

A Tri-Dimensional Model of Mental Health

A Tri-Dimensional Model of Mental Health:

The Wellness Wheel

By

Stephen J. Costello

**Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing**



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This book first published 2022

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-5275-8882-3

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-8882-0

I dedicate this book to my parents, Val and Johnny,
in love, admiration, and gratitude.

‘Men take more pain to mask than mend’

—Benjamin Franklin

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my parents, Val and Johnny, for their constant support, interest, and encouragement. A big thank you also goes to my 'old' friends. You know who you are.

INTRODUCTION

This book is a searching study of what constitutes existential health. I will argue that the integration of body, mind, and heart leads to wholeness. Much of the literature on ‘mental health’ concentrates on psychosomatic unity but neglects the spiritual dimension of the person, which is the ground and *sine qua non* of holistic health. Such an approach as advanced in this work urges us to become aware of the ultimate ground of our being, of what constitutes us in our essential nature. This spiritual dimension, therefore, will receive serious and sustained treatment. I suggest that the person is best viewed in terms of a tri-dimensional ontology: as body, mind, and spirit. This interpretation of triadic selfhood is reflected in the perennial philosophy, in particular, by Plato (appetitive, spirited, rational soul), St. Paul, Viktor Frankl’s school of logotherapy (*soma, psyche, noös*), Assagioli’s psychosynthesis, the Enneagram system, and in Advaita Vedanta (*satchitananda*), to name but some of the core contenders, which will be the subject matter of this book. This tripartite perspective is mirrored in the mystical stages of purgation, illumination, and transcending union. The ‘law of three’ is everywhere apparent. We also see it depicted in Bonaventure’s journey of the soul and in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, where the pilgrims pass through hell, purgatory, and heaven, representing states and stages of consciousness.

Chapter One explores wellness and illness, sanity, and psychosis, through the lens of various philosophers’ theorising on the subject. Mention is made of Plato, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Frankl, Foucault, Wittgenstein, and R. D. Laing, by way of an overview. This first chapter sets the scene. Chapter Two examines the notion of ‘mental health’ and ‘mental disorders’. I utilise Winnie the Pooh as an example to highlight the differences between a psychiatric diagnostic and a philosophical-spiritual one, this latter derived from the principles of Taoism. I emphasise the importance of construing the human being as a unity in diversity – the triune brain is referenced, in this regard – and the threefold force-field of energy. Chapter Three discusses St. Bonaventure’s three eyes of knowledge, citing his *The Soul’s Journey into God*. These three pertain to science, philosophy, and religion: the eye of flesh (matter), reason (mind), and contemplation (spirit), which is the difference between empiricism (gross), rationalism (subtle), and transcendentalism (causal). The chapter concludes with Ken Wilber’s account of the ‘pre-trans fallacy’. Chapter Four examines the Enneagram with its equivalent

approach which postulates the existence of various triads such as the *three* centres of intelligence and expression: body (gut), heart (feeling), and head (thinking). Chapter Five addresses the topic of needs and desires with the help of Maslow's pyramid, as well as the *three* kinds of capital: emotional, rational, and spiritual. On the heels of this, a discussion of consciousness ensues. Chapter Six shows the pilgrim soul ascend from hell, through purgatory, to heaven in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, symbolising the subconscious, self-consciousness, and superconscious. Vices (the seven deadly sins) and virtues are also given some attention, against the backdrop of the Enneagram as a transformative tool for interpretation and understanding. Chapter Seven is a study of Homer's *Odyssey* – here we follow Odysseus on his travels, and we make sense of the journey home to Ithaca (symbolising the Self) through a (further) Enneagram encapsulation and application. Chapter Eight pauses at this junction with a practicum, introducing some concrete tools into the hitherto dense discussion such as the Wheel of Life, the Golden Circle, and the Japanese notion of *Ikigai*. Two components from psychosynthesis founder Roberto Assagioli's spiritual psychology are drawn upon: disidentification and subpersonalities. Chapter Nine draws on Advaita Vedanta's theory of the *threefold* energy: *tamas*, *rajas*, and *sattva* as well as the law of *dharma*. The *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Upanishads* receive due consideration within this particular conceptual context. Chapter Ten traverses the Tarot to extract its moral, psychological, and spiritual lessons for mankind. The Tarot is nothing about fortune-telling and everything about a growth into wellness/consciousness via symbols. Finally, Chapter Eleven coalesces the strands and thought-threads thus far and concludes by posing the central question, 'who am I?' in the light of Vedanta, returning to the distinction between ego and essence, empirical and absolute reality, as well as the variances between pleasure, happiness, and bliss (*ananda*). The Self stands at the hub in the wheel of life. The spokes moving out from the centre represent all the roles we play in the drama of existence.

CHAPTER ONE

MADNESS AND SANITY

‘The main interest of my work is not concerned with the treatment of neuroses but with the approach to the numinous. But the fact is that the approach to the numinous is the real therapy and inasmuch as you attain to the numinous experiences you are released from the cure of pathology’, C. G. Jung

WHO

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines wellness as a state of well-being in which the individual realises his/her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life (resilience), work productively, and is able to make a contribution to the community. Wellness includes the idea of subjective satisfaction – the self-actualisation of one’s emotional and intellectual potential. It connotes a capacity to enjoy life, being able to cope with changes, and adapt to challenges and crises, to the vagaries and vicissitudes of life. The term ‘mental illness’ (much critiqued by psychiatrist Thomas Szasz) with its unfortunate suggestion of physical lesions in the brain, refers to diagnosable mental disorders characterised by alterations in thinking, behaving etc causing impairment of personal functioning. Mental health suggests, so, the absence of psychopathology, such as depression and anxiety. The *two* dimensions involved here are:

- The presence or absence of mental health
- The presence or absence of mental illness

Wellness is care of the whole/entire person – body, mind, and heart: *cura personalis*. It involves paying attention to our tri-dimensional ontology.

A Platonic Perspective

‘Doing what belongs to oneself’ is Plato’s expression, indeed, definition one could argue, from the *Laws*, of what is called ‘mental health’. Doing what

belongs to oneself involves finding and fulfilling one's function (*ergon*), discovering one's 'dynatype' (to use Ira Progoff's felicitous phrase; see, in particular, his *The Symbolic and the Real*), in other words, following one's destiny/bliss – doing 'one's thing' (whatever that is). It isn't always obvious; we are the only beings whose existence is an issue; our very being is at stake. As St Augustine once remarked in his *Confessions*: 'I remain a vast question to myself'. Philosopher Charles Taylor calls this capacity for reflection 'inwardness' in his magisterial work, *A Secular Age* – occupying one's internal space – interiority, individuality. Coming to be oneself is 'individuation' (Carl Jung's term). Whether this is living from one's 'true' centre rather than 'false' self-system or shaping one's life as a work of art, sculpting one's 'essence', it will implicate me in being – my own and others. The opposite, then, of *authenticity* would be *alienation*, inner division, or warfare, a 'divided self' (in R. D. Laing's words; see his book of the same title) – split subjectivity.

Plato famously described insanity as 'divine madness' (*theia mania*) in the *Phaedrus* (244d-244e), suggesting there was the:

- Madness of prophecy
- Madness of the mystic
- Madness of poetry
- Madness of the lover

The *four* forms of *theia mania* (which feature in Plato's *Phaedrus*) are prophecy, catharsis, poesy, Eros. Mania or madness is the God-given state of 'being-beside-onself'. Enthusiasm (*en theos*) is a sickness but it's a worse sickness not to be able to be 'sick' in such a way. One could seek therapy/divination from the prophetess at Delphi, the priestesses of Dodona, and the Sibyl prophetic ecstasies. When clear in mind they were able to say anything of note, but when in a state of rapturous ecstasy, they accomplished great things through their inspired utterances. The name 'mania', assigned to this oracular art of the true seer, was an appellation of honour. Prophetic trances and sacred frenzies appear as madness to the multitudes. Rapture is *raptus*: rupture too – being lifted up, ecstasy, violence. Madness may refer to:

- Anger
- Insanity
- Mental disorder

Cathartic mania was another form of divinely caused being-beside-oneself: divine affliction rooted in ancestral guilt. The remedy was refuge in prayer and service to the gods. We can't free ourselves of these burdens of being by means of rational or cognitive techniques. Liberation occurs through holistic healing – relinquishing the steering wheel of rational self-possession. The process involves submission to being led by another, delving deep into the *daimon* (unconscious/objective psyche). Only by letting go, can we receive the gift of inner cleansing/catharsis. We thus enter into the healing darkness of our divine origin. *Three* figures reveal themselves:

- Mania (escaping into outer orbit)
- Melancholia (sinking into the depths)
- Metanoia (conversion of consciousness/transformation)

Guilt, crime, and sin may be mitigated through *metanoia* – repentance and reconciliation: restoration, reconstitution. *Metanoia* surrenders the self-sufficiency of an independent mind; it is bestowed on the person not by an act of the will but through divine favour – grace, if you like. Poesy is the third form of divinely prompted being-beside-oneself discussed by Socrates/Plato. Poetic mania is the ecstasy inspired by the Muses. Great poetry is born out of divine madness rather than one's own creative or crafty devices. Plato welcomed the 'divine poets'; those who had no claim to the title he expelled from his ideal republic (*polis*). True poetry hails from a higher power: inspiration as revelation. Poets like Rumi and Rilke are vessels for the divine echo, conduits of cosmic consciousness, connecting to the ultimate, all-embracing divine foundation. In terms of eros, well, we can encounter through erotic attraction and experience something enriching, divine, and healing. Not every infatuation is a divine gift, but every erotic site contains the seed and promise of moving beyond its immediate instinctual significance and transported to the transcendent truth that is infinite reality. Our enchantment with beauty is far removed from craving sensuous pleasure. If sex is somatic, as Frankl argued in *The Doctor and the Soul*, eroticism is psychical; love, therefore, is spiritual union. The Platonic ladder begins with the phenomenology of the face and form. The term 'attracted to' has lost the connotation of being moved by something else. What moves us most is beauty, but what passes for love is normally desire. Plato points us in the direction of an archetype embodying primordial Goodness, Justice, Truth, Beauty. *Pulchrum est quod visu placet*: the beautiful is that which pleases the eye of the beholder. Wisdom cannot be seen; goodness is the inner form of beauty, beauty its outer dress. Beauty is

the visible apprehension of the Good. Needless to say, Plato is speaking about moral (spiritual) rather than material (sensuous) beauty. The beauty of the boy, as Iris Murdoch remarked, led Plato to the Good. Beauty prompts the soul to sprout wings and soar to the dwelling of the gods. Pleasure, by contrast, is the disfigurement of eros: hedonism is not the same as spiritual self-giving – donation, disposability.

Plato's philosophy offers itself as a *therapeia*: a therapy of the soul (see, for example, Plato's *Charmides* and Robert Cushman's *Therapeia: Plato's Conception of Philosophy*). It begins with a diagnosis (our earthly alienation) before it supplies a direction (our divine destiny): Heaven as homeland. The key to happiness is goodness: ethics (understood as virtuous activity) leads to *eudaimonia* ('happiness', flourishing). Philosophy aims to bring balance to being, so that instead of being 'many' (partial or satellite selves – subpersonalities) we can become 'one' (integral holism). Intellect is the divine component in man's nature (*noūs*) and in conformity with a trans-empirical reality (the divine *Noūs*) – Plato's theomorphic ontology. Virtue and wellbeing are inseparable, intrinsically inter-related and intertwined. Rejection of the divine order can usher in insanity which is the rejection of reason/reality. *Two follies*:

- Madness
- Ignorance

Both bring us out of touch with that which is.

Existential Approaches

Following Plato, R. D. Laing, the twentieth-century Scottish existential psychiatrist, presented madness as a voyage of self-discovery that could open up onto higher states of consciousness (hyper-sanity). Some contemporary psychiatrists like Laing are critical of the biomedical disease model of madness that has predominated in Western culture. Others, like the existentialists, see madness as a sickness unto death, as the loss of meaning in a soul striving to make sense of itself and its surroundings.

Father of modern existentialism Søren Kierkegaard's definition of authenticity: 'become what one is'. This is the opposite of 'being-beside-oneself'. One's self unfolds. The opposite of such enfoldment or unveiling is unravelling, derailment, breakdown. In *Being and Time* and elsewhere, Martin Heidegger uses the term 'authenticity' (*Eigentlichkeit* or ownedness), as a way of being oneself in the world. It implies being at one with oneself (at-one-ment), achieving a kind of inner unity, of which Plato first speaks

in the *Republic*. Indeed, for Plato, mental health is inner harmony (order). For the existentialists, authenticity is self-realisation through relationship, and understanding (*Verstehen*) or taking a stand/stance, acting, embodying a life-plan or project of sorts, exhibiting a purpose. My existence thus reveals a directedness, a purposiveness. Authenticity will resist the pull of ‘the They’ (*Das Man*) – being an automaton, or adrift in ordinary everydayness, acting as part of the herd, the crowd, in mindless conformity and socially constituted/constructed norms. A condition of They-selves is dispersal, distraction, forgetfulness of being. Authentic *Dasein* (human existence/man’s being) must undergo personal transformation. A life must change.

‘You must change your life’, Rainer Maria Rilke

This is possible only against the backdrop of insights, sometimes coming from anxiety, where one’s world collapses, when one is confronted by lack, aloneness, fear and trembling, dread. Anxiety discloses and individualises *Dasein*. An encounter with one’s ownmost possibility is a precondition of change. Facing one’s own fundamental finitude is crucial in appreciating life’s radical contingency. It will affect the ‘how’ of my life – how I will undertake goals. The other event that leads to metamorphosis is hearing the call of conscience (Socrates did nothing without first obeying his inner *daimon*). Conscience (*Gewissen*) declares we have a debt, a responsibility for ourselves. It urges us to live with resoluteness and clarity. Life/conscience calls, summons me to steadfastness, constancy, wholeness. Thrown into the world, disposed by various moods, alongside others (*Mitsein*), we need to navigate a path, a way ahead. There are things to be done. I have the freedom of choosing to choose my way of being myself. I need to stand up and own up to my agency. My ‘true self’ is one of ongoing narrative, construction, discovery, according to this particular philosophical perspective. It is frequently found in the open moment or clearing (*Lichtung*), in the happening of life itself. But *Dasein* can lose itself; it can be now not itself (self-alienated). Most of the time, however, we live a life that is not owned by me, one that in fact is disowned and I become indifferent to my possibilities and particularities, my potential.

In *Either/Or* Kierkegaard distinguishes between *subjective* lunacy (distorted thinking) and *objective* lunacy (absence of subjectivity). The first is insanity as a delirium of inwardness; the second is insanity as an absence of inwardness. The answer to both, for Kierkegaard, is faith as a leap into the dark. There is also the madness of reason. Kierkegaard himself struggled with his own depression deriving from childhood until his early death at the age of 42. In a Kierkegaardian vein – one compatible with Viktor Frankl – we can distinguish between:

- Depression (somatogenic or psychological)
- Despair (spiritual sadness)

Before him, G. W. Hegel had talked of *three* forms of madness:

- Idiocy
- Madness proper
- Mania (frenzy)

Following on from Kierkegaard and Martin Heidegger, for Jean-Paul Sartre (see his *Being and Nothingness*), I constitute myself through my choices. My freedom determines my reality. I decide the significance of my facticity. I make my own meaning, come what may. But I am also capable of fooling myself, committing acts of ‘bad faith’ (inauthenticity) – a kind of self-deception (*mauvaise foi*) is at play, which happens when I deny my freedom, acting as if I were just a thing, an object rather than subject, a being-in-itself rather than a being-for-itself. Man might well be a ‘useless passion’, and so he will need Kierkegaard’s ‘infinite passion’ to get through/by, wholeheartedness, zest, and zeal for living. Good faith involves actually being something, someone, myself, a self-recovery of being as engaged/committed agent. Authenticity is awareness involving having a lucid consciousness, assuming risks and responsibilities sometimes in horror and hate. Such too is the ambiguity of the ‘all too human’ (Nietzsche) condition. The authentic (existentially healthy and therefore thriving) being will find his reason for being, will see his self as open future, unrestricted. I will decide what concerns me, what my ‘ultimate concern’ (Paul Tillich) will/should be. At the core of these formulations is exemplary uniqueness, ‘well-being’ or *eudaimonia* (flourishing) as the normative ideal of authenticity and singularity. Authenticity is discernment – about what is worth doing and pursuing, unfolding into one’s utmost openness.

A Jungian Analysis

For C. G. Jung, life is a process of individuation, as we said, that is to say, the manner a thing is identified as distinguished from other things, as not someone else. It’s what constitutes sameness at different points of time. It’s the process whereby the individual self develops out of an undifferentiated unconscious. As such, it is a psychic process during which innate elements of the personality as well as the experiences of the person’s life become synthesised into a well-functioning whole. Individuation is not isolation, nor is it introspection (though it involves a certain amount of reflection). It is

not synonymous with narcissistic self-absorption. Individuation is integration which has a holistic healing effect on the individual. It is a process that is marked with stages, milestones from the *persona* at the start when we don a mask, wear a social face for the public just to make an impression on them, concealing our true nature, to the ego (I-maker or conscious part of the personality) at the second stage, to the shadow (the Freudian Id – that which is outside the light of consciousness, dark, disowned, projected), at the third stage, to the *anima* and *animus* (the contra-sexual complexes in men and women respectively), to the Self (the totality of the psyche), at the final stage. From birth, every individual has an original sense of wholeness – of the Self – but with development a separate ego-consciousness crystallises out of the original/primordial unity (*pleroma*). Psychic health depends on a return to the (sense of) Self. Individuation is the coming to terms with one's centre/core. Entering into analysis generally begins with a wounding of the *persona*-lity, when the ego reaches an impasse of one sort or another. For Jung, the Self is a *coincidentia oppositorum*, thus bright and dark and yet neither. The Self is the total, timeless man – an ordering, unifying principle, or blueprint. The aim of life is therefore the coming into consciousness, the (always creative) realisation of the Self that we (already) are. This step into Selfhood will carry as a consequence the deconstruction or *décreation* of the ego (in Simone Weil's sense). The difference between ego and Self (or *Ātman* in Eastern philosophy) is one between the work of gravity and that of grace.

Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy

R. D. Laing sees sanity as entailing the dissolution of the normal ego (that monumental construct of our narcissism), the false self comfortably adjusted to our alienated social reality and the eventual rebirth and re-establishment of a new kind of ego-functioning, the ego now being a servant of the divine, no longer its betrayer (which has some connections, albeit from within a different register, to Jung). 'I suggest, therefore, that *sanity or psychosis is tested by the degree of conjunction or disjunction between two persons where the one is sane by common consent*', (Laing, *The Divided Self*, p. 36). The crucial test to determine whether a patient is psychotic is lack of congruity/conformity, a clash. In psychosis, the unconscious is at the surface, is conscious. The psychotic subject doesn't speak – language, rather, speaks him, or perhaps this: he is ignorant of the language he speaks. Psychosis is, to put it in Lacanian terms, the foreclosure (radical rejection) of the paternal function/metaphor, of the Symbolic Order.

For Viktor Frankl, the task of existential analysis is to point toward and illumine the *personal* dimension of psychosis, to allow the spiritual person (real Self) to be seen through the veil of the psychosis or psychotic episode. The image of illness is a caricature, a shadow image of the real person, a projection of the person into the clinical level from the dimension of the person that is essentially beyond both neuroses and psychoses. Existential analysis awakens and discovers a humanity that is uninjured and incapable of being injured. The aim of logotherapy is to make this visible even through the veil of neurotic disorder or psychotic derangement. A functionally reliable psychophysical organism is the condition for the unfolding of the human spirit. It is the psychophysical organism *alone* that is affected with a psychotic illness, never the spiritual person as such. The spiritual person or Self somehow stands above the psychophysical organism. The spirit, according to Frankl, can never be sick. Of course, the human spirit is dependent upon the service of its body (*soma*). The psychosis barricades the person, holds him hostage. *Three* existential traits constitute, and not just characterise, human existence as such:

- freedom
- responsibility
- the spirit

One who sees only the biological, psychological, or sociological factors of the person but not the spirit's power of defiance, is like the person who looks at a car, says Frankl, and sees only the gearshift and not the clutch. The human person can distance himself from the three gears of:

- instinct
- heredity
- environment

Inherent in psychotic existence is a degree of freedom – freedom against being subdued by the psychosis, as well as a residue/remnant of responsibility. The fate of psychosis remains malleable. We can resist or reconcile with it. As Frankl observes:

‘The individual is endogenously depressed with the stomach, the skin and hair, with the body and the soul, but never with the spirit. Rather it is the psychophysical organism alone that is affected, but never the spiritual person, who as such, as spiritual, is unable to be affected by disease’.

Psychophysical parallelism (psychosomatic unity) is not synonymous with psychonoetic antagonism. There is a thin line separating *soma* and *psyche*, but there is a gap separating the instincts from spirit. There is an ontological diversity/variety (*soma*, *psyche*, *nōos*) within an anthropological unity. This unity is a dimensional multiplicity: existence, facticity, person, and organism: spiritual and psychophysical. We might note, *en passant*, that in Daseinsanalysis (the work of Ludwig Binswanger and Medard Boss), the psychotic person would have no way out of the psychotic skin, as psychosis is seen as just another way of being-in-the-world. Frankl notes:

‘If we were to allow the spiritual person to be incorporated into a *noö*-psycho-physically neutral Dasein, then to who would such an appeal or call be addressed?’

A biological fact, Frankl contends, such as psychosis is far from being a biophysical fact. There must be a spiritual psychotherapy even for psychosis. There is, and its name is logotherapy, ‘a psychotherapy of the spiritual’. Essentially, however, logotherapy is a therapy of what remains healthy in the one who is ‘disordered’/suffering over against what has become ‘sick’ in the human. For what remains healthy (to utilise medical metaphors) is incapable of becoming sick, and what has become sick is incapable of being treated by psychotherapy (not merely by logotherapy, rather, it is much more amenable to somatotherapy/pharmacological treatment). An exchange must occur between the human in illness and the ill in the human, Endogenous (biological) psychosis is caused by somatic disorders. The somatogenesis of psychoses encompasses hereditary genesis. But even a principal somatogenesis doesn’t exclude or preclude a partial psychogenesis understood structurally rather than quantitatively. Indeed we may delineate a:

- Somatogenesis
- Psychogenesis
- Noögenesis
- Sociogenesis

Psychological traumas and complexes belong to the symptomatology but not to the aetiology of the psychosis. There is a gulf/abyss separating ‘is’ and ‘should’ – an existential tension, a negative balance of one’s being against his/her should. The endogenous depression, for example, simply enlarges and distorts the view of the magnifying glass of their endogenous depression. The ‘illness’ of the endogenous depression shows the patient to perceive the tension above in a distorted way. We may give an analogous

example of a reef appearing at low tide. The reef is not the cause of low tide. Rather, through the ebbing tide it is merely exposed. Just as little as the reef is caused by the ebbing tide, is a psychosis caused by a psychological trauma, complex, or conflict. A psychosis is primarily somatogenic. A psychosis is independent of fate. Of course, psychotic hallucinations/delusions may be triggered. Puberty and menopause can trigger schizophrenia stemming from the endocrine system, but one can't call an endogenous depression merely an endocrine disorder. (Triggering could be regarded as a secondary cause). Moreover, the 'choice' of a delusion can be conditioned by the collective thinking of our time (a collective neurosis): such a para-clinical phenomenon would be a sociogenesis within the aetiology of psychosis. And a collective psychosis can find its way into an individual psychosis – the pathology of the *Zeitgeist*. The important point to recall is this: that the person is spiritual and as such beyond being healthy or ill. What logotherapy and existential analysis will emphasise are not psychological reactions but spiritual acts – the personal stances and attitudes adopted towards the psychosis/delusion. Frankl distinguishes between *homo patiens* (the suffering person) and *homo faber* (the skilled person). Even if the psychotic person (for example, the paranoid-schizophrenic) has lost his usefulness, he has not lost his dignity. (See, especially, Frankl's *On the Theory and Therapy of Mental Disorders*).

If depression can be endogenous (somatogenic), it can also be psychogenic (reactive) or existential. There are always mixed cases, even if one will be in the ascendancy. We can highlight *three* insufficiencies from which the depressed person will suffer:

- An inability to work
- An inability to feel pleasure
- An inability to suffer

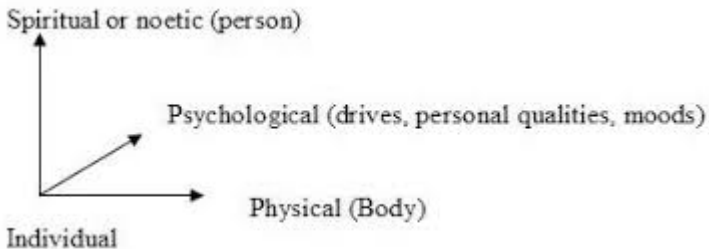
The self-reproach and suicidal tendencies of the endogenously depressed person may well require hospitalisation. Moreover, some patients can be psychologically depressed over their endogenous depression. The reason a human being exists is to be happy (understood as fullness of life), so every moment of misery is a symptom of maladaptation. There is a need to self-distance from the depression, to objectify the symptom (in mild to moderately severe cases). Such depressed persons must be relieved of all their duties and not encouraged to 'pull' themselves together. They are not 'mentally ill', rather, they have a 'mood disorder' (if one wants to use this language). They need to be told that their prognosis is good, that they will emerge from their excruciating symptoms, from their sorrow, fear, and disgust with life. These things hamper their ability to perceive value and

meaning in themselves and the world. They could be encouraged to work only in the afternoons (due to the exacerbation of anxiety in the mornings). Work can provide a much-needed distraction/diversion. *Two* obligations can be stressed:

- Trust in their medical/therapeutic team
- Patience with themselves

The clouds of their endogenous depression will pass from their horizon. Their sights can turn toward the sun which has been all but hidden from view, to what is valuable and worthy of attention, thus filled with meaning in being. Frankl is fond of quoting German poet Richard Dehmel: ‘Behold! The pain of time is but the play of eternal bliss’.

Frankl’s philosophical perspective on the person, which I have discussed elsewhere in detail (see my *Applied Logotherapy: Viktor Frankl’s Philosophical Psychology*), has been expounded by him in terms of a tri-dimensional ontology (viz., body, mind, and spirit).



All three dimensions of the person require attention. The synthesis of body-mind will produce psychosomatic *unity* but not yet spiritual *wholeness* unless and until the noetic/noölogical (spiritual) level is integrated. This brings about a balance in the being, an alignment or attunement with the whole. The ‘spiritual’ is that which is specifically human in the human – our pursuit of meaning and orientation to the true, the good and the beautiful, to ethics and aesthetics so.

Foucault’s Genealogy

Michel Foucault, for his part, regarded mental ‘illness’ as a socialised invention localised to an *episteme* or conceptual scheme. For Foucault, psychiatric practice can only be understood as coercion and discipline. His

Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in an Age of Reason details his critique of biological psychiatry through an archaeology and genealogy of psychiatric nosology (even if the book lapses into a retro-Romantic fallacy of idealising madness and downplaying its suffering). Basically, his contention is that our medicalised understanding of so-called mental disorders is a social construct. Throughout our cultural history, we have seen madness as sinful (Church) or sick (State): mental illness as moral failure, thus. Here psychiatry and penology converge. Roy Porter likewise outlines an historical account of the development of madness in his *Madness: A Brief History*. The Assyrians and Egyptians saw diseases as hurled from the heavens, as a punishment for pride. Madness was a visitation from the gods. The one hope was to restore health through divine intercessions at shrines dedicated to Aesculapius, the Roman god of medicine. Over the centuries madness became medicalised.

Wittgenstein's Appraisal

There are pockets surely of psychosis in everyone. Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein spent their lives trying to come to terms with the melancholia 'inside'. In *Culture and Value*, Ludwig Wittgenstein admits: 'I often fear madness' (Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 61e). Wittgenstein alerted us to the linguistic knots into which we get ourselves. Like Plato, Wittgenstein considered philosophy as a therapy for the sane. In his *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, Wittgenstein writes: 'If in the midst of life we are in death, so in sanity we are surrounded by madness'. Madness lurks just below the surface. And just as death permeates life, madness permeates sanity (and society, for that matter). Incidentally, Wittgenstein's close friend – Maurice Drury – became a psychiatrist and ended up as Director of St. Patrick's Hospital in Dublin. According to Wittgenstein, nothing is so difficult as not deceiving oneself. We need clarity especially in the confusion which we all experience around language. Wittgenstein writes:

'Freud's idea: in madness the lock is not destroyed, only altered; the old key can no longer open it, but a differently configured key could do so'.

The aim with this key is to produce, 'Thoughts at peace. That is the goal of someone who philosophizes long for' (Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 54e). Philosophy is like architecture – it is really work on oneself, on one's conceptions and constructs. 'The philosopher is someone who has to cure many diseases of the understanding in himself, before he can arrive at the notion of common sense' (Wittgenstein, *ibid.*, 50e). Wittgenstein is ambivalent about Freud, at once describing himself as a disciple and devotee

of psychoanalysis; at other times, writing about Freud's 'fanciful pseudo-explanations' (Wittgenstein, *ibid.*, 62e). In keeping with an existential emphasis rather than a medical diagnosis, Wittgenstein asserts: 'madness doesn't *have* to be regarded as an illness. Why not as a sudden – more or less sudden – change of character?' (Wittgenstein, *ibid.*, 62e).

Madness may lead to a breakthrough and not just to a breakdown. Both psychosis and hyper-sanity place us outside the structures/strictures of society and make us seem mad to the mainstream/multitude. Frankl's comment is pertinent: an abnormal reaction to an abnormal situation/society is normal.

'Though this be *madness*, yet there is method in it', William Shakespeare

In his *Notebooks 1914-1916*, Wittgenstein writes, striking a particularly Franklian chord:

'What do I know about God and the purpose of life?
 I know that this world exists.
 That I am placed in it like my eye in its visual field.
 That something about it is problematic, which we call its meaning.
 This meaning does not lie in it but outside of it.
 That life is the world.
 That my will penetrates the world.
 That my will is good or evil.
 Therefore that good and evil are somehow connected with the meaning of the world.
 The meaning of life, i.e., the meaning of the world, we can call God'
 (Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, 72e-73e).

'A life without purpose is a languid, drifting thing. Every day we ought to review our purpose, saying to ourselves: This day let me make a sound beginning, for what we have hitherto done is naught!', Thomas à Kempis

CHAPTER TWO

MENTAL HEALTH, MENTAL DISORDERS

Mental Disorders

Psychiatry is a branch of medicine that is based on the diagnosis and treatment of ‘mental disorders’. The tendency is to view human beings through the lens of pathology rather than potential. To take an example, we may note that in 2000, the Canadian Medical Association published a semi-serious, slightly tongue-in-cheek, light-hearted report entitled ‘Pathology is the Hundred-Acre Wood: A neurodevelopmental perspective on A. A. Milne’. Milne (1882-1956) was the English author of the 1926 *Winnie-the-Pooh* series. The saga was inspired by his son Christopher Robin Milne and the teddy bear owned by him. Milne had himself fought in the two world wars and there is strong evidence to suggest that he returned to England with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The authors of the study cited above observed that the various colourful characters in Milne’s fiction really represent some seriously troubled individuals who meet several DSM criteria. Their paper can be dismissed as a fanciful latter-day interpretation, but it does raise questions over the ubiquitous nature of psychiatric pathologisation (‘a pill for every ill’). Certainly, we can say that though Milne probably didn’t intend each character to represent a ‘mental disorder’, nonetheless, he sought a creative path to heal his own war wounds and connect with his child through the process of expressive writing.

Winnie-the-Pooh

Edward Bear wanted a name all to himself. Christopher Robbin gave him the name, Winnie-the-Pooh. Let’s examine the psychiatric diagnoses attached to the various characters in A. A. Milne’s fictional work.

- Pooh

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD); Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD); eating disorder; Shaken Bear Syndrome (SBS).

Symptoms: obsession with eating honey ('it all comes of *liking* honey so much'), repetitive counting behaviour, inability to pay attention, repeatedly dragged down the stairs ('bump, bump, bump').

- Christopher Robbin

Schizophrenia.

Symptoms: the various characters he created are really aspects of himself – multiple personalities.

- Tigger

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Symptoms: risk-taking behaviour, impulsive about sampling everything, always bouncing around.

- Piglet

Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD).

Symptoms: acute anxiety, self-esteem issues, described as 'poor, anxious, blushing, flustered', frequently exclaims 'oh dear').

- Kanga

Social Anxiety Disorder.

Symptoms: over-protective of her son, Roo.

- Owl

Dyslexia.

Symptoms: misspelling of words, has trouble reading.

- Eeyore

Major Depressive Disorder.

Symptoms: bouts of chronic dysthymia, stress, and negativity, bleak outlook ('a gloomy manner').

- Rabbit

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD); Narcissistic Personality Disorder.

Symptoms: Tendency to exaggerated self-importance, delusional belief that he has a great many relations, obsessively orderly especially about his garden.

- Roo

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Symptoms: challenges with social interaction and communication, restricted behaviour.

- A. A. Milne

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Symptoms: intrusive thoughts, nightmares, self-isolation, avoiding reminders of the event, feeling distant.

Now, there have been many doubters of the psychiatric discipline, not least from within its own ranks, such as Dr Thomas Szasz, a protestor who has offered a sustained critique of the scientific foundations of biological psychiatry, arguing that ‘mental illness’ is a metaphor for problems in living and that they are not ‘illnesses’ in the sense in which physical illnesses are. There are no biological or chemical tests or biopsy findings, after all, to verify DSM diagnoses. The organisation ‘A Disorder for Everyone’ (ADFE) continues to challenge the culture of psychiatric diagnoses. In 2004, founders of the Positive Psychology movement (Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman), proposed an alternative classification with their book, *Character Strengths and Virtues*. And in 2008, Paul Verhaeghe, a Belgian professor of clinical psychology and psychoanalysis, published *On Being Normal and Other Disorders*, which suggests that one’s psychic identity is acquired through intersubjective relationships. He offered a critical evaluation of the prevailing DSM model and its diagnostic criteria, from a Freudian-Lacanian meta-psychological perspective. Existential psychoanalysis, for its part, has always emphasised our very human ways of ‘being-in-the-world’ (its language is very different from that in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, which is so widespread within psychiatry, indeed, defines the discipline).

As it happens, another attempt, distinct from the psychiatric one, was made to understand Winnie-the-Pooh, one which I would like to look at by way of comparing a *psychiatric* with a *philosophical* approach to the same phenomena. Benjamin Hoff wrote *The Tao of Pooh*, the subtitle of which shows his intent: ‘The principles of Taoism demonstrated by Winnie-the-Pooh’. This American author argues that Winnie-the-Poo has a certain ‘Way’ about him, a way of doing by not-doing. Pooh’s Way is close to the ancient Chinese principles of Taoism. Taoism is a spiritual tradition which emphasis living in harmony with the *Tao* (‘way’, ‘path’, ‘principle’, natural order of the universe, intuitive inner wisdom). It teaches one how to act in accordance with simplicity and spontaneity, with *wu wei* (action without

intention). Its ‘Three Treasures’ are compassion, frugality, and humility. The *Tao Te Ching*, a compact book containing teachings attributed to the ancient Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu, is considered the cornerstone of the Taoist tradition.

A Taoist would distinguish simple-mindedness (such as Pooh exemplifies) from stupidity. Pooh may not be as clever as Rabbit, Owl, or Eeyore (the thinkers), but he embodies the Taoist ideal of the still, calm, reflecting ‘mirror-mind’ of the Uncarved Block (*Pu*) – a natural, unforced nature of mind. (Perhaps it’s serendipitous that Pooh and *Pu* are homophones). If cleverness counted, Rabbit would be Number One, rather than Bear. ‘Rabbit has Brain’, said Piglet. ‘I suppose’, said Pooh, ‘that that’s why he never understands anything’. Rabbit’s routine is that of knowledge for the sake of being clever; Owl’s is that of knowledge for the sake of appearing wise; and Eeyore’s attitude is knowledge for the sake of complaining about something. The ‘Eeyore Attitude’ gets in the way of things like wisdom and happiness. ‘Good morning, Pooh Bear’, said Eeyore gloomily. ‘If it *is* a good morning’, he said. ‘Which I doubt’, said he. Pooh’s path is that of simplicity understood as practical wisdom. Pooh may not be actually able to describe or define the meaning of the Uncarved Block – that is because he just *is* it. When complexity and arrogance are abrogated, one discovers the innocent marvel of the child and this is life’s greatest secret (‘unless ye become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven’). The real meaning of the Uncarved Block is *enjoyment* of that which is, rather than wrestling with or worrying about what is not. The discursive intellect is amazing for analysing but its reach is limited; (acquired) *information* is not the same as (innate) *wisdom*. Taoism has been described as the Way of the Whole Man. In the West, it is seen as synonymous with the Scholarly Owl – knowledge for the sake of knowledge. However, the analytical mind dissects, divides; it doesn’t get us to wholeness, to unity. ‘What day is it?’, Owl asks Piglet. ‘It’s *Today!*’, squeaked Piglet. ‘My favourite day’, said Pooh. In keeping with the perennial philosophy, Pooh lives fully in the present. *Pu* is the pathless path, the Way of (Socratic) Wisdom, of wholeness, of Something More, which may appear as something foolish to the ‘wise’ (academician morticians). Pooh often sings; he is full of joy. ‘A fly can’t bird, but a bird can fly’. For those on the Way, Things Are As They Are. Everything has its proper place, its unique function, its own inner nature, which is the universal law, or wisdom of the What, the Which, and the Who. In the story of the Ugly Duckling, the Ugly Duckling stopped feeling ugly when he realised that he was a Swan. According to all the spiritual traditions, each of us has something special – a swan of some sort, inside us. It goes by different

names, such as Self or Spirit or Sage. ‘Tigger is all right *really*’, said Piglet lazily. ‘Of course he is’, said Christopher Robin. ‘Everybody is *really*’, said Pooh. ‘That’s what *I* think’, said Pooh. ‘But I don’t suppose I’m right’, he said. ‘Of course you are’, said Christopher Robin. We may call *Wu Wei* (meaning ‘without doing’), Pooh Way – it is Pooh-in-action. It is a non-combative path, one without egotistical effort. *Wu Wei* means not going against the nature of things – no clever tampering with reality, trying to recalibrate it so it conforms to my mind rather than conforming my mind to reality/being. *Wu Wei* operates on the principle of minimal effort. Pooh doesn’t really do anything; things just sort of happen to him. When the ego as the false-self system is taken out of the equation, the true Self comes into play. Chapter thirty-seven of the *Tao Te Ching* reads: ‘Tao does not do, but nothing is not done’. Egotistical desire attempts to force the round peg into the square hole and the square peg into the round hole. By contrast, when one works with *Wu Wei* and the Self directs the show, there is no stress and no mess – no struggle. Trying too hard simply doesn’t work. In the words of Chuang-tse, the mind of *Wu Wei* ‘flows like a stream, reflects like a mirror, and responds like an echo’. The *logos* holds all things together. *Wu Wei* fights fire with water.

When he sees Caliban, Shakespeare has Prospero say, ‘this thing of darkness I acknowledge mine’. Our task is to face into and own our shadow – not to flee or fight it.

‘I am terrified by the dark thing that sleeps in me’, Sylvia Plath

Chuang-tse described a man who disliked seeing his footprints and his shadow. In his desire to escape them, he ran. But the more he ran, the more they followed him. Thinking he was going too slowly, he ran even faster, until finally he collapsed from exhaustion and died. If he had simply stood still, there would have been no footprints. If he had rested in the shade, his shadow would have disappeared. *Wu Wei* is the way of *stillness* and of *rest*. It is the meditative path. Before we begin to eat the honey, there is a moment which we might describe as awareness, more than anticipation: Suchness. In a nanosecond we realise we *are* happiness, bliss even. And we recognise there is nothing to do and nowhere to go. ‘Where are we going?’ said Pooh ‘Nowhere’, said Christopher Robin. So they began going there’. This is the secret that unlocks the doors of wisdom, happiness, and truth. What is it? Nothing. But a Nothing that is Something, a Nothingness that is Fullness (the Buddhist name is *sunyata* – voidness as ultimate reality). The Taoists call it *T’ai Hsü* – the ‘Great Nothing’. As Claude Debussy expressed it: ‘Music is the space between the notes’. When Eeyore lost his tail, who found it for him? Not clever Rabbit, not scholarly Owl, nor know-it-all Eeyore,