

The Allegory of a Quantum Persona: The Absurdity of Diagnostics

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I. Introduction

Norm, established as a social imperative through the process of mass acceptance, is first acknowledged in the form of a theory proposed by an individual or a group of individuals concentrated on demonstrating the liability of the common ideal. The public announcement of the theory in the proper time period and to a conventional target group leads to the elevation of the norm to the status of regulative laws, making it obligatory for everyone. The same principle can be observed in the process of acceptance and the widespread application of diagnostic procedures and manuals. At the mere beginning of diagnostic procedures, theoretical constructs were presented, which were (following Hegel's theory) confronted with their antithesis, leading to a complementary synthesis.² Any theory in its subjective core is susceptible to the rise of the antithesis as a set of quasi-objective criticism. In certain circumstances the antithesis develops a more elevated degree of credibility, in the sense of its functional utility, than the originally stated thesis. It is my opinion that the standards of the psychological diagnostic system have achieved their peak in terms of scientific usability and will be overcome by the alternative antithesis statements.

II. The Quantum Personality

The advancement of the holistic approach regarding the intercorrelation of the functional elements of the body, the mind and the soul has allowed

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² S. A. Schnitker and R. A. Emmons, "Hegel's Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis Model," in *Encyclopedia of Sciences and Religions*, ed. L. Oviedo and A. L. C. Runehov (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013).

us to transfer knowledge from other scientific disciplines into the field of mental reasoning. As human beings are prone to observe the Real in terms of its material derivations which can be apprehended by the senses, it is possible to explain certain instances of psychological functioning through certain postulates of quantum mechanics. Since everything perceivable represents the complex structure of subatomic and atomic particles, the allegory of a quantum persona implies the possibility that certain instances of a personality may operate under the fundamental propositions of quantum physics. Furthermore, these particular instances utilize maxims of the quantum world through individual manifestations of emotional, cognitive and behavioral patterns. One of the focal constructs of quantum physics by which the particles of the matter display their basic behavioral patterns is the Quantum Superposition.

A. The Superposition

In 1935, Erwin Schrödinger attempted to dispute the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum systems by devising the well-known Schrödinger's cat experiment. This thought experiment consisted of a live cat closed in a non-transparent, sealed box which contained a flask of poison, a radioactive substance, and a monitor for measuring the level of radioactivity. If at any moment the amplitude of radioactivity were to be detected by the internal monitor, the flask of poison would be shattered and the cat would be killed instantly. The Copenhagen interpretation assumes that the cat is simultaneously both alive and dead until an intervening party opens the box and perceives the cat in one of the possible states. Even though Schrödinger's aim was to refute such an argument, his experiment brought more complying evidences in favor of the proposed view. Accordingly, the cat is positioned in both states of being alive and dead for the observing party, until the moment the box is opened and the state of the cat is perceived.³

The Superposition principle states that any particle can be in an infinite number of various states at the same time, until the external source observes the particle and its perception of it determines the particle's definitive state of being. The assumption derived from these

³ J. Gribbin, *In Search of Schrödinger's Cat: Quantum Physics and Reality* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984), 109-111.

statements is that the person itself also tends to differ in its psychic states depending on the context within which it is present and observed at one particular moment.

B. The implication of the Superposition in mental diagnostics

The human mind cannot be and must not be reduced to the trifling moment of the box being opened and the recognition of the definitive state. Due to its dynamic systems, the psyche permanently stays in the state of the Superposition which is under constant influence of differing internal and external factors. Connecting these disclosures to any physical or mental state of being, the determining observer effect can be recognized in the processes of diagnosing mental disorders, in the sense that we perceive what we are prone to perceive. Regarding these postulates, the human mind is susceptible to be in various states of thoughts, emotions and physical reactions until subordinated by a defining analytical specification, recognized by a psychologist or psychiatrist. This would imply that a person with a given diagnosis would not suffer from the determined mental issue if transferred to another social context where his or her mental problem would be perceived differently.

There are many examples that prove that there is a high level of subjectivity during the utilization of diagnostic manuals and diagnostic procedures.

In 1973 psychologist David Rosenhan conducted an experiment which undermined all the diagnostic interpretations made by professionals in several mental health institutions. The experiment comprised of two stages. The first stage involved eight pseudopatients, including Rosenhan himself, who were instructed to report false auditory hallucinations in order to gain admission to one of the 12 psychiatric hospitals in five states in the United States. All of the pseudopatients were admitted immediately and diagnosed with different psychotic disorders. After they got admitted the further instructions, were to start behaving normally as in everyday life. Not a single employee of these mental health institutions realized that they were regular citizens with no history of mental health issues. All of the pseudopatients were forced to admit having a mental illness and had to agree to consume antipsychotic drugs as a condition of their release. The average time that the patients spent in the hospital was 19 days. After the Rosenhan scam was revealed

to the public, offended hospitals requested from Rosenhan to send another group of pseudopatients in order to reclaim their reputation. What did Rosenhan do?

He agreed to the demands of the institutions and in the following weeks out of 193 new patients the staff identified 41 as potential pseudopatients, with a further 42 of them considered suspect. In fact, Rosenhan had sent no pseudopatients to the hospitals at all.⁴

This experiment, as many similar ones, demonstrates the weak liability of diagnosis put forward even by an educated and experienced personnel. It implies that diagnoses depend mostly on subjective interpretations of appraising observers.

Furthermore, these formulations of the patients' mental condition seem to be dependent on the subjective judgements of the perceiving parties who are inclined to make a final decision on the definite state in which the patients' mental picture will prevail. Left with the observers' definition, the patients, being diagnosed with a mental disorder, tend to lose the possibility of flexibility and the fluidity of formed mental concepts and accept the definite state brought by the assumptions of others. Regarding Rosenhan's findings, the Superposition of these pseudopatients would be that they were simultaneously mentally healthy and suffering from certain mental health issues, depending on who the observing party was.

The question arises as to what would happen if the patients were treated as healthy and there was support for the idea of their definite functional psychological state of being. Would the patients recover more profoundly and rapidly?

Another example of the Superposition of the personality can be noted in Information Processing used by cognitive psychologists in their field of studies. Cognitive psychologists have composed an analogy of neural functioning with the computers' ability of collecting and coding the input information. In a certain way, computers do imitate the way the human brain copes with the mass of constantly received information. As Soul McLeodhe, psychology researcher for the University of Manchester, Division of Neuroscience & Experimental Psychology, explained, essentially, a computer codes information, stores information, uses information, and produces an output (retrieves information). And so do

⁴ D. Rosenhan, ed., *On being sane in insane places* (London: Science, 1973), DOI: 10.1126/science.179.4070.250 (accessed December 13, 2019).

humans. For example, the eye receives visual information and codes information into electric neural activity which is fed back to the brain where it is “stored” and “coded”. This information can be used by other parts of the brain relating to mental activities such as memory, perception and attention. The output (i.e. behavior) might be, for instance, to read what you can see on a printed page.⁵

Basic computers operate on the principles of a binary numeral system. It means they use only two digits, 0 and 1, for storing the implemented data or for deducing certain calculations. In Boolean logic 0 stands for False and 1 stands for True. These two states are the two possible values of a bit, the smallest unit of data in a computer. By combining the bits into bytes, multiple operations are made possible for the computer to process, but they are limited by the number of combining states.

Adrian Cho, Ph.D. in experimental particle physics at Cornell University, explains that whereas a classical computer depends on “bits” of information that can be set as either 0 or 1, a Quantum computer employs qubits which can be set to 0, 1, or – thanks to quantum mechanics – any combination of 0 and 1 at the same time. These simultaneous states of qubits are actually using the benefits of the Superposition in order to gain an ability of processing an infinite number of information concomitantly, which in return provides Quantum computers their inherent parallelism.⁶ According to physicist David Deutsch, this parallelism allows a quantum computer to work on a million computations at once, while a basic desktop PC works on a single one.⁷

If the human brain is to be considered the role model of all the computer sciences, we can dare to insinuate that it is also able to function on the same principles as the Quantum computer does. All the information the neurological system admits, both on conscious and unconscious levels, are being intervened in the complex systems of

Superposition where every information is tangled in a state of Superposition on its own and also in concordance with other

⁵ S. A. McLeod, ed., *Information processing* (Simply Psychology, 2008), www.simplypsychology.org/information-processing.html (accessed December 13, 2019).

⁶ A. Cho, ed., *Breakthrough of the Year: The First Quantum Machine* (Science, 2010), <https://doi.org/10.1126%2Fscience.330.6011.1604> (accessed December 13, 2019).

⁷ D. Deutsch, ed., *Lectures on Quantum Computation* (YouTube, 2011), www.youtube.com/watch?v=24YxS9lo9so (accessed December 13, 2019).

information received. The reaction provoked by the information systems can be seen as a product of aimed perception and mental measuring strategies which compel this information in a determinate observable state. This would mean that both the patient and his or her therapist influence and are able to mold the psychic output of the patient.

Regarding this possibility of mediation of the mental condition which in a determinate state becomes a reality to the depicted person, the nowadays techniques of providing mental health care should be revised in the notion of a more flexible and eclectic observing and employment of diagnostic methods.

III. Conclusion

It is not disputable that psychic relief is achieved through the process of naming the mental disorders, which is attainable by the employment of diagnostic manuals, as well as through the consumption of medicaments. The problem is the totalitarian nature of descriptions used in diagnostic procedures. Constructing a diagnosis merely by going through a list of various items concerning different observable behaviors must not represent the Holy Grail of mental classification. The complexity of the human brain and its emotional, cognitive and spiritual instances cannot be reduced to a general system of terminology. It can be regarded only as a stepping stone toward an individually-oriented practice with an eclectic structure, fluid enough to support all the possible changes a certain person may relive and encounter. The eclecticism of heterogeneous approaches to mental illnesses seem as the most reasonable framework while conducting any kind of therapeutic program.

The advantages of heterogeneous methodology in diagnostics is in line with the Hegelian dialectics of challenging and checking assumed diagnoses by counterpropositions. For example, much of what we know about psychosis is methodically comparable with the nature of dreams, phantasy, or even humor, but little is written in the way of challenging and thus checking the accepted wisdom of medicalized diagnoses of mental illness along the lines of parallel with these paradigms.

One of the principles of Lacanian psychoanalysis in their modern reception (Paul Verhaeghe) is the methodical principle of sacrifice of the professional approach by “giving up on diagnosis”. This principle opens up room for the full appreciation of the personality with all of its

normative ramifications. The relativity of perception of normative categories, which depend not only on cultural contexts, but also on the normative presuppositions of the diagnostician herself, in the case of psychodiagnostics, limit the scope of therapeutic intervention in cases where a fully personalized approach is required. This relativity is so extensive that it encompasses cases where the perceived psychosis in one case could be interpreted as something else in another case: in each case it is the normative assumptions that we make about diagnosis that condition our limitations to encounter a full personality of the person who is different.

The raw form of Hegelian dialectics appealed to here suggests an individualized quest for the meaning of behaviors, perceptions and sensibilities that make up a presentation that might be diagnosed by a classification of mental illness. Once this type of constant challenging of diagnostic attempts is accepted, and this challenging is couched in the potentiality of the quantum personality to exhibit a myriad of presentations depending on equally many dimensions of any particular experience, one arrives at a truly individualized interpretation instead of diagnosis, and at the same time at the psychodiagnostic conceptual threshold of Hegelian logic on the one hand, and the new quantum views of the personality on the other. It appears that this perspective militates against the medicalized conventions about what makes up what mental disorder in the same way and to the same extent that the development of a personal identity and the full recognition of individualized sensibilities within any social group inherently militate against the stereotyping of members of the group by their “character”. It is possible that the quantum view of personality might, in the future, lead to a far more relative and less coarse understanding of personhood and character, as well as to a far less serious approach to what might become a historical relict of medicalized psychodiagnostics.

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