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July 21, 2003

Dr. Thomas R. Insel, MD - Chairperson
National Advisory Mental Health Council
National Institute of Mental Health
6001 Executive Blvd.
Bethesda, MD 20892-9669

Dear Dr. Insel:

I am writing to you in your capacity as Chair of the National Advisory Mental Health Council and as Director of NIMH. The enclosed paper provides a background to my letter of July 17, 2003.

My earlier letter discussed a 2 x 3 integrated framework to portray how vivid hierarchical images could induce, or be part of, important types of emotion-charged behavior that seem resistant to rational dialogue or learning.

I am forwarding the enclosed background paper because I wanted to assure you that the pages in the review chapter were not an impressionistic exercise. For example, the enclosed paper expands the analysis of cell 2B (liberal activism) with an analysis and explanation of 55+ features. The roller-coaster emotional life of liberal activists (e.g., varying from elation and the search for charismatic rescue to despair) had a bipolar character. It might be easy to use psychological terms like "bipolar" for clinical pathology and political behavior simply to indicate a surface similarity, but if the evidence in your field suggests a detailed mapping of many of these 55+ features between hierarchical dramas in the political realm and the clinical bipolar syndrome, perhaps this is a good initial test of whether the framework is worth your time as a contribution to the theory of mental illness.

Early in my career, when I was teaching an interdisciplinary course in human behavior at MIT and writing these exploratory papers, my intuition was that a wide range of strong and "higher" images, although with different

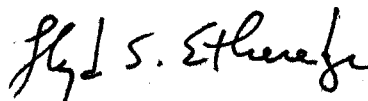
cognitive labels, might induce similar behavior: the ideal-self image (and the gap between the self image and the ideal-self image), government, God, maternal images, the image of the Presidency of a company (to the ambitious for high office). It is possible that the stress and health effects of social status, one of the current research interests at NIH, might be partly understood as a result of primitive physiological syndromes triggered and permanently internalized by such dramas. The model will require a lot of work, but may make it possible to add a similar, clarifying chapter to textbooks in several fields someday.

Twenty years ago, I recall somebody telling me that visual stimuli were processed in the brain directly to the limbic system, bypassing the neo-cortex. I am sure that the true story is much more complex - and I have no idea whether vivid images operate via the same physiology as actual vision. But the suggestion makes a degree of sense to me - i.e., that a model of mental illness with a focus on strong hierarchical images could explain both arousal and inhibition that can be partly independent of rational thought and language.

Also: motivational programs typically use vivid imagery to create and sustain motivation. Certainly, many organizational processes and pathologies involve hierarchical encoding and augmented effects in arousing (inspirational leadership) or inhibition (authority) of emotion. The fact of hierarchy itself can have an enervating effect on motivation - i.e., in liberal arts education we believe there must be initial structure, but the best research is done by a combination of self-starting researchers and a shift from hierarchy to open space.

All of these connected research ideas, and their implications, are beyond the realm of what a simple social scientist could possibly undertake in many lifetimes. But perhaps NIMH has a research engine for fast discovery science that can make use of these ideas?

Sincerely,



(Dr.) Lloyd S. Etheredge, Director
Government Learning Project

FIGURE 1

A MODEL OF LARGER-THAN-LIFE DRAMA

SELF

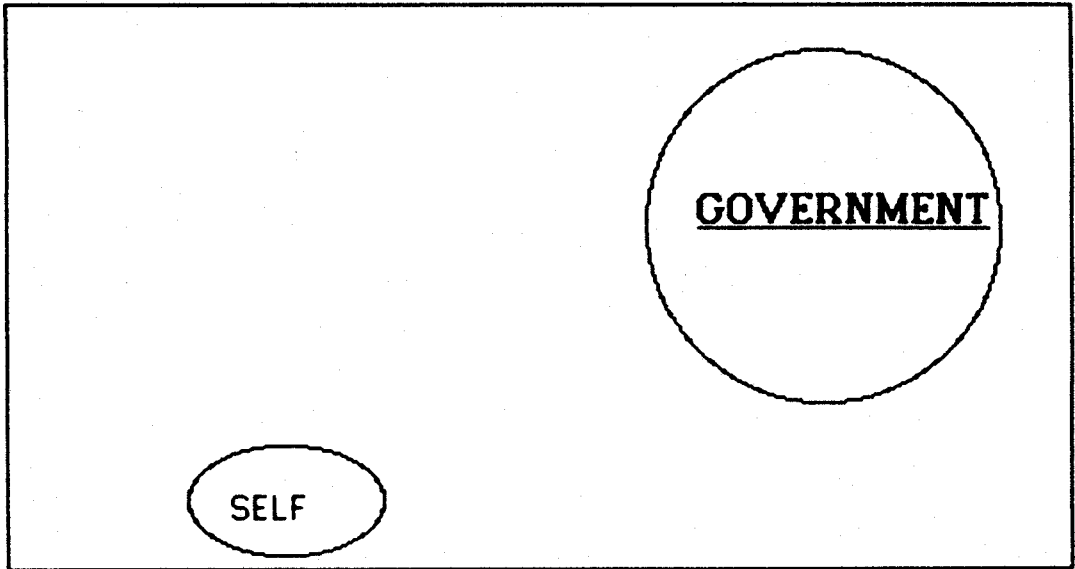


Table 1

Specifications of Personal Psychology of Liberal Activists

I. <u>High Salience Vertical Dramatization of Reality</u>	<u>LA</u>
1. Government animistic, metaphysically elevated	Yes
2. Self, objects of solicitude, imagined below	Yes
3. Personally unsatisfactory, uncomfortable, relation of self to higher presences	Yes
4. Solicitude sought from government, higher presences (e.g. freedom, commitment, caring)	Yes
5. “Upward” mobility sought for lower, deprived groups (e.g. equality, equal opportunity)	Yes
6. Experience/faith higher presences are essentially good	Yes
7. Well-being of self and society believed to depend primarily on leadership, action by and relation to, higher presences	Yes
II. <u>Underlying Despair, Alienation</u>	
8. Alienation of some forms, not anomie	Yes
9. Episodic despair	Yes
10. Episodic fear of catastrophe	Yes
11. Individuation anxiety	Yes
12. Self-restorative quest for salvation through realized blessing of ideals	Yes

III. Tendencies to Symbolic Politics and Magical Thought LA

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 13. Words and symbols above sense of self | Yes |
| 14. Special faith in “upward” metaphysical transformations through knowledge, education | Yes |
| 15. Special attractions to talking, writing, ideas | Yes |
| 16. Symbolic politics | Yes |
| 17. Wishful enthusiasms for novelty | Yes |
| 18. Selective perceptions, misperception | Yes |
| 19. High confidence (bipolar) | Yes |

IV. Search for Creation of Overarching Empathetic Mirroring Via Animistic Symbols

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 20. Quest for self-therapy through empathetic mirroring | Yes |
| 21. Quest for self-integration from self-reflective intellectual/verbal integrations | Yes |
| 22. Quest for aliveness of self through recognition and symbolization from creative arts | Yes |
| 23. Desire to be understood by theory | Yes |
| 24. Tendency to over simple theoretical structures | Yes |
| 25. Identity sorting and construction via creative work | Yes |

V. <u>Guilt Aggression</u>	<u>LA</u>
26. Tendency to self-criticism, introspection	Yes
27. Sense of personal guilt, responsibility	Yes
28. Need to retain virtuous, non-aggressive self-image	Yes
29. Aggression when masked in a good cause	Yes
30. Aggression inhibited by identification with victims	Yes
31. Self-defensive identification with victims	Yes
32. Retributive efforts (see 3, above) to make higher presences uncomfortable, esp. for shortfalls of ideals	?
33. Dependent complaining and criticism of imperfect government	Yes
34. Splitting-off of aggressive impulses (e.g., into images of businessmen)	Sometimes
35. Low direct aggression, low hostility; tolerance	Yes
VI. <u>Hyperactivity</u>	
36. Bipolar (manic-depressive type switching)	Yes
37. Absence of self-reflection in activist phase	Yes
38. High faith and sense of efficacy alternating with despair, self-doubt	Yes
39. Hyperactive in service of progress	Yes

VII. Other

40. Inhibited need for affection	Yes
41. Bid for affection <u>from</u> distant, low status, "safe" groups	Yes
42. Hypnotic entrapment love of power & politics	Probable
43. Maternal quality to solicitous government action	For men?
44. Inner personal reserve; privacy	Yes
45. Inner need for autonomy, freedom from hierarchical contexts	Yes
46. Inner-directed moral reasoning	?
47. Idealistic	Yes
48. Introvert	?
49. Creative	Yes
50. Low Machiavellianism	Maybe
51. Trust in human nature	Yes
52. Obsessive	?
53. Ego defensive	?
54. Low priority to conventional duties	No
55. High moral character	-
56. Resistance to full equality & power sharing (desires to be the overmind/architect of the socialist state, etc.)	?
57. Courage	Yes
58. Physiological predisposition to syndrome	?