and see the person behind the screen. Once the therapist has made acquaintance with the secreted human being, he is in a much better position to tackle the defensive techniques, whatever they may be, and he is in less danger of having the patient use analysis as a means of staying away from life.

(The detached person is a rather vague category. The word means only someone who is not a functioning, interacting part of the life he is supposed to be part of. He seems to stand aside, look on, and observe, but with the basic attitude of an outsider.) I do not wish to define the term more precisely because it is a term frequently used and one that encompasses a large group of varying individuals. I do not make a

differentiation between self-alienation and detachment. I am not challenging the usefulness of this descriptive classification, but it hinders rather than helps the presentation of the particular points I wish to make.

Rollo May⁵ in the introduction to *Existence*, a book of importance in the history of psychoanalysis, describes the isolated, lonely, alienated type as characteristic of people as a whole in our society. Rollo May refers to David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*, to Kafka's *The Castle* and Camus' *The Stranger*, as a few examples of our concern with this phenomenon. I would like to take Camus' *The Stranger*⁶, a book I am very fond of, as the prototype of the detached person I have in mind. In the obituary editorials on Camus, *The Stranger* was called the "Outsider" in, I imagine, a spontaneous translation. This translation appealed to me. The word *stranger* in English elicits the double association of estrangement from self as well as from the world. The book, however, definitely describes the experience of an individual to whom the ways and rules of the world do not make sense, not out of confusion, but because he feels people are living by hypocritical or meaningless clichés that do not jibe with his sense of perception. The murder is an incidental happening and is not meant to prove the inherent destructive potential of the estranged. The trial is a means of showing the irrationality of the world and its estrangement from simple human truths, rather than an emphasis on man's existential guilt. The narrator, the stranger in contrast to the world, is trying to be truthful to himself, even if he can assert no more at any time than he feels at the moment. At the end of the book he bursts out in rage at the chaplain who is trying to force religious consolation on

him. He says: "He seemed so cocksure, you see. And yet none of his certainties was worth one strand of a woman's hair. Living as he did, like a corpse, he couldn't even be sure of being alive. It might look as if my hands were empty. Actually, I was sure of myself, sure about everything, far surer than he: sure of my present life and of the death that was coming. That, no doubt, was all I had; but at least that certainty was something I could get my teeth into—just as it had got its teeth into me."⁷

The Stranger is not a book about a typically neurotic individual. It is about a simple human being's experiences with the world as he sees it. The book was published in 1942. Hitler and Hitler's Germany had left few strands of human idealism intact. They had shown the corruptibility of human decency. Human lives were tossed about in fate's whirlwind, expendable without meaning. The book describes an individual who has resigned himself to the meaninglessness of the big ideals in life—God, ambition, love—but who asserts the dignity of the human being in the intense, sincere experience of the simple moment.

The narrator does not describe himself as an unhappy, despairing person. On the last page he says: "It was as if that great rush of anger had washed me clean, emptied me of hope, and gazing up at the dark sky spangled with its signs and stars, for the first time, the first, I laid my heart open to the benign indifference of the universe. To feel it so like myself, indeed, so brotherly, made me realize that I'd been happy, and that I was happy still."⁸ The portrait given us with this book should make us more cautious about our neat little categories of mental maturity. The man whose picture is drawn demands respect. He has lived his life in his own way and of that way

he was sure. He wants to be cried over as little as he feels any one has the right to cry over his mother's death. Camus writes: "With death so near, Mother must have felt like someone on the brink of freedom, ready to start all over again. No one, no one in the world had any right to weep for her."⁹ While the portrait is one of a detached, seemingly indifferent individual, it is also one of a man grappling with integrity and the dignity of human existence. While there is resignation, there is an aliveness to the details of the moment. While a meaninglessness of the world is experienced, there is also happiness. It is the human picture of a man grappling with a world that is more distinguished by its nonsense than by its sense.

There are as many different portraits of detached people as there are detached people, but some features of Camus' novel have the ring of a familiar story often heard: the sense of isolation, of a distinct division between the world of personal perception and the world that others seem to be ruled by. The detached person is observant and learns the rules, the words, and the main manners of behavior, often he learns them exceedingly well, but to him their significance lies mainly in the fact that this is the way things are done. They are not questioned for meaning or pertinence to himself as the world never seemed to be the kind of place that warranted that kind of question. Such persons often gifted, drift along with currents that happen to carry them, with an absence of self-direction. If luck has it, they stay close to a soil that they can live on, but often they suddenly find themselves adrift on some barren shore that is incompatible with their minimal needs. All this has been often described. What I wish to emphasize is that this particular related-

ness to the world, while it has features of a surface conformity, of dependency, of lack of backbone, of self-indulgence, of influenceability, is to be understood out of an appreciation of the explicit separation of the private world of meaning and the world at large which demands certain behavior, but which is basically too senseless, too full of false values, too full of discrepancies ever to be approached from the point of view of continuous, meaningful experience.

A woman I saw in her thirties, a typically detached person who had gotten herself into quite a mess by drifting, showed me a letter she wrote to her mother when she was about sixteen. It was a desperate attempt to break through to her mother, to get herself across. It begins: "Your last letter made me cry helplessly because our relations are so hopeless. I'll never, never, not in a thousand pages, explain how I feel. If I did get through explaining you won't believe me and would probably wish I had never been born. I'm attempting an impossible thing . . . but I've never seen such a mess in my short life as the one into which you and I have gotten ourselves. Well, now we've reached a dead corner and I'm turning backwards. Remember I am not you . . ." The person then tries to explain herself with ardent intensity on four typed pages, single-spaced. She describes what various incidents had meant to her and how she felt her mother had misconstrued them. The last paragraph reads: "This letter has taken me three hours to write and I have been crying most of the time I was writing it. You will probably never get such a letter again. If this does not succeed—if things go on in the same old way—I shall not try again. I'll be through trying to understand and be understood. I'll be an agreeable—or disagreeable—stranger to my family."

There was, of course, no change. The girl was not only through understanding, and being understood by her family, she was not only a stranger to them, but she was through with the world and was a stranger to it.

This is an illustration of the often very conscious experience of resignation, that communication of more vital, subtle personal feelings is hopeless, that people are interested only in their own image and its confirmation, and cannot or will not grasp the world of the other. At other times this is not a conscious experience, but just a fact of life which they have absorbed and are taking for granted like millions of other facts about their existence. This conviction comes from solid, long-lasting experience. To them it is a fact of life. It is not neuroticism.]

Life can be relegated to underground chambers, but it cannot be done away with. The inner self, the inner springs, are always there even when the surface shell seems devoid of the more obvious personal self. I want to describe some of the ways this self is manifested in persons who have compartmentalized the private and the outer world. The phenomena I will describe are basic human phenomena, but of particular importance in what I am referring to as detached persons. I was first puzzled about my observation that many, though not all, of these persons have a marked inability to use the "I" form of speech. They observe other people minutely and comment on their actions and feelings with great vividness and clarity. Their descriptions sound either like those of a person looking at life through a one-way screen, where they can see and hear without being seen or heard, or, if they are obviously involved themselves, it is an involvement by others, as if no dynamic import emanated from them.]

They observe my behavior toward them, for instance, but without experiencing themselves as the agent that may have provoked my reaction. At my request, a very detached patient of mine once brought me a list of phrases she remembered I had voiced in her direction. They were disconnected phrases, out of context, a meaningless jumble. I remember making some of them in jest, some to be deliberately provocative, some in a serious attempt at explanation, some in light, inconsequential conversation. But here they were, all mixed up, sometimes just a word. No wonder she complained that I was confusing and inconsistent.

My next observation was that a detached person's tale about others, particularly the vivid ones, are about himself. This is usually referred to as projection and identification.] Both mechanisms seem equally involved. However, this phenomenon of experiencing ourselves in others is much more universal than is usually conceded. Others are like a drama that suddenly gives form to an unassorted mass of experience. We know exactly how another feels and, seeing an experience thus demonstrated, feel something more clearly outlined in ourselves. Rank¹⁰ appreciated this mode of learning about oneself. He stated his doubts about the extent of self-awareness we can achieve through introspection. He stated: "Introspection seems to be one of man's more recent and unnatural acquisitions, unsuited to the attainment of subjective self-awareness. It is more natural for man to project his own mental life on others than to learn about it through introspection."

This experiencing through others is most subtle. It is a searching for the like-minded, the responsiveness to a part in another that corresponds to a part of oneself. Here it is not a ques-

tion of distortion, but a fascinated observing and, often, a dependence on finding oneself reflected in the life around. Different-mindedness may be experienced as a threat to one's own sense of existence and may be met with desperation, fury, and anxiety. This occurs not because one is particularly attached to the other person, but because one exists by a mirror image of oneself and difference is experienced as a removal of one's mirror and thus of one's medium of living.

This form of self-experience is very common in detached people who have removed their more private selves from the arena of everyday living. I would like to emphasize that I do not consider this form of experiencing oneself through others as a pathological phenomenon. This is, as Rank says, probably our main natural mode of self-perception. However, problems arise when the person has compartmentalized his inner self to the point that outer experiences cannot be related back to himself.

Another way of experiencing oneself in an outside medium is through literature. I have a number of patients who have been voracious readers, and whose story of themselves has to be gathered from books or poems they cherish and remember. The author or the poet caught their drama or their mood. While such a patient cannot tell me his experiences in the first person singular—in terms of "I"—he will tell me stories that have deeply impressed him. I have encountered one patient with a fabulous memory of poetry. He may start quoting Chaucer, then lines from Yeats appear, then some from Eliot, the Bible, or Shakespeare; but invariably he tells a rather deep, meaningful story about himself if I simply accept his means of experience and expression. In other words, I do not fight against this

existing medium; I accept it as being the one closest to the patient. The patient knows I listen to these productions as an expression of himself and gradually, after initial protests, he too cannot escape the experience that a coherent story is being told, with repetitive themes he recognizes as concerns of his.

Another medium, more accepted in our society, is that of creative dramatization. Some of my very troublesome detached patients were writers, or developed into writers while in analysis. While associations in the hour seemed meager, response to interpretation poor, conscious insight almost nil, they put forth in their story or drama a human wisdom, a depth of experience that elicited my awe and respect. It always seemed to me discrepant or foolish to tell this kind of person anything, as somewhere in himself he knew it so much better. The plays or stories contained insights that, on the analytic level, we did not come to until much later. These creative productions taught me more than anything else not to underestimate the richness of life within, even if the shell or facade seemed shallow or even void.

Not all patients have creative talents that allow them to give artistic form to the richness within. But once alerted I began to pay more attention to the creative medium that lies in all of us, the medium or soil out of which fantasies and dreams grow.

I realized that detached people are often best understood if one conceives of their experiencing life as a stage where their life drama is acted out. This acting-out is subtle rather than outwardly dramatic, as the facade is often very reasonable. Only after long acquaintance does one realize that people are reacted to not so much as alive beings, but as symbols of certain images.

This is a reflection of the aforementioned separation of the outer world and the inner world of meaning. Such patients may be reasonable and conscientious in analytic therapy, yet what has been said seems to go in one ear and out the other, leaving no discernable mark. But in spite of slight progress, there is little discontent. Some sense of disturbance, however, is experienced if discontinuation of the analysis is raised as a possible course of action. The patient may have reacted all along to something of importance to him: a sense of warmth, a face with lines of suffering speaking of experiences similar to his own, the experience of concern for him, an individual to banter with, or a parent to lean on. However there is no meaning in these experiences beyond the pleasure of the moment. It is pleasant to watch a person rooting for one. It feels good. When it is over, it is over without significance. This imagery, however, reflected in his behavior toward others, is of importance in our understanding of him. Images are assigned to himself and others. All roles or images, however, are aspects of himself. The main themes are very persistent. It is the repetitiveness seen in dreams where one symbol embodies different aspects of the story. The themes are invariably linked to the world as it was experienced in childhood and adolescence, the adolescent world usually being a continuation of the childhood world.

One patient, very remote and sparse in analytic productions, had one recurrent emotional reaction best described as "poor John." He was only occasionally and vaguely aware of self-pity. More often and more distinctly he felt pity, compassion for the befuddled, confused, the caught, and helpless individual. This extended also to "poor Mary"; that is, this identification had

no sex barrier. This response was by no means necessarily appropriate to the situation, nor did it seem particularly designed to be actually helpful to the individual. I once described his responses as that of a man who bewails the fact that another has fallen into a hole too deep to get out of by himself, without extending a helping hand. Still, this was one of the few powerful emotional responses present and its persistence spoke for its importance. A dream and other associations helped to disclose some of the emotional currents that seemed to find a vital outlet in the symbol of "poor John." It contained the story of his childhood—the loneliness, hopelessness, and wish for a sympathetic helping person. It told of his interest in becoming the helper of delinquent youth. It contained his resentment toward the world, for one of his trends contained the protest: "You cannot and will not help, but I will." The "I will" reflects ambitious and assertive desires. Thus, the "poor John" contained in a nutshell his lonely lostness, his wish for help, his accusation of the world, and his assertion in it.

Another equally detached, though outwardly more sophisticated, individual persistently had a reaction of great concern when critical of his superiors. He chided himself for his dependency, but I took this with a grain of salt as I felt he had a distinct preference for seeing himself as a dependent "schnook." The image accompanying this experience differed from the more conscious complaint. He saw these people as weak. If they had a weak heart they might die, if they were insecure they might collapse. He felt he had to protect them, hold them up, and he felt that if he turned on them he would demolish them. The story behind this image was one of his boyhood: A father who died

when the patient was five; a memory of the mother blaming him—by implication—for this death; memories of threats that he would be put in an orphanage if he did not behave; the attachment to a stepfather who died in the patient's adolescence; a mother who had her own stage-set world, in which the patient learned to play his assigned role. Thus the recurrent image contained the feelings of the little boy who needs a father, the awareness that the father may perish, the fear that aggressive behavior might demolish his framework of existence, and an awareness of his strength to demolish if he so chose.

I am emphasizing this condensed, symbolic way of relating to human experiences because I believe it to be a common way, among others, in which we relate to people. As a predominant way of relating, it causes, of course, no end of troubles, as others are related to not for themselves, but as pawns of the image. Therapeutically, it is important, as it provides understanding and access to very remote individuals.

I wish to make one more point. There is a power and tenacity in this form of experience indicating that it serves a tremendously vital function for the individual. Many of the individuals I have spoken about live with a surprising degree of outward equanimity, considering the paucity of their lives. As mentioned before, changes in life and analysis may often release a vital individual, with a surprising degree of creative self-expression. Insofar as the experiences described above reach to the core of the individual, they are a means of self-representation, a means of contact with the ground of their being.

It is not my intention to underplay problems, conflicts, or maladjustments. They are part of our human existence. I am not disputing the existence of de-

ensive mechanisms of various sorts, nor the powerful role of anxiety in our personality development. I have tried to emphasize some features less often mentioned because I feel understanding them helps toward a greater appreciation of the conflicted individual.

I have tried to present my story neither in terms of pathology nor in terms of ideal norms. I have attempted to describe certain phenomena as life-preserving, as well as life-stagnating. They are not either, but both at the same time. Both existentialists and Zen spokesmen emphasize that it is not only a matter of the coexistence of good and evil—the constructive and the destructive—but a matter of both being two sides of the same coin. People are never just neurotic mechanisms. Neurotic behavior invariably tells a human story of suffering and of protest or resignation. Often it is an expression of a vital self-assertiveness, even though its means seem ineffective. The vital self is always there. It may be bound and obscured in symptoms or behavior, but the human story is there. It is, I feel, our vision that has to be improved, so that we can recognize the story in the many ways that it is being told to us.

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DISCUSSIONS

ALEXANDER REID MARTIN, M.D., New York: I appreciate this opportunity to discuss Dr. Eckardt's paper, and I want to thank her for sending it to me in time for careful study. I hope my comments will do justice to her thoughtful work on a subject I regard as profoundly important, not only to psychoanalysis, but to all students of our modern culture.

Addressing myself to the first part of the paper, I heartily endorse the clinical approach Dr. Eckardt advocates. Unquestionably, because of our preoccupation with pathology and our basic orientation in pathology and in disease, we approach the patient looking for illness, rather than health. There is growing evidence that this negative approach is gradually disappearing. Hitherto, we have been dedicated to Aesculapius, the God of Medicine, but now we are turning more toward Hygeia, the Goddess of Health. Once preoccupied with pathology you become judgmental. You begin to equate the unusual with the eccentric, and with the eccentric you go from the neurotic to the destructive. And who is to say what pathology is? I would remind you here that the history of surgery 125 years ago shows us that what was referred to as evil, ugly, and foul, and was rejected and repeatedly removed by forceps because it offended man's esthetic and his moral sense, is now referred to as laudable pus. We should remember this in our approach to our patients. How many of nature's early attempts to cure, nature's early attempts to overcome emotional difficulties, to promote awareness, greater consciousness and self-expression—how many of these today are rejected because we regard them as wrong, evil, immoral, and bad? How much pathology results from our disapproving, ignorant, impatient, and repeated interference with nature's early attempts at cure. None of our psychological devices, strategies, maneuvers, defenses was invented by man. Circumstances were such that he was driven to use them. Nature provided the individual with various means to assist him in the struggling process of

self-realization, self-fulfillment, increase of awareness. Many of these are temporary expedients, crutches, which we approach with respect in order to study them. This does not mean that we perpetuate them. The very universality of detachment surely indicates that it is one of man's commonest and perhaps most helpful ways of dealing with emotional difficulties so that healthy growth can proceed. We have to find out what nature is doing (and this includes our own nature), and go along with it. Our patients should feel and should learn implicitly from us that we respect crutches, but that we are not in the crutch business. I think of two dangers that arise in regard to detachment that are true of other strategies and deviations that patients resort to in order to surmount or overcome their difficulties. One is the danger of our perpetuating detachment beyond the point of its real usefulness to the individual. The other is the tendency of the individual to glorify and turn his initially helpful crutch—his detachment—into a virtue.

You will see from what I have just said that I strongly support Dr. Eckardt in her discouragement of moral judgmentalism, of making value judgments of meaningful, purposeful behavior, and pathologizing symptoms and signs that represent stages in the individual's struggle toward healthy growth.

This whole business of values has become very controversial, and I think we have particularly to be on guard against evaluation out of context of the patient's totality, and/or compulsive evaluation. I agree entirely with what Dr. Eckardt says about psychobiological need for conformity. As I see it, the individual is born in the world with a sense of rhythm, a sense of pattern, some degree of integration. Our main concern should be with compulsive conformity.

Returning to the whole problem of values, I would remind you of Freud's likening analysis to archaeological research. It is helpful to approach the patient to some extent like an archaeologist toward

what is being unearthed and uncovered. To begin with, it is not so much what we find, but what we help the patient to find in the course of his voyage of self-discovery and his excavations of himself. Everything that turns up has value in trying to construct his early buried and unconscious patterns of behavior. We are interested in helping the patient to see the dynamic interconnection of all his early formative patterns, just as the archaeologist uses everything that is uncovered to learn how man lived in the past. He can step out of the role of archaeologist and become judgmental, esthetic, or moralistic; he can admire a certain vase, and express approval, disapproval, or disgust toward some one thing that has been unearthed, but as an archaeologist, each piece has equal value in trying to reconstruct the buried, dynamic patterns of living.

I never realized until I read this paper that there was so much of Rank to agree with. In other words, I find myself ranked with Rank and going further from Fromm.

I particularly appreciate Dr. Eckardt's drawing our attention to Rank's positive, constructive attitude toward human conflict. In this part of her paper, she moved into an area to which I have given a good deal of thought; that is, the connection between healthy friction and creativity. I cannot subscribe to the idea of a fundamental movement of man toward homeostasis and equilibrium, any more than I can subscribe to the idea of a death instinct. It is not only a matter of reconciling ourselves to living with our conflicts; it is from these conflicts, this friction, that the spark of life arises—inspiration, imagination, creativity. Whitehead said, "Man is the only animal that has built restlessness into a metaphysical principle." I am strongly convinced that discouragement and avoidance of healthy friction in the course of a child's upbringing creates a vicious circle, induces great feelings of weakness, as a result of which there is increasing inability to face and feel inner conflicts. There is a couplet which helps to clarify the situation as I see it

"Oily smooth Togetherness remains in total dark,

"Tis active Friction's brisk rough rub creates the vital spark."

Apropos of Fromm's emphasis on equilibrium, and also apropos of what will come up later regarding Camus and *The Stranger*, I would draw attention to a wonderful line in Graham Greene's play, *The Potting Shed*: "When you are not sure, then you are alive." Bearing these lines in mind, we see the basic and frightening truth of such phrases as "dead certain," "dead right," "dead center."

I wish when Dr. Eckardt was reminding us, à la Rank, that we have to live with our polarity, ambivalence, complementation, that she had introduced the idea of friction. With every facing and feeling of healthy conflict, whether in the outer world or the inner world, the individual feels strong and better able to face other conflicts. It seems to me that if friction can be faced at a healthy level, the likelihood of explosive friction becomes lessened. As we learned to our cost in the outer drama, it seems to me it must follow in the inner drama, that avoidance, appeasement, and repression of early healthy formative conflict leads to greater destructive explosive conflict and friction. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., well aware of the extent to which this attitude toward all conflict prevails in modern American culture, refers to it as "the bland leading the bland."

My final comment on the first part of the paper, which is a natural sequence to my thoughts about our need to feel and face our conflicts, would be to ask for a change of emphasis from the pursuit of happiness to the happiness of pursuit. I say this because it seems that a natural corollary of any desire for equilibrium, perfect balance, or freedom from conflict would be to wish for the happy ending. I think we are suckers for the happy ending idea. Instead of a good ending and concern for the future, we should be thinking of good going and appreciate the present. Hence, my comments about the happiness of pursuit. And pursuit here, of

course, is pursuit of the truth, which, I remind you again, is a direction and not a destination.

Coming to the second part of the paper, here I regret to say I found myself on uncertain and unhappy ground. The first part of Dr. Eckardt's paper had prepared me for something different, and I think what particularly misled me, or what confused me, was her sub-title, "In Defense of Present-Day Man." I saw plenty of defense of present-day man in the first part; not so in this section.

First of all, the phrase "detached person" troubles me, because here we single out one characteristic and present it as if it represented the absolute totality of the individual. I would prefer to think relatively of persons who habitually use detachment as their mode of adaptation. This would particularly apply to the patients Dr. Eckardt mentions and the ones we see in everyday practice. "Detached person" suggests an exclusiveness which could make us overlook other dynamic elements in the total personality.

Dr. Eckardt decided to make no differentiation between alienation and detachment, and referred at the outset to the "detached person" as a vague category. A great deal, therefore, hinged on what Dr. Eckardt decided to use as her prototype and she chose *The Stranger* of Camus. Many difficulties confronted me here, which may be due to my failure to catch Dr. Eckardt's meaning. First, I was not at all clear what *The Stranger* was detached from. Certainly he was not detached from outer conflict, because Dr. Eckardt spoke of him as a man "grappling with the world that is more distinguished by its nonsense than sense," and "a man grappling with integrity and the dignity of human existence." Perhaps she saw *The Stranger* as detached from the meanings and values of the outer world, because to him they were meaningless, but I could not reconcile this with this picture of him: ". . . while there is resignation, there is an aliveness to the details of the moment."

We must remember that *The Stranger* was written in 1942, at a time when Camus

was to some extent a victim of the French form of existentialism, which was highly intellectual and involved a practical denial of the unconscious. The French variety of existentialism was spoken of as "alienated beyond alienation from the unconscious." Having reached this point, the French existentialist then proceeded "to explore the delicate involutions of consciousness, the microscopically sensuous, in order finally to create the theology of Atheism, and so submit that in a world of absurdities, the existential absurdity is most coherent." Throughout *The Stranger*, and in Dr. Eckardt's excerpts, we find great preoccupation with "meaning" and whether or not "life makes sense." In other words, the defensive intellectualism of *The Stranger* stands out. I say defensive, because the repeated assertion, quoted by Dr. Eckardt, that he was sure of himself, sure about everything, sure of life and death, to me indicated that he was denying his unconscious and his emotionalism. In other words, all his "grappling" was on an intellectual level and the so-called "aliveness to the details of the moment" was an aliveness to the intellectual details of the moment, and this would seem to be an intellectual experience of facing the meaninglessness of life. I am reminded here of William Faulkner, who in his Nobel Prize address some years ago attributed our decline in creativity to our forgetting "the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself." *The Stranger* seems to have forgotten the problem of the human heart in conflict with itself, and has concentrated on the problems of the human mind in conflict with itself.

A few days ago, in *The New York Times* Book Review Section (February 21, 1960), I read Camus's last statement on existentialism: "Existentialism in France leads to a Godless theology and to a scholastic dogma which tends inevitably to justify regimes of inquisition." In the same statement, he says he is no longer an isolationist politically, and adds, "One can refuse to be a fanatic and still continue to be a militant in politics." What he is saying here strikes at the heart of my argument

about detachment and involvement. Healthy detachment is when we are not compulsively involved. To be a fanatic is to be compulsively involved.

In defense of present-day man in this country, where democracy grants free expression and a free press, our strength lies in the fact that so much is out in the open; we are grappling with our mixed feelings, our contradictions, and our hypocracies. These are the days of the candid camera, the frank autobiography, and a daily press that constantly confronts us with our conflictual behavior. We can measure the weakness of a totalitarian regime, as we can the weakness of the individual, by the inability to face and feel inner conflicts.

Dr. Eckardt reminded us in the beginning of the value of facing and feeling conflict. Then she presented us with *The Stranger* as the prototype of the detached individual. I wish I could see the analogy to the present-day man; I see *The Stranger* as someone who attempts to resolve conflicts by an intellectual, reasoning, conscious process, who has to be sure, who cannot reconcile his world with the "meaninglessness" of the outer world, and separates himself from it.

If we regard this process as detachment, then it refers to separation of worlds of meaning. *The Stranger* separates his world of meaning from the world at large, which he dismisses as senseless and becomes resigned and goes his way joyfully!

In my opinion, there is in *The Stranger* an over-evaluation of the conscious. Dr. Eckardt seems to subscribe to this and excludes the unconscious when she invokes the idea of "luck" as determining what happened to some of these gifted detached individuals.

St. Paul, in his Letter to the Ephesians, emphasizes "the vanity of the mind," which, he tells us, is accompanied by "alienation" and "blindness of the heart." This describes the type of detachment in *The Stranger* 1942, but it certainly does not typify the Camus of 1959. However, it does seem to typify the girl mentioned by Dr. Eckardt who wrote to her mother at 16,

constantly emphasizing that not in a thousand pages could she explain how she felt—all her emphasis was on explaining, understanding, being understood. This girl became resigned to the intellectual irreconcilability of her world and the "meaningless" world of her mother and remained detached or separated from it. (Sometime it would be interesting to consider the relationship between resignation and this type of detachment). What these individuals are detaching themselves from becomes clearer when Dr. Eckardt speaks of "persons who have compartmentalized the private and the outer world."

I am trying to make the point here that the need for compartmentalization seems to be based on intellectual evaluations and the individual's dismissal of a meaningless outer world "more distinguished by its nonsense than its sense." But as long as the individual grapples with this world, wherein lies the detachment?

Far more important than this separation of the inner and outer worlds is the deep separation within the individual himself, the compartmentalization of the individual from his own feelings. Dr. Eckardt begins to deal with this kind of detachment in the balance of her paper.

The inability to use the "I" form of speech, the first person, typifies the individual who is keeping away from his feelings. In the course of a very short conversation with one of my patients, I have heard him shift from the first person singular into the first person plural, then to the third person, and finally to the impersonal—all in a short space of time. This invariably happened when the patient had moved into an area where conflicting feelings about me were about to emerge.

We should recognize the universality of the ability to experience ourselves through others, the so-called vicarious living. It will occur when we have negated, denied or compartmentalized the emotional conflicts within ourselves. These conflicting feelings we deny in ourselves are projected on to others.

Experiencing oneself through others has also something to do with a persistence of

the early un-differentiation of the self from the non-self. The young child naturally invests you with their feelings and thought, and differentiation of self from not-self begins with the awareness of difference and the occurrence of healthy conflict and friction. As Dr. Eckardt says, in those living vicariously, awareness of difference is felt to be a threat to one's sense of precarious existence.

Vicarious living through others, and experiencing oneself in the outer drama and in literature, certainly are not neuroticisms. To invest others with our own feelings and thoughts represents a period in our growth of awareness. When we develop the strength to face and feel our own conflicting thoughts and feelings, we will recognize their so-called projection. In regard to literature and identification with individuals, such as occurred in the "poor John" story, we should certainly go along with this, as Dr. Eckardt advises. Sooner or later, the patient will begin to recognize his over-reactions as stemming from something within himself, or he will begin to catch his own overtones and the implications that the external drama has for his own inner drama. Because of the over-evaluation of the conscious that characterized French existentialism and seems to characterize *The Stranger*, and the consequent exclusion of the unconscious, I would remind you that the unconscious determines the individual's choice of story, and the external drama to which he over-reacts. I would also remind you that in doing so, the unconscious shows the remarkable and fantastic power of selecting those external elements that most appropriately dramatize that inner conflict seeking expression.

One thing becomes more and more obvious as we review Dr. Eckardt's paper: Regardless of what context, what external drama they find themselves preoccupied with, who or what enters into their conversation, in what voice, tense, or person they speak, our patients are always talking about themselves.

I think that what Dr. Eckardt has given us is an excellent defense of man's struggle to find himself and express himself and become himself. I wish she had made more

explicit reference to the constructive elements in our unconscious life, and that "the heart has reasons that reason doesn't know."

What *The Stranger* did in his intellectual life we have also to do in the emotional life: grapple with the human heart in conflict with itself, allow ourselves to become involved with our own emotional conflicts, but not compulsively so, allow ourselves thereby to become militant but not fanatic—as Camus put it in his last communication to the French public in which he denounced French existentialism as a departure from Kierkegaard.

In the legend of Ulysses and the Sirens, I come round in full circle to Rank and the need for conflict, to the individual who can grapple with his emotional conflicts, but not become consumed by them. I think this legend has deep overtones and deep implications for our present concern with detachment, for the so-called "detached person," and particularly for our defense of modern man. This outer drama has to be translated and appreciated as an expression of our inner drama. Ulysses was told that if he heard the song of the Sirens, he would be unable to resist them, would go overboard, and be consumed by them. He had everyone's ears stopped with wax except his own. He had himself lashed to the mast and he ordered his most trustworthy men not to release him when they saw him pleading and agonizing in conflict. Through this conflict he suffers, but he remains acutely alive. There is no deadness; he hears, he sees, but he is detached and does not "go overboard." We must carefully note that his capacity to suffer conflict accompanies and is intimately related to his capacity to depend upon and trust his subordinates.

This, in a sense, is the role that has to be played by the analyst. We have to possess the capacity to face and feel our emotional involvement with our patients. This capacity frees us from the compulsions and the fanaticism which would eventuate in our "going overboard." I say this because during therapy a constant seductive process goes on. A part of the patient wants us to

subscribe to his neurosis, and so we relate and address ourselves constantly to the whole patient—not only to his articulate periphery and not only to his so-called neurosis—and thereby we maintain our therapeutic detachment.

In defense of present-day man and his detachment, I am reminded of Thomas Mann's Hans Castorp in *The Magic Mountain*. For him, the real man, or *Homo Dei*, is "lord of counter positions." That is, he realizes he possesses emotional conflicts, but is never possessed by them.

FREDERICK A. WEISS, M.D., NEW YORK: This paper is important because it has grown out of the author's very personal and psychoanalytical experience. It helps us to re-evaluate radically some of our assumptions about psychoanalytic therapy, its goals, its methods and its effectiveness.

An enforced detachment caused by a sudden hospitalization deprives me at present of many satisfactions, for example, of being here with you tonight, but it also proved helpful to me. Having temporarily the experience of being a detached person myself, brought me closer to the feelings and problems involved in your paper.

I still like to distinguish "detachment" as referring mainly to the individual's emotional distance from others and the world, and "alienation" as "the remoteness from one's own feelings, wishes, beliefs and energies."¹

There exists among psychoanalysts a kind of professional neurosis which has two main aspects: The first causes them to look primarily for the morbid and the pathological in the person, be it a patient or a candidate-in-training of a psychoanalytic institute. The second causes them to look at the patient, and particularly the detached patient, with some narrow, preconceived notions of libido or libido-withdrawal, archetypes or neurotic claims. The patient, however, is a suffering human being who, due to early lack of genuine love and acceptance, was forced to build up, for emotional survival, a defensive character structure. Behind the protective wall is an extremely sensitive self, which he will not

expose to a world he experiences as threatening and hostile. He has withdrawn from others and from the world.

He has not only withdrawn, he is filled with basic distrust. He is convinced, as your patient was, that nobody cares, nobody understands him and that communicating his deep suffering to anybody, including the analyst, is sheer waste. He feels as the poet Moerike expressed it: "World, let me be! Do not entice me with gifts of love, let my heart keep its joy and its pain to itself."

"Shoulds" regarding mental health often prove more deleterious to human existence and human growth than neurotic "shoulds." Not too rarely we can observe an escape into pseudo-health in which the patient, in unconscious doctrinal compliance with the therapist, begins to talk about "giving birth to his real self," without any true change having occurred. Behind his vision or health, he has remained as sick and alienated as he was.

Let the patient speak in his own terms. His feelings and his behavior become meaningful not against the background of preconceived norms, but only in the context of *his* world. The first move the detached person makes out of his ivory tower is constructive, even if it takes the form of a homosexual relationship. The first assertive or aggressive move the self-effacing patient makes is constructive, even though it may still contain reactive-vindictive feelings. A hobby, such as bird-watching, selected initially out of an unconscious need to remain detached and to avoid people, became highly constructive in the life of a patient of mine when, with strengthening of his self and a growing capacity to relate, it developed into a meaningful endeavor and even into a bridge to the world and to people.

Many therapists feel impelled to emphasize the still-neurotic aspects in such steps, instead of welcoming them as evidence of the patient's growth. Such an approach paralyzes a patient's progress. It reflects the fact that the therapist himself is still under the tyranny of this theoretical "shoulds" and that he is not yet available

as a free, true partner in the therapeutic relationship, which is fostering the patient's self-realization.

The compulsive therapist who, driven by his *furor diagnosticus* or *therapeuticus* tries to intrude prematurely into the private inner world of the patient, will necessarily also produce a negative therapeutic reaction. What about the therapist who is basically detached himself? On first sight, he may appear as the ideal therapist for the detached patient. Actually, however, it often is not so much the respect for the individuality of his patient, but the therapist's own unconscious, unsolved conflict about close, interpersonal, and, particularly, sexual relationships, which leads him to idealize detachment. In recent years this occurs occasionally in the form of an ideology derived from Eastern philosophy, which minimizes the significance of interpersonal relationships and glorifies the "overcoming" of emotional and sexual needs. Working with such therapists will, of course, only perpetuate and intensify the patient's detachment.

What this patient needs most is, in the words of Edith Weigert, the "rediscovery of trust." This requires a warm, mutually trusting relationship in which the patient, as "different" and as sick as he may be, feels, often for the first time in his life, fully accepted as he is, accepted with those aspects of himself which early in life he had felt compelled to reject or repress. Only this enables him gradually to abandon his defenses. He will test the reliability of this acceptance and the trustworthiness of the therapist again and again before he risks emotional involvement. The "meeting" between patient and therapist as partners in a true dialogue (Buber) becomes the most important therapeutic factor on the patient's road to genuine self-acceptance and self-realization.²

No concept of "normality" is helpful to the psychoanalyst. The statistical norm, the average, often is farthest removed from emotional health, spontaneity and aliveness, as for example in our own culture which fosters self-elimination and self-anesthesia through shallow living and com-

petition for success. And it is even more dangerous to start with the ideal as norm. This, like all utopian standards, prevents us from being and enjoying what we are while living in this world of ours. It fosters neurotic guilt feelings, self-contempt, and self-destructive attitudes.

Camus said about some utopian revolutionaries: "They reject the man of today in the name of the man of the future." This unfortunately also holds true with regard to many psychoanalysts. They unconsciously or consciously reject the patient because of his "neurotic trends," while any effective therapy requires acceptance of the patient as he is, but with full awareness of his potential for health.

Psychoanalytic therapy, as I tried to show in my paper "Psychoanalysis and Moral Values,"³ cannot be interested in *absolute* moral values or in "adjusting" the patient to the *conventional* moral values around him which often are hypocritical, vary with time and place, and disregard the essential needs of the individual. Camus said: "I detest the frightful morality of the world, and I detest it because it ends, just like absolute cynicism, in demoralizing men and keeping them from running their own lives with their own just measures of meanness and magnificence."⁴

There exists, however, very much in contrast to conventional and absolutely morality, a "morality of evolution" (Karen Horney, Julian Huxley), whose criterion lies in the answer to the question: Is a certain attitude inductive or obstructive to growth and self-realization? It is similar to existentialist concepts of man which see the human being challenged by the call to realize his humanness. Existential anxiety occurs when we are confronted by the challenge of fulfilling our potentialities; existential guilt is experienced when we are denying or forfeiting these potentialities. Such failure to fulfill our commitment to ourselves is, of course, no moral failure, but it remains an existential tragedy.

Is not a similar distinction necessary with regard to conflicts we meet in living? Yes, we have to accept conflicts inherent in life itself, such as the conflict between

our need to be only with ourselves and our need to be with others, or the basic existential conflict in which we have to ask ourselves how much of our "security," as illusory as this may be, are we willing to risk for our freedom to be, to love and to realize ourselves?

We must distinguish these conflicts, which are not only unavoidable, but which are the essence of any living which is more than vegetating, from neurotic conflicts which, far from enriching our life, narrow it down, and defeat and destroy us; conflicts, for example, in which we are torn by morbid dependency needs on the one hand and needs for vindictive triumph on the other, or between a compulsive need for omnipotence and self-glorification and an equally compulsive need for self-effacement and self-elimination.

If we want to be more than tranquillizing mental repairmen, we have to help our patients to become aware of and outgrow their self-blocking and self-defeating conflicts, so that they become able to want, to welcome, to be open to full living with its polarities, paradoxes and conflicts.

Psychoanalytic therapy is partly a disillusioning process, but it is at the same time liberating, due to the increase of self-awareness, in the sense of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Camus, who said: "I wanted to break the handsome wax figure I presented everywhere." (*The Fall*).

Dr. Eckardt says that a detached person often exists by a "mirror image of oneself." Experiencing oneself through the mirror image received from others is not pathological in itself, but if due to alienation from one's own feelings of self and identity, it is the *only* way in which one is able to experience oneself, I would consider it a deficiency phenomenon.

Full living requires maximum awareness and involvement. In Camus' *The Stranger*, however, Meursault is in a state of minimum awareness and involvement. Events *happen* to him: the death of his mother, the love of a girl, fight and murder. "It is all the same to me," he says again and again. No true feeling is experienced, no continuity of time and life, no self.

I believe that such state of self-anesthesia and self-alienation which we find today in so many of our patients expresses much more than the rejection of the hypocritical clichés by which the people around him live. It is his way of life, or rather *his way of not-living and not-feeling that life and that self* which he resents and rejects. The violent resentment which has been hiding all the time behind Meursault's resigned, passive facade breaks through in the final crisis: "I started yelling at the top of my voice. I hurled insults. . . . It was as if a great rush of anger had washed me clean. . . . I felt ready to start life all over again."⁵ Such total emotional involvement in rage and conflict often, in analytic therapy, precedes acceptance of the self and the world.

It would be a severe mistake to take Meursault's attitude of resignation and alienation as that of Albert Camus himself. Repeatedly he emphasizes that "something in this world has meaning: it is man because man is the sole being to insist upon having a meaning."⁶ In his whole life and work Camus expressed the conviction that one cannot avoid facing, and getting involved in, the conflicts of present-day man.

In a beautiful short story "Jonas" (*The Artist at Work*), Camus pictures the dilemma of the artist whose creativity is in danger of being destroyed by success and well-meaning friends who are closing in on him. In search of "absolute solitude" he withdraws into a kind of human bird-cage which he has built with his own hands. There he works day and night. Finally he falls down, exhausted. In the center of his canvas which had remained blank, only one word was written in very small letters. "One could decipher it but without knowing whether it should be read as 'solitaire' or 'solidaire' (solitary or solidarity)."⁷

This is no mere play on words. It is a true symbol that condenses the basic conflict of Jonas, the creative man of today. "Solitaire" is the condition needed by him who must not be distracted by people and relationships and who often pays for his creativity with loneliness. "Solidaire" is his other basic aspect: as a human being he

needs relating, communicating with others for his emotional survival.

Camus left no doubt where he stood in this conflict: "One of the temptations of the artist, he said, is to believe himself solitary . . . but this is not true. He stands in the midst of all, in the same rank, neither higher nor lower, with all those who are working and struggling."

"Between the ivory tower and the roll call of 'the social church' is there room for a creative attitude which will reconcile aesthetic demands with the duty of brotherhood? . . . Yes, the artist must accept the dangers which threaten him and repel the bitterness his sense of alienation sometimes inspires. . . . He runs the risk, if he stays in his ivory tower, of cutting himself off from reality, or, if he gallops forever around the political arena, of drying up. . . . It seems to me that the writer should not ignore the conflicts of his time, and that he should take part in them when he knows he can. . . . But he must also try to stand off a bit to contemplate and formalize what he sees. This eternal return, this tension which can be, frankly, a dangerous game at times, is the burden of the artist today."⁴

I feel this is the burden not only of the artist, but of present-day man. It is his burden—and his challenge.

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HAROLD KELMAN, M.D., NEW YORK: "The detached person is a rather vague category. The word means only someone who is not a functioning, interacting part of the life he is supposed to be part of. He seems to stand aside, look on and observe, but with the basic attitude of an outsider. I do not wish to define the term more precisely because it is a term frequently used and one that encompasses a large group of varying individuals. I do not make a differentiation between self-alienation and detachment."

Dr. Eckardt has defined what she is talking about and clearly limits the details of her definition. You may have wished for more, and may not like her definition, but if you are to listen to, respond to, and comment on it meaningfully it must be from her defined position. This applies to any presentation. I have heard hundreds of them. The limited value to the thousands of listeners often derived from the fact that wittingly and unwittingly they attempted to impose their presuppositions upon the presenter and what he was presenting.

This possibility is intensified by the fact that Dr. Eckardt is Dr. Horney's daughter. Some might feel she should rigidly adhere to her mother's viewpoint. This, in spite of the fact that Dr. Horney kept changing and evolving her ideas, as did every original contributor to psychoanalysis; that for her psychoanalysis was a constantly evolving and changing discipline to the evolution of which she had contributed so much; and, finally, that Dr. Eckardt's failure to develop her own ideas would be a denial and contradiction of her mother's basic philosophy that we continue to grow as long as we are alive. A second difficulty arises for people trained in, familiar with, and daily using the theoretical constructs evolved by Dr. Horney. The terms "resignation," "detachment," "alienation" are factually their everyday working tools. And much that Dr. Eckardt has presented could very comfortably and accurately fit under Horney's concept of the "supremacy of the mind," "compartmentalization," and especially under the notions of "active and passive externalization."

Dr. Eckardt has the right and privilege of saying, "I do not make a differentiation between self-alienation and detachment," and discussants have the right and responsibility to assert they do not find her viewpoint congenial or fruitful. But it doesn't make it wrong. The opening quotation defining the detached person appears at about the middle of the paper. I feel it would better have been her first paragraph. As I shall indicate with some further quotations from her presentation, I feel Dr. Eckardt's presentation could have gained by better organization and by a more explicit presentation of her position. In any presentation both the communicator and the one communicated with have a share in the degree of mutual understanding that happens. Such understanding is the essential prerequisite before discussion of areas of agreement and difference can fruitfully begin and be carried on.

The subtitle of Dr. Eckardt's presentation is "A Discussion with a Phenomenological Bias," which she restates in the first paragraph of her presentation. Again, I feel she could have been more detailed and explicit in stating that she takes this position because, "Our refined ideas of neuroses and character have quietly pathologized all men," because starting with "an ideal as your norm" you inevitably "end with increasing moral judgmentalism," because "the ideal norm does not give the individual much leeway for existence," and because of many other points she makes.

I feel it is essential to state and restate the need for the phenomenological approach in as many ways as possible. This objective can be furthered by defining it in terms of what it is and what it isn't. I am well aware of this necessity because for years, in discussions, courses, papers, and lectures, I have been attempting to do just this with very slow progress and limited success. It is sixty years since Husserl's *Logische Untersuchungen* appeared. American psychiatry and psychoanalysis have as yet only the faintest understanding of what he is talking about. We are so caught up in the split between what is and what ought to be factually, morally, and aes-

thetically that we are blind to the fact that the emotional and intellectual milieu we swim in is an either/or one. Fish never question the fact that "of course the world is all water."

To the extent that you can be, not simply know, and use the phenomenological approach, you will be able to let the human being Dr. Eckardt loosely describes as the detached person "speak to you on his own terms." You will see that "our so-called defensive structure is primarily a means nature has given us to adapt ourselves to the particular world we happen to have been born into. It is part of our equipment for survival and self-preservation and not a pathology."

Maybe an analogy from neurology might help. Epilepsy, the "falling sickness" was once considered divine. With the advent of scientific medicine it was considered a disease, than a symptom. Modern neurophysiology helped us understand it as a form of organismal response to the stress level exceeding a certain limit. It is a precipitated manifestation of stress and a form of total organismal response temporarily terminating that stress situation, at a price. Or as Dr. Eckardt put it, "certain phenomena" are "both life-preserving as well as life-stagnating. They are not either/or but both at the same time." She quotes Existentialism and Zen on this point. A further bit of Zen wisdom is pertinent here. When one realizes it one can only wonder at one's blindness. It is so self-evident. "Every affirmation is a negation and every negation is an affirmation." When you say yes you automatically and inevitably say no. In saying yes to certain things you are saying no to others. Blindness in regard to this issue is reflected in the abused complaint, "But I didn't do anything!" Not doing is also doing. Or to put this issue even more concretely, the bottle is both half-empty and half-full, both at the same time.

Having a deeper and widening feel for the phenomenological approach enriches our possibilities for obtaining much more from such concepts as unconscious motivation, blockages, freer associating, dreaming, and human relating and communing in the

therapeutic process. The phenomenological, existential, and psychoanalytical approaches are not mutually exclusive, but mutually inclusive and enriching. At least that has been my experience.

With such a viewpoint new vistas open up regarding "detached people," who constitute an increasing percentage of our patients because they are and exemplify the sickness of our times. Many patients at first glance do not look like what Dr. Eckardt has described. In time, as certain foreground aspects are worked through and resolved, the picture of the detached person emerges more clearly. As an expression of the therapist's pessimism, hopelessness, and feelings of incompetence to deal with them, they have been variously labeled—not diagnosed—borderline cases, schizoid characters, pseudo-neurotic schizophrenics. I also might diagnose them so, but that diagnosis would mean something quite different to me and certainly not one implying therapeutic nihilism or hopelessness.

In opening our eyes to these patients, to the problems they present, Dr. Eckardt is also pointing at the sickness of our time and to possible ways of becoming more effective with those individuals who come to us for help. Helping them would be helping our time and ourselves.

There are many aspects of what Dr. Eckardt describes as the ways these people experience themselves about which I could comment, but I shall limit myself to a discussion of one of them. She speaks of the "secreted human being" who speaks from "behind the screen" in a "coded language." Only as I became aware of the fact of "coded language," the fact of "screens and walls," and finally of the "secreted human being" behind those coverings could I finally get acquainted with the intensity, extensity, and richness of their secret inner lives. Once I found ways of making contact with this secret inner world the analyses of these people took a new and more constructive turn. In speaking of a secret inner life and inner world I want to make it clear that I am not talking of autistic thinking or of living in imagination, but of something vital, alive, rich, and palpitating, preserved

and never shared as a survival necessity.

I can concretize what I am pointing at by relating a dream a man told me early in analysis. It took many years of mutual effort before it could be meaningfully experienced as a vital, alive present. The dream setting is somewhere in the center of Europe. How, he does not know, he came upon an isolated monastery. After he entered, a monk asked him to follow. After passing through many doors and many rooms somewhere near what must have been the center of the monastery they began to descend some stairs. After having descended seven levels of stairs they came into a large room with a dirt floor. The monk dug a hole and about seven feet down he found a box. When opened, it contained seeds that had been there for thousands of years. They were vital and well-preserved and now he was going to plant them. They were seeds of wheat.

A woman, after many years of analysis and many analysts (I being the fifth) finally told me in the fifth year of her work with me that ever since she had been a little girl she had had secret life she never shared with anyone. In it she was a playful, loving, happy little girl, a role she hoped someday to be able to share with others and to live out in real life. This secret life had been preserved behind many walls, but, she insisted, was never lost to her awareness through many years of severe illness, much anguish and suffering. I was the first human she had ever shared it with. Namely, the first person she ever trusted enough, in whom she had confidence enough, who would accept her and her world, and who could and would persevere with her to find the ways to finally reach that guarded inner sanctum.

Dr. Eckardt has made an attempt to point the way to a large and serious problem of our time as it is manifested in many individuals. She has indicated some possible ways of looking at it and dealing it. From conversations with her and reading some of her previous papers I know this to be a deep, meaningful, and continuing concern. I look for further developments of her creative endeavors in these directions.

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PROLOGUE AND EPILOGUE: The essentials of Dr. Eckardt's position and what I have been attempting to delineate are better communicated with the clarity and immediacy possible in a Nobel Poet Laureate as he answers John Ciardi's questions, the first one being, "What is the function of the poet in this conflict? (The never-ending conflict is between man's internal needs and the external forces upon him. . .)"

"SIGNOR QUASIMODO: It is always important. As I have said, the true poet is no dilettante. His role is moral. Not that he determines the morality of his people. His morality—and this is the real point—is in finding the forms that will express anew for his generation the reality of human dignity. That is why the poet does not deal in the worn-out forms of past ages. The image of man is no eternal thing. We must remake it generation by generation.

"QUESTION: The poet creates a sort of "moral mirror" for his people?

"SIGNOR QUASIMODO: Just so: a moral mirror. He is no pedantic moralizer. He does not write tracts. He writes his poems. And the poems do not dogmatize. The poet's morality is to recognize the eternal worth of humanity through every change. He studies himself and his fellows, and he forms within himself what might be called a genetic sentiment. He makes concrete images for the condition of man in every new age. All else is merely mental play, and barren."*

ANTONIA WENKART, M.D., NEW YORK: Dr. Eckardt's defense of the detachment of present-day man is not only a most humane endeavor, but is also delivered in the spirit of a contribution toward the advancement of psychoanalytic thought. The problem of detachment-attachment is crucial in our times and it has caused considerable misunderstanding among the members of the profession. Unfortunately, in the course of our exploration of this vital problem, certain misconceptions have arisen among us which

may prove harmful. I believe that several of these misconceptions occur in Dr. Eckardt's otherwise excellent paper.

I agree with Dr. Eckardt that the meaning of conflicts in our lives stands in need of re-examination. Although it is certainly true that we suffer through conflicts, it is not so much the elimination of conflicting trends that is necessary as the disavowal of their incompatibility. It is in fact, our very desertion from the battlefield of raging conflicts, our about-face disinvolvement, the very act of self-alienation that is pernicious.

Self-acceptance within the many phases of existence—be they healthy or sick—is the first premise of success. It should be used as a guide in the pursuit of wholesome integration.

To be sure, introspection for the sake of self-awareness is a most difficult undertaking, although sometimes the most rewarding one. The concept of externalization surely has its validity. We can benefit therapeutically from it by taking back to ourselves whatever has been unduly ascribed to another person.

However, there is another question that must be posed. What is it that either grows or withers between man and man? We have yet to map adequately the emotional cosmos of the world we have in common. The dimensions of dialogue have not yet been sufficiently tapped as a source of growth.

Dr. Eckardt does apply her great sensitivity to finding sources of strength in this dimension of betweenness. This is quite a different approach from that of only observing the phenomenon, or even trying to disentangle the contribution of one person from that of the other. Beyond this approach we need astute cognizance of the positive and constructive components in the exchange.

Dr. Eckardt touches on one very essential point that I wish she would elaborate. It is the point concerning the detachment used by the patient in defending his aliveness. It is important for many reasons to see the constructive in the destructive, to understand defenses as awkward protesta-

* Saturday Review of Literature, June 11, 1960, page 16.

tions against the crushing-in world, the meaning of defenses as a shield for the delicate—the untimely burlap over the bud in Spring.

Appreciation of the patient's mode of dealing with the existential conflicts is necessary not only in order to see his suffering, but also to view his struggle in its context of active engagement in existence.

Sensitivity, tact, and professional training are all required to grasp and hold he who is sick unto death, but at the same time we must also use our critical judgment. The relativistic evaluation of modern day man that Dr. Eckardt seems to posit has to take into consideration the patient's inner world. But we have yet to move from the compassion and acceptance of what is, to the greater compassion that accompanies the patient in his change toward what may be, always being careful in our analysis not to accept for the sake of resignation.

I am glad that Dr. Eckardt uses Albert Camus' *The Stranger* as an illustration. When Camus leads us into the world of his hero we shudder with dismay. The author's opening sentence states the problem of *The Stranger*: "Mother died today. Or maybe yesterday. I can't be sure." He is out of time, but not because he is overwhelmed by grief and confusion, but only because it doesn't matter; he is touched neither by life nor death. This is a man who is thickly covered by burlap. This is not a mode of existence, it is non-existence, and it cries out for help and intervention.

Actually, Camus' stranger is not confused. He appears to be clear-headed. To him, the ways and rules of the world do not make sense. He senses the absurdities of this world and, indeed, asserts himself as the only sensible being in a world of absurdity. But the tragedy of this person is that he is indifferent to everything around him and within him until he encounters his own death.

Further along in the book, the stranger is given the opportunity to travel to Paris; it is assumed that he will enjoy living there. The stranger accepts the offer with complete indifference, saying, "One life was

as good as another and my present one suited me quite well."

At another point, Marie, his girl friend, asked him if he would marry her. "I said I didn't mind. If she was keen on it we'd get married. Then she asked me again if I loved her. I replied, much as before, that her question meant nothing or next to nothing—but I supposed I didn't."

Counter to Dr. Eckardt's remarks, this inner desert, this inner nothingness is a nightmare of existence, not an authentic modality of existence.

Generally speaking, no one can better observe the rules than a detached person. No one can better formulate the rules than the remote observer who knows about gamesmanship, lifemanship, upmanship—to use Stephen Potter's inventions. In this way he has the best *modus operandi* and the worst *modus vivendi*. He has abstracted from life the rules and subtracted from life the Being.

In dealing with the problem of self-realization, we have been all too painfully aware of our lack of systematic formulation of what the self is. We presuppose that there is a self, we know quite a bit about it, but we do not have a clearcut concept or definition of the self. We know much more about what happens to a person who has lost his self, who has lost his identity, who is alienated. Our difficulty is that we know more about sickness than about health.

Of course, the desire for self-realization does make one freer and happier. But the fashionable pretense of health confronts us with counterfeits of happiness in our patients, rather than the real thing.

Dr. Eckardt says that the idea of developing one's potentialities, is frequently connected with a moral obligation and is indicative of the error of the "should." This perhaps may be an unfortunate use of the term "obligation." Hegel says, "Man is what he should be." In other words, man at best is himself and can become himself, developing all his own potentialities.

It is significant that Dr. Eckardt touches on a serious existentialist dilemma: the

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necessity of being free while remaining defined, not restricted and yet having a framework for existence. Perhaps Rilke points the way to a solution of this dilemma in a beautiful image offered in his "Love Song," a poem that gives masterful expression to that state when the whole human entity does not encroach upon another, and yet is capable of encountering the other in genuine communion:

"WIE SOLL ICH MEINE SEELE
HALTEN,
DASS SIE NICHT AN DEINE
RÜHRT?

". . . DOCH ALLES, WAS UNS AN-
RÜHRT, DICH UND MICH,
NIMMT UNS ZUSAMMEN WIE EIN
BOGENSTRICH,
DER AUS ZWEI SAITEN EINE
STIMME ZIEHT."

"How am I to withhold my soul
That it not impinge on yours?
. . . But everything we are touched by,
you and I,
Draws us together as the stroke of a bow
Mingles two strings in a single note."

One single wholeness and one great communion, this is the solution to strive for.