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Dear Phil,

Jim says he is working on dreams of medicine at the office. So I will send a few lines now on Dreams of Psychiatry - which are a bit different. Myth is a good word for these things because they are the sort of dreams that one is embarrassed about. If a stranger comes and says "you psychiatrists are supposed to be doing blah-blah-blah," one becomes irritated and thinks how little this person understands the complexities of the matter. But a lot of the irritation comes from knowing that that inane wish is what secretly compels a large part of one's own work.

#### Myths of Psychiatry

1) The Humane Treatment of the Insane. Madmen are perhaps more universally scapegoated than any other group. Hitler's Final Solution and current treatment of the elderly demented are examples. Communist countries seem closer to humane treatment than we are, because they allow the insane to work. (The non-insane don't do so well.) That insanity should be rationally dealt with is clearly a mythic concept. The work of Thomas Szasz illustrates some of the absurdities wise men enter when they attempt this; he says that the only way to treat lunatics humanely is to ignore their insanity.

#### 2) The Perfectability of Children

Freud seemed to be saying at certain moments that, if we did not torture our children, they would not become neurotic.

Les Farber (a Chicago analyst) has talked about a similar myth of perfectability that psychoanalytic candidates re-live during their training analyses. If one escapes those entrapping neuroses, one will attain infinite capacity for work and for love. The main trap here is that no one is quite sure what is good for which children at which times. The post-World War II crop of children were remarkably prone to a set of disorders called narcissistic. That is, these children did not have neurotic selves; many had no sense of self whatsoever. Parental abdication from discipline spared these children the torments of guilt, but substituted feelings of abandonment and insubstantiality. A new generation of psychoanalysts (like Heinz Kohut) have new recipes for perfecting children. Consistent parenting and helping the child attain mastery are new catch-phrases. One wonders at times if this preoccupation with a Pygmalion-esque approach to the child takes us so far away from the natural human view of child as valued community member that we distort our children regardless of which catch-words we use.

### 3) The Taming of Human Greed, Sexuality, and Aggression

Freud had great respect for the unconscious drives that he described. However, some of his followers have implied that, if Freud had been better analysed or more skillful, he would not have been so frightened of these unconscious human drives. Wilhelm Reik felt that children would thrive if allowed to freely express their polymorphously perverse sexuality. Gestalt therapists urge their clients to "let all the anger out."

Regressive therapies offer the client diapers and a bottle and promise him that it is O.K. to have needs and that demands can be met. Needless to say, these efforts are among the noblest and most naive in psychiatry. Psychiatric efforts with criminals have been such dismal failures that it is difficult to take seriously the efforts of many psychiatrists to end war. On the other hand, some of the most gallant and beautiful moments in the history of psychiatry have hinged on the determination of a Freda Fromm-Reichman or a Bruno Bettelheim to refuse to be intimidated by one of these powerful drives. (Bettelheim has a candy room at the Orthogenic School where children can indulge their greed without limits.) The high suicide rate of psychiatrists, the fact that a handful are murdered by their patients each year, the fact that another handful are sexually seduced or seductive with patients... all this attests to the power of these drives. Psychiatrists seem to forget at times how hard they struggle to make separate peace with these drives and insist that it would be easy for the world at large to do so. The recent sexual revolution represents such an attempt. It becomes clear that when 11-year-olds take birth control pills and when Masters and Johnson masturbate ladies with machines in the laboratory, sex (with a small s) is being tamed but Sex (with a large id S) has flown out the window.

Phil, sorry for the roughness and lateness of this. I think there are probably other Psychiatric Dreams but these are the least subtle.

Love,

Jeanie