

Introduction

1. A Working Theory of Man

Primitive man must have faced the mysterious forces of nature in almost constant terror. Insignificant and vulnerable, he assigned magical meanings to the unknown and began to appease it with gifts and strange rituals, thus lessening his fear. To us such efforts appear not only pathetic but also heroic. They were Man's first clumsy attempts to come to terms with the overwhelming forces that shaped his destiny. Now we also know how erroneous these attempts were, and how ineffective.

Since then we have learned to tame nature and even to unleash some of the tremendous energy that is locked up in atomic and in subatomic particles. Yet, though we understand the cosmos and can even manipulate our satellites at unimaginable distances, fear is still as close a companion for many of us as it was for our ancient forebears.

Our eyes look outward and away from us, and it follows that in our search for security we first looked in those directions. Only recently have we dared to acknowledge with much trepidation that hidden forces inside us may be as fierce and powerful as those outside us. They determine the destiny of individuals and the fate of nations. But we are only beginning to really understand these forces. Till now they have been described crudely, and our attempts to control them have failed almost totally.

The very tool that enabled us to conquer the physical forces of nature—our capacity to understand, to infer, to make connections, in short, our power of reasoning—has been the main stumbling block. We insisted that we were rational beings capable of looking after ourselves no less well than we could manage all other things around us. Even Freud viewed Man as a special being able to cure himself by understanding his unconscious. As a result, we know a lot about things, very little about people, and

almost nothing about ourselves. The affairs of individuals, families, and societies are still tangled.

Technologically, life at the end of this century is altogether different than it was at its beginning, when we did not have radio, telephone, television, air traffic, mass education, antibiotics, space exploration, atomic energy, lasers, and the microchip. The natural sciences have changed the very essence of our lives in a very short time. But loneliness, despair, and the search for meaning continue. They have become, in fact, more central concerns of modern existence. We live better and longer and our sophistication is much greater, but we are not happier. We do not conduct our affairs rationally.

It is well known that the social and psychological sciences are lagging behind. We still need a set of principles that will help us use the many new facts about people that our extensive research has unraveled. This book attempts to provide such a master key, and Chapter 8 offers such a set of unifying principles.

If valid, a theory of human motivation and behavior should enable us not only to bring order and harmony into our personal lives but should also help us run our institutions and governments much better. It must be applicable to all human experiences, past as well as present, regardless of geography or cultural differences; it should be capable of predicting the future behavior of individuals and of societies and provide the tools needed to increase industrial productivity and morale. Above all it must enhance our chances of survival in a nuclear age. Like all new keys, such a theory is likely to have some sharp edges at first; new things seldom work smoothly without at least minor adjustments.

The basic motives of our behavior are relatively easy to understand, like the other laws of nature. The general outline of what follows, if not every detail, is comprehensible by any thoughtful and intelligent person. Still the danger of a temporary loss of objectivity exists, because readers are likely to see themselves repeatedly in this book. Our nature is such that we tend to follow our hearts rather than our minds, and we must repeatedly overcome this tendency if we wish to increase our understanding of anything.

Scientific discoveries often consist of no more than careful descriptions of the reactions of materials, phenomena, individuals, groups, or societies. Any single such observation is rarely useful in itself. Our understanding of the universe is only ex-

panded when we discover and uncover general trends and patterns that apply even to things that we have not yet observed directly. Men had always observed that objects fall to the ground, but it was not till Galileo's experiments and Newton's law that gravity was understood. Previously disparate phenomena then began to form a connected system in which future behavior could be predicted. Man could henceforth plan better and improve his methods. Even new observations cannot be usefully gathered except on the basis of a tentative working theory. The search is otherwise as effective as looking for berries in a wheat-field.

Further observations and research will validate and invalidate various parts of the theory that is presented here, but any thoughtful reader is really capable of assessing to what extent its basic themes make sense. By virtue of being alive, we are all somewhat expert on the subject: We have acquired intimate knowledge of human nature and assembled a rich treasure of observations about it. We can often recognize familiar facts even if we cannot elucidate them ourselves.

2. A Brief Outline of the Book

The central importance of irrational fear in the lives of humans is still generally underestimated. It dominates all other feelings and limits health and achievement. Chapter 1 describes the three basic types of fear that torment people: the fears of abandonment, of engulfment, and of non-being. The last of these, which is not the same as the fear of death or dying, has never been described this way before.

Chapter 2 traces the origins of irrational fear in early life, when character is shaped and lifelong expectations and attitudes are formed. This chapter also explains why depression is practically universal. It takes the reader into the world of the newly born, a space in time that each of us has occupied once but that none of us can remember cognitively.

Chapter 3 addresses the all-important differences between thinking and feeling. Most people are at least vaguely aware of the powerful influence of feelings. They not only shape "opinions," but often they are also responsible for "decisions." But true deciding can never be impulsive. It depends on a thoughtful consideration of all the issues involved, yet this is often hard to

come by, since "learning to really think requires first that we make room for it by diminishing the domain of feelings."*

The fascinating story of the development, functioning, and limits of the human brain are also described in Chapter 3. We shall see how we have always tried to escape fear by using rationalizations, downgrading the enormous power of emotions. Yet feelings dominate the affairs of Man both individually and collectively. Potentially a blessing, they are very often the cause of the things that people unwittingly do to harm themselves and others.

Chapter 4 considers in detail the six other basic feelings that exist in addition to fear: romantic and non-romantic love, hate, hurt, anger, happiness, and sadness.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 address some of the important implications of our new understanding, both for the individual and for societies. It might perhaps be possible now to avert the early decline of democracy, an imperfect system of government that nonetheless offers Man's spirit more freedom and dignity and his body more material comforts and security than any other system in the long history of our species.

Chapter 5 is concerned with the quality of life in a world that is quickly becoming overpopulated. We examine here some of the painful moral dilemmas that we have no choice but to face. How do we rationally reconcile the sanctity of life with our need to maintain its quality? How do we raise healthier children in an unhealthy world?

Chapter 6 outlines a new and different approach to psychotherapy that is capable not only of ameliorating the horror, hurt, and pain of depression but also of curing the illness. This chapter can serve as a guide to the perplexed seeker of help for such diverse conditions as addiction and smoking, obesity and social isolation, alcoholism and phobias, the tendency to fail or the obsession to succeed. These are all symptoms of anxiety and of depression, as we shall see. Man stands a chance to become truly free not on barricades but in therapeutic settings that are effective. The way out of meaninglessness requires much work, courage, expense, and time; but easy or not, such a way clearly exists.

In Chapter 7 an alarm is sounded that is meant to awaken

* The above quote appears in Section 80 of Chapter 8. Quotations from this chapter are integrated in the text throughout the rest of the book without specific citations. The purpose is to facilitate reading without interruption. The interested reader will always be able to find the source of the quoted phrases in one or more of the ninety-nine Sections of Chapter 8.

Western societies from their delusional slumber in the domain of feelings. We examine ways to defend ourselves better against international terrorism and focus upon the urgent need to discard the old fictions of an international law based on wishful "thinking." Also included are several practical suggestions that might improve the chances of democracy in its struggle against barbarism.

Chapter 8 is the culmination of the book. It is a systematic presentation of the many separate observations about Man's nature found in earlier chapters. This unified theory of human motivation and behavior explains how we got to be the way we are, what we want, what interferes with our plans, and how we might break out of our characteristic habits of existence.

3. Wanted and Needed: Better Relief from Anxiety

Most people today are at least superficially aware of unconscious motives, but few realize how powerful and how prevalent they are. Man is not what he claims to be. The talking mouth is probably the least trustworthy organ of our body. It obfuscates as much as it clarifies. What we are and how we feel are expressed much more faithfully by other parts of our body: by facial expressions and by muscle tension; by the glint or dullness in the eye; by the pain in our posture; by how we sit, stand, walk, smile, eat or drink, sleep, and even smell. Our mouth lies to save our face. At least unconsciously, words and "thoughts" are often designed to mislead, ourselves as much as others.

Observant individuals can learn to recognize their facial and bodily expressions; they can be seen even more readily in others. These physical phenomena reflect experiences in our distant past, when each of us first adjusted to extrauterine life. "Nothing is lost in the universe. Even though we have no conscious memory of [such] early experiences, our body remembers." We can find traces of such long-past experiences not only in our bodies but also in our behavior and in our habits. If we come upon a tree that is grossly bent in one direction, we can safely assume that it was subjected to recurring winds or other pressure for a long time. In the same way, we can understand people's strange and seemingly inexplicable reactions and behavior. Everything makes good sense in some framework, even if it looks "crazy" in the context in which we first observe it.

It will become increasingly clear along the way that Man is

essentially *not* a rational being, merely one capable of rationality. He is fully rational only rarely, for relatively short periods of time, mostly when the social expectations of him are clearly spelled out, well understood, and voluntarily accepted. In the bosom of his immediate family and in intense emotional involvements he repeatedly acts and reacts "on the basis of feelings, not rationally."

Man, we are told, has been created in God's image, with the capacity to choose between good and evil and between rationality and impulsivity. His high potential is, however, not very often realized. Although capable of existing just below the angels, irrational fear condemns most of us to living far below, among all the other crawling creatures. Living consciously, without dread or distortions of reality, is the glory of human existence. We shall soon see, however, that we are commonly diverted from this lofty state by senseless and yet very real panic.

Billions of dollars, marks, pounds, yen, and even rubles are spent every year to alleviate anxiety. Medicine, psychology, social work, religion, business, government, and many others offer help; but they usually succeed mainly in distracting sufferers from their pain. The despair and the need are so great that many useless and even damaging "remedies" find willing customers. New drugs and procedures as well as self-help books and belief systems are regularly touted as "the answer"—but not many people get more than temporary relief. Yet it is possible now to actually cure most types of emotional stress and illness.

Why is this such a secret then, and why are such approaches not more commonly used? Mostly because irrational fear—the greatest human limitation of all—has hindered both sufferers and those who would help them. Freud understood correctly that psychoanalysts must first be analyzed before they are competent to analyze others. But even he did not know that the cognitive and intellectual process of analysis is essentially irrelevant to eliminating irrational dread. Gaining insight is fascinating, and it is somewhat reassuring, since it sheds light on the frightening darkness of the unknown. But it does not cure illnesses. A person's body must change before dreams-that-cannot-be are slowly and reluctantly given up. Changing perceptions is not enough.

The basic fears of Man that are discussed in Chapter 1 are subjectively so terrible that we failed to fully understand their nature till now. But understanding them is not enough. The fear must first be eliminated within the person who wishes to help

others effectively. This cannot be attained by book learning and by being smart, nor even by having clinical experience. Prospective helpers must actually dare to face their own fears and essentially rid themselves of them. But practically everyone is too afraid even to look at them directly.

Therapists generally rationalize that other less frightening, easier, and simpler ways exist. There are nine ways to skin a cat, they often claim, probably innocently. As we shall see in Chapter 3, Man has repeatedly erred by idealizing his wonderful brain, causing his own tragedies. His error is understandable, since the brain is as close to a true miracle as we ever come. But the price of this delusion has been very high. Many millions have perished because they failed to see that they were being led astray by feelings that are usually irrational. They ignored thinking, which might have saved them. Fear, the most powerful of all feelings, commonly numbs us, and it frequently interferes with our capacity to reason.

Millions of disappointed, disillusioned, and disgruntled ex-patients of psychiatrists, psychotherapists, counselors, ministers, and various "morale builders" continue to suffer misery and pain. Still others turn to occupational therapists, art therapists, music, movement, and dance therapists, gurus and cult leaders, wasting not only money but also human dignity, hope, and life itself. Acute symptoms are often ameliorated, but the lifelong illness continues to fester underneath.

Standing on the shoulders of Zen masters and other giants like Martin Buber, Sigmund Freud, and Wilhelm Reich, just as Einstein stood on Newton's, we can now see awesome vistas altogether different from the landscapes they described. Our view is clearer and we can see much further, not away from us but deep inside us.

A swelling market demand for effective therapy may be the only force strong enough to bring about change, pushing prospective therapists through the rigorous process of self-transformation, the prerequisite for really helping others. Marketplace pressures might thus transform psychiatry into a more useful branch of medicine, and psychotherapy from an endless crutch into an effective system of healing. It is a formidable goal, but the task must be undertaken, since the welfare and lives of millions hang in the balance.

To benefit from this book and enjoy it does not require previous expertise or knowledge, either in psychology, political sci-

ence, or other fields. It requires only the flexibility to see ourselves in a new way.

Although of interest to professionals, students, and experts, these observations are within the reach of every literate person. Although it offers no easy solutions, the book is meant to have practical applications. Strange as it may sound at first, I regard the general human predicament as a condition which is literally curable.