FRIEDERICH C. G. SCHEIDEMANTEL: THE FIRST SYSTEMATIC TEXT IN PSYCHOSOMATIC MEDICINE (1787)

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A YOUNG Hessian physician, born in 1735, who had hoped for an academic career had to return home after his graduation in 1762 because of the death of his father, also a physician, and a fire which destroyed the major part of his home town including his paternal home and property. He put aside his original plans for research and became a general practitioner in his small town. His practice also encompassed the neighbouring Spa at Brückenau and the court of the neighbourhood prince. The medical biographies list him as an able and sage practitioner and credit him with several writings which were frequently used in his time for reference regarding the usefulness of Spas for various diseases. The least recognized of his works, however, is a book published in 1787, nine years before his early death. In the introduction, he designates this work as the "red thread" of his scientific occupation but one which he was only able to produce slowly because of the lack of physical and scientific means. This book, *Die Leidenschaften als Heilmittel* (The Passions as a Means of Cure), is the first systematic presentation of what we today call psychosomatic medicine.

Friederich Christian Gottlieb Scheidemantel lived during the period which saw the dawn of German objective idealism, a philosophy which extended itself into the field of psychology as psychological romanticism and into the fields of medicine and science as the period of the broad deductive systems. Scheidemantel stood with one foot in the strongly biogenetic medicine of his century and with the other he spanned the first decades of the new century with its psychological objectivism which considered "die Seele", the psyche, a real part of the total of man's existence. The psyche was that part to which man owed his capacity to think, but this psyche was also considered the seat of virtue and vice which, together, Scheidemantel designates as the "passions", and which we today consider emotions and affects. This dual position attracted Scheidemantel's scientific interest and it became his mission to investigate, from a medical viewpoint, the relationship of what was later to be designated the psycho-physical parallelism; the influence of the psychic forces upon the body. This position was revived a century later in our psychosomatic medicine. In accordance with the scientific concepts of his time, Scheidemantel went to work systematizing and deductively organizing his observations. The results offer us an impressive presentation of the concepts of the mind-body relationship in the way they were popular during his time.

Die Leidenschaften als Heilmittel is divided into two parts. The first is a psychosomatic pathology which gives an account of the ways in which passions cause bodily illnesses including, at the end of the individual accounts, a short amendment on the natural healing influence of each passion. The second part contains a follow-up of all the passions in their actual therapeutic application and influence.

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Both of the major sections are opened with a chapter on general therapeutic considerations. Scheidemantel begins his introduction by rejecting both one-sided physiologic materialism and one-sided spiritualism. But "changes in the body caused by influences from the side of the psyche" are basically evident for him. He is a strict empiricist and starts his argument almost phenomenologically by pointing to the evidence of psychic documentations in facial expressions, in the frown, smile and tears. For evidence of pathological influence he points to the expressions caused by excessive pleasure, desires and dislikes. From this point it is only a short distance to the manifest organic changes due to emotional expression, be they good or bad, such as changes in breathing, palpitations of the heart and changes in blood circulation. These are known areas which can be influenced by emotional upsets. Scheidemantel does not doubt that the whole vascular-motor system, skin temperature, excessive elimination of body fluids, voluntary or involuntary muscular contractions and changes in the nerves ("*Nervensaft*" or nerve-fluid in the terminology of his time) belong to the sphere of symptomatology of direct actions of the psyche on the functions of the body. The basis of Scheidemantel's psychosomatic concept is that the primary channel through which the psyche influences the body is the vascular-motor system. However, this basic insight is worked out in great detail with regard to his qualitative and quantitative values. He discusses in detail the relationship between the momentary intensity and the length of time of a passion's influence with regard to the more or less resistant or vulnerable bodily constitution and the conditions it influences. His presentation of the effect of combinations of passions is elaborate; for instance, when a momentary scare strikes a fearful person or when fear follows a violent scare or the effect of several scare attacks following each other. Similar discussions concern the combination of rage and sorrow. The author is also aware of the influence of environment as a combination factor; for instance, the greater impact of scare in exposure to frost and of rage in hot weather. He also discusses the combination of passions with acute or chronic illnesses such as pregnancy, menses and convalescence. It is here that one realizes the sensitive understanding the author has for psychosomatic conditions.

Scheidemantel proves to be primarily a functional thinker regarding the actual pathological elements. The pathogenic influence of the passions are mainly carried by a contraction, expansion or enlargement of the vascular system. All further influence is a consequence of this.

To emphasize the character of Scheidemantel's thought and aims, I would like to quote the following passage which is so modern that it is astonishing to know it was written 125 years before the concepts of psychoanalysis and individual psychology appeared: "Remembrances of events inducing scare which were imprinted upon the psyche in childhood, insecurity, superstition, the pressure of guilt feelings in the consciousness of having committed a bad deed, and a melancholic disposition make the temperament vulnerable to fear and the start of its influence is facilitated by weakness of the nervous system."

In the first section, chapters follow each other which study the set of major emotions and their effects: scare, fear, sorrow, bashfulness, rage, indignation, joy, hope, love, hate and envy, vanity and ambition, and longing.

The first and longest chapter is devoted to *scare* as a pathogenic factor. Following his well-organized pattern, Scheidemantel describes the experience of scare:

> The bewildered stages of the psyche expresses itself with great vehemence in the motions of our body. The moment a person becomes scared his arms and legs tend to become rigid.

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Like lightning, a sensation strikes the pit of the heart; one has a feeling that the thorax is too tight. One gets pale and cold; a chill runs through the body. The skin of the entire body contracts and goose-flesh develops. The eyes seem paralysed and unable to move. The scared person is paralysed; he is unable to make a decision and therefore unable to escape. He remains immobile at the spot where the scare struck him. He has a rapid, short and irregular pulse. The heart trembles or beats so hard that one can hear it. The chest feels oppressed. The breath becomes slow and once in a while with a sigh one tries to gain relief. All limbs tremble and the word dies in one's mouth. Strength vanishes, the nerves become unreceptive, the psyche seems to want to leave the body which is threatened with a fainting spell. Such terrible episodes are caused by a scare and a single word or a rustling leaf is able to bring the healthiest person into such a state.

Following this description of a single scare attack, a similar detailed presentation of the organic process is given. According to Scheidemantel, this organic process is basic to most physical pathology resulting from scare. As we pointed out before, it is the author's general theory that passions influence, at first, the vascular-motor system, the heart and bloodstream, and all other effects result from dynamic deviations of this system. Disturbances explained in this way range from fainting and death due to a scare shock to goose-flesh and hair-raising.

In describing the various disorders which can be caused by scare, Scheidemantel used a great many cases reported in medical literature. He apparently read a great deal and abstracted an enormous amount of material. He proves to be acquainted not only with German literature, but with all European literature. For instance, he frequently quoted the French-Swiss neurologist S. A. Tissot.

The diseases brought on by scare first discussed by Scheidemantel are various forms of febrile conditions. He then continues with hepatitis, menstrual irregularity, unusually strong bleeding, stillbirth, ruptures of the veins and finally diseases of the respiratory system such as hiccoughs, lung bleeding and pneumonia. As can be easily seen, all these disorders are connected with the vascular system. However, he also reports conditions which go beyond this sensitive area. There are swellings and tumours of the female breast due to decomposition of the milk, there are stomach ailments and colitis in which the reaction of the liquid release of the mucus membrane and the gland is the causal influence of scare. In the group of secondary effects, Scheidemantel records cases where the urinary system's reaction to scare was enuresis or an unusually strong release of urine. In a nervous person, scare may cause chronic quivering and trembling as well as paralysis, convulsions, shock and severe spells of depression and melancholia. Finally, he points to cases of hernia and rupture caused by scare.

As mentioned before, Scheidemantel also lists the positive influence of passions. With regard to scare attacks, he reports cases where severe bleeding or menstruation were stopped and fevers, gout, palsy and paralysis were alleviated by the momentary impulse. We today would speak of this as easing an hysterical spasm. He also enumerates cases where scare had a healing influence in mental ailments like hysteria, melancholia, depressions and delirious states. Here, Scheidemantel shows his intense interest in this healing factor of passion which he later develops in the second part of the book in greater detail.

Whereas scare is a momentary shock-like influence, *fear*, the second passion discussed, has a long range influence. After describing, again in detail, the actual process of fear and its organic effect, the author presents the actual pathologies caused by it. Fear has a basic tendency to cause chronic diseases because of its long range influence. Again the vascular system stands in the

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foreground with chronic heart conditions, long-ranged irregularities of the pulse, congestions of the vascular system and the lungs as the areas attacked. However, an over-sensitive nervous system attacked by fear may lead to tremors, convulsions or lethargy. Bleeding, menstrual irregularity, diarrhoea, colitis, the various forms of liver and gall bladder diseases, stomach and digestive disorders may also be due to exposure to fear over a length of time. Various types of mental diseases may also be caused by a long involvement with fear as well as language deficiencies like stammering and lesser effects like greying of the hair. Fear is emphasized as a serious secondary factor which would aggravate existing diseases. On the other hand, the author has observed cases where a sudden exposure to fear has improved stammering, dumbness, paralysis and chronic constipation.

Sorrow and its more intense sisters *grief* and *sadness* have similar organic influences as the passions discussed previously. The influences most emphasized are a slow weakening of the functions of the heart, a toxic effect on the blood, a tendency towards malfunction of the glands and digestive processes due to the bad living habits of such sad and grief-stricken persons. It is pointed out that sadness induces a predisposition to strokes as well as to mental illnesses like depression and melancholia. Serious states of long lasting grief in a pregnant woman may have a serious effect upon her unborn child. Sorrow is the passion of the melancholic individual. Scheidemantel observed how much such melancholics "enjoy" their grief. There are no forms of illnesses which can be helped by sorrow or grief.

Bashfulness is explained as a mild form of fear. Its most common physical expression is blushing. It can cause mild physical discomfort of various kinds and is frequently the cause of stammering and other speech deviations.

Rage is almost always connected with hate and a desire to remove the irritating element. Rage has the most intense influence on the vascular system. The disturbances brought on by rage include acute, brief irregularities of the pulse as well as chronic irregularities and spastic conditions. There are certain physical dispositions which give some individuals a tendency towards rage. They are known as the choleric type, but hypochondriac and hysterical types also lean towards easy outbursts of rage. In addition to disturbances of blood circulation and chemistry which can be traced to rage, there are also secondary effects of the intestinal and urinary system. These include liver, gall bladder and stomach diseases—more specifically colitis and other inflammations and ulcerous conditions. Fevers of various kinds, haemorrhages, lung tuberculosis, speech disturbances, convulsions and spells of dizziness, stillbirth and certain menstrual irregularities are also included here. Scheidemantel reports the folk belief that rage may drive bile into a nursing mother's milk and cause serious intestinal disturbances in the infant. From the healing side, rage can assist in overcoming hysterical paralysis, in bringing on menstruation which has stopped and in relieving gout and febrile conditions.

Indignation is described as a mixture of rage and grief. It is considered one of the most dangerous passions because of its lingering, penetrating effect. Some chronic conditions caused by indignation are dizzy spells, stomach and lung ailments, speech disturbances and mental diseases. Scheidemantel proves to be conscious of the basic Freudian postulation of suppression when he writes: "Indignation is most dangerous when it is intense and suppressed." There are also positive influences from indignation.

Joy is the passion with the greatest positive influence of all, and this is especially true when it finds its physical expression in laughter. Laughter

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revitalizes the vascular system and through this the entire body. It can help overcome many types of obstructions and constipation, and may even lead to the breaking of internal abscesses or may facilitate child-birth. However, excessive joy and laughter may have a serious negative effect. It can disrupt normal breathing and blood oxidation and cause haemorrhages and veins to burst. Quite a few cases were reported in history where over-joy even caused death.

Hope has effects similar to joy but not as strong. Hope is deeply involved with the total of human experience and is, in particular, the patient companion of the sick. It is the basis for confidence in the doctor. The author sees it as the real basis for all medical and pseudo-medical superstitions and miracle cures.

Love as conceived of by Scheidemantel is erotic and almost Freudian in its nature. He emphasizes the extent to which sound love improves physical and mental health; however, he also points out the consequences of too much erotic excitement or sexual excess. The consequences of unhappy and unfulfilled love and its extreme partner jealousy receive extensive treatment. Physiopathology caused by these passions range from hepatitis to insanity and death. Scheidemantel has also observed national characteristics pertaining to love and jealousy. He maintains that Turks, Italians and Spaniards have a greater tendency towards jealousy and its consequences than, for instance, the Germans. Love for other than human objects has similar but not such intense forms and effects. *Hate* is the passion diametrically opposed to love. In their psychological effects, their negative influences produce the same harmful, abnormal conditions in our body and mind.

Scheidemantel considers *envy* one of the most complex passions. It is that passion with which one tends to be most preoccupied. Anyone who is seriously possessed by envy is difficult to help, and so are the chronic conditions it causes. The envious person is an atrophic individual who cannot properly enjoy life or food. He sleeps little, is deeply melancholic or expends himself in spells of choleric rage. He is predisposed towards lung and stomach sicknesses, but strangely enough some of these individuals live a long life.

Arrogance, *vanity* and *ambition* belong to the same family. Arrogance is based on an unhealthy self-love and preoccupation with one's ego. Many believe it is actually a mental illness. Ambition is the son of arrogance with the addition of instability. Its negative organic effects are similar to those of indignation. Vanity, a member of the same family, is a passion with a strong tendency towards mental illnesses.

Longing, the reverse of arrogance, is a desire not for oneself alone but for a foreign object. It tends to create a loss of appetite and sleeplessness, and if it lasts for any length of time it can be the basis for chronic diseases. Homesickness, a special type of longing, which the author describes in great detail is the most dangerous form of longing.

The most impressive part of the entire book, the general introductory chapter of the second part, deals with the passions as an actual means of treatment and cure. Scheidemantel emphasizes that here he is not referring to the natural positive influence passions may have by themselves but to the actual use of passion as a therapeutic tool applied by the doctor, carefully planned and administered. The author confesses that this is a completely new idea in medicine. Since he was able to find very little material in the literature he had to rely mainly on his own observations and experiments.

Since the vascular system is the vehicle for the passions as agents of disorder so it is the vehicle for them as therapeutic agents, and again their

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influence on the enlargement and contraction of the vascular system extends throughout the body. If such influence on the vascular system can assist in curing any disease, there is an opportunity to apply the passions as a remedy. From the beginning, however, Scheidemantel has one special basic consideration in mind; namely, that there are certain illnesses for which there is no remedy in physical medicines. It is with this type of disorder that passions may become an important aid. And a third aspect is brought out in these introductory chapters; that there are diseases which are caused by passions and the application of a correlated passion might help such diseases.

Before determining any practical applications, Scheidemantel points out the negative effects of each passion to make sure that these are ruled out in the planned use. Another preliminary aspect for the author is that the patient be made aware of the role passions have, of the help he can receive when they are applied and that he must co-operate by following directions given with regard to these passion treatments. One application is basic to all use and this is that the patient learns to accept the disease as such, its length and the disagreeable factors the attempts at cure may imply.

We are without specific and detailed quantitative measurements in the practical application of passions. The only quantitative advice possible are such general specifications as weak, medium and strong. The doctor who wants to apply passions therapeutically must realize that simply prescribing them will not be of too much help. The difference between passions and physical medicine is that the passions are an intimate part of the very nature of the patient and the doctor must work closely with his patient in this respect. The basis for a judgment and evaluation in passion therapy is an intimate knowledge of the physical and mental nature of man. The doctor who wants to apply passion therapy must know much about the human temperament (psychology), the differentiation of the various stages of age, the educational and social background of his patient and he must have complete information about the specific conditions of the ailment he is planning to treat. One cannot learn passion therapy from books but only from long years of experience and a sensitive feeling for the very nature of passions.

Passions cannot be produced in a patient simply in a direct manner. The passions are carried through the memory and imagination; therefore, the nature of the patient must be known. Since a quantitative measure cannot be evaluated, the doctor must distinguish carefully between violent or negative passions and positive ones as a basic precaution. Occasionally violent passions will prove helpful in certain conditions, but one must be aware of the danger of using them whereas no such precautions are necessary with the milder passions.

After these general considerations, Scheidemantel again discusses the individual passions in the same order as he did in the first part of the book.

Scare is again given the longest consideration; however, this time as a therapeutic tool. Scheidemantel enumerates a number of disorders like sleepwalking, gout, epilepsy, malaria, paralysis, constipation and dropsy which may be helped by scare therapy. With great detail it is advised when and how to apply it for each case. Again the point is raised as to where the danger of harmful effects or regression is to be avoided. The underlying process in the specific sickness in connection with the effect of scare is also described. Finally, it is emphasized that scare should be used only where all other medical possibilities have failed.

Fear has basically the same pattern of therapeutic influence as scare. The

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difference is that scare has a momentary influence whereas fear has a long lasting one. Fear is believed to be especially valuable when intellectual and reasonable advice failed to influence the patient. It seems to be extraordinarily important in ailments brought on by the patient's self-abuse, either from violent passions or vice and physical excess. Fear seems to influence all kinds of haemorrhages and menstrual irregularity, convulsions and chorea, tendencies toward fainting spells, digestive disorders and finally certain mental diseases. There is less danger from serious negative effects in the application of fear than exists with scare; however, serious consideration should be given when using fear to avoid harmful effects.

Grief has no therapeutic value because there are only negative effects. However, it may be useful only if one wants to prevent a patient from unadvisable actions. *Bashfulness* also has very little therapeutic value.

It is not expected that *rage* would have a therapeutic use. However, it proves to be a valuable factor in activating stagnant processes, giving a quick momentary impulse and warming up the body. Rage is a useful therapeutic means with phlegmatic types and with persons who, for one reason or another, refuse to move fast or at all. It has also proved helpful for obstructions of the liver and bile tract, sclerosis, rickets and to induce menstruation in certain types of women. Rage is also helpful in bringing about a catharsis in fevers and as a result it also effects smallpox, measles and chicken-pox. Within the range of mental diseases, rage may be used to break spells of depressions and grief. However, Scheidemantel emphasizes most seriously that rage should always be used in a moderate form to avoid the danger of an uncontrolled rage which may harm the patient.

Indignation is another passion which Scheidemantel discards as unusable in therapy.

In contrast, *joy* is considered the most useful passion for healing purposes. By itself, it is a basic factor for all health and happiness and it represents the best guarantee for reaching an old age. Joy cannot be underestimated as a strengthening factor in all health and therefore it is a primary factor in advancing any cure and completing a convalescence. Of course, there are dangers of over-joy; however, these are more easily controlled than the negative effects of other, more violent passions. Scheidemantel lists 34 different disease patterns in which he sees joy as an active helper. Its basic influence is in the improvement of the general circulation. He lists children's and women's disorders, various fevers, colitis, diarrhoea, lung ailments, colics, catalepsy, the various rheumatic conditions and many mental ailments, especially hypochondria. In each case, Scheidemantel gives detailed conditions for the application of joy. Special emphasis is placed upon its application as a basic factor of cure in children's diseases.

Hope has a similar therapeutic effect to joy but it is weaker and of a more long-ranged efficacy. Hope is an indispensable assistance to the doctor and the author discusses its medical use in great detail. He is very thoughtful in discussing the application of hope in incurable diseases and the effects of unfulfilled hope in recurrent disorders. For homesickness, hope is the only existing remedy.

Love in the biological sense, as Scheidemantel had discussed it in the first part, has no therapeutic value which the medical doctor can apply. He doubtlessly differs greatly in this with the present Freudian psychoanalysis. However, love for non-human objects can be successfully utilized.

Finally there are a group of passions which Scheidemantel lists as unusable

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for therapy. These are *jealousy*, *arrogance*, *envy* and *vanity* and empty *longing*.

There is, of course, much in Scheidemantel's thinking which is closely related to the scientific thought of his period. His psychology, although almost modern in some respects, in other respects, especially in the terminology, it is strongly within the pattern of the late 18th century. The same must be said of his physiological thinking and especially of his basic concepts of neurology. But in spite of this, his conception of the body as a whole and of the differentiation of the internal systems and their co-ordination represents beliefs to which much of our recent physiological pragmatism has returned. However, his clear insight into the psyche-body relationship and his realistic insight into psychic functions in this sense is most astounding. In this respect, he is certainly one of the great masters of psychosomatic medicine and practical psychology.

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