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The Unconscious and Evolutionary Basis of Multiple Personality

Clinical Science

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I propose that every individual has in his or her unconscious, the different personalities which such a person has assumed in previous incarnations. These are in addition to the personality of the index incarnation. Thus every individual has more than one personality, though one may be dominant- usually the one of the present incarnation.
Multiple personalities are the results of evolutions through biology and psychology. The other personalities sometimes participate in the affairs of the individual, most of the time in a relatively non-psychopathological manner but occasionally their activities may amount to psychopathology.

Introduction

I will start by stating the condition under which I expect multiple personality to exist in an individual, and thereby put the matter in proper context. My premise is that doctrine of reincarnation is real; in other words when an individual dies; the soul of such a person later enters a new-born baby and continues another cycle of life.

In each incarnation, the individual develops and manifest a particular personality which accompanies the soul when the body dies. This is carried onto the next incarnation where another personality is formed. Thus with successive incarnations the individual has a number of personalities, but most of the time it is the personality in the present incarnation that is functional. Occasionally one or more of the other personalities (in the unconscious) take over the individual and begin to function.

As for those who do not subscribe to the idea of reincarnation, this paper may not much appeal. We need however an explanation for multiple personality.

Are we to take it that foreign personalities move in and out of individuals at will? What will be the source/s of such personalities and what will be the nature of the so called movement. In my opinion this is a different view-point to defend and it lacks intellectual appeal; neither does it appear to possess any evolutionary foundation.

This is not a paper on the theology but the concept of soul, reincarnation, personality and immortality should not be alien to orthodox science and philosophy. Criticisms are allowed but tolerance is a greater virtue. On this note I proceed with my thesis.

The Origin of Multiple Personalities

Even though many great scholars may object to this, it may still be said that the unconscious appears to be the psychological equivalent of the genetic code. The deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) which contains the genetic information provides the basis for evolution; for example genetic changes through mutation over a period of time will lead to the production of offsprings that are in some way different from their parents… The DNA that we possess today is the result of changes that have taken place from the time of primitive man.

The Unconscious is a storehouse of information regarding the past. Thus it contains records of how the individual and humanity evolved and these records will be passed on to future generations. All characteristics and all personalities that have ever existed are in the unconscious.

My understanding from the foregoing is that with evolution and civilization, every individual has in his or her unconscious the different successive personalities which he or she has assumed in the past.

How often do Multiple Personality Manifest?

It would appear that multiple personalities manifest in individuals far more than we realize. Individuals sometimes talk to themselves – not necessarily in states of psychopathology; this appears to be like one personality talking to another in the same individual. People sometimes exhibits ambivalence – the co-existence of opposing emotions, impulses or actions. I think this can equally be explained on the basis of multiplicity of personalities in the same individual.

I am inclined to think that sometimes, two personalities may alternate rapidly in the way they function in an individual. If for instance a particular personality is functional at a time an individual locks the door or turns off the gas, and a few minutes later another personality takes over, this may create doubt and repeated checking which are the characteristics of obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). It is in the light of this that I posit that multiple personalities are the bases for OCD.

It would appear that when the dorminant (current) personality is weak or suppressed, one or more of the other personalities take over the individual and begin to function.

We agree that personality affects our perception of objects and events. Let us consider the phenomena of depersonalization and derealization. In depersonalization the individual experiences himself or herself as having changed and therefore no longer real whereas in derealization the environment is perceived as having changed and so no longer real. I wish to submit that these are the experiences of a personality that has temporarily taken over the individual.

This is not just about explaining everything in terms of multiple personality. When you are presented with a proposal of any type and you ask for time to think about it, it is an acknowledgment that there are contending personalities in you, and eventually the individual will yield to the dictate of the dorminant personality at that time. If before the implementation of the proposal, a different personality becomes dorminant, the taste of the individual may change and a mistake is considered to have been made. We must not forget that the pros and cons of the initial decision were considered before the decision was made. These phenomena and experiences are so common among us that we do not relate them to the activities of multiple personalities operating at the level of the unconscious.

The generally considered Multiple personality disorder is said to be rare. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) in its 10thedition of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD)[1] , 'Multiple personality disorder

'This disorder is rare, and controversy exists about the extent to which it is iatrogenic or culture-specific. The essential feature is the apparent existence of two or more distinct personalities within an individual, with only one of them being evident at a time. Each personality is complete, with its own memories, behaviour, and preferences; these may be in marked contrast to the single premorbid personality.

'In the common form with two personalities, one personality is

usually dominant but neither has access to the memories of the other and the two are almost always unaware of each other's existence. Change from one personality to another in the first instance is usually sudden and closely associated with traumatic events. Subsequent changes are often limited to dramatic or stressful events, or occur during sessions with a therapist that involve relaxation, hypnosis, or abreaction'

In this case it is grossly a disorder but the basic mechanism remains the same as that which occurs in normal people. The examples mentioned earlier in this paper are sufficient for one to conclude that multiple personality may actually be a phenomenon that applies to virtually everybody in a normal state. However in a psychopathological states in which an individual repeatedly talks to himself or herself, in cases of depersonalization and derealization, in OCD and in the typed stated in ICD-10, the issue is clearly abnormal'.

Conclusion

Multiple personalities arise from successive incarnations of the individual and are therefore the products of evolution. They owe their origin to both biology and psychology. They are probably far more common than is known to the scientific world.

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Reference

1. World Health Organization. The ICD-10 Classification of Mental and Behavioural Disorders Geneva: WHO; 1992