

Steven Earl Salmony, Ph.D.: ESSAY ON THE RELATION BETWEEN MIND AND STATE

To psychologists like myself the terms superego, ego and id are commonplace and refer to the remarkable institutions of an individual's mind. In a similar way the words judiciary, executive and legislature are ever so familiar signifies for political scientists and many others of the marvelous national institutions which organize our country into one united state. That these great systems of "mind" and "state" may emanate from a common human nature has been discussed many times heretofore. This essay extends that discussion and is a condensed presentation of a way in which these recognizable institutions composing the mind and the state might be connected. I present it here because it seems somehow right, and possibly useful, for people to communicate their perceptions about basic aspects of our shared reality.

As an example, consider how the judicial branch of government possesses certain essential features of the mind's superego; that the executive branch functions much like the ego; and of course the many ways the legislature concretely expresses the wishes and needs of the masses and reflects the id. The nature and significance of the relationship between mind and state has been commented upon since the early days of Western civilization. This commentary begins with Pythagoras' effort to answer the questions: What is the nature of human nature, and how might this nature express itself in the organization of human society? To put these questions another way: May the structure and dynamics of the mind have significance for the manner in which the social world is ordered and operates? Pythagoras and later Plato perceived that aggregate forms on two levels --- the psychological/individual and the governmental/societal -- are governed by the same principles. While Pythagoras is most likely the first to record this linkage, one of the truly impressive portrayals of these symmetrical psychological and governmental forms is to be found in the Dialogues of Plato, wherein he presented three governance mechanisms of the city-state mirroring three psychic agencies perceived ubiquitously within the ordinary individuals who belong to that city-state. For Plato, the three governing elements of a state are derived from individuals who themselves possess these same elements in a terminal system he called psyche, others have called soul, and we call the mind.

By fixing his analysis on the conflict among certain institutions of government, Plato posited that the social order is a large-scale replica of the individual. Indeed, it has appeared to some people throughout the course of Western cultural and technological development that governance mechanisms of a state originate in, and are congruent with, the agencies which compose the mind. That is to say, the origin of a social order is not bestowed by a higher authority or based upon a conscious 'social contract', but given in what is uniquely human in the nature of the individuals themselves. From this perspective, a state also is not the product of an historical process as many since Cicero have believed, but rather is derived from something plain and fundamental in the minds of its membership. It is then possible to

consider individual minds as microcosms in which the governing features of a macrocosmic social order can be apprehended and, in a most rudimentary way, understood.

It may be fruitful to consider this fundamental relationship in which the individual gives objectivity to her terminal system in the formation of a state, yet does not often acknowledge the independence and validity of the governing institutions in this 'object' as being reflections of her own nature. This does not mean that the individual is equal to, or stands above, this necessary object. On the contrary, the state is above the individual and governs her. The point here is merely this: a plurality of individuals projects its commonly-held psychic elements into judicial, executive and legislative mechanisms of the state in its attempt to constitute a government, and then makes itself subordinate to this large-scale, external organization. Human beings, it appears, are by nature constituted for social living, and most inevitably become engaged in the outward events of the social and material world as a way of meeting basic needs determined by the requirements of reality. Ancient thinkers as well as contemporary scholars have postulated that there can be no human beings without a social order. It can be said, therefore, that certain aspects of mentation are knowable because the mind presents itself both in three distinguishable parts to itself and in three governance mechanisms of the state. This mind / state relationship can be thought of as an example of the state having been generalized from, or having taken on the form of, animating principles of unity in the mind of the individual.

Individual members of a state unconsciously consent to be governed, as it were, by a state which typifies their nature. It is then plausible that the state comes closest to ensuring the expression of naturally determined human potential and relational capacities of its members, as their 'lights' accord them a view of just what potential and capacity for relations they possess. Institutions of government form where individuals recognize that they are incapable of providing for their wellbeing through personal thought and initiative alone. By means of the proper employment of judicial, executive and legislative mechanisms, government deals at once with inner conflict and challenges from the outside world in much the same way the superego, ego and id in the mind of the individual operate in the service of the self.

The state has ultimate concern for the needs of the individual by ensuring the opportunity for the fulfillment of those purposes for which individuals are created. Those governments which are most successful in accomplishing this goal are founded upon an understanding of capacities peculiar to the individual, with particular attention to the goals toward which human beings tend. Then the state becomes a structure common to individual minds; conversely, their common psychic structure serves as a model that is employed to organize, authorize and empower governance mechanisms which direct society toward a remote, unreachable goal: the good of all. Here we identify a dynamic terminal system in its individual and its societal form. In the latter, a plurality of individuals shapes, amplifies and adapts governance mechanisms according to its make-up in the formation and maintenance of a personality writ large, called a state.

At the dawn of Western civilization people saw 'through a glass darkly' that governance mechanisms of a state spring from and 'mirror' the interplay of structured, psychodynamic distinctions of personality. Thanks to certain eminent psychological findings by Sigmund Freud and to the incomparable constitutional inventions of Thomas Jefferson, we can see with more clarity how the aggregate form, the dynamics and the overall momentum of the mind furnish the model for the structuring and functioning of a united state.

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