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## COMMUNICATION IN PSYCHIATRY

### The Development of the International Journal of Psychiatry

Jason Aronson

The *International Journal of Psychiatry* has been organized to facilitate communication in psychiatry across international and interdisciplinary boundaries. The purpose of this article is to review the journal's development, examine the problems of communication in psychiatry, and describe the ways in which the journal will attempt to cross these barriers. The report is a personal one, not only because it is in that way perhaps more informative, but because such a narrative reveals the underlying motivation which is shared by many of the participants in this project.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF THE JOURNAL

The background of the journal is the crisis in civilization, the conflict between East and West, which today is the background of all our lives. Never before in the history of man has the possibility existed of the complete destruction of life. Man's mutual distrust, and his often irrational behavior have led to many disastrous wars; entire societies have been annihilated. But destruction has never had the possibility of being complete; human existence has always continued. This assurance to past generations—if it is assurance—is no longer ours. At times it has seemed that only the mutual fear of total devastation has held back the use of nuclear weapons. History has shown, however, that mutual fear is not a strong and stable guarantor of peace. The very existence of our future seems to depend on a decrease in the massive distrust that currently burdens international relations.

Concern for this ominous problem tends to overshadow everyday activities. After all, what is the value of any research in psychiatry if civilization is to be destroyed? But what can any one individual do? Some people—Jerome Frank, Charles Osgood and others—have become specialists in the psychology of international relations. However, the usual training and experience of a psychiatrist does not equip him to solve problems of public affairs. One cannot directly extrapolate clinical experience with individual patients to arrive at conclusions about the behavior of nations. Nevertheless, increased mutual knowledge in all fields, including psychiatry, might contribute to a decrease in the immense distrust that currently exists.

It is clear that most American psychiatrists are uninformed about Soviet psychiatry; and, in all probability, our Soviet colleagues are equally as unknowledgeable about American psychiatry. Perhaps it would be possible to contribute to American psychiatrists' knowledge of Soviet psychiatric research and services and increase communication in the other direction as well. After reviewing the English literature on Soviet psychiatry, having begun to learn Russian and having had long discussions with Mark Field, a sociologist who has written extensively on Soviet medicine, I made a grant application to the United States Public Health Service for support of a study of Soviet psychiatry. The aim of the proposed grant was to translate and make available in the English language basic materials on contemporary Soviet psychiatry and to provide the necessary background data on Soviet society and Russian culture to understand the context of psychiatric practices in the USSR\*.

\* A series of books: *Psychiatric Services in the Soviet Union*, *Psychotherapy in the Soviet Union*, *Forensic Psychiatry in the Soviet Union*, and *Alcoholism in the Soviet Union* are now in preparation.

This was to be accomplished through the examination of existing Soviet and Western literature and by interviewing Soviet psychiatrists in the USSR to the extent it might be possible. The funds were granted, and in the summer of 1961 I made my first trip to East Germany, Poland and the Soviet Union.

In Warsaw I met psychiatrists (Stephan Leder, Kazimierz Dabrowski), psychologists (Janusz Reykowski), and sociologists (Andrej Malewski, and Magda Sokolovska), who were familiar with science both in the United States and the Soviet Union. They explained that Poland has traditionally been a crossroads between the East and West. Since a major motivating factor behind this trip was to increase communication between the East and West, in the course of our conversations I suggested the publication in Warsaw of a journal whose goal would be to increase international communication in psychiatry. This was greeted warmly, and the kinds of articles which it might contain were discussed at some length. A week later in Moscow I took this up during meetings with psychiatrists (Babayan, Snezhnevski, Kerbikov, and Fedotov) and met with similar interest and support.

On return to the United States, I found encouragement here as well, and an organizing committee\*\* was established in order to provide advice on many of the problems ahead, and to select the members of the editorial board. Conversations with the organizing committee, the men who became members of the editorial board, and others\*\*\* led me to realize that the problem of international communication was complex but of great importance.

#### COMMUNICATION IN PSYCHIATRY

Communication in psychiatry has grown more complex in recent decades. The number of people working in psychiatry and its related fields has increased, as has the number of publications. There are 214 currently active journals of psychiatry (Clegg, 1961) and thousands of other journals in medicine, physiology, psychology, sociology and other fields that publish relevant articles. Moreover, there is a great increase of specialization within psychiatry: child psychiatry, psychopharmacology, and social psychiatry which have become special fields in themselves, each with its own journals, meetings, and vocabulary. In addition, there is a broader collaboration of disciplines on specific research projects than before. The multidisciplinary approach often involves psychologists, sociologists, statisticians and physiologists in collaboration with clinical psychiatrists. This enormous growth of psychiatry, the increasing specialization, and the development of multidisciplinary approaches has compounded the problem of communication.

Of course, this problem is not unique to psychiatry; all scientists are faced by the "information explosion." Morris Fishbein (1960) has estimated that 250,000 original medical articles are published annually in approximately 50 languages. Even so, a preliminary study by Richard Orr (1960) on scientific information in the

\*\* The members were: Dr. Erich Lindemann, Prof. and Chairman of the Dept. of Psychiatry, Mass. General Hospital and Harvard Medical School; Fredrich Redlich, Prof. and Chairman of the Dept. of Psychiatry, Yale Medical School; Carl Binger, President of American Psychosomatic Association; David Hamburg, Prof. and Chairman of Dept. of Psychiatry, Stanford Medical School; and myself.

\*\*\* Scott Adams, National Library of Medicine, Washington; Frank Fremont-Smith, Am. Inst. of Biological Sciences, New York; Joseph Garland, Editor, *New England Journal of Medicine*, Boston; Hans Hoff, Univ. of Vienna, Vienna; S. Z. Levine, Foundation for International Child Health, New York; Sir Aubrey Lewis, Maudsley Hospital, London; Margaret Mead, Am. Museum of Natural History, New York; Helen Swick Perry, San Francisco; Howard Rusk, Dept. of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, New York Univ. College of Medicine, New York; and Jack Wing, Social Psychiatry Research Unit, Maudsley Hospital, London.

areas of cardiology and endocrinology estimates that only about 60% of the information reported at professional meetings was published within two years and thus made widely and easily available to other workers. The researcher, although inundated by new publications, often finds relevant information difficult to locate. This situation leads to fragmentation, unintended replication of previous work and the development of conflicting approaches which are not easily recognized as being inconsistent.

Socio-cultural factors are also a barrier to the transfer of information in psychiatry. In psychiatry, more than in any other field of medicine, socio-cultural factors are of primary significance. While the treatment of a broken leg or ruptured appendix tends to be uniform wherever there is a scientific medical system, this is not true in the treatment of mental illness. Since psychiatry's central concern is more with personality and emotions than with physiology or anatomy, it is more deeply embedded in its sociological and cultural setting than is medicine or surgery. For example, let us examine a cultural variable crucial to the understanding of Soviet psychiatry—dialectic materialism.

Dialectic materialism in the Soviet Union is more than an abstract philosophy. It is a *Weltanschauung*, a "world view" (*microsozrenia*, in Russian), a way of looking at nature, man, and society. The aspect of this doctrine which most directly relates to psychiatry is that it sees man's psyche as secondary to his soma. The brain is regarded as first a physiological organ and only secondarily psychological. The mind is regarded as a product of its past history and present surroundings and therefore as having no independent existence or motivating force. Thus, the individual is seen as extremely malleable: change the external milieu, and man's mind, values, attitudes and actions also change. A decade ago in the Soviet Union psychological studies and psychological concepts were regarded as anti-Marxist and leading to idealism, i.e., to unscientific speculation. Since 1959, this has changed. Soviet theorists now describe the previously held view as "naive materialism," a misinterpretation of Marx's true meaning. Although Soviet psychiatrists still regard mind as secondary to matter, psychological processes as secondary to physiological ones, they view psychological concepts as useful and psychological studies as having value. It is impossible to thoroughly understand Soviet psychiatric research without some awareness of this ideological framework.

Socio-cultural factors affect even the style of an article. A manner of presentation that is highly valued in one country may be regarded negatively in another. If this article had been written by a French psychiatrist, the philosophical implications would have been elaborated; a Soviet psychiatrist would have avoided the personal quality that is present here, and an English psychiatrist would have written this more dispassionately. Since there is a tendency to reject material that is presented in what one regards as a poor manner, one must have vastly greater tolerance when reading articles from a foreign culture than when reading the literature of one's own country.

This cultural relativity makes objective editing difficult, if not impossible. An editor can only evaluate material in terms of his own perceptions, past experiences, and values. While it is not possible to arrive at an evaluation with which everyone will agree, it is possible to make the relevant issues more explicit. For example, in the introduction to Eysenck's critical review, "The Effects of Psychotherapy," which appears in this issue, I make several critical comments. Joseph Wolpe, in his discussion of this review, says that I give expression "to some common misconceptions by implying that behavior therapy does not aim at *fundamental* eradication of neuroses and that its use is confined to the allegedly simple phobias."

He goes on to explain, "The truth is that behavior therapy depends on the experimentally based conception that neuroses are *nothing but* persistent unadaptive conditioned habits which are primarily, in most cases, anxiety response habits. When the habits are deconditioned, nothing remains of the neurosis; and, at follow-up, relapses or new symptoms are rarely encountered." Wolpe's response to my comments leads to a clearer definition of the issues. Such clarification is a more reasonable editorial goal for an international and interdisciplinary journal than is the goal of objective evaluation.

Thus we see that not only does the massive volume of publication by its very bulk obscure significant papers, but that there are formidable socio-cultural barriers to the effective transfer of information. Since objective evaluation is illusory, the format of the journal might most wisely be designed to facilitate dialogue between individuals with different points of view in order that issues be made explicit.

#### THE FORMAT OF THE JOURNAL

The *International Journal of Psychiatry* will be addressed to those standards which are shared both East and West, the standards of scientific methodology. The journal will attempt to deal with the problem of the transfer of information in psychiatry by reprinting articles of significance that have appeared in the world psychiatric literature and by publishing critical reviews. It will be a quarterly publication in English, with Russian, French, German, Polish, and Spanish summaries.

#### Reprinting of Articles

Each article is to be preceded by an introduction which attempts to make clear the significance of the article. This introduction will describe concepts used which may be unclear to the broader audience to which the article is now being presented, and will give some biographical data about the author. There is, however, to be no single pattern to these prefaces. One introduction might emphasize the historical perspective, another focus primarily on the background of the author. Sometimes articles representing different approaches to the same problem will be juxtaposed; occasionally, a series of articles on the same topic will be grouped. The articles are selected by the international Editorial Board.

#### The Critical Review

Scott Adams (1960) has described the function of the critical review in the development of science as providing ". . . a first step in the synthesis of new scientific knowledge, relating new findings to the existing body of knowledge and suggesting new approaches to unsolved problems." At least one critical review will appear in each issue.

The critical review in the *International Journal of Psychiatry* is expected to be a critical evaluation of the work in a specific area. The relation of the reviewer to the studies he is reporting is the same as that of the theorist to his data. That is, he is to deal with the material conceptually as well as descriptively. It is possible, however, that other scientists may hold different points of view than the reviewer, and there may be relevant work in other countries or in other disciplines with which the reviewer is unfamiliar. In order to approach the solution of this problem, each review will be sent to at least ten specialists of different orientations and from different countries. Each of these specialists will be asked to write a discussion in which they make clear their agreements and disagreements with the author, and add whatever relevant research is being done in their country or in their disciplines which they feel has been overlooked or not given sufficient attention. They are free to comment on the entire review or those aspects of it which may be of particular

interest to them. The function of the journal is the facilitation of dialogue between participants throughout the world.

The *International Journal of Psychiatry* has been organized to attempt to deal with the problem of communication across international and interdisciplinary boundaries. Through the selection and reprinting of significant articles from the world literature with clarifying introductions and through the preparation of critical reviews with discussions by specialists from different disciplines and different countries, the journal expects to facilitate transfer of information in psychiatry for the mutual benefit of countries throughout the world. This new format with its emphasis on dialogue in scientific communication is being utilized in the organization of similar journals in medicine and surgery. The historian, Arnold Toynbee, has suggested, "Future generations may see as the greatest achievement of the twentieth century not its wonderful scientific discoveries, but its realization for the first time in human history that man's knowledge can be shared all over the world for the common good."

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