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REHABILITATION CENTER: PSYCHIATRY AND GROUP THERAPY

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The group therapy technique in the army is doing much to compensate partially for the shortage of psychiatrists. It has reached hundreds of general prisoners in the army, notably at the Fifth Service Command Rehabilitation Center, Fort Knox, Ky. It promises to become a major development in the rehabilitation of general military and civilian prisoners.—EDITOR.

The establishment of Rehabilitation Centers in and of itself is *prima facie* evidence that the War Department believes military criminals can be retrained to become effective soldiers—citizens of the Army.

If we examine the history of criminology and penology with open minds, forgetting our prejudices for the moment, if that is indeed possible, we discover that the evidence is clear that the less imprisonment, the better, the less punishment, the better, and the more teaching, retraining, and social reintegration, the better.

Fines, probation, parole, conditional sentences are all elements within the newer technique, but these are neither enough, nor even sufficiently used. Making of the sentence a constructive experience is vital to success. The task here is one that calls for the broadest human sympathy and insight and the utmost skill in human relations.

Perhaps at this point it would be well to clarify our concepts of what we can do and what we cannot hope to accomplish in our rehabilitation centers as regards types of offenders. Let us be realistic for we are all prone to become enthusiastic over our work and to set our sights too high. We cannot reasonably hope to return all our offenders to duty with a good prognosis for successful adjustment, because we know from experience that many are recidivists who have a long-established pattern of criminality. We can hope to return to duty and successful adjustment those men whose pattern has not become firmly established, *if* we make the sentence a constructive experience for them. It is a burden that rests upon us no less than upon them. We must hold it uppermost in our minds lest we project our shortcomings upon our charges who are traditionally known as "no goods", "jail birds", and by other and sundry terms of opprobrium. It will bear us all in good stead to recall the memorable observation: "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

With the foregoing principles as guides, let us proceed. We have, by our pious reminder, if conscientiously made and received, established in ourselves one of our prerequisites, namely, that of broad human sympathy.

But, what of insight? What of understanding? This continues to be the sorest spot in the practice of penology. The lack of insight, of knowledge of motivation for social deviation, has been the most damning defect of penology. This factor has been the fundamental fault of the traditional attempts at reformation, foredooming them to failure or, at best, to miserable success.

What makes an offender? A difficult question it is, which taxes us severely. Obviously, there is no one single cause, nor yet merely a few causes for the commission of offenses. The repetition here of all the well-known facts about broken homes, lax discipline or over-indulgence during formative years, about crime areas, lack of education and training, about delinquent companions, alcoholism and the like will little advance our cause today. Those factors have been well-known now for years and yet our understanding of them has had little effect on crime if one is to judge by the mounting incidence of crime in the world. The uncounted stacks of researches on the above named and similar factors at best constitute a monument to the somewhat fruitless labors of our earnest and largely unrewarded colleagues. They do, however, form a basis for the edifice which we wish to rear. Prevention of those factors should be the goal of hygienists, sociologists, teachers, doctors, ministers, parents and others who seek a better world, for if we create a finer milieu for our children we will go far in the prevention of crime.

Fundamental Normal Development

Our problem, however, is one of urgency and requires that we return erring soldiers to their places in a fighting army. We must leave prevention to others for the time, while we bend every effort to mending damage already done.

Fundamental to our understanding of our charges is knowledge of the normal development of a human being. Mindful at once of the tremendous breadth of this problem, and the limitation of time at our immediate disposal, we can at best consider only the barest of essential factors.

Louis Berg has aptly phrased a profound observation: "Man is not born human, but rather, struggles all his life to become so." Perhaps we should say he struggles all his life to become social, for that is what is meant. Some of our most innate human attributes are the very ones with which we must struggle in order to subjugate them in favor of socially accepted attributes. At any rate, the newborn child is the epitome of an

asocial creature. He has no knowledge of the existence, rights and privileges or desires of other beings, and therefore behaves as though he were indeed the central being in the universe. His demands are peremptory and admit of no delay in their fulfillment. He will eat, play, cry, and relieve himself when, as, and if he wishes. As the saying goes, "He wants what he wants when he wants it." His cries are imperative, and his rages are indicative of his assumption of omnipotence. His greed is enormous, his nonchalance in failing to pay homage to etiquette in the matter of elimination is magnificent. Here is the prototype of the psychopath. Here is one who regards not at all the rights and privileges of others, who proceeds with utter contempt to get what he wants when he wants it and to hell with what anyone else wants, needs or merits. We dwell on this blissful state of infancy only to emphasize the fact that we were all asocial in our behavior at one time in our lives. The next factor is that, by and large, the infant succeeds in getting what he wants as he wants it and this is of the essence of our understanding. Regression to this phase of normal development when it occurs in an adult is pathologic and indicates failure to adjust socially. It results in offending the social laws of society and, in our case, of the service.

However, in normal development, the infant is gradually brought to realize that he is a part of a constellation, and not the sun, in the universe. He gradually learns to respect the rights and privileges of others. He learns that he must observe certain rules of behavior, such as performing his elimination in private, eating only his share of the family's food, remaining quiet during the hours while others are resting, etc. At first he does these socially acceptable or required acts because of the authority of the parent, having learned that he is actually far from omnipotent, but really the opposite; a dependent, defenseless, tolerated creature, loved when he is "good" and punished either directly or indirectly when he is "bad." If his development proceeds normally, he eventually incorporates the parental authority into his own personality which then becomes "conscience." This conscience then forbids him to do "wrong" or to offend society and bids him do "good" and conform to society's rules of conduct. So long as conscience rules, his conduct is acceptable to society and he is a "good citizen." However, if it fails or does not even develop sufficiently to rule his conduct remains infantile and he more or less retains his babyish outlook; he wants what he wants when he wants it. If the latter is the case in the adult, social deviation, or criminality is the result. Here is the soldier who takes French leave regardless of the fact that his country needs him to fight a formidable and despicable foe. Here, then, is the thief who sees

what he wants and, like the baby, takes it regardless of ownership or of the hardship he may work upon another. Here is our inmate who has been caught and has suffered the just wrath of his outraged fellow soldiers by the application of the Articles of War.

Classification

One may classify criminals from a psychiatric standpoint as acute, chronic, and neurotic.

Under the heading Acute Criminal (by which we mean criminal under special circumstances) are sub-headings. Thus, there are situational crimes and accidental crimes. Situational crimes are those brought about when the anti-social impulses gain supremacy in the individual under impelling circumstances such as self-defense, desperation, strong sense of injustice, etc. In situational crimes the entire ego participates at the time, but rejects its behavior later on. Accidental crimes are those caused by slips or mistakes, and are brought about by unconscious intentions.

Chronic criminals we sub-classify as *organic* and *normal* criminals. In these there is established an habitual criminal reaction. In the organic criminal there is biologic etiology, that is there is defective biological growth, the personality is affected by organic processes, toxic processes, and infectious disease. Illustrations of this type are seen in degenerative idiots and in the well known paretics, epileptics and schizophrenics. By normal criminal we mean one who has a sociologic etiology, and in which there is no conflict. This type is reared in criminal surroundings and has a criminal type of conscience, and this type, by and large, is deterred only by intimidation of the law. Under our third heading, that is the *neurotic criminal*, we find those who commit crime from a sense of guilt. Strangely enough, it has been learned through much research that this type of criminal often commits his crime in order to get caught and punished, following which there is an absence of sense of guilt. Also, under the heading, neurotic criminal, are seen the *symptomatic* or *compulsive* types. In these types the ego participates without realizing the meaning of the acts. Illustrations of this type may be seen in the kleptomaniac, pyromaniac, and other monomaniacs.

There remains a third sub-group in our *neurotic criminal* classification. This is Freud's so-called "exception." These commit crimes out of a sense of injustice against the world. They feel that the world owes them something, so they take it.

We take time to consider these various types because we can better clarify our concepts if we do so. Thus, we have found from experience that there is little hope for rehabilitation of the organic and the normal criminal. We can do little to rem-

edy the damage done in the case of the organic criminal, and on the other hand the pattern of the normal criminal is so firmly fixed that he is little affected by all our efforts to rehabilitate him. We are more concerned with the acute criminal and the neurotic criminal. In both these classes there is hope for rehabilitation. It is especially with reference to the neurotic criminal that we may now proceed.

What has all this to do with understanding and insight? It has this to do with it: we must learn the reason for the failure of conscience in the soldier's development, so that we may rationally plan a method of treatment aimed at its restoration to power. We must establish a pattern of socially acceptable conduct or we fail in rehabilitation. We must make our trainees have a sincere desire to return to duty, not to escape punishment and gain freedom for themselves from the wire fences and guard towers, but rather to serve because it is their acknowledged, deep-seated conviction that it is their duty to serve the country which guarantees the very freedom which they require for adjustment.

According to Aichorn, one of the outstanding men in the field of juvenile reformation: "It is characteristic of the delinquent that he possesses little capacity for repressing instinctual impulses and for directing energy away from primitive goals. He is thus unable to achieve what is considered by society a normal ethical code." He states in *Wayward Youth* that the great majority of delinquent children "come into conflict with society because of an unsatisfied need for tenderness and love in their childhood."

In delinquents we find a great hunger for pleasure. Lacking inhibitions, they satisfy this hunger in a primitive fashion and in contradiction to rules of conduct laid down by authority.

The ideal way to attack our problem would be to receive these offenders sympathetically, and to assure them of our interest and affection in an environment calculated to please them, and to make use of their affection thus won, to retrieve a neglected part of their development, that is, the transition from their earlier unreal world of self-indulgence to one of reality.

However, we enjoined ourselves to be realistic. We cannot hope in a military establishment to greet the incoming deserter, thief, or forger with love and kisses. We would soon find our accommodations far too limited for the guests we would be required to care for, soldiers being what they are: human beings with little desire to stop hot lead or cold steel. Nevertheless, we can and must, if we are to do a job, keep our sympathy and understanding for our trainees. Within the limitations imposed upon us in the military establishment, we

must strive to direct our efforts at rehabilitation along sound principles. We must not alone train men to drill, wear gas masks, read maps, and fire guns. We must strive to continue or to reinstitute normal development where it left off in our offenders.

This brings us to the consideration of methods and techniques, for we must now develop or learn, rather, to use certain tools to reshape our material.

Without effusiveness or sentimentality, we must, indeed, make our trainees feel our sympathy and understanding, and we must give them affection in a manner which is positive but still masculine and free of "sob sister mush." It must have dignity and warmth together. It must reassure the trainee without leading him to the false assumption that he has found a "soft berth." We must be frank, honest, and firm in our dealings with him. A vacillating course will surely result in losing his confidence and respect. A superior, "holier than thou" attitude will strengthen his conviction that he cannot adjust to the army. The over-application of authority to hide our own insecurity and ineffectiveness will surely alienate him irretrievably.

Having laid the foundation by our manner of reception and dealing with him, we must proceed to find his trouble. The psychiatrist is specifically charged with this task, being pre-eminently qualified by virtue of his training for such work. However, it is no less the duty of the battalion commanding officer, the company commanding officer, the training officer, the chaplain and the others who work with him to aid in this. One needs only to be sympathetic, understanding and interested enough to try in order to gain his confidence and affection, following which confidences are sometimes eagerly offered by the trainee.

Group Therapy

There remains, however, a new technique to be applied. This is known as "group therapy." It is a technique used by psychiatrists to treat neurotics in groups rather than singly. If we are to remain realistic we must acknowledge the fact that the psychiatrists in our Rehabilitation Centers have far too little time to devote to the treatment of trainees.

We should, at the onset of this phase of discussion, admit freely that this method has not yet been widely utilized for the treatment of this type of maladjustment. It has not been applied largely because of the conviction of many men that it will not work successfully for this type of aberration. We must disregard this prejudice and proceed on the basis that "nothing ventured nothing gained", and with vigor and determina-

tion bring this weapon into play in our battle of rehabilitation, especially with the acute and neurotic criminal.

What is group therapy? Space does not permit even a superficial discussion of its method of application. Briefly, it consists of the treatment of a group by lectures and open discussion both conducted by men who have common problems. The neurotics should form one group, the milder psychopaths, or rather, those in whom an anti-social pattern is not yet firmly established, another and so on.

This group therapy should preferably be conducted by the psychiatrist, but the psychologist or other trained worker can be taught the technique.

It is not our purpose to enter into the more technical phases and special techniques of group therapy. The psychiatrist can be charged with its application. Our purpose is to determine a method of attack in the struggle for retraining and reintegrating the personality of our offenders in a normal pattern of development. In essence, group therapy can become a powerful weapon to aid in retrieving that neglected part of development—the transition from the earlier unreal world of self-indulgence to one of reality by bringing the cause out into the open for the trainee to recognize and correct. The fact that he can do so along with others lends powerful support to the effect, for “misery loves company.”

To be effective, this therapy must delve deeply and, therefore, cannot proceed so rapidly as we might wish. We must, as all good soldiers do, cultivate the virtue of patience. The method must not be damned if it does not in the space of a few weeks undo and correct the results of years of maldevelopment. Neither must we expect 100 per cent results. Just as surgeons cannot save every patient, nor internists cure every case of tuberculosis, neither can we hope to reclaim every delinquent. If we successfully treat a good percentage it will have been successful and worth our efforts.

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