

# Conceptions in Modern Psychiatry, by H. Sullivan

## a. Quotes:

- "It is only when the world expands as a tissue of persons and interpersonal relations which are meaningful that knowledge becomes truly significant, and learning becomes a serious attempt to implement oneself for one's future life." - Author (pg. 44)
- "One achieves mental health to the extent that one becomes aware of one's interpersonal relations" - Author (pg. 207)

## b. General Notes:

- Lecture 1 - Basic Conceptions (pg. 3)
  - "The next, I trust, great step in its emergence came with the realization that the field of psychiatry is neither the mentally sick individual, nor the successful and unsuccessful processes that may be observed in groups and that can be studied in detached objectivity. **Psychiatry, instead, is the study of processes that involve or go on between people. The field of psychiatry is the field of interpersonal relations, under any and all circumstances in which these relations exist.** It was seen that a personality can never be isolated from the complex of interpersonal relations in which the person lives and has his being." (pg. 10)
  - "Childhood includes a rapid acculturation, but not alone in the basic acquisition of language, which is itself an enormous cultural entity. By this I mean that in childhood the peculiar mindlessness of the infant which seems to be assumed by most parents passes off and they begin to regard the little one as in need of training, as being justifiably an object of education; and what they train the child in consists of select excerpts from the cultural heritage, from that surviving of past people, incorporated in the personality of the parent. This includes such things as habits of cleanliness—which are of extremely good repute in the Western culture - and a great many other things. And along with all this acculturation, toilet habits, eating habits, and so on and so forth, there proceeds the learning of the language as a tool for communication." (pg. 18)
  - "**...experience...is the foundation of the self system**, the organization of experience reflected to one from the significant people around one—which determines the personal characteristics of those events. In no other fashion can we explain the enormous discrepancy between people's reactions to comparable life situations." (pg. 24)
- Lecture 2 - The Human Organism and the Necessary Environment (pg. 30)
  - "The infant is born in far too immature a state to live by its own functional activity, unaided by interventions from others." (pg. 32)
    - "**As growth and maturation proceed acculturation is inevitable, because in the earliest stages, the infant is cared for by people, and modified by this personal element in the environment.**" (pg. 33)
  - "Almost from birth, the infant begins to attend to movements and objects about him...There is no room for doubt as to the significance attached to the object which satisfies the hunger and thirst of the infant, and we may safely infer that the mothering one is the first vivid perception of a person relatively independent of the infant's own vague entity. I surmise that a part of her, the nipple, provides the first of all vividly meaningful symbols—a vaguely demarcated "complex-image" or proto-concept with very wide reference. The clarification of the nipple as borne by another person instead of its being a relatively unmanageable part of one's own cosmic entity is the first step in shrinking to life size. Outer objects of a more neutral sort—that do not satisfy physico-chemical needs directly—come gradually to mark off the limits of one's private world, and so to establish the reality of the relatively manageable as against the wholly independent." (pg. 33)
    - "We learn in infancy that objects which our distance receptors, our eyes and ears for example, encounter, are of a quite different order of relationship from things which our tactile or our gustatory receptors encounter. That which one has in one's mouth so that one can taste it, while it may be regurgitated to the distress of everyone, is still in a very different relationship than is the full moon which one encounters through one's eye but can in no sense manage. This difference of relationship to objects is an important category for organizing one's knowledge about the world. We organize our acquaintance with the world in order to maintain necessary or pleasant functional activity within the world with which, whether the objects be manageable or unmanageable, remote or immediate, one has to maintain communal existence however unwittingly." (pg. 34)
  - "The cultural entities, so to speak, are part of the necessary environment. The human being requires the world of culture, cannot live and be human except in communal existence with it. The world of culture is, however, clearly manifest only in human behavior and thought. Other people are, therefore, an indispensable part of the environment of the human organism. This is absolutely true in the earlier phases of personality development. The factor of fantasy may cloud this issue in later stages, as in fact, it may be observed to do at the end of the epoch of childhood in the case of isolated children." (pg. 38)
  - "In brief, the child proceeds into the juvenile era of personality development by virtue of a new tendency towards cooperation, to doing things in accommodation to the personality of others. Along with this budding ability to play with other children, there goes a learning of those performances which we call competition and compromise. In the juvenile era, in this culture, school is the great new arena for experience." (pg. 38)
    - "School brings new experience in adjusting oneself to authority" (pg. 39)
    - "Now come other adults who have to be managed. One discovers quite suddenly that parents are by no means the worst people in the world; that parents, whatever their faults, take one rather more seriously than do teachers and older boys and girls. One finds that tried and trusted symbol operations - speech, gesture, excuses, promises—are no longer effective. Autistic fringes begin to stand out as barriers to communication. Mediate and immediate acculturation proceed apace. **The world begins to spread, the horizons move off. One begins to see that there is a great deal which one had not previously suspected.**" (pg. 39)
      - "On the other hand, harsh, cruel teachers and there are certain people teaching school who enjoy the discomfiture of their charges—may affect the child from a happy home who has been taught to expect friendliness and a receptive and inquiring attitude, may teach him gradually by reiterated pain and humiliation, that the world into which he has moved is an unfriendly and cruel world, and may start revery processes in him the goal of which is to return to the home from which he has unhappily been expelled, apparently for no reason other than that he had gotten older. In this, a very considerable evil has been done because the character of these reveries is regressive. **They seek to go back, and this child may indicate this regressive, retreating-into-the-past tendency by regretting that he has grown older, by wishing that he was younger again. This regressive tendency is a great evil because development still has a very long way to go. If at the very beginning of the more specialized socialization of personality which the juvenile era, according to its limits, initiates, there is this strong reverse, this powerful rebuff, this cutting off of satisfactions or undermining of security, in the mind's eye the child turns backward, he seeks to avoid the future, to escape experience which would teach how to live with one's fellows.**" (pg. 40)
  - "The capacity to love in its initial form makes appearance as the mark that one has ceased to be juvenile and has become preadolescent. What this means in the outline of situations which it brings about is this: at this point the satisfactions and the security which are being experienced by someone else, some particular other person, begin to be as significant to the person as are his own satisfactions and security. You have just heard a definition of the end state of love which, if you are not accustomed to this type of thinking, may seem to you a strange one. Let me repeat it, because it has certain objective validity which many other definitions might be found to lack. **When the satisfaction or the security of another person becomes as significant to one as is one's own satisfaction or security, then the state of love exists.** So far as I know, under no other circumstances is a state of

- love present, regardless of the popular usage of the word." (pg. 42-43)
- "One's security is not imperilled by one's love object. One's satisfactions are facilitated by the love object. Therefore, naturally, for the first time one can begin to express oneself freely. If another person matters as much to you as do you yourself, it is quite possible to talk to this person as you have never talked to anyone before. The freedom which comes from this expanding of one's world of satisfaction and security to include two people, linked together by love, permits exchanges of nuances of meaning, permits investigations without fear of rebuff or humiliation, which greatly augments the consensual validation of all sorts of things, all in the end symbols that stand for - refer to, represent - states of being in the world." (pg. 43)
    - "In this period there begins the illumination of a real world community. As soon as one finds that all this vast autistic and somewhat validated structure to which one refers as one's mind, one's thoughts, one's personality, is really open to some comparing of notes, to some checking and counter-checking, one begins to feel human in a sense in which one has not previously felt human. One becomes more fully human in that one begins to appreciate the common humanity of people - there comes a new sympathy for the other fellow, whether he be present to the senses or mediated by rumors in the geography, or the like. In other words, the feeling of humanity is one of the aspects of the expansion of personality which comes in preadolescence. Learning at this stage begins to assume its true aspect of implementing the person in securing satisfactions and maintaining his security in interpersonal relations through the rest of life." (pg. 43-44)
  - "We have seen how **the self comes into being as a dynamism to preserve the feeling of security.** We have observed that it is built largely of personal symbolic elements learned in contact with other significant people. We have noted that **the self comes to control awareness, to restrict one's consciousness of what is going on in one's situation very largely by the instrumentality of anxiety with, as a result, a dissociation from personal awareness of those tendencies of the personality which are not included or incorporated in the approved structure of the self.** The point is that the self is approved by significant others, that any tendencies of the personality that are not so approved, that are in fact strongly disapproved, are dissociated from personal awareness. We saw that these dissociated tendencies, which do not cease to exist merely because they are excluded from the self, manifest themselves in actions, activities, of which the person himself remains quite unaware. The actions are unnoticed and the goals of the activities are things of which the person has no conscious knowledge. This dissociation of components of the personality is not restricted to the pursuit of satisfaction. Some of the power processes which the infant and the child, perhaps even the juvenile, found effective also come under such stern disapproval at a later stage of personality that they, too, are dissociated, and from then on manifest outside of the awareness of the person himself." (pg. 46)
    - "...one might say that the larger the proportion of **energy systems in a personality** which act exterior to the awareness of the person, the greater the chances that he will meet some crisis in interpersonal relations in which he cannot act in the fashion which we call mental health." (pg. 47)
  - "Culture in this sense we hold to include institutions like the government, the Department of the Interior, the church, the school, and so on; the forceful convictions as to right and wrong ways of living, the mores, as sociologists are wont to call them, the traditions of the family group, of the community, and the like, and the fashions which are in force at the particular time concerned." (pg. 48)
    - "These are the cultural entities which are highly significant in the human environment, and all of them have their being and their manifestation so far as any particular person is concerned in other people who are significant for one reason or another to him, originally the mother as the provider of all sorts of necessary protection and satisfaction; in childhood the parents and the home society, people who are frequently in the home and related by bonds of intimacy or hostility to the parent; in the juvenile era, the school, the school teacher and all that machinery, and to a certain extent one's play companions; and in preadolescence the chum and the people in whom the chum is interested. We have seen how this personal environment is expanded by the mediate channels of communication, the telephone, the radio, and particularly the printed word." (pg. 48)
  - "[W]hen somebody else begins to matter as much as I do, then what this other person values must receive some careful consideration from me. So it is in the preadolescent change that the great controlling power of the cultural, social, forces is finally inescapably written into the human personality." (pg. 49)
  - "**In this brief phase of preadolescence, the world as known gains depth of meaning** from the new appraisal of the people who compose it. The world as rumored is a wonderful place; the quest of Sir Lancelot rises from the mists of faëry to all but a pattern of life to be lived. Experiences reported from excursions away from home carry a coloring of friendly wonder. The future is constructed in relatively noble terms by the reveries that prepare for tomorrow and that assuage disappointment, take the humdrum out of monotonous tasks." (pg. 56)
  - Lecture 3 - Developmental Syndromes (pg. 57)
    - "Once successfully negotiated, the person comes forth with self-respect adequate to almost any situation, with the respect for others that this competent self-respect entails, with the dignity that befits the high achievement of competent personality, and with the freedom of personal initiative that represents a comfortable adaptation of one's personal situation to the circumstances that characterize the social order of which one is a part. The epochs that lead up to adolescence are closely if obscurely related to somatic maturation. Adolescence begins with the most spectacular maturation of all, the puberty change, with its swift alteration of physiological processes to the completion of bodily development. I still find virtue in dividing the epoch of adolescence into three eras: early adolescence, from the first evidences of puberty to the completion of voice change; mid-adolescence, to the patterning of genital behavior; and late adolescence, to the establishment of durable situations of intimacy such that all the major integrating tendencies are freely manifested within awareness in the series of one's interpersonal relations." (pg. 57-58)
    - "Such a person, having stumbled through preadolescence, let us say, carefully avoiding any physical intimacies with anybody, comes to adolescence. **At adolescence the genital dynamism awakens.**" (pg. 62)
      - "We say that the principal zones of interaction are as follows: the oral, the retinal, the auditory, the general tactile, the vestibulo-kinæsthetic, the genital, and the anal, or aboral." (pg. 64)
    - "Dreams are interpersonal phenomena in which the other fellow is wholly illusory, wholly fantastic, a projection, if you please, of certain constructive impulses, or of certain destructiveness, or of certain genital motivations, or something of that kind." (pg. 69)
  - Lecture 4 - Explanatory Conceptions (pg. 87)
    - "The most astonishing of the disorders of recall are the amnesias which we encounter most frequently in self-absorbed people who have met insuperable difficulties in living. These folk live rather as if the world were a stage on which each performs, assisted by shadowy figures, for a shadowy audience including one luminously real person, the actor. It is not so strange, therefore, if, to them, recollections lack the brash reality to which the rest of us are accustomed; if they, instead, have a varying measure of uncertainty, so that some recollections of events have a rather dream-like or may-have-happened character. Hysteria, the mental disorder to which the self-absorbed are peculiarly liable, is the distortion of interpersonal relations which results from extensive amnesias." (pg. 109)
    - "Interpersonal situations including an obsessional person are characterized by obscure power operations directed to the maintenance of control over everything that happens." (pg. 112)
      - "The obsessional state is classically a state in which there is great activity of thought. The interpersonal relations are never simple, never free from great parataxic distortion, and they can be very strikingly illusory—particularly, of the Me-and-Myself type. These people are always "trying

- to make themselves" do this or that, or be this or that which is regarded as desirable—which they "ought" to do or be." (pg. 114-115)
- "People suffering the paranoid states can generally be provoked into expressing ideas of grandeur. Paranoid states are said to be characterized by ideas of persecution and of grandeur. This is somewhat misleading, because all substitutive processes include an extravagantly superior formulation of the self-for the good reason that they are all complex processes to overcome or at least obliterate from awareness an irremediable sense of inferiority, unworthiness, and incapacity to awaken positive attitudes in others. If one's efforts in this direction take the form of being persecuted, it is only natural that the rationalizing of this extraordinary state of affairs calls for some rather amazing explanatory beliefs. To have a whole group of people bent on one's injury or destruction may well be convincing evidence that one is a person of considerable importance." (pg. 121)
  - "The paranoid, the algolagnic, the hypochondriacal, and the obsessional states are probably different patterns of much the same maladjustive processes. Patients manifest various blends of the four and some patients definitely alternate between one or another of them. Some hypochondriacal people become paranoid, and vice versa; and there may be more than one such transformation. The processes which are woven into these four types of episodes are briefly, as follows. The early experience produced a prevailing negative self. There was not enough approbation. The negative attitude has interfered with the securing of interpersonal satisfactions. The projected low appraisal of suitable people has minimized every opportunity. The feeling of personal inferiority and unworthiness—which has to be concealed but is not thereby improved—has applied even in comparison with the already derogated others. The unsatisfied state, also more or less clearly represented in awareness—often as loneliness—is at times intolerable. Failure after failure undermines the vestiges of security which come from reverie processes of a forward-looking type. They lose their utility, and a state bordering on despair supervenes. The conviction grows that one is not fully capable of being human, and the intolerable insecurity that this entails deletes what is left of adaptive effort. One ceases to make positive or negative movements towards others. Random, relatively purposeless, restlessness becomes the expression of unsatisfied longings; sleep is disturbed and fatigue phenomena appear. The processes making for consensual validations are entirely suspended. Autistic features become more and more evident in one's reveries. The reveries themselves are regressive; they are oriented to constructive purpose, but the orientation takes the direction of a search in the past. One goes back as it were, over the course of one's development, seeking for a time in one's life which was satisfactory. In this regression, one always comes to something that is experienced as a way to start over again. The regressive direction now changes. The autistically valid but consensually inassimilable pattern now unfolds as an episode of mental disorder; it initiates a relatively stable maladjustive progression in interpersonal relations. Various degrees of awareness attend these dramatic changes of life-direction from a regression in the face of despair to a progression along the line of one of our syndromes. The person who is regressing in the realm of interpersonal relations, be he ever so withdrawn from integration with real people, is not out of the world. Events continue to impinge on him. Some of these events are provocative of the reverie processes, the highly illusory interpersonal relations, that he manifests in the regressive course. One of them may strike off a vivid alertness, all the more impressive because of the narrowing of consciousness which is a phenomenon of fatigue. This impressive event, perceived in the setting of an earlier state of development, may unfold itself as the very cause of the forward movement. This is the case with the unhappy person who "suddenly sees it all" and emerges from regression into a quickly systematized paranoid state." (pg. 122-123)
  - "**Schizophrenia is a term meaning literally a fragmentation of the mind. The state is factually a splitting of the control of awareness.** In all other conditions a monopoly of the self dynamism, awareness in schizophrenic states includes that which is in the self system and also that which attends the autonomous functional activity of the hallucinating zones of interaction. Put in other words, in nonschizophrenic states, awareness—at least awareness of personal meaning - of the situations in which one exists is restricted to integrations brought about by tendencies incorporated in the self dynamism. Nothing else but conflict and anxiety can be present in awareness. In schizophrenic states, on the other hand, a state of conflict has as it were been universalized, the conflict-provoking tendency systems being accorded independent personality with power greater than that of the self. Instead of anxiety, there is fear and often terror. So far as the self functions, the patient is engaged in (regressive) magic operations in an attempt to protect himself, to regain some measure of security in the face of mighty threats, portents, and performances in a world that has become wholly irrational and incomprehensible." (pg. 141-142)
  - Lecture 5 - Therapeutic Conceptions (pg. 175)
    - "**The purpose of psychiatry is the understanding of living to the end that it may be facilitated.** The goal may be viewed from the standpoint of treating mentally disordered patients. Even from this viewpoint, one cannot but realize that the social order itself is an important factor with which one must reckon in formulating therapeutic aims and the procedures for their realization. If the psychiatrist is able to maintain his perspective, he comes sooner or later to see that there is another perhaps even more significant standpoint from which to consider the ways and means by which the purpose of psychiatry can be achieved. I refer here to contemplating the social order, not merely as it sets the limits within which the patient's interpersonal relations may succeed, but rather as the mediate source from which spring his problems which are themselves signs of difficulties in the social order." (pg. 175)

c. Further Readings:

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