

## **MEANING-REORGANIZATION VIEW VIS-À-VIS HIDDEN REALITY VIEW- REVISITING THE ALLOTROPES OF PSYCHODYNAMICS OF INSIGHT**

**K. RAM CHANDRA**

Professor & Head, Department of English, VR Siddhartha Engineering College (Autonomous), Vijayawada,  
Andhra Pradesh, India

### **ABSTRACT**

This paper aims at presenting the allotropes of Psychodynamics of insight with special reference to Meaning-reorganization view and hidden reality view. An attempt is made to present a contrast between the two in addition to taking up a conceptual analysis amidst various aspects of human psyche.

**KEYWORDS:** Human Psyche, 'Hidden Reality', Ego-Integration

### **INTRODUCTION**

As a prelude to indulging in the interpretation of psychoanalysis, with reference to the variant views related to the psychodynamics of insight, an endeavour has been taken up in order to realize the line of demarcation, if not difference, between analyzing what a theory means and arguing about its truth. This phenomenon is significant enough not only due to the controversy over psychoanalysis in which this simple distinction is very often lost sight of, but also because in these controversies, one specific interpretation of the semantic realization of the psychoanalytic discourse, namely 'the hidden reality' view, is considered the content of its literal truth as well. Hence in putting forward a different interpretation, there is every possibility that it may seem to be challenging the truth of the theory (Fingarette 1963 p15). But it may also be understood that this appearance arises only because the orthodox interpretation is not perceived to be what it is an interpretation or construal of the discourse of psychoanalysis. It is this orthodox understanding of psychoanalytic theory that can also be called the hidden reality interpretation. This interpretation establishes its point of departure from the centrality of repression, but it possesses a literal understanding of repression. It is to be understood that this prominent pronouncement is Freud's own representation of repression.

"The essence of repression lies simply in the function of rejecting and keeping something out of consciousness" (Freud 1958 p86). His subsequent enunciation presents the comparison of the repressed mental wish to a guest who is either not allowed into the drawing room or is forced out once he is in, or is never allowed in at all. At the door is the ever-present guardian censor for the guest is impetuous and might force his way in if the door is unguarded.

Many more instances could be given of such descriptions which present the hidden reality view. According to this line of thinking, there are such hidden events and processes as unconscious wishes, repressed memories and therapy consists in bringing such hidden material to the forefront of the individual's consciousness. It can be argued that such an interpretation of psychoanalysis would be encountering two particularly serious challenges:

- In terms of such a perspective, a therapeutic interpretation is said to be a discovery of repressed items but the unconscious, by its very nature, cannot be brought to consciousness in its rudimentary state, i.e. as unconscious. But in such a case, what determines the validity of a psychoanalytic interpretation?

- But, it can be suggested that that any such ‘hidden reality’ understanding of psychoanalysis may not be able to make a satisfactory sense of the therapeutic significance of insight.

In order to contribute to such critical issues, an alternative scheme of interpretation, namely ‘the meaning-reorganization’ view (Sundara Rajan 1991 p120) is also put forward. Certain instances of how this view could be developed may offer some understanding.

The following descriptions of the phenomena of psychotherapy portray the line of thinking:

- The therapist does not present information; a presentation of options takes place.
- Insight does not reveal unknown events of the past but helps one see known past events in a new way or from different perspective
- Insight stands as a reorganization of the meanings of the experience pertaining to past and present, a reorientation of future and past. (Fingarette 1963 p20)

### **An Analysis of the Meaning-Reorganization View**

In the light of the above interpretation, there are certain broad pre-suppositions; a significant one is that meanings are constitutive of experience at the human level. Another is that in human beings, there is a certain drive towards increase and integration of meanings. It is assumed that this drive towards meaningfulness is fundamental and autonomous; by this it can be understood that while this drive towards meaning may be connected with organismic and biological drives, it is not simply reducible to such biological impulses. In other words, there is also a drive towards gratification which gets represented by the pleasure principle in psychoanalytic meta-psychology. Meaning may be used to maximize pleasure, a possibility that psychoanalysis conceptualizes as the Reality Principle functioning in the service of the pleasure principle. It is also true that achievement of meaning may itself provide gratification. But in spite of such close inter-connections, the drive towards meaning is a separate and autonomous force – a point which becomes clear in those situations where meaning is achieved only at the price of gratification.

The autonomy of the search for meaning carries with it the autonomy of the ego, especially of its synthesizing functions. In fact, ‘ego’ is the name for this unifying drive towards meaning and the ego’s unity, ego-integration as such, is a unity of meaning (Sundara Rajan 1991 p122). The elements of ego-integration have a significant contribution to make as far as human psyche is concerned since human mind is a multi-dimensional phenomenon.

From this stand point, there can be two different ontological interpretations of the language of psychoanalysis, namely, the conventional hidden reality model and the meaning-reorganization model. The models can conveniently be represented as the structuralist and hermeneutic models, respectively. If one undertakes an enquiry into Levi-Strauss’ analysis it appears as though the structuralist model undergrids the interpretative or hermeneutic model, but based on the above points of view, one may develop a conceptual position where the relationship between the two appears to be one of complementarity, for the structuralist or hidden reality interpretation may not amount to accommodating the primacy of the entire gamut of the dynamics of insight.

The reorganization of meanings which the insight therapy leads on to requires to be considered an autonomous function of the ego. But by marching ahead, the endeavor to validate the hidden reality interpretation appears to be an insurmountable task except by resorting to meaning-reorganizations. It can be exemplified that if the hidden reality interpretation is to be preferred over the meaning-reorganization model, it can realized only by administering the criteria of

validation of therapeutic interpretations. In the process of identifying and considering the methodology of validation of such interpretations, it can be found that a therapeutic interpretation is validated because it makes sense of what was previously senseless; a psychoanalytic interpretation does not present the unconscious wish itself for it is only as something conscious that is known after it has undergone transformation or translation into consciousness. Valid insight results in a new meaningfulness and it is because of this that it is validated. It shall be kept in view that Freud himself justifies the postulation of the unconscious by a gain in meaning. He writes:

“All these conscious acts remain disconnected and unintelligible if we insist upon claiming that every mental act that occurs in us must also necessarily be experienced by us through consciousness; on the other hand they fall into a demonstrable connection if we interpolate between them the unconscious acts which we have inferred. A gain in meaning is a perfectly justifiable ground for going beyond the limits of experience” (quoted in Fingarette 1963 p30)

If the representation happens to be pragmatic enough, it would appear that the evidence for the validity of a psychoanalytic interpretation belongs to something that is hermeneutic in nature; even a pronounced structuralist account is based on such grounds only. This suggests that the meaning-reorganization model enjoys a primary conceptual stature. This analysis may be an awe-inspiring inversion of Levi-Strauss.

But the pertinent question about the hermeneutic model is the explanation of the therapeutic efficacy of insight. It is incumbent on the part of the model to present how the process of restructuring of meanings or the achievement of a coherent and intelligible framework releases the tensions and constrictions of experience. The very experience gets reorganized by means of a re-construal of it is the hypothesis. This has to be established at both the philosophical and psychological levels. At the philosophical level, the concept is that certain meaning-giving acts constitute experience. This was the core principle in the plethora of Kantian teachings that the experience is not so much given as constituted by certain primordial intentionalities of the mind. This perspective has been elaborated in Husserl's Phenomenology and also in the psycho-therapeutic context, by the contribution of phenomenological and existential psycho-therapists such as Ludwig Binswanger, who perceives such constitutive meaning-giving organization the existential a priori. But at the psychological level, the issue offers a greater challenge – how does understanding address and transform the modes of suffering?

It shall be taken into consideration that as per the observation of psychoanalysis, the neurotic compulsions and symptoms are not mere unmeaning organic episodes; they have their own meaningfulness. In this context, the question that arises is related to the way therapeutic intelligibility displaces neurotic meanings. In addition, if the achievement of therapeutic meaning transforms the experience of suffering, in what way the fact that this insight and clarity is itself the result of a severe personal struggle often fraught with suffering can be explained? Finally, is the goal of therapy merely a healthy state of normalcy beyond suffering or, on the contrary, is there not something to be done for the human growth and moral development for the value of suffering?

### **A Step towards Realizing and Reconstructing a Rational Life World**

As has been discussed, drive towards meaning shall be perceived as the synthesizing and integrating function for the ego. As a matter of specific representation, this synthetic unity of meaning is represented as ego in common parlance and in regular reckoning. In the light of this, any bewildering element that stands either as an impediment or as a peril to this function may cause a threat to the integrity of the ego, and psychoanalysis categorically states that the ego experiences such threat as anxiety. It is common knowledge that anxiety forms the bedrock of psycho-pathology. This phenomenon of anxiety gets experienced as the engulfment or overpowering of the ego in its synthesizing functions. The individual is

subjected to a condition of feeling helpless in the face of an experience which the ego is unable to master. When the meaning reorganization is effectively processed by therapy, it leads to a re-structuring of the experience under such forms and in such a manner that the ego could make sense of. "Of course this process of re-structuring of meanings is not merely an intellectual matter of adopting a new point of view, but an acceptance of a framework for self-application and self-understanding; it is a matter of seeing oneself in relation to others in a new way. Such a re-structuring of meanings gives rise to a re-structuring of experience; a re-construal of meanings is a reconstitution of my life-world" (Sundara Rajan 1991 p124).

It is this phenomenon that transforms self-pity which is the specific element of neurotic suffering. In other words, it is understood that meaning-reorganization is ego-integration and that non-existence of the semantic realization is experienced as anxiety. It may be identified that in this point of view anxiety is structurally connected with the ego and it is to be understood that such a theory of anxiety establishes a reasonable, may be a plausible, sense of three psychoanalytic insights:

- The ego alone can experience anxiety.
- Anxiety is a signal of a threat to the ego.
- The specific function of the ego is synthetic integration. (Sundara Rajan 1991 p125).

### **Establishing the Perspective**

Opposed to the said line of thinking which suggests an intelligible account of anxiety, it may be identified that the structuralist or hidden reality model can only exemplify the concept and element of anxiety as some kind of mythical alchemical conversion of libido. To perceive anxiety in that manner precludes any possibility of considering it a human response to experience; if anxiety were merely a transformation of the libido, it would be something that happens to every one of the conscious human beings like any other developments including aberrations, rather than something what the humans are.

As Ludwig Binswanger puts Anxiety is a way of being in the world in the mode of helplessness and being under a threat. But it may be questioned that if this point were to be a realist phenomenon, does it not only show that neurotic suffering is, in its own way, with meaning? Has not Freud taught us to look behind the bizarre symptoms for their own peculiar intelligibility? (Sundara Rajan 1991 p125).

This objection obviously leads us on to the next one, namely, that if therapeutic insight transforms the mode of suffering by giving a broader framework of meaning to the experience, why, almost invariably, the adoption of this newer, meaning-giving perspective itself should be such a painful struggle; therapeutic understanding is not to be seen blandly as an overcoming of suffering and pain.

On the contrary, insight here is the result sometimes of great personal agony. One might begin to understand this therapeutic suffering more clearly if one remembers that the neurotic did have a framework or a way of contextualizing one's experiences; specifically, one does have ways of making intelligible to oneself the relationship to things, to others and to oneself. This perspective might indeed have had various shortcomings and at these points, there were blind spots that were unintelligible; at these points emerged behavioural and affective symptoms that thrust themselves upon one arbitrarily, like a persistent headache or inexplicable tremor of the hands. But the framework did provide a sense of intelligibility to the person. Also, one must remember that however inadequate the neurotic perspective might have been, it did at least have one supreme virtue in terms of the perspective, it looked as if the poor individual himself / herself was

more to be pitied than censured, that he/she was the victim of unfortunate tendencies and forces and that all that was good and great in him/her has not been allowed a chance. In other words, the suffering individual could yet maintain a sense of dignity and in fact could even compensate for his/her ills by protecting a concealed tender image of him/her. The neurotic perspective nourishes this self-pity and functions as a mythic shield of defence against a hostile, debunking world.

There is another side to the coin; neurosis is also a way of keeping alive certain exalter images of others; father and mother are pure ideal beings and they are not, generally, to be blamed for this headache that one has and the dread that comes to anybody in one's dreams. In this way also, neurosis preserves the semblance of a morally tolerable world by allowing one to lie about oneself and others. Likewise, Neurosis creates a meaningful structure in terms of which one can see oneself and one's relations with others, but it is built upon a certain inner complicity and collusiveness. When this structure of meanings is called into question and gets eroded, the pain of being peeled off layer after layer like an onion, the bewilderment and anomie of being left without guidelines and supports may become unbearable and resistance to such reorganization of meanings formidable.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is in some such manner that one can understand the struggles of transference and working through, for these stages/ levels and rather conceptual layers of therapy represent the de-structuring and re-structuring of the patient's life-world. Or, in Kuhnian terms, such phenomena lead to the destruction of an old, even celebrated, paradigm and its replacement by a new one. The new framework is not merely more inclusive in the sense that it makes sense of otherwise unintelligible and anomalous phenomena but even more prominently, it strengthens the drive towards meaning and coherence, increases the range of personal responsibility and also reduces self-pity. It is to be understood that human being shall be pragmatic enough to balance one's mental states for a success in any given environment.

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