

Discrimination and Fragmentation in the 1970s

— an organized response to global crisis

Part 3 : A World in Distress

— a model of fragmented « social development »

The description below seems to provide a perfect, if tragic, summary of the global social crisis at a number of different levels. It could represent, to a greater or a lesser extent :

- world society with its constituent blocs, nations and institutions constantly threatened by disintegrative tendencies
 - the United Nations and its family, of associated agencies with their internal problem of coordination, the more general one of relevance to world problems (some sentences could be extracts from the Jackson Report of the Capacity Study of the United Nations Development System), and particularly the impression it gives to any organization attempting to interact with it of a multi-faceted, inconsistent, fragmented ability to respond
 - the system of international nongovernmental organizations as fragmented into the many joint conferences
 - any government and its associated family of governmental agencies
 - any normal human being forced to work through conflicting social roles
 - or, which is in fact the case, a person suffering from chronic schizophrenia (It might have been instructive if « Julie » had been replaced by « X » or one of the above in the following text — but perhaps the reader can do this mentally more elegantly than would have been possible by making cumbersome substitutions in the text).
- « Even when one felt that what was being said was an expression of someone, the fragment of a self behind the words or actions was not Julie. There might be someone addressing us, but in listening to a schizophrenic, it is very difficult to know « who » is talking, and it is just as difficult to know « whom » one is addressing... One may begin to recognize patches of speech, or fragments of behaviour cropping up at different times, which seem to belong together by

reason of similarities of the intonation, the vocabulary, syntax, the preoccupations in the utterance or to cohere as behaviour by reason of certain stereotyped gestures or mannerisms. It seemed therefore that one was in the presence of various fragments, or incomplete elements, of different « personalities » in operation at the one time...

With Julie it was not difficult to carry on a verbal exchange of a kind, but without her seeming to have any overall unity but rather a constellation of quasi-autonomous partial systems, it was difficult to speak to « her ». However... even this state of near chaotic nonentity was by no means irreversible and fixed in its disintegration. She would sometimes marvellously come together again and display a most pathetic realization of her plight. But she was terrified of these moments of integration, for various reasons. Among others, because she had to sustain in them intense anxiety; and because the process of disintegration appeared to be remembered and dreaded as an experience so awful that there was refuge for her in her unintegration, unrealness, and deadness. Julie's being as a chronic schizophrenic was thus characterized by lack of unity and by division into what might variously be called partial « assemblies », complexes, partial systems, or « internal objects ». Each of these partial systems had recognizable features and distinctive ways of its own. By following through these postulates, many features of her behaviour become explicable.

The fact that her self-being was not assembled in an all-over manner, but was split into various partial assemblies or systems, allows us to understand that various functions which presuppose the achievement of personal unity or at least a high degree of personal unity could not be present in her, as indeed they were not.

Personal unity is a prerequisite of reflective awareness, that is, the ability to be aware of one's self acting relatively unself-consciously, or with a simple primary non-reflective awareness. In Julie, each partial system could be aware of objects, but a system

might not be aware of the processes going on in another system which was split off from it. For example, if in talking to me, one system was « speaking », there seemed to be no overall unity within her whereby « she » as a unified person could be aware of what this system was saying or doing. In so far as reflective awareness was absent, « memory », for which reflective awareness would seem to be prerequisite, was very patchy... The absence of a total experience of her being as a whole meant that she lacked the unified experience on which to base a clear idea of the « boundary » of her being. Such an overall « boundary » was not, however, entirely lacking... Rather, each system seemed to have a boundary of its own. That is to say, to the awareness that characterized one system, another system was liable to appear outside itself... It was only « from the outside » that one could see that different conflicting systems of her being were active at the same time. Each partial system seemed to have within it its own focus of centre of awareness : it had its

own very limited memory schemata and limited ways of structuring percepts; its own quasi-autonomous drives or component drives; its own tendency to preserve its autonomy, and special dangers which threatened its autonomy. She would refer to these diverse aspects as « he », or « she », or address them as « you ». That is, instead of having a reflective awareness of those aspects of herself, « she » would perceive the operation of a partial system as though it was not « her », but belonged outside. She would be hallucinated ».

(R.D. Laing, *The Divided Self; a study of sanity and madness*. London, Tavistock, 1960, p. 214-7).

We do not yet have psychoanalysts for organization systems unfortunately. What large organizational system has the channels to advocate the need for such specialists ?



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