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Trigant Burrow and the Laboratory of the "I"



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ABSTRACT

Social self-inquiry was originated by Trigant Burrow in the 1920's and is now carried forward by a small group of investigators at The Lifwynn Foundation. It is a research method that combines group work with a somatic approach and is aimed at a better understanding of hostility and alienation in human relationships. This article presents the experiences out of which the research method grew and

describes Burrow's thesis regarding the basic unity of the human species and the prevalent social neurosis that has disrupted it.

At The Lifwynn Foundation, in Westport, Connecticut, a few coworkers and I are carrying forward the social self-inquiry or group analysis initiated by Trigant Burrow in the first half of this century. It is a research method that combines a distinctive form of group work with a somatic approach, and it grew out of Burrow's early diagnosis of a social neurosis, a prevalent disorder in the feeling life of human beings. With a few associates, he organized in the 1920's a small laboratory group to study its own interaction in the immediate moment, an experimental community that lived and worked together for more than thirty years. All participants, including Burrow, were regarded as both investigators and the material to be investigated.

Burrow claimed that the findings of this research placed the study of human conflict in the realm of the biophysical sciences (1949, p.147). But his approach to what constitutes scientific study had a distinct phenomenological flavor in keeping with the contemporary questioning of scientific objectivism.

Trigant Burrow and his principal collaborator, Clarence Shields, were also my teachers and mentors. Thus, I am not neutral in telling their story—my images of both have become intertwined with the image of myself and its proprietary feeling attachments. That circumstance, common as it is, is something I hope to hold in awareness in writing this article. For in our work of social self-inquiry, it is the responsibility of participants to be aware of their biases and assumptions; to sense them as largely generated socially; to share them verbally when that seems likely to enhance communication; and especially to experience the sensations that signal and accompany them.

The purpose is to find out, as a group, how the sensations associated with bias and affect-projection feels. That is, what are the sensations associated with making other people and outside events responsible for our feelings (i.e., "she makes me mad," "I'm upset because my train was late." etc.)? Through such proprioception, we are learning to become more aware of our own projections and of their power as a motivating factor in human interaction. Our concern is with the development of a fresh approach to social transformation and healing that can be realized on a broad scale. (Throughout this article the word affect is used to denote feeling that has become attached to symbols and ideas.)

Group analysis was originated by Burrow; it was a precursor of group therapy, and the first extension of Freudian principles to the sociological setting. Group analysis or social self-inquiry constituted a study of social mood, the prevailing feeling-tone as embodied in society and reflected in the investigators, their group, their families. This research was—and continues to be—a study of society at large from the inside—from inside a group which regards itself as exemplifying that society, and from inside the men and women composing the group, each considered biologically typical of the phylum.

A basic assumption of our work is Burrow's premise of the solidarity of the species—a biologically grounded continuity of feeling that exists among human beings, a concrete and palpable feeling integration in individual and group. Burrow speaks of the presence of an organic species continuum; though side-tracked in the course of evolution, it is still capable of mature expression and development as a motivating force in human behavior. Moreover, this sense of union is not conceived as something to be attained, a "higher" state of consciousness to be striven for, but as inherently accessible to every human.

Such formulations will not seem extravagant to readers of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. When he writes of the "flesh of the world" (1968, pp. 147-149; Behnke, 1984), of inter-corporeity and co-functioning ("We function as one unique body."—1968, p. 215), he also seems to suggest a tangible and corporeal enfoldment in which we humans have our being (Rosen, 1993, pp. 24-28).

Other investigators—Murphy (1959), Johnson (1983) Lynch (1985)—, for example, too, have proposed that the bond among human beings is concrete and substantial (Galt, A., 1991, pp. 109-10) and it is consistent with this position that if wholeness is indeed our native state, then the problem is to discover, and if possible remove, the impediments that interfere with the experience of it. That is the endeavor in which my colleagues and I are engaged. Burrow's findings are both social and somatic, that is, psychosocial and they have been inculcated in each of us from babyhood on. Social self-inquiry does not focus primarily on either the group or the individual, but on a totality composed of interconnected wholes, each a unique element that at the same time reflects and embodies the human condition. Thus, the work of social self-inquiry is done by individuals working as components of a larger entity, by society as incorporated in you and me.

"Our investigations demand in a very special sense the initiative of each investigator," Burrow wrote in 1949. We find the material of our observations in our own reaction patterns. But the reaction-pattern of individuals is not confined to their own behavior and, therefore, cannot be found only in them. It is part of a larger social pattern It is part of a pattern that is phyllic. (1949, 22/8).

Burrow's Early Life and Studies with Jung

Trigant Burrow was born in Norfolk Virginia, in 1875. He studied medicine at the University of Virginia and served after graduation as a demonstrator in biology. General medicine did not appeal to him, however, and after a year of postgraduate work abroad, he opted for further study at Johns Hopkins University. There, in a philosophy seminar, Professor James Mark Baldwin mentioned that no one had as yet ignited the spark needed to understand the basic cause of mental disease. Burrow decided then and there to devote his life to this effort (1949, p. 78). He was already enrolled for his doctorate in the Department of Psychology where he also served as assistant. His doctoral thesis in the field of attention won him a degree in 1909, and he moved with his wife, the former Emily Bryan and two young children to New York. There he began working under Adolf Meyer at the New York State Psychiatric Institute on Ward's Island.

The new field of psychoanalysis was commanding more and more attention and Meyer, a Swiss, was impressed by seminars conducted at Küsnacht by Carl Jung, a fellow Züricher. Both Jung and Freud were in New York that fall on their way to deliver the famous Clark lectures in Worcester and Burrow was introduced to them by A. A. Brill, oddly enough between the acts at Hammerstein's Roof Garden. It was immediately arranged that Burrow would study with Jung that fall. In spite of the difficulties involved in financing the trip and transferring the small family to Switzerland, the Burrows sailed within a month.

A series of letters to his mother (Galt, W., 1958, pp. 23-35) tell of Burrow's pleasure in his teacher and his new field of study:

And now what is all the time uppermost! I am perfectly delighted with Jung My journey to Zurich is more than vindicated! Now listen! You must have felt these many years of your loving hope for me, that there has been a talent, an interest, an aptitude—what you will—a tendency to penetrate into certain types of character... You must have felt how apart this strange keen interest has been from conventional medical standards. You must have felt my own pain and disappointment and embarrassment when at every turn, no matter what heart and enthusiasm I brought to each new direction or endeavor, I was ever confronted with the same old uninspiring, unimaginative mechanical physical tools and physical problems... But a new day has dawned and I have found my work.

With every word from Jung I realize the fellow-spirit behind them!

At that time Jung, of course, was still a follower of Freud although the rift between them had already begun (Saul Rosenzweig, pp. 69-71). So it was Freud's teaching, interpreted by Jung, that Burrow was absorbing in Zurich; he makes clear in later writings that his allegiance was always to that teaching.

On returning from Switzerland, Burrow again took up work with Adolf Meyer, this time at the Phipps Clinic of the Johns Hopkins Medical School. Yet paradoxically, his own sensitivity to the material he was analyzing yielded observations that eventually led him to question the entire basis of his new field of endeavor.

The Psychoanalytic Years

Psychoanalysis was burgeoning in the years from 1910 to 1920 when Burrow was practicing in Baltimore, and he was at the center of it in this country. In 1911 he

joined with eight others to found the American Psychoanalytic Association and served as one of its first councilors and later president. His practice was highly successful—patients followed him even to Lake Chateaugay in the Adirondack Mountains when he and Mrs. Burrow purchased Lifwynn Camp there. They stayed at lodges around the lake and one even built a home nearby.

Between 1911 and 1918, Burrow also published eighteen papers and they began to evidence his ideological independence. Based on observations in his psychoanalytic sessions, he started to write of a "strifeless phase of awareness that antedated the infant's earliest objective appreciation of its surroundings" (1964, p. 10). He wrote later:

There was no doubt with me that there existed between the infant and maternal organism a tensional rapport (I did not call it that at the time)-a total physiological continuity in sensation and reaction that underlay the entire developmental life of the organism and that was quite different from the tensional modifications brought about with the infant's adaptation to its environment and to its mother through the process of outer objective awareness. (Galt, W., 1958, p.312)

He called this the organism's primary subjective phase and spoke of the infant's primary identification with the mother.

Burrow suggested that this preconscious mode (before consciousness) preceded the turmoil of oedipal conflict. He wrote of the "encroachment" of cognition upon the organism's primary empathic mode as outer objective awareness intruded. And he applied these observations to explanations of homosexuality (1917) and of incest-awe (1918). "Incest is not forbidden", he wrote, "it forbids itself." In recent years, Little (1960), Winnicott (1992) and others have also written of this original mode of human awareness, but at the time Burrow's formulations evidently had the ring of novelty: They were cited by the historian, Clarence Oberndorf, as a principal contribution of American psychoanalysts before 1920 (1953).

Even earlier Burrow had begun to question the mental health of "normality" and to suggest that neurosis is socially induced (1911). Later (1914a) he wrote, "We are of one tissue... Society too has its elaborate system of defense mechanisms, its equivocations and metonymies, its infantile makeshifts and illusions." But society's frailties are set down as custom while so-called neurotics isolate themselves by the extravagance of their metaphors.

He also rejected mind/body duality, claiming that the psychological and the physiological were "obverse aspects" of each other (1914b).

These themes remained significant for Burrow throughout his lifetime but they would be subjected to reality-testing in the crucible of group analysis.

The Beginning of Group Analysis

In the preface to his first book (1927, pp. xv-xviii), Burrow describe the event that changed the course of his life and work. (In the interests of brevity, I will both quote and paraphrase Burrow's statements throughout this article.) 'It unexpectedly happened one day that while I was interpreting a dream of a student-assistant, he made bold to challenge the honesty of my analytic position.' He suggested that Burrow's sincerity could only be proved if the two changed places. Burrow at first

thought the suggestion absurd (he had been analyzed). But he decided to go along with it in the interest of experiment and to humor the "waywardness of inexperience."

Not long after Burrow became the analysand, however, he discovered that his "resistances" far from being negligible were plainly insuperable. He speaks of the indignation and pain of his position, but as the months dragged on, he came to realize that in changing places he had merely relinquished the authoritarian role now being enacted by his former analysand, Clarence Shields. This was a crucial revelation. At that time (1918-1920), there had been no questioning of the role of the analyst and it was a shock to Burrow to realize "that, in its individualistic application, the attitude of the psychoanalyst and the attitude of the authoritarian are inseparable." It led him to question his entire commitment to the field.

But most significant was the study that came out of this situation for Burrow and Shields. Burrow described it as "the reciprocal effort of each of us to recognize within himself his attitude of authoritarianism and autocracy toward the other." The individualistic critique now became the material for analysis. The two men approached this task from an inclusive, egalitarian position—the altered frame of reference that characterized all their subsequent studies and that we have tried to maintain at The Lifwynn Foundation. This research posture was not arrived at through processes of logic, Burrow writes, but was the "outgrowth of events that were prior to and independent of any conceptual formulation of them." It was a peer study by two men who looked at their own mutual disdain and mistrust.

Clarence Shields' background was in marked contrast to that of Burrow. He had grown up in a Pennsylvania farming community and graduated from a small college nearby. Because of his love of the outdoors he became a surveyor and might have spent his life in this profession. But the death of the young woman he was to marry brought home to him a profound emotional insecurity. He gave up his work and after some months of drifting became a companion to a psychiatric patient in a family known to Dr. and Mrs. Burrow. Burrow describes his first meeting with Shields in 1915.

I had not before met anyone with whom I could not enter readily into the customary social give-and-take exchange. I had not before known a man or woman who was not socially accessible in the ordinary sense and yet who was sane... Here was a man whom I could not bring to think either with me or in opposition to me on the accustomed basis of interchange... I wanted to understand an expression of behavior that defied the behavioral categories. (Galt, W., 1958, p. 43)

Shields for his part, was attracted by the innovative ideas Burrow had put forth in his papers, and particularly his formulation of the preconscious mode. In 1947 he described their early work together. This is a condensation of his report:

The present research began when Dr. Burrow and I first met and shortly thereafter realized our common behavioral interests. This interest in human motivation had been outstanding for both us. With me it took the form of persistent search without knowing what I was searching for; with Dr. Burrow, such orderly form as culminated in his early brilliant papers.

From the beginning we were committed to a program of mutual analysis. And this study did not at any time present easy going. But, when we came actually to work together in the same office, then little by little, the unexpected began to happen. Neither could brook the observations of the other. Our relation became strained. The tempo of the strain increased and turned to mutual pain. There was now rudely thrust upon us a hitherto unsuspected behavioral element. The indomitable "rightness" of each had intruded itself and we were wholly unprepared to meet it.

There was, too, the increasing, the impelling desire to withdraw, to flee. And yet, through it all we managed somehow to stand by. It was this standing by in face of behavioral disaster that constituted the core of our early association. It was this very early relationship—a relationship that should have cracked up but did not—that embodied the core of both the insurmountable problem and the consistent achievement.

It was not Dr. Burrow's study of me or my study of Dr. Burrow. It was not a study of the behavior of two individuals by two individuals. It was a circumstance—a nuclear, social behavioral circumstance. And this nuclear circumstance was characterized by the interest of not one but of two organisms. It could have been any two organisms. There was, for instance, the study undertaken by Miss Hölljes and myself. But the number was immaterial. The sole innovation, the sole requirement was that the two, the three or the thirty-three stand by, when the hell of our own—of humanity's—affect-behavior was laid bare and each was overpoweringly impelled to withdraw.

In this nuclear event, the behavior of each was equal and common. The opposing rightness of each, the opposing wrongness of each was equal and common. In this equality and commonness lay the essence of wholeness and health, the foundation of growth, the reassertion of humanity as a living organism. But it was only a beginning. (Galt, W.1958, pp.349-352)

The two men called in others to assist in their study, former patients, family members, and associates, including Hans Syz M.D., the Swiss psychiatrist and Phipps Clinic colleague who became a lifelong co-worker. Group analysis had become a reality.

Lifwynn Camp and The Lifwynn Foundation

In the summer of 1923, the first study session took place at Lifwynn Camp. Remote and lushly beautiful, the camp was (and is) ideal for concentrated community study. In 1926, twenty-four persons, among them my mother, my sister and I, were invited for a two-month session. I thus found myself at the age of fifteen involved in a totally unprecedented investigation. It was based on the premise that a common "social neurosis" exists throughout human communities, deflecting the development of the natural human trend to cooperation and cohesion. We were to observe immediate motivations and feelings in ourselves and others, and share these observations verbally. This was a forerunner of the here/now orientation so important in later group work (Fried, 1971).

There was not, at that time, the physiological grounding that later marked these studies; the work that summer was highly exploratory. Yet in addition to many laboratory meetings, there was also time for nonverbal activities, rhythmic dancing, singing lessons, arts and crafts, and many water sports. The house- and grounds-work was shared by the campers, and each of us paid a part of the camp's running expenses. Throughout all this activity, emphasis remained on immediate observation of feeling and motivation. This was a forerunner of the here/now orientation so important in later group work (Fried, 1971).

It is difficult to realize now how totally new such a venture was at that time. And even in many subsequent experiences in groups (T-groups, encounter groups, Tavistock groups, and dialogue groups), I have not encountered anywhere that questioning of the "I," of possessiveness and projection as it occurs in love, anger or friendship. In other groups what you said you felt was accepted as valid; in Burrow's

group analysis what you said you felt was open to examination by yourself and everyone else.

Though this may seem like a heavy trip to lay on a fifteen-year old, my recollection is that the experience was immensely freeing. Nineteen twenty-six was the only occasion that the group analytic meetings were recorded--- number of amateur stenographers took notes which were later typed. I see in the transcriptions that there was no hesitation on the part of the youngsters in camp, including Burrow's son and daughter, to challenge the affect of their elders.

During that summer, meetings were also being held around plans to create an organization that would formalize and facilitate the singular social situation described in Clarence Shields' report. Finances had been pressing for the Burrows since he relinquished his practice in 1921 and the meeting transcripts reveal his embarrassment that some former patients who remained as participants still continued to pay for consultations with him, "as though I were still the healthy psychopathologist capable to treating the ills of others." His hope was directed toward a foundation that would more fully represent the actualities of the group research.

The following year, The Lifwynn Foundation for Laboratory Research in Analytic and Social Psychiatry was established in New York, with Burrow as its Scientific Director. The by-laws, composed by Clarence Shields and still in effect, precisely reflect the conditions of the group work: The corporation is not only to carry out its stated program but at the same time is to observe and examine the feeling processes involved.

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That same year, Burrow received word from his longtime friend, Adolf Mayer, that his connection with the Phipps Clinic was being severed by Johns Hopkins University, as his work was not sufficiently relevant to their interests (Galt, W., 1958, pp. 164-65).

First Reports: The Social Basis of Consciousness

The first writings to emerge from group analysis were Burrow's papers, "Social Images versus Reality," (1924) and "A Relative Concept of Consciousness" (1925). In the former he wrote that we have been "diverted from the organic reality of our relationships and have substituted for them the mental pictures formed by our own artificial projections" (p. 235).

The Social Basis of Consciousness: A Study in Organic Psychology Based upon a Synthetic and Societal Concept of the Neuroses appeared in 1927. In

"Psychoanalysis in Theory and in Life" (Chapter I) Burrow notes that the theory of psychoanalysis rests on the conception that nervous disorders are the substitutive manifestation of a repressed sexual life. Burrow agrees that there is substitution, but he no longer views it "as primarily for sexuality as we now know it." Rather, he believes that sexuality is identical with the unconscious and is itself a substitution for the basic harmony of function that is the biological birthright of all humans. The restless, obsessive quest that everywhere masquerades as sex, he wrote, is the hallmark of the mental reaction-average known as "normality." "We who are psychoanalysts.. are very largely misled by an unconscious that is social—we, too, are neurotic in so far as every expression but that of life in its native simplicity is neurotic" (1927, pp.10-17).

Burrow speaks of the subjective field of scientific reasoning and the need to keep clearly before us the "distinctive and impassable interval between the subjective and objective domains of scientific inquiry" (p. 19). In "A Relative Concept of Consciousness" (Chapter 2, pp. 32-49), he begins to describe the kind of science needed to observe subjective processes. In the usual process of observation, he points out, there is an unwarranted assumption, namely that the position of the observer is valid and privileged. It does not take into account the observer's own organic dimension, so that we look out at the phenomena of life as from a background, detached spectators of a merely static aspect.

From the point of view of relativity, he goes on, such a detached observational outlook toward life is to view it in the flat, bi-dimensional plane of the image. But an account of life that does not include the consciousness that is our own kinetic function does not encompass life in the full orb of its actuality. "It is within the subjective sphere of our affects, representing our organic racial continuum, that this distortion of outlook is manifested in its deepest poignancy." Burrow compares his more inclusive position to that of the relativists, Freud's to the Newtonians!

From this broader organic frame of reference, The Social Basis of Consciousness discusses, among other matters, the unconscious in its individual and social aspects, the dream and its analysis; the biological substrate of neurotic conflict; the distinction between sex and sexuality; and the ultimate resolution of the societal neurosis.

In many ways, this is a revolutionary book; it is also a difficult book. Yet surprisingly the critical response was favorable, particularly from the lay press in England and the U.S. A few professional journals greeted it with scorn but the novelist, D. H. Lawrence, wrote a laudatory review. "Dr. Burrow is that rare thing among psychiatrists, a humanly honest man...Subjective honesty, which means that a man is honest about his own inward experience, is perhaps the rarest thing, especially among professionals" (1927). ¶

In a private letter, however, Lawrence chided Burrow for the convolutions of his language. Burrow replied, "I love what you say about my excruciating style. It is awful...The as yet unresolved conflict within me between science and art is the thundering noise one hears on every page as I come laboring along." He hopes that "his breathing is less stertorous" in some of his "later things." ¶

These "later things" included "The Laboratory Method in Psychoanalysis," which Burrow delivered as president of the American Psychoanalytic Association at the Ninth Congress of the International Psychoanalytical Association in Bad

Homburg, Germany, in 1925. Freud did not attend the Congress but Burrow had sent him copies of his first two reports on group analysis and Freud's reaction not surprisingly was negative. He sent word through Paul Federn, editor of *Zeitschrift* that Burrow should explain more fully his method and results; and in "The Group Method of Analysis," he did so. But Freud's coolness persisted--in a letter to Burrow, he expressed his belief that analysis could only be practiced in a group of two and added, "I do not believe that we should be grateful to you for the fact that you want to extend our therapeutic task to improving the world" (November 14 1926 see also Rosenbaum, 1986).

But a new dimension was already being added to group analysis that would introduce the concrete grounding I referred to earlier.

In reviewing this revolutionary book the novelist, D. H. Lawrence, wrote, "Dr. Burrow is that rare thing among psychiatrists, a humanly honest man. Subjective honesty—which means that a man is honest about his own inward experience—is perhaps the rarest thing, especially among professionals" (1927). Freud, however was not so generous—in a letter to Burrow, he expressed his belief that analysis could only be practiced in a group of two and added, "I do not believe that we should be grateful to you for the fact that you want to extend our therapeutic task to improving the world" (November 14, 1926; see also Rosenbaum, 1986).

Contrasting Modes of Attention and *The Structure of Insanity*

Throughout all this writing (twenty papers and a book between 1924 and 1932), the rigorous discipline of group analysis or social self-inquiry continued. The constant probing in the group, the constant self-questioning day and night, led Burrow to a situation in which "the sense of frustration or defeat of my habitual interests and activations had reached its acutest phase... the dearth of my 'normal' interests and incentives seemed to have reduced me to a state approaching interrelational nihilism. It seemed to me that in these moments the sense of frustration had reached the saturation point" (1949, p. 114).

At such a moment, when all affective response to ordinary stimuli appeared non-existent, an unexpected phenomenon made itself felt a reaction which at the time could only be described as a sensation of pressure or tension in the head. This sensation was not clearly outlined at first as to location or quality. It lasted for only a few seconds and was not sharply defined or vivid. Burrow could not account for it in any way, although he deemed it "unthinkable" that such a subjective sense or sensation could have come to awareness if there had not been the constant interruption of customary social interests. It was only the drab background against which the sensation was outlined that could account for its having been noticed at all.

If wholly new and alien, at least this experience was tangible, directly palpable, so to speak. The unexpected intimation of a new field of observation, however faint, held significance for Burrow. For having recognized in himself and his co-workers the constant presence of bias and personalistic motivation, it was "intriguing" to discover that, when this sense of internal tension came into

awareness, self-oriented ruminations (what Burrow termed affect-images) and projections fell away!

Burrow and his fellow investigators continued their challenge of customary reactions and the sensation of tension made itself felt again. Gradually, the moments when the tension or pressure was experienced grew longer and it became possible to locate it more clearly in the anterior part of the head, or the region within and back of the eyes. And still the observation of particular interest connected with this internal stress was its indication of a physiological reaction that was not accompanied by any mental image or critique.

Slowly over time the experimenters learned to induce this sensation (by means that will be described in a later section of this article) and with it the elimination of emotionally toned thinking—the affect images that had formerly preoccupied them. From this point on, they devoted themselves to the cultivation of this sense of stress or tension in the oculo-facial area and to the larger organismic background against which it stood out in ever sharper contrast (1949, pp. 114-116).

In 1932 the first report based on this newer proprioceptive investigation was published. It was called *The Structure of Insanity: A Study in Phylopathology* (phylo- from the Greek word meaning “race” or “tribe”). The book appeared in England as one of Kegan Paul's Psyche Miniature Series, and in German translation published by Georg Thieme in 1933. In The Structure of Insanity, Burrow draws attention for the first time to the need to observe the process of observation or attention itself. Language, he says, deals with aspects of the world—we symbolize an aspect or part of a thing and henceforth that symbol stands for the object or event. This is a part-to-part relation, moreover, because it is mediated by only a small segment of the human organism: the system consisting primarily of the visual, auditory and laryngeal functions located in the cranial area. The marvelous capacity for **symbolization** facilitated by these limited **processes** has made possible the enormous range of human achievement.

It also made human beings vulnerable to a bipolar right/wrong symbol inculcated in infancy. Although ubiquitous, right and wrong are not demonstrable criteria like hot and cold, soft and hard, etc. Moreover, what is right in one time or place is wrong in another; what is good for one person is bad for another. Thus, as a child we were each inducted into an arbitrary and mutable symbolic system for governing behavior, a system that reflected the special prejudices of those from whom we absorbed it (pp.38-40).

In The Structure of Insanity, the entity which we designate as “I” or “I, myself” is described as the sum of the collected impressions acquired through the symbolic function, including the symbol of my “right” or “rightness.” But as with symbolic usage in general, this “I” is only a partial self and does not encompass the totality of the organism. Lacan is sensitive to this situation: in re-stating his position, Stewart writes, “The subject in the symbolic is the ‘I’, which is a stand-in for the self of experience. But this subject is not substantial; it is only a signifier within a realm of signifiers...” (1983, p. 47).

Moreover, there are states and conditions of the organism that do not lend themselves to the symbolic mode of representation. When we use such words as “love” and “hate,” “anger,” “desire,” “anxiety,” we are attempting to symbolize—to represent—organismic conditions which are not negotiable by symbolic means. To

know what anger, love or horror is in concrete terms requires a different mode of observation from this customary symbol-exchange. It requires that our point of observation "move back" (as Burrow had suggested in his previous book) to a position within the organism where the feeling of anger—or affection or whatever—can be sensed or experienced directly (pp.28-32).

Burrow writes of an integral mode of attention or cotention which permits the experience of "deeper organismic processes," of the solidarity with our kind which is essential to individual and societal health (pp.22-23). Confusion has occurred between two ways of relating or attending—the symbolic (words/images) and the organismic (feeling/sensation). This confusion has derailed our relationships with our kind and with our environment. It has set up strains and tensions that are directly palpable within the processes of each of us (pp. 52-53).

In concluding this little book Burrow writes:

The social symptoms of worldwide pain and futility, of economic distress, of industrial desperation, together with the endless repetition of insignificant palliatives that represent purely peripheral, symbolic and dialectic intermediations—all these are evidences of [our] generic social pathology and plainly attest the community's kinship in a community-wide disorder. (p.71)—"Working as I must from the same background, I am necessarily under a constant handicap in attempting to bring an adequate undeflected feeling-expression to this thesis. In saying this, however, I am merely stating the conditions of a task which an increasingly integral basis of feeling and thinking on the part of my colleagues will more and more alter and assist." (79).

To me, this book is written with a flow which contrasts with the more crabbed style of Burrow's first book. Yet the reviews--in England, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and the U.8.--were highly critical, even sarcastic. Only George Stevenson, editor of *Mental Hygiene* seemed to like it at all (*Mental Hygiene*, Jan. 1933, Vol. XVII, and No.1).

In 1933 the American Psychoanalytic Association, of which Burrow was a co-founder and president in 1925-1926, dropped him from membership. Again, the word came from an old acquaintance—A. Brill, who had introduced Burrow to Freud and Jung at Hammerstein's Roof Garden.

The Biology of Human Conflict

Burrow's third book, *The Biology Of Human Conflict: An Anatomy of Behavior Individual and Social* (1937), is a straightforward, lucid account of what the author sees as the generic and physiological basis of social discord and disintegration. It starts with two chapters on the symptomatology of what is accepted as "normality." In "The Behavioral Fallacy of Right and Wrong," (pp. 45-65) Burrow discusses the potential for conflict that centers around the sense of rightness inculcated in each of us—our defensiveness and self-justification, the sense of what is due to me, my family, my party, my side.

The next chapter, "The Preconscious, or Foundations in Human Biology," (pp.66-103) describes the symptomatology of health, of wholeness. Through examples from dreams, poetry and religion, Burrow illustrates the deep sense of confluence and unity that also informs human life. Familiar to many of us is this mood of serenity and quiet that may suddenly be there as we stop to gaze at the

sunset, say, or listen to solemn music in an empty church. Burrow relates it of course to the first experience of infancy. And while that original undifferentiated unity does not in itself constitute phylic health, its persistence in memory is a reminder that wholeness is the soil from which we spring.

In the next section of the book ("Organismic Morphology") (pp. 107-244), Burrow develops further (but not yet fully), the theme of contrasting modes of attention introduced in *The Structure of Insanity*: the primary, integral mode (cotention) and the symbolic, which he refers to here as attention. He again emphasizes that words and symbols are mediated by the exteroceptive senses of vision and audition, and the adjacent laryngeal system. As long as the developing symbolic functions dealt strictly with signs and symbols, they comprised only another asset for the race, like the opposed thumb or the upright posture. But somewhere in the course of evolution this minute circumscribed system attempted to co-opt also the deep empathic functions of the organism as a whole, bringing about conflict within the organism involving neuromuscular activations.

The eye is central to both modes of relating to the world—the broad, mute adjustments of the total organism and the constrictive objectification of the symbolic system. Thus, if an unwarranted overlap of function has indeed occurred between these two modes of adaptation, as Burrow suggests, it is not surprising that it should make itself felt in the area of the eyes and brow. And, in actual practice, sensing the tensions in that region seems to provide an opening wedge to discriminating between the limited pattern of neuromuscular tensions associated with the symbolic system, on the one hand and, on the other, the more diffuse and generally distributed tensional pattern of the organism as a whole (pp. 285-289). This is the practice that enabled Burrow and his fellow investigators to eliminate affective imagery and projection. If it proved similarly effective generally, psychopathology could shift its emphasis from changing the patient's ideas/images, or reducing affect-attachments through drugs, to helping the patient learn to distinguish proprioceptively between two contrasting ways of attending or relating to the physical and social environment.

In Chapter V of *The Biology...*, Burrow gives a case history of a patient treated in this manner. But his wider concern is with the recognition among his colleagues of the morphological basis of human conflict and violence, and the possibility of approaching these urgent problems on the basis of underlying structures and functions.

In this book, Burrow uses the term "I"-persona for the distorted sense of self, the fragmented self-image, that has issued from the functional imbalance just described (pp.370-372). The "I"-persona is that cluster of feelings, ideas, images, sensations and projections that are associated with the sense of "myself" as special and different. Although one's sense of "I" seems intimately one's own, we actually share it with everyone else. Burrow refers to the "I"-persona as a "social artifact."

This is the first of Burrow's books to contain a glossary. He has often being criticized for his use of neologisms but new words are usually needed when an altered frame of reference is introduced. And even such words as empathy, dichotomy, and ecology which are now in general in use, were perplexing—and irritating—for many readers in the thirties.

The Technique of Cotention and The Neurosis of Man

In the twelve years following publication of *The Biology of Human Conflict*, world events were catching up with social self-inquiry. We had been through a devastating, all-encompassing war. The horrors of the Nazi concentration camps had been revealed and the atomic bomb had burst upon the world. Already, two halves of the globes were separating into armed camps. The neurosis of the human species was there for everyone to see, if they chose.

Among those who recognized the crisis confronting society was the poet and writers, Hebert Read, an admirer of The Social Basis of Consciousness, he invited Burrow to address the postwar world in a new book for his publishing house, Routledge and Keagan Paul.

The Neurosis of Man: An Introduction to a Science of Human Behavior, published in 1949, matched the mood of the times—it has elements of passion and urgency, and I have always considered it the most powerful of Burrow's books.

By this time, his formulation of contrasting modes of attention had matured. He introduced the term ditention to signify the divided attention of our normal way of relating (pp. 72-73). In ditention, interest does not flow directly to the objects and people around us; it is diverted back upon the self-image (how am I doing? do these people like me? what's expected of me in this situation? what am I getting out of this? etc.) But, when the go-getting drives of the "I"- persona are held in abeyance, cotention asserts itself quite naturally, not as restoration of our infant state but as a mature realization of organismic powers, including the symbolic capacity. This distinction is made by Rosen in his "Evolution of Attentional Processes in the Human Organism" (1994).

Cotention is an interrelational function (194, p.183); it embodies the felt experience of our common substratum of feeling and implies the phylic continuity that unites the human species. "Just as the bony skeleton is the organism's structural framework, so cotention is the organism's functional support. It is the individual's balance wheel; it is the homeostat of the phylum" (1949, pp.247-248).

Beginning in the early 1940's, a series of instrumental recordings were made of eye-movements, respiration, and brain waves in the two attentional modes. They showed clear and striking differences as subjects shifted from ditention to cotention in various experimental settings (reading, looking at pictures, etc.) (1938, 1943, 1945, 1949, 1949a, 1949b). The purpose was to demonstrate that there were indeed physiological contrasts involved— Burrow warned against the "seductive blandishments of graphs that undertake to chart human behavior... Our starting-point and our ending-point is the internal perception of the organism's pattern of behavior as a whole" (1949, pp.267-268).

In the new book, Burrow described attention, "as all but synonymous with the relation of an organism to its environment. Attention is thus an essentially bionomic or logical process. Without attention there would be no contact with the outer world...there would not be our ecosomatic or organism-environment relationship" (1949, 69).

Hence, the contrasting patterns of attention which Burrow designated as ditention and cotention are not states but modes of attention with somatic components. "Just as the bony skeleton is the organism's structural framework, so

cotion is the organism's functional support. It is the individual's balance wheel; it is the homeostat of the phylum"

Formulating the procedures developed in social self-inquiry, Burrow states:

The technique requires, as far as my own subjective experience discloses, that one recognize [one's] incessant preoccupation with mental images possessing an affect-coloring of greater or less intensity. This is the affect-element which, in attaching itself to the image or symbol, constitutes [fragmented] attention or dition. So that one's first recourse is to arrest such affect-images because of their functional disparity in relation to the organism as a whole. Through repeated experimentation my associates and I were at pains to verify that the tension about the eyes, while not the primary factor in dition, constitutes an intrinsic part of the neuromuscular pattern involved. We found ourselves trying to sense and adjust the imbalance of the eyes.

So accustomed is this area to discrepant or disparate oculo-motor tensions that an attempt to bring about a balance of these tensions was unwelcome and caused resistance or stress. It caused resistance or stress from which we tended automatically to seek comfort again in affect-projection or dition... in automatically darting back... to the various interrelational stimuli associated with the preservation of the social self-image.

But as more and more one recalls oneself to oneself, there is the sense of being a student and that the field of research is the interrelational activation of the [species]. Once more you set to work. Again the eyes are closed. Again there is the darkness in front of them. Once more there is the central point and the black curtain before the brain. Again its fixated images and their affects are excluded. Again they are replaced by a sense of stress—of stress in the eyes and forehead. "But, mind you, one is not thinking One does not... gain touch with the organism's neurosis through a mental acquaintance with it. One acquires an internal appreciation of tensions internal to [the] organism, and observations are based solely upon the internal sense or sensation of these tensions." The research of students of phylobiology is within the naked sensation of their own organism.

With increasing observation of the sensation caused by the partitive stress...of the separate "I"-persona, there develops concurrently the sense of a larger background, the primary organism of the species in its native spontaneous continuity and solidarity... The organism senses its relation to the environment and to others as an integral element within an integral organismic unit. Through this procedure, the vast material of the organism's personal and social affects becomes increasingly set off from and contrasted with the more permanent matrix of the organism's motivation as a phylum. Where this technique has been persisted in by a group of people over a sufficient period of time, the barriers to common interests and activities artificially set up by the socially prevalent "I" are let down in behalf of the common interests and activities that make for the survival of the individual and the group as a phylic whole (1949, pp.253-258).¹

(This kinaesthetic practice can be carried out in laboratory meetings, as well as in solitude. Eyes need not necessarily be closed.)

The Neurosis of Man is a series of seminars and involves repetition from chapter to chapter as the author's thesis unfolds. It was dictated and discussed, as Burrow points; out in his Foreword (1949, xvii), in daily group seminars composed of associates and students. I well remember those sessions in which I occasionally participated, Burrow coming in the morning with a handful of notes--a few sentences

¹ Some readers have spoken of similarities between Buddhist philosophy/practice and the study Burrow called phylobiology. My own knowledge of Buddhism is too limited to judge this question; it requires an experiential, as well as a theoretical comparison. If it should turn out, however, that a western investigator, approaching the problems of consciousness and behavior with the tools of an expanded twentieth century science, arrived at insights consistent with those of ancient seers, it could have implications of significance even beyond these two approaches.

or several pages jotted down in the early morning or during the night. The importance of placing the findings of the long research in the hands of fellow scientists was constantly before him.

The *Neurosis of Man* was to be printed in England and continuing wartime shortages of paper postponed the book for months. Taking advantage of the delay, Burrow wrote a long and urgent letter to fellow scientists asking them to read selected chapters and comment on them. The response was gratifying. Twenty-nine investigators in a wide variety of fields responded. Among them was A. J. Carlson, an eminent physiologist at the University of Chicago. When *The Neurosis of Man* finally appeared, he wrote in a review.

This volume is in essence a scientific endeavor to comprehend the genesis of the irrational behavior of social and national groups...composed largely of so called "normal" individuals....It is a "must" book for every adult citizen in our democracy....saner social and international behavior...will be reached and stabilized sooner if all leaders in education, sociology, industry, politics, and labor master the problem as outlined, illustrated, and partly clarified in *The Neurosis of Man* (1950, 335-36).²

In 1948, Burrow suffered a devastating blow in the sudden death of his beloved son, Jack, from an unsuspected heart condition. It undoubtedly hastened Burrow's own death which occurred less than two years later. But during that time he produced several masterful papers including "Prescription for Peace" (1950a), requested by Pitirim Sorokin for Explorations in Altruistic Love and Behavior; and "Emotion and the Social Crisis" (1950b) delivered at the Mooseheart Symposium on Feelings and Emotions. He was also working on a book based on his correspondence with scientists regarding the thesis of The Neurosis of Man. This volume was later completed by my husband, William Galt, under the title, Science and Man's Behavior (1953).

Next Steps

If, in reading this article, some of Burrow's concepts have sounded familiar, it may be because they were picked up and reported by subsequent writers. Nathan Ackerman (1964) referred to the neglect of Burrow by his colleagues as "surely one of the strangest episodes in the history of psychiatry." He remarks that Burrow's ideas were originally rejected but then "one by one, [his] concepts begin to re-emerge in the current literature, but oddly enough not as coming from him" (p. viii). More recently, Edi Gatti Pertegato (1994) used such words as "pillage" and "plagiarism" for the treatment accorded Burrow's ideas.

Expectedly, such remarks excite affect in those of us who identify with Burrow but perhaps, instead of acting on the sense of affront, we can turn our attention to the accompanying sensations, particularly those in the eye area that seem to be related to the neurodynamic misfunction Burrow identified. Presumably we share this with Burrow, his colleagues, and ultimately also with those who read this article. Such proprioception can provide a different "posture" from which to examine the question of "pillage" or "non-pillage" and can free us from unnecessary projections as well as unessential somatic tensions. We can "rest back" on the organism, as Burrow put it to me one time.

Is it possible that such work could take hold widely? Well, many striking changes have occurred in the social surround since I first set foot in Lifwynn Camp. When I came home at the end of that summer, I had difficulty explaining to my friends what we had been doing up there in the woods. Then suddenly in the fifties and sixties, the whole group movement burst into bloom: Humanistic Psychology became an active force; the human potential movement took shape; T-groups sprang up. In England, S. H. Foulkes and his followers instituted a group analysis which, though therapeutic in aim and different from Burrow's approach, nevertheless took as an assumption the "groupness" of human beings. Margaret Rioch brought to this country human relation conference that illustrated the insights of Wilfred Bion regarding the group as a whole and its "basic assumptions." Eugene Gendlin's Focusing centered on the "felt sense" of a problem. Reevaluation Counseling developed.

At the same time, thousands of people in the industrialized world began setting aside daily periods for meditation. Sensory Awareness was introduced in the U.S. by Charlotte Selver. Somatics became an accepted practice. A Study Project in Phenomenology of the Body evolved. Our dream life was wrested from the experts to yield its secrets to ordinary dreamers.

Of particular importance were the studies of David Bohm (1980), the theoretical physicist whose realization of the immediate threats to human survival permeates his writings. His profound and comprehensive observations seem to me to lend strong support to Burrow's thesis (and vice versa). Bohm stresses the underlying wholeness of the universe and explains how thought has misled us regarding "reality" and our place in the overall scheme. He speaks of the need for "proprioception of thought" (1992, pp. 120-130) --for thought to become aware of its own impact—and it is my assumption that this is the function of the technique of cotention described in the previous section. Bohm's writings and seminars--and the work of Patrick de Mare with median groups (1991)--have led to the dialogue group movement now growing throughout the world.

What does it signify that all these expressions of desire for a more organismic grounding, of concern with greater openness in communication, a greater sense of our own bodies, with identification with the environment and the cosmos, should be burgeoning at a time when the signs of societal decay are becoming ever more glaring and obvious?

Vaclav Havel has been writing recently of the transitional nature of our present global culture: "It is as if something were crumbling, decaying and exhausting itself, while something else, still indistinct, and were arising from the rubble" (1994). In keeping with Kuhn's comments (1962) about resistance to new scientific paradigms, it has been suggested that those who cling to an old, outmoded world view will defend it more tenaciously as the strength of an alternative paradigm grows. Perhaps in ethnic cleansing, addiction, child abuse, school-room shootings, environmental degradation and the myriad other expressions of social disintegration, we see what Clarence Shields referred to as "The hell of our own—of humanity's— affect behavior."

At The Lifwynn Foundation we do not have the answer; we have a clue to a way of looking at things, of feeling things that, as part of this great movement toward change, may help to facilitate it. The frame of reference serendipitously arrived at by the original investigators (see the section "The Beginning of Group Analysis") offers

a fresh approach to research on the human organism, the human species, as a totality. It involves (1) a group in which relationships are totally egalitarian; (2) observing behavior as typical of, or exemplifying, society-at-large; (3) sensing proprioceptively the affect and bias of the separated "I." These steps are not easy—in fact they can be painful at times. This work is for men and women who are willing to risk discomfort in the hope of discovering something of significance for society and freeing for them. For the findings of social self-inquiry suggest the possibility of transforming human relationships and discovering a renewed sense of organismic wholeness and social healing.

In some of the dialogue groups recently formed, the "generic position," as I call it—viewing the group as a microcosm of society—is included. So it would not be irrelevant for some of them, as for groups of phenomenologists, somatics practitioners and others, to experiment with Burrow's procedures. "There is required an approach that is consistent with an applied anthropology," he wrote, "an anthropology that is not purely traditional or historic, but that offers students direct functional impact with the daily reactions of themselves and their fellows—an anthropology that is medical as well as social and in which material and observation have to do with behavioral processes of immediate and dynamic insistency. It will have to do with subjective sensations and reactions as they arise out of the generic solidarity of the species... Our interest will not be in external, superficial differences, but rather in the common denominator of organismic motivations that are the universal heritage of us all (1949, pp .20-23).

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AUTHOR'S NOTE:

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Alfreda Galt is president of The Lifwynn Foundation, which was founded in 1927 as a setting for the social self-inquiry of Trigant Burrow. She was a student of Burrow's in the early days of his group research and later married his associate, William Galt. When her husband died in 1955, she succeeded him as Secretary of the Foundation and Chairman of its Editorial Committee. She helped to bring to completion two books that her husband was editing at the time of his death: *A Search for Man 's Sanity: The Selected Letters of Trigant Burrow with Biographical Notes* (1958) and Burrow's posthumous book, *Preconscious Foundations of Human Experience* (1964). In 1984 she edited *Trigant Burrow: Toward Social Sanity and Human Survival, Selections from his Writings* and has published a number of articles on his studies. Address correspondence to: Alfreda alt, The Lifwynn Foundation, Box 314, 1771 Post Road East, Westport, CT 06880. Telephone: 203-254-0599. Fax 203-254-8663.

Trigant Burrow is the author of *The Neurosis of Man* (4.50 avg rating, 2 ratings, 0 reviews, published 1999), *The Structure of Insanity* (4.00 avg rating) See if your friends have read any of Trigant Burrow's books. Sign in with Facebook. Sign in options. Join Goodreads. Trigant Burrow's Followers (2). Trigant Burrow. edit data. Combine Editions. Trigant Burrow's books. Trigant Burrow Average rating: 4.0. 4 ratings 1 review 13 distinct works. *The Neurosis of Man: An Introduction to a Science of Human Behaviour*. 4.50 avg rating 2 ratings published 1999 11 editions. Want to Read saving€| BURROW, TRIGANT (1875-1950) A forgotten American psychoanalyst and pioneer of group analysis, Trigant Burrow was born in Norfolk, Virginia, on September 17, 1875, and he died on May 25, 1950, in Westport, Connecticut. Source for information on Burrow, Trigant (1875-1950): *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis dictionary*. At the beginning of his higher education, Burrow attended Fordham University, where the dogmas of the Catholic church began to lose their significance for him. Following his graduation in 1895, he entered the medical school at the University of Virginia, 1899. One year was spent in post-graduate study of biology, one year touring Europe where he attended the psychiatric clinic in Vienna of Professor Wagner-Jarureg. Humanistic psychology is a psychological perspective that rose to prominence in the mid-20th century in answer to the limitations of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory and B. F. Skinner's behaviorism. With its roots running from Socrates through the Renaissance, this approach emphasizes the individual's inherent drive toward self-actualization, the process of realizing and expressing one's own capabilities and creativity. Trigant Burrow *7.9.1875 in Norfolk, Virginia € 24.5.1950 in Westport, Connecticut Psychoanalytiker, Psychiater und Psychologe; begründete und entwickelte die Gruppenanalyse sowie wissenschaftliche... Zusammenfassung. Trigant Burrow. *7.9.1875 in Norfolk, Virginia. € 24.5.1950 in Westport, Connecticut. Psychoanalytiker, Psychiater und Psychologe; begründete und entwickelte die Gruppenanalyse sowie wissenschaftliche Grundlagen für eine Weiterentwicklung der Psychoanalyse auf der Basis der Einbeziehung gesellschaftlicher Bedingtheiten psychoanalytischen Denkens und Handelns. This is a preview of subscription content, log in to check access. References. Wesentliche Publikationen. Although Burrow was a founder and one-time president of the American Psychoanalytic Association, his prescient and incendiary ideas--namely, his theories of group analysis and the social unconscious--led to his expulsion from APsA in 1933. Over his 40-year-long career Burrow published seven books and approximately 70 articles, moving between psychoanalysis, group analysis, and experimental studies. in neurodynamics, all the while religiously claiming his indebtedness to Freud and the basic principles of psychoanalysis. Life obtains an ephemeral quality in Burrow, a quality we can only access through emptiness and the effacement of individuality.