Psychoanalysis and Science: Some Unrecognized But Critical Considerations
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The current psychoanalytic paradigm as a local theory of the mind
The isolation of psychoanalysis from the family of sciences
Relevance to the extinction of psychoanalysis as a field of endeavor
and to the internecine political warfare that currently dominates the scene

The adaptive paradigm as a universal theory of the mind
The many links between the adaptive paradigm and the biological and physical sciences

Recent discussions among psychoanalysts have noted and decried the failure of psychoanalysis to find a place in university curricula and thus, to attract the interest of much of the younger generation. There is as a result, little interest in the field on the part of those who could in the future help keep psychoanalysis alive as a viable field of interest and endeavor. Along similar lines, general interest in psychoanalysis also is waning. Much of this has arisen because psychoanalysis has failed to link up with the various fields of science and has not been able to establish itself as a member of this family.

There are however wider ramifications to the failed relationship between psychoanalysis and science. This deficiency cannot be dismissed by proposing that instead of being a biological science, psychoanalysis is a matter of hermeneutics—a non-biological study of meaning detached from the biological strivings of human beings. Given that the field attempts to explore and deal with the activities of the human mind and of their consequences for interactions between individuals and groups, this argument is untenable—a weak effort to excuse and rationalize away a major failure of current psychoanalytic thinking. In addition, the detachment of psychoanalysis from the scientific community and its findings and universal principles, creates a situation in which psychoanalysis can only feed on itself without vitalizing inputs from other fields of endeavor. Decay and extinction is thereby rendered inevitable.

In the natural course of its development and without a deliberate intention to develop psychoanalysis as a science or to bring into an alliance with other forms of science, the adaptive paradigm has accomplished both feats. Rather than being posited as a purely theoretical statement, the approach's definition of *psychoanalysis as the science of emotional cognition* followed the development of several scientific accomplishments involving both evolutionary biology and the development of universal, biological laws of communication. In this connection, the following is a partial listing of the ways in which studies and insights based on the principles of the adaptive paradigm have interacted and interdigitated with the biological and physical sciences:

The adaptive approach is in essence and per se a biological science by definition.
It is by its nature a component of the science of evolutionary biology whose central task entails the scientific study of the evolution and adaptive resources of the emotion-processing mind. In this context, it is to be appreciated that evolutionary biology—the study of the evolutionary history of living organisms and their present adaptations—is the basic subsience of biology. All of its component subsiences make use of the Darwinian principles of natural selection and as such, deal with universal laws, mechanisms, and feature that are applicable to all biological entities and systems—features that bring the adaptive paradigm into the flow of the archetypal and universal attributes of nature, phsical and bilogical.

One feature of evolutionary biology is the development of adaptationist programs that identify the selection factors that engineered the evolutionary scenarios of various living beings and their organs—the how and why of evolutionary development. The adaptive paradigm has carried out this task for the evolution of the emotion-processing mind. This is but one of many ways that this paradigm makes use of evolutionary principles developed through the study of other living organisms and systems. As a result, the findings and ideas generated in turn by the adaptive paradigm of the mind could be used to illuminate biological—and physical—researches. As such, they deserve to be taught in biological courses offered in teaching institutions.

A major adaptive finding lies with the discovery of similarities between the immune system and the emotion-processing mind. Both systems have evolved to deal with predatory threats of annihilation. The immune system copes with threats posed by microscopic predators and the emotion-processing mind deals with threats from macroscopic predators, mainly other humans and natural disasters. The two systems share universal design features and have related evolutionary histories. For example, each had a major bifurcation moment about 600 millions years ago: For the immune system, which was diffusely and generally defensive, nature began to select for the development of specialized cells like lymphocytes and other distinctive types of cells which enhanced its defensive capabilities. This also was the time when nature selected for organisms like worms who for the first time possessed nerve cells and nervous systems—developments that facilitated the processing of incoming information, especially of a threatening kind. These developments greatly enhanced the adaptive capabilities of living beings and thus improved their chances of surviving adverse environmental changes.

In addition, the immune and mental systems exclusively share many critical features such as their being knowledge acquisition systems, being able to distinguish self from not-self, having the ability to store and retrieve information, operating on the basis of universal selectionist principles, being two-system entities, being responsive to active traumatizing agents and events, making use of encoded communications, having perceptive and surveillance capabilities, and being intimately tied to the brain. No other biological systems or entities have these features.
The adaptive paradigm has shown that the emotion-processing mind shares in the archetypal tendency of nature, physical and biological, to create new systems when an existing adaptive system becomes overloaded with information. This was first seen with the first replicator, RNA, which became overloaded with the information it needed to process so it could continue to function as the means by which living entities faithfully reproduced themselves. This overload problem led to the natural selection of organisms that possessed a second information-creating and processing system, DNA.

As for the parallels in the evolution of the emotion-processing mind, indications are that early hominid minds possessed a single, adaptive conscious system which also became overloaded with information and meaning, events that needed processing and neutralizing because of the threat they posed for survival—e.g., the explicit awareness of death and of overwhelming psychological dangers that could not be dealt with by the conscious mind. This overload, which resulted from the increasing complexity of human life, resulted in the natural selection of two system minds, with a deep unconscious system that was able to take in and register many threats unconsciously or subliminally and process them without disrupting conscious functioning.

There also is the adaptive understanding that the emotion-processing mind responds to boundary conditions and to rules and regularities in ways that are characteristic of all types of systems, physical and biological. In all cases, boundary conditions reveal much about the activities within those boundaries and they also are a critical factor in the nature of those activities. In addition, systems require secured boundaries and a strong set of rules and regularities in order to be stable enough to function effectively—and not disintegrate.

There is a natural alternation between a system's conveying meaningful information and not doing so. That is, there is a natural tendency to or need for rest while in the process of expressing meaning; too much concentrated information leads to system overload and dysfunction. This is true of human communication where there is a natural cycling of narrative and non-narrative expressions—that is, rotations between highly charged double-meaning, storied messages and low charged single meaning, intellectualized messages. This principle is also seen, for example, in the structure of genes where protein-creating segments alternate with inactive segments. Recent findings show that some of these inactive segments are involved in regulating gene expression but nevertheless, there remain many interspersed non-meaning segments that are present between the meaning segments of the gene.

The quantitative science crafted by Anthony Badalamenti and myself led to the discovery and identification of several universal laws of the human mind and its verbal communications, laws that also pertain to communications from chimpanzee. These laws also have definitive counterparts in the physical realm as characterized through
Newtonian Physics—laws like work and force that were measured mathematically in the exact same way that they are measured in physics. This research also linked up with the laws and rules that prevail in information theory and involved measures of entropy that apply equally to human communication and the physical world. One such law is that in extended communications, entropy is a logarithmic function of time. Another measure of this law of entropy was developed by using the equations that measure the entropic changes in steam engines.

The also is the across paradigms discovery that all first paradigms of nature created by human minds serve the function of denying death. Second paradigms do not serve this denial. Freud's theory of the mind was at first, an exception to this rule, but in little time he changed the theory in a way that conforms to this rule and the resultant paradigm has lasted over 100 years with no sign of change. The adaptive paradigm involves the inevitable shift to a paradigm that no longer serves the denial of death, but it has not been incorporated into the psychoanalytic corpus—showing the extent to which sustaining this denial is a deep human.

Recent findings in neuroscience show that the brain is hard-wired to register and anticipate positive events and to not register or blunt the registration and anticipation of negative incidents. This is the brain-based counterpart to the mind-based adaptive thesis that denial of death is an evolved, hard-wired feature of the conscious system of the emotion-processing mind. There are as well many other ways in which the adaptive view of the mind has ties to the nature of brain functioning.

The adaptive paradigm views the patient-therapist relationship and interaction as a feature of a two person system and has adopted a systems-theory approach to their communicative exchanges. As such, the various principles of systems theory, which apply to both biological and physical systems, have been found to pertain to the therapeutic interaction.

The adaptive paradigm connects to cognitive psychology by offering a new, cognitive map of the emotion-processing mind and by exploring the particular features of deep unconscious perception, adaptive processing, and communication. The adaptive paradigm also accepts and elaborates on the theory of mental modules by defining the features of the mental module known as the emotion-processing mind.

The adaptive paradigm also makes use of field concepts, especially those related to fields of energy and force.

All in all, the adaptive paradigm places psychoanalysis squarely into the family of sciences. It has utilized principles and regularities discovered in the physical and biological sciences as a means of pointing to likely features of the human mind and to
support, extend, or raise questions about the theory's theoretical concepts. In return, it offers these sciences a set of laws, regularities and ideas that can inform their own pursuits. Most importantly, observation made on the basis of the adaptive paradigm reveal that the mind shares with other sciences a series of universal laws and regularities which help to document the unification of nature across its many diverse forms of expression.

This is not the case with the present, mind-centered paradigm of psychoanalysis. It has a group of subtheories, none of them dominant, each viewing a selected part of the picture of nature, but none of them able to develop a larger, more universal view. It is a qualitative or impressionistic science that lacks a validating methodology as well as the means of generating lawful quantitative findings. Its lack of universals is seen in its focus in individual entities and its failure to develop a theory of archetypes and thereby a generalizable theory of the mind. Among many other deficiencies, there is the failure of classical psychoanalysts to generate a valid definition of the cornerstone concept of its theory, namely, the features of the unconscious domain and the means by which it accessed. Small local truths, like that of the Oedipus Complex, are limited in their knowledge value, cannot be generalized to other aspects of nature, and thus cannot be the foundation for a science of the mind. Nor can psychoanalysis as now configured be especially relevant to and help solve the plaguing problems of humankind, especially its tendency to turn to unbridled violence to resolve its issues and its mindless movement toward destroying the natural resources of our planet.

A science or field that lacks a fundamental theoretical foundation and universal applicability inevitably will, by virtue of the natural laws of evolution, become extinct. At stake is what will replace it. There are two main possibilities: That it will be replaced by mindless forms of cognitive theory with its heartless lack of psychodynamics, mechanical qualities, and sterile definition of unconscious processes that speak for its stark limitations. Or it will be replaced by a new paradigm of the kind that I have been advocating for nearly 25 years. This latter outcome, which has met with fierce resistance and at the moment appears unlikely, would keep the dynamics of the human mind in play and eventually lead to a revised theory of the mind that would take its place in the flow of the natural sciences. This revised theory also would enable psychoanalysis to become relevant to the world at large because its basic theory would be a sound basis for universal applications to the world at large, social and otherwise.

The conscious and more elaborate unconscious realization that psychoanalysis is a failed and failing theory of the mind creates an underlying tension that is played out in the political arena, resulting in unresolvable irrational battles—e.g., the present warfare between advocates of dictatorship versus those who speak for democracy. In addition, without its own scientific foundation, psychoanalysis takes on the mantle of a belief system and as such, invites the creation of competing versions of the truth without any possibility of there being a dominant viewpoint—each school seeing a part of the elephant and none seeing the elephant in its entirety, let alone its relationship to the universe. As a set of local and minor theories, no position can take on the mantle of the
basic theory of psychoanalysis and thereby express a universal or archetypal viewpoint. The splitting off of the followers of these segmented approaches, each with their own belief system, is more akin to the development of religions and the history of the Catholic church than it is to the evolution of scientific theories and ideas.

None of this bodes well for the field and its future, which is grim and unpromising. It takes a revolution to overturn a failed political system but it takes a paradigm shift to do this in science. These shifts have been hard to come by. In his oft-quoted comment, Max Planck pointed out that the old-line Newtonian physicists never accepted or embraced the new paradigm of quantum physics. They fought against it to their dying days and had to die off before quantum theory became dominant. The problem for psychoanalysis is that each new generation of psychoanalysts tend to be clones of the old generation and there is no sense of or place for the scientific freedom which would allow for dissention, debate, and revision. Despite the recognition that the field is in decline, classical psychoanalysts have not been able to overcome or finesse the evolved design of the emotion-processing mind whose evolved configuration favors means of denying rather than dealing with its existence and ramifications.

The few adherents of the adaptive paradigm can only stand by and watch, and suffer the fate created for them by present-day psychoanalysts. As strange as this may sound, we need the coming of a secular anti-Christ who can find the means of saving psychoanalysis—and humanity—from the ruin that is being supported by the failed psychoanalytic paradigm. I put it this way knowingly because it was Christ even more than Freud who offered the world its most compelling and promising solution to the awareness-of-death problem that lies at the root of the threat to existence for both psychoanalysis and humankind. Thus, Christ offered viable ways of dealing with the three forms of death anxiety experienced by human beings. He solved predatory forms of death anxiety caused by threats from others by advocating the turning of the other cheek; offered a resolution for predator death anxiety and the devastating guilt caused by harming others by accepting punishment for and by dying for each person's predatory sins; and he solved the problem of existential death anxiety and human mortality by offering all comers an eternal life by his side in heaven.

Clearly, these denial-based solutions have failed to serve as the basis for peace, both personally and in the world at large. Paradoxically, Christ seems to have done more to intensify these death anxieties than to resolve them. But most importantly, his denial-of-death failure to bring peace to humankind and the comparable failure of Freud's death-avoiding/death-denying efforts must give way to efforts to achieve peace through the development of a death-confronting and death-processing scientifically-grounded psychoanalytic theory in which attention to unconscious forms of death anxiety play a significant role. This approach would in time reveal sound and successful ways of knowingly adapting to the discombobulating ramifications of human mortality.

To paraphrase Freud: Death is our only possible answer to life.

Sources:
Freud, S. Thoughts for the Times on War and Death. SE 14, 1915, p. 300.


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Of these books I say, paraphrasing Wordsworth:

*When I wrote them, God and I knew how I was able to do it. Now only God knows.*

Read them and you will understand what I mean.