

PERSONALITY

A lecture given on
14 August 1951

Handling the Environment

There is an individual who can be tremendously occluded and who can have an enormous persistence. Believe me, he is really going it blind, though. He has tremendous persistence but he is very occluded. And you can have people who are wide open and whose persistence is just nothing.

If you can get a person's occlusions mopped up and get those out of the way, then with this tremendous force that person has he takes off like a rocket ship. What I am trying to say is that a person can still have a lot of pain on the bank and be effective, but it is only in ratio to how much persistence he has in life anyway.

So, you can have a person who is operating in such a way that practically every sweep of the scanner will look at the objects in the area and say, "Dangerous object, dangerous object, dangerous object." That is just his sight scanner registering intervals of danger.

It is registered, by the way, and then scanned. He isn't getting direct computation. It is registered and scanned, registered and scanned. It is an indirect sight, in other words.

When a person is unable to make up his mind, you have a situation where his scanner sweeps over the bank one time and it says, for instance, "Microphone—dangerous." Then he has another scanner that goes to work and it scans the whole subject of microphones, finding out "Why is this microphone dangerous?" It is doing that continually and it says, "Microphone—safe, microphone—dangerous, microphone—safe, microphone—dangerous, microphone—safe." He has instances when microphones were dangerous and instances when they were safe, and he has the quantity of safety of microphones and the quantity of danger of microphones, and they start balancing. He starts hanging up on an overall maybe. The whole computation keeps coming out "maybe" on the subject of microphones. He develops what you call an anxiety about microphones.

The microphone becomes a symbol, too, for the address to and the proximity of other human beings. It becomes a symbol of communication, so it has many instances behind it that are highly complex. But if it starts falling out into the maybe range, the person can't get up to the point where necessity levels says "I have to" and yet he can't quite leave it alone; he is anxious about microphones. He has to have the thing but he can't get away from it, but he has to get away from it because he can't have it.

When a fellow starts to build up to the point where floors are uniformly more dangerous than they are safe and floors are uniformly safer than they are dangerous, where chairs are uniformly safer than they are dangerous and chairs are uniformly more dangerous than they are safe, where it is dangerous to breathe air and not dangerous to breathe air, where it is dangerous to have light but dangerous not to have light, where it is dangerous to touch anything but dangerous not to touch anything, this fellow is hanging fire in the maybe category all up and down the bank. Everything he requires in his life for survival has a 50 percent nonsurvival value. So these objects in his life are 50 percent nonsurvival and 50 percent survival and he will start to balance off. The physical universe has become too painful to him for him to make up his mind. There you have indecision.

Now, he can start unbalancing on that to where everything is more dangerous than it is safe. And when he starts balancing over on the side of registry where things are much more dangerous than they are safe—and therefore he doesn't dare touch anything, he doesn't dare go anyplace, he doesn't dare do anything, he doesn't dare eat, he doesn't dare do anything else—

he has just fallen down the tone scale, and death is the out at the bottom. That is psychotic. It is a lot of things. That is getting arthritis or schizophrenia. The body can go that way or the mind can go—it doesn't matter; they are trying to go on out through the bottom into death.

The overall computation, then, is the same all the way along the line. But where we have an enormous quantity of pain involved, we get a lot of perceptions wrapped up in areas which we don't dare approach because it is too painful to approach those areas. The scanner can't hit those areas; you are supposed to leave those things alone in the environment.

The first pain is the first disconnection from affinity with the material universe and organisms. As pain begins to compound in the organism and life becomes more and more painful, as the persistence of life is more and more impeded by having to go up against objects, the individual becomes less able to handle his environment. Survival says, "I have to tackle this microphone," and yet all up and down the bank the microphone is simply a symbol of death. It says, "Microphones are terribly dangerous. You can't . . ." and the guy still overcomes it. He still has drive enough to talk into a microphone. He will persist, but one day, all of a sudden, the whole house of cards will fall down. Then microphones are so painful that he is licked. He has passed that crest. He can no longer handle his environment. No longer being able to handle his environment—the environment is too dangerous for him, he can't manhandle it around—the organism will do an exit, and life will go on and get another organism. That is the process of deterioration.

Now, the stages of reaction to the physical universe can be labeled with precision. The amount of pain—physical pain—that has been suffered, the amount of repulsion the environment has done on the individual, the amount of rejection, evidently brings about an energy constant. If recordings of pain are 50 percent and energy recordings of pleasure are 50 percent, the person is not too far down the tone scale. He can still work. He is up around boredom, usually.

Then you start to get heavier, painful rejection charger on the bank. The ability to obtain pleasure, or that part of the mental energy which can sight pleasure, is getting less and less, and that part which contains pain and which will be attracted toward pain contains more and more, until you get an organism which starts to harmonise only with pain and only seldom with anything like pleasure. That is below 2.0, which is the break point on the tone scale. This is very sharply quantitative with all organisms, evidently, so you can predict from the ratio of survival energy to nonsurvival energy in the individual how much he will survive. There is a constancy of reaction. That is the tone scale.

The personality of an individual actually is composed of concentration on one particular valence, on good structure and on other factors. For instance, take a fellow who is a golf champ: his structure for coordination and his general muscular structure are excellent. He has a certain talent, in other words. His nutrition will have a bearing on his personality, again by having a bearing on his structure. His early training—we include under training what the whole environment has done to him—will lodge certain charges on the bank, one way or the other. Then there is his experience. In other words, we have a genetic factor, we have a nutritional factor and we have an experience-educational factor—three sets of factors there which regulate what the particular personality will be. This personality can vary greatly from person to person because these things are very different amongst people.

But there is a constancy when it comes to the amount of enturbulence, or the amount of pain energy, there is on a bank as compared to the amount of pleasure energy there is on a bank. That is quite solid.

There is evidently another endowment which is very interesting, and that is the life-force endowment. One organism is apparently less or more alive than another organism. It is somehow or other a quantitative thing.

I looked in Thomas Jefferson's writings to make sure that I was right about this; he said, "All men are created with equal rights." All men are a long way from equal, but some are more

equal than others. We have tremendous differences in the endowments of individuals—not only the structural endowment and the experience endowment, but there seems to be a life-force endowment.