

Expanding the Interpersonal Theory of Self-Threat¹

On Apprehension and Dread

We would rather be ruined than changed,
We would rather die in our dread
Than climb the cross of the moment
And let our illusions die.—*W. H. Auden*

... if I have ventured amiss—very well, then life helps me by its punishment. But if I have not ventured at all—who then helps me? And ... if by not venturing ... I have gained all earthly advantages ... and lose my self! What of that?—*Søren Kierkegaard*

PSYCHOANALYSTS DIFFER, OFTEN SHARPLY, in their conceptions of anxiety—its nature, origins, and meaning. And they differ, perhaps even more crucially, in their ways of working with it in the clinical situation. They do not differ, however, in considering it a fundamental process in human psychopathology, and a pivotal dynamic in the analytic inquiry. In this, there is unanimity; anxiety is a cardinal concept for all analysts. And for all, anxiety signifies some form of self-threat, the referent dimension of selfness varying according to each analyst's theoretical perspective.

It was Freud himself who first observed that "... anxiety is the fundamental phenomenon and main problem of neurosis" (1926, p. 144). Nevertheless, it was left to the interpersonalist Fromm-

¹ Abridged versions of this paper were presented at the Clinical Services Conference of the William Alanson White Institute on March 21, 1989 and at a colloquium sponsored by the Manhattan Institute for Psychoanalysis on February 25, 1990. I wish to thank Dr. Barbara Suter for her careful reading and thoughtful critique of this paper.

Reichmann, nearly thirty years later, to suggest that Freud's original definition of a psychoanalyst—one who accepts the facts of transference and resistance, the theory of the unconscious, and the significance of childhood history—be expanded to include, as a fourth requirement, "... the acceptance of the paramount significance of anxiety for the dynamic understanding of human personality ..." (1954, p. 711). The analytic centrality of anxiety is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the unique interpersonal conceptions of Harry Stack Sullivan, for whom anxiety defined one of the central dimensions of human living and the central dynamic in human psychic disorder and its treatment.

Sullivan's Concept of Anxiety and the Interpersonal Self

Sullivan's unique view of anxiety is, of course, that it is purely interpersonal in origin, that it comes from our communal humanness—originally "caught" or induced empathically from significant others. For Sullivan, anxiety plays a central role in human socialization, shaping much of anyone's living and awareness of that living. In Sullivan's theoretical schema, the intrapsychic world of mental representations, or personifications, of oneself and others is viewed as the psychic derivative of the human need to discriminate anxious from non-anxious interpersonal experience. And all, or nearly all, human striving and activity is seen as conditioned, shaped in some manner, by this need for social approval.

The interpersonal self, the reflected appraisals of significant others, is the dimension of human experience that Sullivan found most compelling, and studied most extensively. Born from anxiety, and limited by it, the interpersonal self defines the human imperative that Sullivan called security, the inherent and irreducible interpersonal need to feel safe in the presence of another. For Sullivan, this social need is primary, a human given. In contrast, orthodox analytic formulations of social anxiety view it as deriving from the more fundamental biological "danger" it portends—the trauma of helplessness in the face of overwhelming instinctual excitation. Anxiety, in this framework is the human, or animal, reaction to potential sensory overload, a derivative of physical fear. Not so for Sullivan: anxiety is interpersonal—just that, and nothing more. One simply needs to be secure with others, not because to be so means relief of drive tension. Sullivan thus conceptually distinguished anxiety, or interpersonal self-threat, from fear, or physical self-threat—the danger to life or limb. And Sul-

livan considered fear to be psychiatrically far less important than anxiety.

For Sullivan, interpersonal anxiety is the major disjunctive force in psychic life. It is in the crippling experience of interpersonal anxiety that Sullivan found the source of all inappropriate and inadequate interpersonal relations and the psychic root of all analytically relevant discontinuities in experience and distortions in living. And so, in his view, it is centrally implicated in all that comes to analytic attention, what, in one form or another, the practicing analyst must "eternally deal with." Sullivan's clinical focus, like that of his theoretical emphasis, was on the study of the interpersonal self, on the analytic play of the universal human need for security and approval. This was his paramount therapeutic concern. The analytic vicissitudes of interpersonal anxiety and its parataxic concomitants form the foci of interpersonal inquiry, as envisioned by Sullivan.

A fuller study of human irrationality can be achieved by a consideration of some aspects of anxiety or anxiety-like tensions that Sullivan ignored or only touched upon marginally. These processes or experiences form a psychic dimension which may be included as an integral part of an expanded and more comprehensive interpersonal theory of human motivation and self-threat. As central a dimension of human experience as interpersonal anxiety may be, and as central a place it may hold in the interpersonal theory of human personality and psychopathology, there are other processes of self-threat whose further study is equally significant for a more rounded interpersonal account of the human psyche.

Expanding the Interpersonal Theory of Self-Threat

Sullivan's theoretical system assumes three basic human motives or sets of needs, and three types of threats or affective tensions if these needs are unmet. This may be diagrammed as follows:

Needs	Experience of unmet need
Biological requirements (satisfaction)	Fear
Interpersonal security	Anxiety
Interpersonal intimacy (love)	Loneliness

Security, as already noted, is freedom from anxiety; and satisfaction refers to the gratification of bodily need, including lust, or the genital drive.² As a "middling example," or sub-group, of the need for satisfaction is the need for interpersonal intimacy, a very important set of relational needs, which begin in infancy as a "need for contact" and develop, in mature form, into a need for intimacy, or love. And unmet love is loneliness, a motive even more powerful than interpersonal anxiety.

The interpersonal theory of self-threat or anxiety can be broadened to include two additional and important groups of human motives and sources of self-threat or anxiety-like tensions. These processes are implicitly or explicitly noted in several of Sullivan's conceptions; but he did not attend to them in any extensive or systematic way. They are, however, more fully considered and explored in the theoretical work of other interpersonalists such as Fromm (1941, 1947, 1955, 1960), Fromm Reichmann (1955), May (1950, 1953, 1967), Schachtel (1959), Singer (1965), and Wolstein (1971, 1981, 1983, 1987). These two sets of motives and sources of self-threat and anxiety-like tensions may be called:

- 1) the need for personal fulfillment, or freedom from dread, the fear of psychic unaliveness or self-constriction (i.e., psychological death); and
- 2) the need for personal orientation, or freedom from apprehension, the fear of uncertainty, novelty, or chaos.

² Sullivan (1953) views lust, the "felt component of the genital drive", as a major motivational system, but sees it as a need which emerges only later in development; that is, not until puberty. He maintains, however, that once "... lust gets under way, it is extremely powerful. In fact, if one overlooks his experience with loneliness, he may well think that lust is the most powerful dynamism in interpersonal relations" (p. 266). Sullivan emphasizes that lust is a major source of anxiety and conflict, at least in our culture, which he regards as "the most sex-ridden people on the face of the globe" (p. 289).

Although Sullivan clearly recognized and, to some extent, discussed the developmental and psychopathological implications of unfortunate interpersonal experiences with early sexuality or sensuality, he did not, in contrast to the libido theorists, articulate or elaborate a detailed theory of the ontogenesis of a general sexual drive. Nevertheless, Sullivan's concept of "zonal needs" provides the theoretical means for a detailed interpersonal study of early, "pregenital" sexual or sensual needs and experiences. Thus, although Sullivan himself did not detail a theory of infantile or childhood sexuality, there is theoretical room in interpersonal theory for an expanded developmental theory of sensuality or sexuality.

That group of processes that I call the need for personal fulfillment comprises the psychic analogue of the need for bodily satisfaction, and refers broadly to what has been variously called the drive for self-actualization, self-realization, or "true selfness." It refers to what Wolstein (1981) calls "psychic self-fulfillment" and overlaps with aspects of those human existential needs that Fromm (1955) terms "sense of identity" and "transcendence". The need for fulfillment, thus, is a broad category of need which refers to the innate human striving for personal expansion and self-knowledge and the fulfillment of one's unique psychic potentialities, including the full expression and realization of one's singular capacities for feeling, imagining, and thinking. This genus of need refers, in other words, to each person's self-active striving to fulfill his or her "originality", true being, or what Fromm (1941) refers to as the "active center of the self" and Wolstein (1981, 1983) calls the "I" or "first-personal, uniquely individual self"; and it includes such processes as creativity, activity, curiosity, play, and elements of what Farber (1966) calls "will"—intending, choosing, initiating, determining. In a sense, the need for personal fulfillment is akin to the need for interpersonal intimacy; however, in this case the need is for self-intimacy, the need to know and to be oneself, to the fullest of one's reach.

Frustration of fulfillment is, of course, inevitable for everyone, though its extent is always individual. The dread of unfulfillment may be experienced as feelings of emptiness, wistful yearning, longing "to be fully oneself", or a vague sense of wanting. It may also be experienced as anxiety, fear, or even loneliness. Severe or prolonged dread of unfulfillment, what Fromm-Reichmann (1955) has aptly referred to as "psychological death", may lead ultimately to resignation or other states of apathy, accompanied by repressed rage and hostility.

The need for personal orientation broadly includes the oft-observed human needs for order, familiarity, clarity, certainty, and predictability; and it includes aspects of those needs that Fromm (1955) calls "rootedness" and "frame of orientation and devotion." When unmet, this need leads to what I call apprehension, or the fear of freedom, change, "newness", reorganization, transformation, "differentness", "strangeness", or the like. I call this anxiety-like tension apprehension simply to distinguish it conceptually from the tension states of fear, dread, and anxiety, though it may

be experientially similar or identical to them. Apprehension includes what Kierkegaard poetically refers to as the "dizziness of freedom", and what Schachtel (1959) calls "embeddedness anxiety" and others describe as a fear of the unknown, unfamiliar, or ambiguous.

There is a dialectical and dynamic tension between the forward-moving or "progressive" needs for fulfillment, satisfaction, and love and the limiting or "conservative" needs for personal orientation and interpersonal security. The tensions of loneliness, dread, and fear represent needs that are inherently contradictory to those which lead to anxiety and apprehension, and thus inevitably oppose one another. All of these needs and sources of "anxiety" or self-threat may co-exist and operate simultaneously in any particular psychic or behavioral act. Moreover, any one may appear defensively as any one of the others.

Disentangling the motivational influences of the various component "anxieties" or their sources can be a complex clinical task. Consider, for example, a common and relatively simple situation where an individual's need for personal fulfillment is frustrated. Let us say that a patient is unable to freely exercise or live out an aspect of his or her creativity. Is this patient's "anxiety" and blocked self-realization a reflection of interpersonal anxiety, or of personal apprehension—i.e., his or her fear of the unknown or of disorganization? In what ways, perhaps, is it a mixture of both? And does fear play a role? Or, take a somewhat different situation. What are the sources of a particular patient's subjective sense of urgency about his or her lack of creativity? Is this a matter of interpersonal anxiety? Narcissism unfulfilled? A situation in which the individual's self-regard, prestige, or sense of self-acceptance depends on some early learned condition of being special and "creative". Some other anxious dynamic? Or is it a question of dread, of psychic constriction or suffocation? Of not, for some reason, being able, or free, to realize oneself. Or, is it a complex amalgam of dread and anxiety? Similar complexities characterize the relationships among all five sets of needs and the self-threats they occasion when unmet. Depending on the particular situation and individual, one or another of these sources of self-threat may be prepotent, having motivational priority, as it were.

The tensions of apprehension and dread are phenomenologically similar to those experiential states that Sullivan calls anxiety,

fear, or loneliness. Apprehension is similar to fear; and that pattern of tension that ranges from yearning or emptiness to dread has components of both loneliness and fear. Both apprehension and dread, unless mixed with anxiety, lack, however, the qualities of self-disapproval, shame, humiliation, unworthiness, or sense of self-loathing that often give complicated interpersonal anxiety its characteristic experiential stamp.

Anxiety, in Sullivan's narrow interpersonal sense, is a "self" emotion. Similarly, the other four sources of anxiety-like tensions also represent threats to the self, though, of course, to different dimensions of it. These five types of "anxiety" or self-threat and their sources can be schematically represented as follows:

<u>Self</u>	<u>Need</u>	<u>Type of "Anxiety" or Self-Threat</u>
Physical Self	Satisfaction	Fear
Relational Self	Intimacy	Loneliness
Interpersonal Self (representational self)	Security	Anxiety
Personalized Self (representational self)	Orientation	Apprehension
Personal or Authentic Self (self as agent)	Fulfillment	Dread

Though Sullivan limited his concept of anxiety to the interpersonal and emphasized the centrality of this psychic dimension in human living, he touched upon the psychic dimensions of fulfillment and personal orientation in some of the conceptions. His Theorem of Escape and his concept of the "fear of novelty" relate to the realm of apprehension; and his concepts of his "power motive" and the "drive toward mental health" implicitly touch upon the dimension of personal fulfillment. Thus, Sullivan considered these dimensions of human living, at least implicitly; but he did not develop his concepts about them in any major way. Contemporary interpersonal theory, however, is able to encompass fuller study of these processes—a reflection of its creative elasticity; and, in the final analysis, of the self-fulfilling creativity of Sullivan himself.

Inasmuch as consideration of these psychic dimensions, particu-

larly that of fulfillment, ran counter to the interpersonal thrust of Sullivan's thought, they remained relatively neglected in his theoretical system. Sullivan's emphasis on operationalism, at least as he understood it, led him to focus on what could be consensually observed and to eschew what he termed the delusion of unique individuality. Wolstein's (1971, 1981, 1983) more welcoming post-Sullivan perspective on unique individuality and his extensive study of its therapeutic role has done much to correct Sullivan's neglect of this psychological dimension in his interpersonal conceptions. And Moore (1984), in a scholarly critique of Sullivan's interpretation and use of operationalism, has argued convincingly that Sullivan's application of Bridgman's operational methodology was unduly restrictive, and that analytic consideration of unique individuality or private humanness does not violate standards of operational study—that, in fact, "science" always includes the private and individually unique. Be this as it may, certainly Sullivan de-emphasized this aspect of the human psyche in his theoretical system.

Sullivan's focus on the principle of interpersonal similarity, rather than that of personal singularity, also derives from his intensive study of schizophrenic processes and reflects his clinical emphasis on their essential humanness—on the schizophrenic individual's psychic continuity with others. Sullivan's empathic appraisal of the schizophrenic reflected his special sensitivity to the profound interpersonal anxieties of such patients. And to that dimension of the human psyche in us all. Sullivan brought the authority and authenticity of deep personal experience to his study of this human dimension. As Perry's (1982) biography indicates, Sullivan knew deeply and in a very personal way those aspects of living that he called anxiety and loneliness. And, given their psychic significance in his own anxious and lonely early life, it is not surprising that this gifted man turned his originality to the focused study of these interpersonal aspects of the psyche, to the relative neglect of other significant aspects of the human mind, including, ironically, those very processes which he so abundantly exemplified in his own unique creativity. Sullivan also, as Wolstein (1984) observes, developed his interpersonal conceptions within a cultural surround that, in many ways, was preoccupied with the idea of social security.

It could be argued that Sullivan's interpersonal concept of anxiety represents a cultural or personal bias; that the need for inter-

personal security represents a particular personal or cultural concern or need, rather than a universal human imperative. It is factual that the experience of anxiety is universal, but it is conjectural that its origins are interpersonal. Sullivan's exclusive or near-exclusive concern with the realm of the interpersonal self and his relative neglect of the personal self, may reflect the narrowing effect of historical, cultural, or individually personal influences; but, I think that there is no question that Sullivan mapped a crucial dimension of the human psyche. And he, perhaps more than any other theorist, studied and elaborated its clinical and therapeutic significance.

Before moving on to a discussion of dread and apprehension—i.e., the personal and personalized selves, I would like to consider briefly that aspect of interpersonal experience that I call the relational self.

The relational self refers to that broad set of purely interpersonal or social needs which, in one way or another, express the innate human striving for contact or closeness with others. The relational self, in other words, defines a complex set of interpersonal motivations, *sui generis*, which encompass, in Fairbairn's (1952) term, the "object-seeking" dimension of human personality. This cluster of interpersonal needs is manifested in the manifold ways in which humans strive for verbal and non-verbal communication or communion. The relational self, then, includes all those primary needs for interpersonal attachment, affiliation, affection, engagement, responsiveness, and intimacy which are met or gratified in such interpersonal processes or experiences as empathy, sympathy, attunement, affective interplay, "participant play", emotional connectedness or "resonance", being "known" or "knowing", "seeing" and being "seen", parallel play, companionship, friendship, chumship, love, and similar forms of interpersonal sharing.

The component aspects of the relational self may be ordered developmentally, ranging from early, primitive, and often one-way or one-sided forms of intimacy to the more mature states of intimacy, which in their higher forms are characterized by the experience of mature love and full mutuality. Developmental observations (cf. Schecter, 1973; Stern, 1985) indicate that the infant and the young child searches for "intimate" interpersonal experience, even if in developmentally primitive ways. Sullivan (1953), too,

recognized the need for intimacy as an inborn or early formed need. And he recognized its developmental structure, and outlined a theory of it. Although Sullivan explored the later developments of the need for intimacy, or loneliness, he did not elaborate, or consider as fully, its early expressions in infancy and childhood. Sullivan's theoretical effort, as noted earlier, was focused on elaborating his theory of anxiety, rather than a theory of intimacy. The developmental structure of interpersonal intimacy remains an aspect of contemporary interpersonal theory which requires detailed study. The work of Schecter (1973, 1978) and, more recently, that of Stern (1985), even though he doesn't define himself as an interpersonalist, are significant steps in this direction.

Interestingly, both Sullivan and Fromm, like many analytic theorists of other schools, tend to underestimate the young child's relational capacities for mutuality and love. Sullivan, for example, asserts that intimacy, or love, does not emerge until preadolescence. This is open to question; the capacity for love seems to emerge much earlier. Although the capacity for intimacy may not mature or come to full fruition until preadolescent development, or even later (or never), it seems to exist, in limited form, much earlier. Young children often appear capable of what seems like genuine empathy and sympathy. Children may, of course, exhibit submissive or symbiotic forms of "love", but this is a defensive expression of the interpersonal self, not the relational self; and this is about security, not intimacy.

Though both are interpersonal in nature, the relational self and the interpersonal self refer to different dimensions of self-experience and self-process. The relational self, as just noted, refers to the need for interpersonal intimacy—the inherent human need for engagement, affection, or mutuality. By contrast, the interpersonal self, as previously discussed, refers to the human need for interpersonal security; that is, for social acceptance, approval, status, prestige, and the like. And though love and approval may be closely related, and are often mistaken for one another, they are not the same thing.

Dread and the Need for Personal Fulfillment

Unlike other seminal cultural-interpersonalists such as Fromm, Fromm-Reichmann, and Horney, Sullivan never spoke of drives for self-realization. He seems to implicitly accept the dynamic of

personal fulfillment and dread, however, in his concept of a "drive to mental health". When he suggests that this "drive" enables the patient to analytically tolerate anxiety and to carry the work forward in the face of personal suffering, is he not suggesting that all of us carry within us some self-striving or self-actualizing dynamic or imperative? Some psychic drive forward? Is not the notion of dread of unfulfillment implicit here? Sullivan, however, states his idea, briefly at that, and does no more with it. There is no development of it. Sullivan also seems to address the phenomena of fulfillment, even if in a limited way, when he discusses the zonal need to exercise maturing abilities. Although Sullivan himself only developed this idea in limited form, there is theoretical room in contemporary interpersonal theory for what one could call "neurogenic" zonal needs, equivalent to those motives for stimulation, curiosity, and exploratory play described by psychologists such as Robert White and Harry Harlow. And these processes, in my view, comprise an aspect of personal fulfillment. Mullahy, an early colleague and important promulgator and popularizer of Sullivan's ideas, criticizes Sullivan for his neglect of these aspects of personal resourcefulness; and he suggests (1970), in fact, that such a class of needs and tensions—what he called the needs for activity, manipulation, and investigation—could be included within interpersonal theory. Perhaps Sullivan came closest to postulating a striving for self-actualization or personal fulfillment in his concept of the "power motive". According to Sullivan (1940), humans "seem to be born . . . with something of this . . . motive toward the manifestation of power or ability" (p. 14). Sullivan limited his concept to the effective pursuit of relational intimacy, bodily satisfaction, and interpersonal security; however, this motive would apply equally, I think, to the pursuit of personal fulfillment—to the innate need to fully develop and express one's own psychological powers or capacities, personal and interpersonal, in any and every conceivable field of human experience.

It may be observed that just as powerlessness to meet vital biological needs leads to fear, so may psychic unfulfillment, or powerlessness to meet vital psychic needs, lead to dread. Thompson's (1950) notion of an inherent "tendency to develop and grow" and Sullivan's drive to mental health both imply that the human striving for fulfillment of one's psychic capacities or resources, may be stronger, or prove stronger, than anxiety. Is this so? Is

dread more potent than anxiety? Is man's need to fulfill himself stronger than his need for the approval of others? What happens when strivings for fulfillment are thwarted? Do apprehension and anxiety prevail; or does dread, in the final analysis, push us forward and move us through these regressive forces? It is, of course, difficult to determine an answer in the abstract. There is, without question, great individual variation. The balance of forces is always uniquely individual. Some individuals strive to realize their uniqueness, even under severe anxiety. For others, security rules. In fact, May and Fromm, among others, complain that the individual of today has opted for conformity, rather than creativity and individuality. Obviously, one's interpersonal history is crucial. There are significant differences in the degree to which individuation, creativity, and self-expansion are encouraged or discouraged in any particular historical time, cultural surround, or system of family practices. Nevertheless, however truncated or inhibited the need for fulfillment may become, it is there, in some form, always. And it is in these self-strivings and capacities, in our attention to our dread, that we find our ability to move ourselves through our myriad fears.

In the psychoanalytic situation, when the analyst is open to this psychic dimension in the patient, he or she may hear dread, or strivings for personal fulfillment, where previously only manifestations of anxiety or loneliness were heard (cf. Fiscalini, 1990). What, from the perspective of interpersonal security, may seem like psychopathology, defensiveness, or even autistic-like behavior or experience may, from the perspective of unfulfilled dread, appear as idiosyncratic, or even eccentric, moves toward self-realization, whether lived fully relationally or only personally and privately. Although the patient's efforts to achieve his or her full selfness are not inherently interpersonal, they are conditioned by the interpersonal and they eventually express themselves within a shared context; i.e., the social analytic field.

The analyst may discern the patient's strivings for fulfillment, as they emerge and express themselves within the analytic hour, in such psychic movements as: personal insight and other steps or moves toward self-knowledge; creative understandings, new thoughts, and "original" formulations or perceptions of oneself and others; expressions of curiosity about the analyst and the analytic interaction, as well as about oneself; increasing capacities to be

alone in the presence of the analyst; the struggle to open up to the analyst and take in the analyst's formulations and interactive invitations; developing abilities to bear anxiety, apprehension, guilt, grief, disappointment, and other distressing emotions and experiences; engagement in, or moves toward, countertransference analysis; making changes in one's life; various idiosyncratic moves toward personal growth, which often look like, or may be mixed with, resistance; and all moves toward spontaneous and playful relatedness to the analyst.

Dread will invariably develop whenever anxiety and apprehension, for whatever complex of reasons, prevail in an individual's approach to a situation. And if not attended to or worked through, this dread, or thwarted fulfillment, will inevitably lead to impotent rage and, ultimately, to despair and even physical death, or to resignation and the slower suicide of conventionality and neurotic adaptability (what might be called the neurosis, or even psychosis, of "normality"). In the analytic situation, as in everyday life, dread is evidenced in various forms. It often finds symptomatic expression in: wistful longings for self-achievements of one sort or another, such as expressed wishes to make a mark, do something worthwhile, do something meaningful with one's life, all of which may be mixed with, or confused with, adolescent or infantile drives for glory, or other defensive evasions of anxiety or apprehension; expressed fears that one can't, or won't, achieve some important self-fulfilling goal; feelings of irritability and rage; the depression of unexpressed selfness; a vague uneasiness; and various addictive or compulsive ways of trying to simulate a sense of aliveness and compensate for, or mask, pervasive feelings of inner constriction, hollowness, or deadness.

The need for fulfillment is a universal human imperative. Of course, it is possible that what I think is universal and fundamental simply reflects a personal or cultural bias. After all, what I call dread could simply be anxiety about irrationality or helplessness, interpersonally conditioned. That such anxiety may be mixed in with dread is probably always the case; but, I do not think that dread is reducible to interpersonal anxiety. It is a primary and significant source of personal terror. The yearning for self-fulfillment, or the potentiality for dread, runs deep in us all. Those interpersonalists who have explored this aspect of psychic life have

addressed a central dimension of human living, one which finds only marginal recognition in Sullivan's study of anxiety.

Although Sullivan did not attend to the dimension of self-threat that I call dread, his coevals Thompson and Fromm-Reichmann both acknowledge it. Fromm-Reichmann (1955) addresses the phenomenon of dread in her hypothesis that psychic stagnation, or the inability to grow psychologically, forms an important source of anxiety. Fromm-Reichmann thought that the futile repetition of parataxic or neurotic interpersonal patterns, i.e., the inability to change, leads to a fear of "psychological death", analogous to the fear of physical death, and forms the basis of many people's anxiety. Though Fromm-Reichmann did not distinguish this anxiety from interpersonal anxiety in Sullivan's narrower sense of the term, she nonetheless points to a source of anxiety-like tensions which is not necessarily interpersonal (even if lived out in that dimension of living). And although she did not elaborate upon her idea, Thompson, too, points to the "anxiety" of dread in her observation that "any threat to the expression of one's potentialities is anxiety producing" (1950, p. 129). What I call dread, or unfulfillment, could also be called "nothingness", "futility", "meaninglessness", or "powerlessness": these terms each capture an important aspect of the experience of dread, the anxiety of psychic death. This dread, however, is generated not only by the dissociated repetition of futile interpersonal patterns of relatedness, but by myriad other ways in which the human need for self-fulfillment may become inhibited or impaired.

On Apprehension

The dread of unused or unlived psychic life, of not being free to fulfill one's self stands in sharp conflict with the fear of freedom and newness that I call apprehension and that Schachtel (1959) studied as "embeddedness anxiety". Though Sullivan touched upon the phenomenon of apprehension in several of his conceptions, several other interpersonalists—Fromm, May, Schachtel, Schecter, Thompson—more explicitly addressed this dimension of human fear. These theorists all hypothecate a basic human "anxiety" or fear of the unfamiliar, unknown, uncertain, or unpredictable. This group of anxiety-like tensions refers to that set of human motives and processes that I call the need for personal ori-

entation, or freedom from apprehension—an inherent human need for order, coherence, or familiarity.

Sullivan touches upon the dynamic of apprehension when he talks of the “fear of novelty”. He also refers to the human need for familiarity and predictability when he speaks of the reassuring power of language to label the otherwise nameless, or in a more sardonic vein, of man’s “evil genius for rationalization.” But he did not elaborate these ideas into a theory of apprehension. Sullivan’s theory of resistance, however, does address an analytically crucial aspect of the need for personal orientation. According to Sullivan’s Theorem of Escape, the self-system, the defensive anti-anxiety dynamism, “from its nature . . . tends to escape influence by experience which is incongruous with its current organization and functional activity.” (1953, p. 190). We all tend, in other words, to perpetuate our ways of being and experiencing—to seek familiar structure. In this way, patients, or all people for that matter, fail to profit from their experiences, and thus compulsively and futilely repeat their neurotic patterns. Sullivan implicitly seems to account for this not only in terms of the specific interpersonal anxiety that any particular self-system change occasions; but also, and very importantly, in terms of that anxiety that is aroused by reorganization of the self-system, or characterological shift, *per se*. This is what I call apprehension. Thompson (1950) refers to it as “secondary anxiety”. In other words, it is not simply the old danger, the original self-threat that is the problem; there is a new source of danger, the disorganization or reorganization of the personalized self, of the personified “me” or representational self. Apprehension, thus, is the fear of change itself, of new being, not of the kind of change or new being. The self-threat is of new, unknown selfness. It is, in other words, the fear of new experience, rather than bad experience. As Thompson (1950) puts it, the threat of

. . . change to . . . the nature of the self-system is all that is needed to produce anxiety . . . by the time the self-system is formed, there is an emotional stake in maintaining it blindly and this forms a rigidity in the personality and increases the potentiality for anxiety (p. 126).

Schachtel (1959) addresses the same issue even more emphatically:

. . . man is afraid that without the support of his accustomed attitudes, perspective, and labels he will fall into an abyss or flounder in the pathless. . . . Letting go of every kind of clinging opens the fullest view on the

object. But it is the very letting go which often arouses the greatest amount of anxiety (p. 195). The unknown danger in anxiety is the new, unknown state of being when leaving a particular constellation of embeddedness (p. 47).

Thus, for Schachtel, anxiety is essentially fear of separation from the known. Schachtel’s “embeddedness-anxiety”, like Fromm’s “fear of freedom”, refers to that fear of personal disorientation or loss of structure that I call apprehension.

Schachtel’s theory of anxiety, like Schecter’s (1973), was deeply influenced by Fromm’s conceptions of anxiety which were, in turn, deeply influenced by those of Freud. In fact, Fromm’s theory of anxiety may be understood as a cultural-interpersonal-existentialist translation of Freud’s biological concept of separation-anxiety. Although their anxiety theories differ in metapsychological emphasis and detail, Freud, Fromm, Schachtel, and Schecter all share, in contrast to Sullivan, a separation concept of anxiety. All of these theorists see anxiety as grounded in fear of separation, whether it be from a need-satisfying object, an existential other, one’s genitalia, or the familiar known. Both Schachtel (1959) and Schecter (1973) explicitly reframe Sullivan’s interpersonal concept of anxiety (and its hypothesized empathic mode of transmission) in separation terms; that is, as a special case of separation or stranger anxiety. I see it differently. I don’t think that either anxiety or apprehension can be reduced to the other; they are separate and distinct forms of self-threat.

Clinically, apprehension is often, perhaps always, mixed with interpersonal anxiety. The fear of psychological change usually stems from both the apprehension of unfamiliarity, or the “pathless”, and the fear of aloneness, the interpersonal anxiety of isolation from the consensually shared perspective—the approved way of significant others. Apprehension, though not inherently interpersonal, is almost always conditioned by the interpersonal. Some people grow up in homes where venturing, exploring, trying the new, being curious, forebearing ambiguity, and similar attitudes are approved of and encouraged. And their living reflects this background—they are strikingly unapprehensive. Other people, perhaps most, grow up in fearful, harsh, or restrictive homes (or subcultures) in which the world and life are portrayed, or demonstrated to be, full of peril or evil, and in which expanding oneself or venturing forth in any way is viewed with alarm, anxiety, and

disapproval. There is little question that the unknown, new, or ambiguous will be linked with considerable anxiety and fear in such instances. Simply consider, for example, the person who grows up in a home where obsessional omniscience, narcissistic grandiosity, or paranoid vigilance and fear of spontaneity are defensive necessities. Apprehension, like anxiety, is, of course, inevitable for us all, and none of us are ever entirely free of it. Nevertheless, its influence varies considerably from person to person, for each of us carries a uniquely individual history of interpersonal relations.

In the psychoanalytic encounter, the patient is offered the therapeutic opportunity to live out his or her apprehension and anxiety with the analyst. When not countertransferentially or counterresistantly anxious or apprehensive, the analyst may experientially (and interpretively) live through the patient's fears of fulfilling him or herself directly with the patient, within the living through process of the personal analytic relationship (Fiscalini, 1988). In such situations, the patient has a new and reconstructive experience with a significant other who is less afraid, apprehensive, and anxious about the patient's or his or her own individuality and psychological growth than were the historically significant others. When this process occurs across the serial and contextual span of the analytic inquiry, and its central psychological themes, therapeutic growth is greatly facilitated—in fact, it becomes inevitable. Much of analytic self-transformation occurs in this experiential, emotionally corrective, and silent way.

Of course, the process of therapeutically living through anxious and apprehensive analytic experience depends on analysts' alertness to the play of apprehension within themselves, their courage in facing this, and their awareness of the complicating effects of their own anxious past experience in venturing towards personal fulfillment. Most fundamentally, however, it depends on the analyst's own deep unconscious or preconscious capacities for growth and change. Openness to growth in another always implies its correlate in oneself. The analyst's functional capacity for personal growth defines the limit of his or her therapeutic availability and the patient's therapeutic opportunity, at least in that particular analytic situation (and until the analyst frees his or her potential for fuller living). In other words, at any given moment in any analysis, the dyad can only go as far as the more mature of the two. If the analyst's anxious complication of his or her own apprehension ob-

scures the patient's apprehensiveness, leads the analyst to distort it as anxiety, or causes the analyst to falter in his or her capacity to follow it out analytically with the patient, then, of course, the analyst will fail the patient, at least for that moment. The analyst may feel less apprehensive and less anxious, and so may the patient too. But both will also be less alive, however defensively secure.

This sort of countertransference operates silently or invisibly in many analyses, perhaps to some degree in all. It is this process, I think, that is often responsible for the fact that many lengthy analyses, even those that have been successful in many ways, leave significant or even central aspects of the patient's (and analyst's) pathology or characterology unresolved or untouched. In other words, when congruent or complementary transference-countertransference (or more precisely, resistance-counterresistance) patterns, resulting from similar or overlapping apprehensions and anxieties, are operative in any analysis, analytic growth is inevitably hindered or inhibited, and this goes unnoticed by both participants. This happens in situations where the patient and analyst share personal blind spots or pathological attitudes common in their culture (as, for example, the patterns of competitiveness, controllingness, and materialistic cynicism that are so common among members of our own culture). These silent mutually syntonic transference-countertransference problems often lead to prolonged, even intractable mutual analytic dependencies; lengthy analyses which die a slow death of boredom and unaliveness; analyses which result in mutually "satisfactory" conventional adaptations; or situations in which the analysis finishes off and proves helpful in many ways, but remains significantly incomplete. Sometimes the patient continues or completes his or her unfinished psychic work in a later reanalysis, with the same, but changed and matured, analyst, or in a subsequent analysis with someone else with whom the necessary analytic work can be accomplished. Too often, the analyst is not able, for a variety of complex reasons, to provide for him- or herself such constructive resolution.

Staying with the familiar, the organized, or the known may stay apprehension or anxiety; but it incurs the reciprocal self-threat of psychological death, the dread that comes from being strangled or suffocated in one's development by "embeddedness", the fear of venturing into new and unknown psychic territory. As Schachtel (1959) warns, "... the seeking of protection in the embeddedness

of the familiar makes for stagnation and constriction of life" (p. 45). And this is as true in psychoanalysis, as it is in life. And as true for the analyst as for the patient.

Self-Confrontation and Psychic Birth

Our needs for psychic fulfillment, like those for satisfaction and love, stand in inevitable conflict and opposition to those for personal orientation and interpersonal security. Our needs for creativity and fulfillment always, to some extent, contradict our need for order, stability, coherence, and the consensual approval of others. The painful experiences of apprehension and anxiety are inevitable if one is to grow and fulfill one's potentialities for living. It cannot be otherwise. As Fromm (1955) reminds us:

We are never free from two conflicting tendencies: one to emerge from the womb . . . from bondage to freedom; another, to return to the womb, to nature, to certainty, and security. . . . Each step into . . . new human existence is frightening. It always means to give up a secure state . . . which was relatively known, for one which is new, which one has not yet mastered . . . at any new step, at any new stage of our birth, we are afraid. . . . *The whole life of the individual is nothing but the process of giving birth to himself; indeed, we should be fully born, when we die—although it is the tragic fate of most individuals to die before they are born* (p. 32–33, italics mine).

In their prolific and often eloquent writings on mankind's psychological dilemmas, the humanistically oriented cultural-interpersonalists Fromm and May repeatedly point to our inescapable fears of creativity, freedom, and self-individuation. Both point to our common existential plights—our ultimate aloneness, mortality, and powerlessness before nature—and to our need to create a personally meaningful relatedness to ourselves, others, and to the world. Fromm and May each lament the modern individual's all too common flight from existential freedom and responsibility into addictive conformity, anxious masochism, sadistic destructiveness, compulsive competitiveness, or solipsistic narcissism. These are the contemporary ills, or unfulfillment, that we see daily in our clinical work with those individuals who have enough hope, courage, psychic resources, and dread to even attempt the arduous and often painful psychoanalytic inquiry into the self and its various dimensions. And these individuals represent the all too rare exceptions to the countless many in our society whose needs

for psychic growth and self-transformation go unheeded both by themselves and by others, with great personal and social cost.

May (1950, 1953, 1967) maintains, correctly I believe, that to be psychically whole, each individual must bear his or her existential fears and apprehensions of freedom and originality (what we could call the apprehension of the creative leap), while seeking his or her own personal answers to them.

Each individual also must develop an ability to bear, observe, and analyze his or her irrational interpersonal anxieties, if he or she is to grow psychologically. As analysts, we are all aware that both anxiety and apprehension move experience and behavior in directions that are consistent with the limiting envelope or character of our interpersonal and personalized selves. As analysts know all too well, throughout the course of any analysis, both patient and analyst are inevitably confronted with the opposition of their self-systems. Any movement towards therapeutic insight and growth, or personality reorganization, invariably entails the distress and pain of both anxiety and apprehension, and the defensive counter-thrust of our ego-defenses or security operations, as we strive self-protectively to restrict our experience to that which has been historically familiar or acceptable.

And so it is therapeutically vital for both analyst and patient to bear and to face both their own anxious and apprehensive experience and that of the other, as it is lived in the analytic situation. Although, as Sullivan observes sardonically, "nobody wants anxiety", the patient must gradually learn to bear his or her anxiety and apprehension, to experience them, live them, and work them through. There is simply no other way to curative transformation of the self. Though this process may prove too painful at first, the patient must develop (with the therapeutic assistance of the analyst) an increasing capacity to communicate and to learn in the presence of anxiety. This form of self-confrontation is, of necessity, achieved in small steps, and takes considerable time. This process cannot be rushed and cannot be abrupt, for sudden, intense anxiety, like sudden apprehension, will simply stun the self, and stop analytic work. As previously noted, a significant factor in the developing capacity to bear both one's anxiety and apprehension is their experienced affirmation in the therapeutically reconstructive personal relatedness of the living through process.

When I write of the patient's therapeutic need to bear or experi-

ence anxiety or apprehension, I am not endorsing callous analytic provocation of unnecessary, and counter-therapeutic, anxiety or fear. As Sullivan (1954) cogently reminds us, the analyst should "... administer no wounds that do not heal" (p. 234). An essential feature of therapeutic skill is the ability to chart an analytic course between the Charybdis of too much anxiety and the Scylla of too little. It is within this analytic working space, between too much and too little anxiety, that the patient is able to work through and resolve his or her patterns of anxiety and apprehension and their derivative psychopathology. Too much anxiety is either disintegrative in itself or disjunctive in its provocation of heightened defensive activity—the patient becomes preoccupied with restoring self-esteem or personalized order, and communication and learning are handicapped or paralyzed. Too little anxiety, on the other hand, means that defensive operations rule, untouched—the patient's neurosis remains unchallenged and unanalyzed, analyst and patient self-protectively collude, and communication and learning are minimal, or illusory.

It is also therapeutically vital, as May (1967) emphasizes, that the analyst help his or her patient develop the capacity to face and bear his or her real guilts and enduring regrets, both towards others and toward him- or herself. No matter how necessary psychologically, nor how unconscious and "unknowing" it may have been, each and every patient has invariably harmed both him- or herself and others whom he or she has both loved and hated. It is essential that we do not, in May's (1967) words, "... push aside the pain or cover over the tragic possibilities" (p. 108). This holds as true for the analyst as for the patient, and in this ever present fact lies as strong an impetus for counterresistance as that of anxiety. And this holds true not only for our sense of having betrayed our responsibility toward others, but also of having betrayed our own self-potentialities; of having been unfaithful to ourselves—to our singular psychic capacities and sensitivities, and to our own deepest needs and powers.

In the final analysis it is only through the unavoidably painful and frightening, but potentially liberating, and even joyful, living through of our most alive selves—of experiencing fully our past beings and present becomings—that we fulfill ourselves and work through our apprehension, anxiety, and dread.

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