

## **Prescriptions for Responsible Psychiatry**

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### **Abstract**

The ills of psychiatry are currently diagnoses with the aid of deficient etiologies. The currently proposed prescriptions for psychiatry are practically impossible. The defective part of the profession is its leadership which in its very defensiveness sticks to the status quo, thereby owning the worst defects and impeding all possible cure. The current discussions of the matter are pretentious and thus woolly. The minimal requirement from the profession as a whole and from each of its individual members is that they be not defensive and clear. In this vein I offer here preliminary discussions of propriety, of responsibility and of science.

### *Introduction*

The claims that psychiatrists are irresponsible is repeatedly made, usually linked with prescriptions for improvement. Irresponsibility is diagnosed as a social ill, and variation in diagnosis is linked to variation in prescription. The common diagnoses are these:

- (1) Mental disorder is no illness.
- (2) Psychiatry is unscientific (perhaps because mental disorder is no illness).
- (3) The dignity of the mentally troubled is regularly violated (perhaps because psychiatry is unscientific, perhaps because mental disorder is no illness).<sup>1</sup>

The common prescriptions are these:

- (1) Abolish psychiatry.
- (2) Render psychiatry scientific.
- (3) Increase psychiatrists' responsibility to their patients.

A suggested variant of (1) is the proposal to convert the status of psychiatry from that of medicine to that of counselling, which is neither here nor there, since no objection to psychological counselling was ever raised. The variants of (2) rest on the diverse characterizations of science tagged to it. The variants of (3) rest on the diverse characterizations of responsibility tagged to it)

The ideas behind the three diagnoses are questionable: in order to implement them, more knowledge is required of mental ailments, of science, and even of responsibility. The diagnoses are shaky because of the absence of background knowledge, because they rest on shaky etiologies. Consequently, no one knows how to implement any of these prescriptions. Unfortunately, public debates nowadays centre on the prescriptions, at times on the diagnosis, but we need more background knowledge, more aetiology. Thus far, in the absence of firm aetiology, there is no scientific basis to support any of the diagnoses mentioned. Moreover, each of the prescriptions mentioned is impracticable and so they are all of little value. Should we, then, suspend the discussion until more background knowledge is gathered, until more is known about science and about mental illness? Or is there an alternative approach that circumvents this defect?

Fortunately there is a way to circumvent the defect: what can and should be done, and more-or-less at once, and with no problem as to missing background knowledge, is the institution of safeguards against the defensive attitude prevalent in the leadership of the profession, as this attitude prevents an open and critical debate of the extant criticism of the profession. Public discussion may dispel criticism that is unjust or misdirected. Public discussion may lead to the discussion of the possible ways to reduce the level of such criticism. As to valid criticism, public discussion of it will help

meeting it. The defensive attitude of the current professional leadership of the profession betrays a terrible, unjust, tacit admission that the current criticism of the profession is just and that the complaint is not removable. (If the current professional leadership renders the fault irremovable, then it should be replaced.) The defensiveness of the current professional leadership, then, is the target of the severest criticism of the profession possible, yet this fact is missing from the three diagnoses mentioned above.

Nevertheless, it is valuable to examine the background knowledge concerning responsibility, concerning science, and concerning mental illness; it is particularly valuable to centre on responsibility, as the severest ill of psychiatry is that it is saddled with an irresponsible professional leadership that seemingly takes care of the membership of the profession, but in truth harms it by tacitly admitting that their interest conflicts with the quest for the truth. Of course, the question of responsibility here is therefore inevitably linked with the other problems raised here regarding background knowledge, but then at least the discussion will be confined to the limits of what is required to be known in order to be responsible: it stands to reason that the responsible must be knowledgeable to some extent, but not more than the expert. It so happens that the experts on science, the philosophers of science, are particularly ignorant, confusing, and downright irresponsible; this inevitably lowers the standard of responsibility required of psychiatrists, of course.

### *Propriety*

What all diagnoses of the ills of psychiatry share is that they present it as somehow improper - on social grounds, not on personal ones, of course. This alters the status of psychiatry: it is no more a patient, it is an accused; subsequently even its practitioners are appraised as culprits; this is so even when the appraisal is offered quite impersonally; it is akin to the old appraisal of intrigues and of hired guns and of bribes to foreign politicians - at the time when intrigue were practiced by Jesuits and at the time when respected citizens were employed as assassins and when, only yesterday, international corporations almost openly engaged in bribes to foreign political leaders: even as these activities were still permitted, they were already frowned upon and even if their practitioners were not brought to trial, they were censured. 1

One ought to note here some subtlety. When an immoral activity is legal, there are strong incentives to partake in it: in such situations the executive who refuses to bribe foreign dignitaries is ousted by a less restrained competitor. When an immoral activity is also illegal, the transgressors are worse off, but defensible suspects are better off: the court can exonerate them. Criticisms of this kind at times are unjust and at times they herald improvements of current public attitudes, improvements of standards of propriety - moral or political or legal or any other. To be able to distinguish between the just and the unjust criticism of current standards of propriety, then, we should examine the idea of propriety in the first place.

The currently received notion of propriety is a confusion of three different notions. The civic tradition suggests that proper individual conduct be in accord with the best standards of their community. The scientific tradition suggests that proper individual conduct is speaking and acting knowledgeably and not otherwise. The Romantic tradition suggests that proper individual conduct is action in accord with actors' best sense of mission and with their innermost convictions. Each of these standards is deficient; they contradict each other and they are put into use in different situations: each has a recognized if not easily well-characterized domain of applicability, where the other two clearly break down. The broadest domain of applicability belongs to the civic tradition, according to which propriety is secured by the compliance with current received standards. Yet it cannot be taken as all embracing, or else all reform of the current standards will be a priori precluded. It is the received opinion that the currently received civic standards are incomplete, and invite precedents and legislation whenever new circumstances invite improvement - usually in the form of new rulings. Applying current civic standards thoughtlessly to unusual circumstances, even if not new, is at times unacceptable, and even to the point of culpability: such conduct may, and at

times is, deemed negligent. To take a very simple example, medical services by the ignorant are forbidden by custom and by law, yet this is no excuse for neglect in cases of emergency in which expert services are unavailable. Even in cases in which such neglect is not deemed culpable, it is always deemed discreditable and even unprincipled. It is well known that cowards often hide behind the claim that their conduct is within current standards. At times this is most intolerable, for example, when a civil society has descended into barbarism - as happened in Russia and much more so in Germany, in the dark days of Europe, in the first half of the twentieth century. However rare such cases hopefully are, and however unlikely it hopefully is that our society (whatever it happens to be) is not likely to become barbaric, the very possibility of barbarization renders the criterion of the civic tradition insufficient, as misapplying it has a distinctly barbarizing effect.

The error behind the admission of the civic traditional standard as adequate is very general and very common: it is the confusion of a criterion with a touchstone. <sup>2</sup> For example, the criterion for a piece of metal being gold of a sufficient degree of purity, is a matter of specific gravity. The matter of specific gravity is difficult. The touchstone simplifies matters: a piece of matter is proven to be gold of a sufficient degree of purity by a mark left on it by a touchstone that scratches it. But suppose white gold platinum) passes the touchstone test. We will not decide that therefore platinum is gold, but rather that the touchstone does not distinguish gold from platinum. Similarly sour taste was for ages the test for acidity (= sourness) and then some sweet acids were found (e.g., Prussian acid). At times characterizations have to be altered under the pressure of discoveries, like the discovery of very light metals. <sup>3</sup>

The air of paradox raised by a mode of conduct socially accepted but judged immoral disappears when we note that the comparison of an item of conduct with what is accepted in civic society is often a mere touchstone rather than a criterion.

This is not the whole picture: there is the matter of compliance with moral standards and the matter of compliance with legal ones. And the legal standards are obviously the less demanding. For example, it is legally permissible to lie, except for specific cases (such as lying with the intent to defraud and lying under oath). The legal standards are generally limited to severe violations and to received notions. Thus, English law condones the medical use of magic, for example, in societies where it is endorsed, but not in societies where it is known to be useless or worse - simply because it may be an excessive demand on practitioners to be so much better informed than their peers.

Let us move, then, from the legal standard to the standard accepted by the scientific tradition. What is this standard? The question splits into two: what is the legal standard and what is the moral standard received in the scientific tradition? The legal standards are two, and perhaps only one: the first is of exotericism, namely of openness to all, though on the condition that access requires some prior training; the second is that scientific experiment is repeatable. Following Descartes, Robert Boyle, the father of modern chemistry and of the modern scientific etiquette, declared that alchemy is to be ignored because its recipes are esoteric. <sup>4</sup> Now violations of scientific etiquette often reaches court of law, and this standard is applied to any claim for scientific status for any find. In what follows this standard will be endorsed with no debate. Admittedly, objections were raised to its application to psychiatry, both on account of the confidentiality of the material involved and on the claim that human conduct, especially pathological conduct, is too complex to be repeatable. These objections are not serious. As to confidentiality, if it is betrayed by science, then it is betrayed every time a report is published on any psychiatric encounter. Moreover, unfortunately, psychiatrists in certain positions betray confidentiality regularly with no qualms. <sup>5</sup> As to complication, there is no reason to suppose that nuclear physics is more or less complex than psychiatry. If it is true that psychiatry cannot offer repeatable empirical information, then it is better to admit so and to refrain from demanding for it the status of an empirical science; only repeatable evidence can claim for psychiatry the status of an empirical science. For a discussion of the question of repeatability in the social sciences see my *Technology: Philosophical and Social Aspects*, Kluwer, Dordrecht, 1985. For repeatable facts in psychiatry, see Y. Fried and J. Agassi,

Paranoia: A Study in Diagnosis, Kluwer, Dordrecht, 1976, and *Psychiatry as Medicine*, Kluwer, Dordrecht, 1983, introductions to Chapter 3 and Conclusion. 6

So much for the legal requirement within the scientific tradition. The more problematic requirement is the moral one, namely, that proper individuals speak and act knowledgeably. It is not clear what it is to be knowledgeable. The standard view of it in modern societies is that the knowledgeable is in possession of scientific proof. Except that we do not know what scientific proof is. The fact is that this matter is regularly contested both in general (philosophical discussions) and in many particular examples (of scientific controversy). This fact led to a suggestion of a very useful touchstone: 7 whenever experts agree, received expert opinion is binding. This touchstone is particularly lovely because it includes a clear-cut limitation: when experts disagree, doubt is appropriate. Nevertheless, it is not limited enough, as it is not a criterion as to who the experts are. Already tradition relies on experts, except that these are traditional experts whose expertise is validated by tradition. The expertise here discussed is allegedly scientific, but in cases of scientific controversy this is question begging. Not only do we not know what the makeup of science is; we know less what is the makeup of scientific expertise. Even when commonsense tells us that we can take a certain group of people as experts, commonsense also tells us that for all we know they can become barbarians. Even if it is most unlikely that the group in question will become barbaric, the very possibility of it becoming one exhibits the defect of the touchstone in question. Moreover, not having any touchstone invites the experts to become barbarian out of sheer (short-term) self-interest. And we do not want to tempt the experts even when we know that they will not be tempted, of course. Moreover, the question is, is the unanimity of a group of experts based on science or on self-interest to begin with? In the case of psychiatry, it is uncontested that the unanimity achieved by the efforts of the authors of the current authorized psychiatric vocabulary (DSM-III-R) is based on the lowest common denominator, not on scientific investigation, on the search for respectability rather than the search for the truth that should render the profession respectable. 8 This would be inconceivable were there a clear and uncontested criterion of scientific validity. To repeat, only a minimal criterion for scientific validity is generally recognized, namely the claim that science is more-or-less open (has no trade secrets) and the claim for the empirical character of scientific experiment in the form of repeatability (where the first claim is additional or implied in the first claim)

Perhaps some elaboration on the current situation in received professional opinion may be useful. In recent decades the philosophy of Thomas S. Kuhn has won popularity – especially among the sciences with dubious credits, of course – just because it offered a touchstone for the scientific character of a discipline, and one that is easier to comply with than by presenting the genuine article. A discipline is scientific, says Kuhn, if and only if it is in possession of a paradigm and its membership follow it unanimously. Before one knows what a paradigm is, one may notice that it is a remarkable suggestion, since the touchstone is proposed that makes no distinction between a good and a poor paradigm. Of course, a touchstone proper distinguishes pure pieces of gold from the less pure ones, and purity is the asset required. Yet Kuhn's paradigms, whatever they are, are themselves neither touchstones nor tested by any touchstone: the touchstone is the unanimous adherence of researchers to it, and certainly this holds for parapsychology no less than for psychology. Can it be that in his opinion as long as all researchers share a paradigm their product is pure science? 9

One can hardly attribute all this to sheer oversight. Kuhn offered his criterion this way quite intentionally, of course, since differentiating between good and poor paradigms will require a new touchstone, and Kuhn declares this not possible: it takes experts to comprehend a paradigm, and it takes leaders to propose it, he says, following the esotericist theory of science of Michael Polanyi. 10 Since science can, and at times does, undergo revolutions, the goodness of a paradigm is not a matter of a fixed criterion: any idea is good as long as it is upheld by the scientific leadership, they declared. And so, according to Polanyi and Kuhn, what matters is the command of the scientific leadership, not any specific idea. The reason for that, they say, is that there must be coordination between researchers, that this coordination requires control, and that the best arrangement is when

the scientific leadership controls the research of the rank-and-file. Even were this true, the control of the leadership should count as a necessary condition, not as a sufficient one; it would condemn the psychiatric manual (DSM), perhaps as it is a result of a compromise rather than of leadership proper, but it should not declare all well coordinated research scientific. Moreover, even while admitting that coordination is required and that it is done by the leadership, control is better not in the hands of the leaders, since democratic control is generally more reliable (as other forms of control are conducive to corruption) and more in the spirit of the scientific tradition. It is an inconsistency of the Polanyi-Kuhn philosophy that it is traditionalist yet it relinquishes the most central concern of the scientific tradition for openness and for democracy.

It is clear in any case that the admission of the lowest common denominator of a research tradition as a paradigm is not what Kuhn has in mind. Rather, he prefers a bi-paradigm discipline, he says under pressure. Under more pressure he even admits multi-paradigms. He clearly suggests that properly controlled a multi-paradigmatic field will evolve to become mono-paradigmatic. This is no guarantee, especially since it is the paradigm that is used for the coordination of research, so that there is no coordination between paradigms, unless a super-paradigm is postulated: there is nothing to prevent the disintegration of a discipline.

An example will illustrate this disintegration. When Hans Küng was deprived of his status as a cardinal, he was appointed professor in Tübingen's theology faculty.

His colleagues there complained vociferously: adding a dissenter to their faculty of theology, they said, would deprive it of its scientific status! They were totally unconcerned with the presence of non-Catholic theology elsewhere; it was the presence of a Catholic dissenter that they deemed a threat. (Needless to say, parallels in psychotherapy easily spring to mind: the diverse schools in the field, as in theology, are more concerned with heresies than with the existence of competing schools.)<sup>11</sup> Moreover, Küng is an advocate of Kuhn's views, whereas his colleagues cannot be accused of familiarity with them, let alone assent to them, and yet they do and he does not apply these very views consistently to their own case. This is an eye opener: the futility of any effort to use Kuhn's theory to distinguish between the putative scientific status of physics and of theology may be the reason Küng likes it, but the same futility is a prominent defect of this theory – so much so that it demolishes it entirely. The reason it is popular despite this defect is, perhaps, that it offers a cheap way to acquire scientific status. This is stressed here not as a complaint but as an illustration of the view that what commands respect does not always deserve respect - not even in the commonwealth of learning.<sup>12</sup>

So much for the two initial criteria for propriety, the standard accepted in the community at large and the standard accepted in the scientific community. The third and last criterion for propriety mentioned above, is due to the Romantic tradition; it suggests that individuals behave properly when they act in accord with their best sense of mission and inner conviction. This is a dangerous idea and one that facilitated the deterioration of European society into the state of barbarism. It needs not be discussed here beyond the observation that however dangerous it is, at times it is a sign of virtue, especially when one lives in a barbarian society and rejects its mores. In a civilized society the defects of the law require democratic campaigns for their reform. In emergency, when the process of legislation is too slow, one is in a tough position, since the right thing to do is too demanding: one may feel bound to violate the law and stand trial.

The corollary from this is obvious. There is no single criterion that is satisfactory; they are all open-ended. This is not to dismiss them. We use them within limits and with good results; we present each of them in different wording and debate these critically; we try constantly to improve each of them; and we regularly attempt to bring them together. Thus, we try to render the customary scientific through research, to develop a proper sense of propriety through education, and to develop our educational system so as to render it scientific. What exactly this means is not clear, though some suggestions are rather obvious. Classical individualist philosophy takes it for granted that actors are autonomous and that the propriety of their action is rooted in their ability to justify their

actions rationally, namely, scientifically. Yet there were two schools of thought about the scientific justification of informative ideas, the one that found certainty in scientific intuition and the one that found certainty in scientific evidence. And there were two schools of thought about the justification of moral ideas, the ethics of intentions and the ethics of consequences. The advocates of ethics of intentions criticized the ethics of consequences, observing that these are often beyond actors' control; and the advocates of ethics of consequences criticized the ethics of intentions, observing that the way to hell is paved by good intentions. All this is in clear violation of common sense and is based on the idea that common sense is no substitute for rational, scientific justification. Today we take propriety to be recognizing one's duties, taking them with due care, and trying one's best to do what is expected of one, and do it as well as can be reasonably expected. Propriety is thus no longer taken to be justified either by good intentions or by favourable outcome or by any other single criterion. Rather, propriety is taken to be *bona fide*, a matter of good intention with no violation of accepted codes unless circumstances seem to call for it, and with no disregard for what is known to be the likely undesirable consequences of one's action. It is a common precept that good intentions are invoked by attempts to avoid likely consequences of one's actions, by attempts to avoid unreasonable risks - though without raising expectation of assurance of success, of course.

### *Responsibility*

What characterizes a responsibility is its being a special kind of duty: it is a duty freely undertaken and the undertaking in question is rather open-ended. Let me take this slowly.

The following observation is all clear, yet regrettably it requires restatement: responsible conduct is proper and irresponsible conduct is improper, yet, strictly speaking, one can behave properly without ever raising the question of responsibility. Proper conduct is possible without ever accepting any responsibility, since in a civilized society the conduct of citizens is deemed improper only if they break the law and irresponsible only if they violate a responsibility that they themselves have freely undertaken. This observation is not quite true, as the law does not forbid lying except in well-specified cases (particularly lying in an attempt to defraud or lying under oath). It holds only to the extent that the law does represent publicly recognized morality, especially in the case of the acceptance of responsibility: neither the law nor morality demand the acceptance of responsibility: they both demand that one discharges those responsibilities that one has freely undertaken.

The last sentence is criticized, and from the fact that some parents are responsible, some not. Now to the extent that responsible parenthood is required by law, it may be deemed more a matter of propriety than responsibility, akin to the duty to pay a debt: a debt is the outcome of an undertaking - to return a loan or to make a gift - it is hardly a matter of responsibility. Therefore, to know to what extent parenthood is a matter of responsibility we may wish to inquire into the question, what makes an undertaking a responsibility?

An undertaking to make a gift is scarcely a responsibility but the undertaking to represent a client is. The reason is technical: there is hardly a problem when one offers to make a gift, but when one undertakes to represent a client the promise is too open-ended. Thus, when a representative makes a mistake, this raises the question, was the mistake responsible or negligent? There are standards of responsibility in many but not all cases. What is clear is that once one has discharged one's undertaking properly, then one has discharged one's responsibility. The requirement, then, is for proper discharge not of one's duties but of one's undertaking, and of an undertaking that is pretty open-ended. Consider, then, parental duties. It is not clear to what extent parenthood is a matter of choice. To the extent that it is, and to the extent that the duties it incurs are open-ended, it incurs parental responsibility. (Of course, open-endedness itself may be rather open-ended, but this is scarcely problematic.)

This idea, of responsibility as open-ended, can be generalized to include also open-ended duties to oneself. Through self-neglect one may easily become a public nuisance. The duty to avoid being a public nuisance is the duty to take proper care of oneself. We may call that duty a responsibility to oneself. In this sense, the responsibility to oneself is a form of duty, the duty to avoid becoming a

burden on society; responsibility to society at large may be deemed a civic duty, namely, the duty of a citizen qua citizen: a civic duty may count as a civic responsibility, then, if and when it becomes too open-ended to be simple and clear-cut. Yet we will view this as not quite correct as long as we wish to distinguish between duties and responsibilities as those that are given those that are freely undertake. There is no objection to this usage, as long as it is clear that the civic responsibilities involved are not to any particular individual or institution other than the law or to society at large. Nevertheless, responsibility to oneself is the exception, as this responsibility is taken for granted; it is hardly ever a legal matter, because when one betrays it one does not sue oneself: one may be charged with improper conduct as specified by some law, but in modern society such laws are disdained and abolished sooner-or-later, since they are paternalist, designed to insure that citizens follow good judgment in their own interest.

Responsibility to oneself also requires that one does not abuse drugs or attempt suicide; both alcohol consumption and attempted suicide were criminal in the United States of America for a while, but it was deemed wise to decriminalize them; the abuse of other drugs is still illegal, and either on questionable paternalist arguments or in order to defend the young. Responsibility to oneself is important nevertheless, as it is a matter of self-esteem. The absence of responsibility to oneself also is a strong motive for the irresponsible acceptance of responsibility to the public at large or to friends and relations or the irresponsible acceptance of parenthood. But the matter of responsibility to oneself still is a matter of morality or psychology, not of the law. The law makes responsibility different from civic duties or the duties or responsibilities of a citizen qua citizen; legally responsibility, to repeat, is a matter of undertaking towards others. It is not always clear towards whom, especially in matters of legal complication that will be ignored here altogether, in matter of political affairs or other public affairs, which will likewise be ignored here, and in cases of the mentally incompetent, whether minors, mentally deficient, disabled or disturbed. What is to be done with individuals belonging to these categories is a difficult question. Usually they are appointed guardians. In the case of the mentally incompetent, then, the duties to oneself are transferred from them to those who volunteer to act as their guardians, and the guardians are responsible to the state to represent properly the interest of their charges. There is then the problem, who belongs to which category? Who is a minor? Who is mentally disturbed? Of these categories the one that concerns us here is that of the mentally disturbed. Who is mentally disturbed? The responsibility of psychiatrists is not only to their patients, but also to the state that requires from them to certify individuals as mentally incompetent as well as to the appointed guardians of their mentally incompetent patients.

These matters present psychiatry with the responsibility of the medical profession to the state and to patients, except that the service of the psychiatrists to both the state and their patients is problematic and that psychiatric patients are problematic as well. The rules of responsibility require that psychiatrists admit the difficulty they have here, but it is the leadership of the profession that is chiefly irresponsible, as it sanctifies the silencing of this matter, thereby enabling members to act irresponsibly without violating accepted norms.<sup>13</sup>

### *Responsible Leadership*

Little is said in the literature on responsibility, by philosophers or by psychologists. In psychology the conspicuous case is that of Jean Piaget. He spoke of the growth of individual moral autonomy - at the age of 12, incidentally; he did not touch upon responsibility, much less upon its growth. The reason is that individualist ethical theory took responsibility to be a part of moral autonomy and the outcome of free undertaking to others. Responsibility was first introduced as a special category only by thinkers who rejected individualism and spoke of the responsibility of political leaders in the Romantic vein. The most Romantic political leadership was Nazi, of course, and their regime began in 1933, but it started in earnest a few months later, when its Führer freely and readily accepted personal responsibility for some shocking cold-blooded murder of some of his closest colleagues; this (political) responsibility, he said, he undertook only towards the Nation and its History -

thereby rejecting the classical individualist view of responsibility as to individuals and the classical legal view of responsibility as prescribed by law.

This is not to endorse the classical individualist view of responsibility. Historically, responsibility is much older than autonomy, as all societies have some leaders, and they normally show some sense of responsibility, yet autonomy was invented in the Mediterranean Basin somewhere in the first millennium BC. And, of course, political leaders may be responsible to groups most of whose members are not autonomous at all. The current view of political leadership in tribal society was first advocated by Sir Edward Evans-Pritchard and quoted by Ernest Gellner; it is just that: the African tribal aristocrats are trained to self-reliance and authority; yet their fellow tribespeople are not autonomous and do not aspire to be autonomous. Empirically, then, the responsibility of political leaders to their people is not that to autonomous individuals. 14

Classical philosophers viewed traditional European leadership, aristocracy and clergy alike, with a cynical eye. Hence the popularity of Machiavelli as the first political scientist who only appeared a cynic because of his scientific detachment, a view shared by Sir Francis Bacon, Jean-Jacque Rousseau and almost every thinker in between. Today we take it for granted that the historical facts are more complex, that some kings and some popes acted responsibly in their own lights, some not. This, indeed, is the datum which students of responsibility should not ignore. 15

The question still is, what responsibility do leaders undertake when they agree to lead? The famous theory of leadership of Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld presents one sort of leadership that is clearly important in democracy, and that can hardly be justly treated from the viewpoint of classical political theory: it rests on the evident fact that some citizens have influence on their neighbours' opinions: when a new situation occurs that invited the opinion of the citizen, it is most natural to consult a wise neighbour, and the person who functions in the position of a wise neighbour is, by definition, an opinion leader. 16 Now does the position of opinion leader entail any responsibility? It seems difficult to find any duty that is entailed by opinion leaders. Of course, an opinion leader may easily betray trust and, say, disseminate disinformation. This is at times directed by central political organization, which may subtly suggest to their followers to subtly manipulate their peers in some specific manner decided upon by public-relations officers of these organizations. This is not in any way a responsibility of the opinion leader: manipulating people and disseminating disinformation is immoral and at times also illegal.

This is not the whole story. In some countries professional organizations, such as dental or medical ones, suggest to their memberships in periods prior to significant and emotionally charged elections to be careful about conversing with patients for fear of exploiting their influence when unwittingly acting as opinion leaders. Yet it is questionable that the professional organizations which issue these warnings are concerned with the autonomy of the individual voter: more likely they are concerned with the damage that the profession may suffer from its members' freely and unwittingly acting as opinion leaders. And indeed, whatever the merit or demerit of the suggestion is, acting as opinion leaders consciously is certainly preferable to doing so unwittingly.

The question remains as to influential members of the community, whether aristocrats or professionals: do they have some special duties, and if so, are these responsibilities to the public? are these responsibilities moral or professional or legal? This question is not merely a thought experiment. A few thinkers, including the famous novelist and essayist Aldous Huxley and the leading philosophers Michael Polanyi and Karl Popper claimed that scientists do have a special responsibility. Moreover, Huxley suggested that a professional oath be instituted for scientists, akin to the Hippocratic Oath. Popper agrees and he issued the slogan *sagesse oblige*.<sup>17</sup> Yet the Hippocratic Oath was abolished in most countries just because it is either an oath to maintain one's responsibility, and then it is redundant, or else to transcend it, and then it is immoral, as it may easily be read to be the undertaking to take care of the interest of the patient beyond what one has legally undertaken. This attitude is paternalist, it permits and demands of physicians to act in the interest of their patients even if against the explicit instructions of the patients themselves. Though

paternalism is still extremely popular, it is quite beyond debate, as it is clearly both immoral and illegal. Still, this should be said against it now, before it is dismissed without further discussion. When the clergy acts paternalistically, they claim privileged knowledge, and they have a mandate from their religion, from their tradition, perhaps even from their congregation. This does not exculpate their conduct, but it makes it understandable. When physicians (psychiatrists or somatoiatrists) do so, they have no privileged knowledge, since they often know at most only the medical aspects of their patients' interests, and they have no mandate, and they use pathetic paternalist arguments in attempts to extricate themselves out of some narrow corner or another. All paternalist excuses are unacceptable, but they are outrageous when used to cover up for some faults. Still, the fact is that professional individuals are able to use paternalist arguments because they are opinion leaders, and this demands some further discussion of the responsibility of the intellectuals in modern society.

### *Responsible Science*

Public discussion on the responsibility of the scientist is new, because science was traditionally admired as the quest for knowledge and seen as the domain of autonomous individual; despite widespread expectations that it transform society (for the better), its social and political dimensions were not noticed. As a social or political affair science began to be noticed only after World War II, with the recognition of the role of science in the military, as this became too conspicuous to ignore after Hiroshima, with the advent of governments' involvement on a large scale in applied scientific research and the rise of social status of the professional scientist to a position of very high esteem. The shift in concern is symbolized by the strange competition between Harry S Truman and Robert J. Oppenheimer about the responsibility for Hiroshima: during the one conversation that took place between them, Oppenheimer expressed a sense of guilt about Hiroshima; afterwards Truman expressed contempt for this expression, saying the bombing of Hiroshima was his doing and so his responsibility, not Oppenheimer's. Still, the debate over the guilt occupied much public interest ever since.

I choose as an example for that Erik Erikson's *Insight and Responsibility*, because the title of the book comes as close to the matter of the responsibility of the scientist as possible and because Erikson is a leader of a whole school in psychology and in psychotherapy, and because he is a fairly popular writer. Despite its title, however, the book says nothing about responsibility, and its Subject Index refers to responsibility about a dozen times, referring to less than one line for every twenty pages. One of these lines says, obviously, we must now learn to accept the responsibility of not having as many children as possible. True, but too little; the other references say less on responsibility. In particular, there is no discussion there of responsible leadership or even of responsible delegates. 18

We no longer demand of responsible actors, especially leading actors, to hold uncontroversial views; on the contrary, democracy assumes that the political leader represents the views of one party. This is not to say the democratic leader need or even may ignore the view of the opposition party. This is why where there is a sizable and stubborn opposition: for example, the democratic leader can hardly declare a war without a national consensus. 19

The fact that a democratic leader is responsible to the nation as a whole, the majority and the minority alike, while being a representative of the majority party, is a major item in political life within every democracy. It conflicts flatly with the idea that one must act on scientifically verified opinion, which is the traditional individual moral philosophy still irresponsibly preached by many a philosopher and by most scientists - if and when they at all take cognizance of matters outside the sphere of their narrow expertise.

Of course collectivist ethics permits political leaders to be responsible and act as they find fit. But also it permits and even demands that the political leader serve the general will of the nation. How the political leader knows what the general will is and how best it is served is a matter I need not enter here. 20

The commonwealth of learning was always nearly amorphous since the views it endorsed were largely that action is justified only by rational or scientific proof. If anywhere this view were ever applicable, its place surely is the commonwealth of learning. Only in almost amorphous society - in traditional science (not in contemporary science), in the world of fashion and in street gangs leadership grows spontaneously; and the worlds of fashion and of street gangs are not exactly rational. Yet the strict justificationist code of science imposes on its practitioners ever narrowing constraints of professional expertise constrained by full rational, scientific proof. 21 And so the scientific leadership tries to shun public activity, yet when forced out of their shells they do so with a vengeance, pretending that they act not as powerful leaders but on their views which, they allege, are fully justified. It follows that the people, even within the scientific community, who do not share their views, are just knaves and fools. Yet during the tragic Vietnam war the pseudo-scientist irresponsible, self-appointed spokesperson of the scientific community in the United States, Professor Noam Chomsky of the celebrated Massachusetts Institute of Technology played on all traditional prejudices of his peers and claimed his case was as clear as the greenness of grass, clearly implying that his opponents were knaves and fools: "my view is that the grass is green", he brashly declared.

I do not wish to deny his charge that the advocates of the Vietnam War (on both sides) acted irresponsibly. I think that as the result of the utter failure of singer Joan Baez to organize a protest movement against the atrocities of Pol-Pot, it is by now commonly agreed that Chomsky's conduct was no less irresponsible than that of his adversaries, and considering his academic mantle I for one would say he was more irresponsible as the destroyer of the ivory-tower, of the last bastion of credibility. And so, to conclude, let me say, since responsible leadership is permitted to hide behind the book but only up to a point, and since when the book's defects are pointed out it becomes increasingly irresponsible to ignore them, especially when the criticism is offered along accepted lines, by the book, especially by the book of political democracy and by the book of scientific integrity, doubtless the most becoming role of women and men of science is to act as critics - a role quite traditional, through the Middle Ages and the Enlightenment to the dissidents in East Europe prior to the demise of the Soviet Union.

The ivory tower is their proper place. The place of the detached critic. But for this little more needs be said: the democratic canons of criticism should be spelled out and discussed in detail. And so also the canons of the community of science should be spelled out and discussed in detail; they are agenda, and must be taken as agenda for any scientific leader who feels the brunt of our recent double and triple fiasco, of the poor roles science has played in recent decades, in the Holocaust, in Hiroshima, in the Cold War, in Vietnam and in Cambodia, not to mention the defence of the conduct of the Soviet Union by ever so many intellectuals until its very collapse.

The next battle concerns the population explosion, industrial pollution, Poverty and the propagation of nuclear weapons (the four P's). To fight it we need all the credibility we can amass. It may be the last chance.<sup>22</sup>

### *Responsible Expert Services*

The services that psychiatrists offer the state or institutions or individuals are expert professional services and fall under the rubric of professional etiquette. Professional etiquette is a complex matter, as its official purpose is to secure responsible conduct of professional experts to their clients, yet it is all too often the means by which to keep a professional organization closed and élitist and protect professional interests even at the public's expense. It is well known that this holds particularly true of the legal and medical professional organizations. One need hardly say that the élitist attitude may serve the élite's interest, but only in the short run. In the long run openness is advantageous to all. This makes élitism rather irresponsible. This is by no means peculiar to the psychiatric profession. But since psychiatry is in more need for improvement, its need to open up its closed clubs is even more urgent than that of the medical profession at large or of other medical sub-professions.

What are the requirements from responsible experts that differ from those of any non-expert? First and foremost, the claims for expertise are claims that invite higher- than-usual level of responsibility. It is therefore the prime responsibility of experts to delimit their expertise very clearly: first and foremost experts are aware of the limits of their expertise, and their responsibility to their public as experts is to make this known whenever it is relevant. Unfortunately, experts – all experts - are tempted to claim omniscience. They tend to claim so both in their own interest and in the interest of their customers and in the public interest. Yet this is an error on every count.

The situation becomes quite difficult when the customer requires, and even insists on the requirement, that the expert takes over all responsibility and pretends to be omniscient. That this is the customer's relinquishing of responsibility is obvious, and that customers often find responsibility too much of a burden just because of the situation in which they are customers of experts - legal, medical or any other – is equally obvious. But it is nonetheless wrong and unwise for customers to relinquish responsibility just because it is too heavy a burden, especially since it is in such moments that responsibility is important. When experts accept the role of the omniscient agent they ask for trouble that may appear later on as unpleasant complaints, litigation and so on.

Usually, when the burden is really too heavy and the customer must stay in charge, there is the possibility of calling the help of other experts, especially the help of expert psychiatrist. This is difficult when the initial service is psychiatric. Not that a psychiatrist who requires the aid of a colleague should have trouble getting it; but the service the colleague should perform is the one the original expert should have performed and failed.

Yet the complication of matters this way is at least in part merely technical. What it amounts to is that customers may become (for a while at least) mentally incompetent, and then the usual procedures should take place, and none of them permits experts to take charge without customers first being declared mentally incompetent and appointed guardians to represent them to experts. At times this is impossible. Then emergency conditions take effect. This too is a mere technicality. What is more problematic is different. It is that expert psychiatrists do not know when an individual under tremendous stress is mentally incompetent. Responsibility requires admission of inability, as experts, we remember, are obliged to report the limits of their won expertise.

How is this limit decided? When do experts know what they can responsibly undertake what not? The standard answer, we remember, is that all and only what is given to scientific proof is known. This answer, we remember, does not tell us what is proof. The question what is scientific proof is, finally, highly disputed. Where are we to go from here?

We are here to do what science always does: we are here to observe: professional etiquette tells us what is responsible professional conduct and so we should be able to report what it is.

What is taken as responsible professional conduct in expert scientific society? Here we have come full circle to our starting point. So let us accept some simple observations and follow some simple rules.

Let us assume that we do need some radical change in the psychiatric profession to stop the increasing complaints against it as irresponsible - either by rebutting these charges or by admitting them and rendering it more responsible or by a mixed strategy. Let us assume that this will not be undertaken by the profession as it is now, that there will be no radical change in the psychiatric profession without some radical intellectual and organizational change in it. Let us further assume that the profession should accept only the very minimal standards required of a scientific enterprise. Let us agree that these include openness, including the practice of admitting criticism without defensiveness, the limitation of claims to those that can be supported with no serious controversy, particularly the limitation of the claim for the status of empirical science only to cases when the evidence in question is repeatable. (No repeatability, no second opinion!) This minimalist already includes so much that there is no hope that the profession as construed these days will endorse the. What then should one do to render the profession more responsible?

Clearly, what one can and should do first, is to undertake to act as a responsible individual within the accepted system. This includes the effort to study and publicize in every possible manner the extant criticism of the profession, of different theories, and of the professional organization. To be effective such attempts must sooner or later find their organizational expression, preferably within the extant professional bodies. But the motto of the study should be, "we are not on trial".

This should do for now.

## NOTES

1. The strongest wholesale condemnations of psychiatry today are those of Thomas S. Szasz. See his *The Myth of Mental Illness: Foundations of a Theory of Personal Conduct*, 1961, new ed., Hoeber-Harper, N. Y., 1974, *Law, Liberty and Psychiatry: An Inquiry into the Social Use of Mental Health Practices*, Macmillan, N. Y., 1963, and later writings. The most pretentious critique is perhaps that of Adolf Grünbaum. See his *The Foundations of Psychoanalysis: A Philosophical Critique*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984 and my review of it my *The Gentle Art of Philosophical Polemics*, Open Court, La Salle IL, 1988. The latest condemnation, written in a vivid popular style, is that of Jeffrey Masson. See his *Against Therapy: Emotional Tyranny*, Macmillan, N. Y., 1991. He shares with Szasz the view that there is no such thing as mental illness and that therefore the profession is fraudulent, and that the worse offense of the profession is to the autonomy and the dignity of the patient. Grünbaum's claim is utterly divorced of any direct considerations of this kind; his claim is that psychoanalytic theory is unscientific, implying, perhaps that all psychiatry is, and concluding that treatment is so unreliable that it should not be supported by medical insurance; his direct concern is entirely with "scientificity". Unfortunately, he does not even allude to what scientific character amounts to; on the affirmative side, he uses a new and unexplained terminology; on the negative side, he overlooks both the demand for repeatability and the distinction between scientific theory and scientific technology.

For a critical discussion of the contribution of Szasz see N. Laor, "The Autonomy of the Mentally Ill: A Case Study of Individualistic Ethics", *Phil. Soc. Sci.*, 14, 1984, 331-49; see also Y. Fried and J. Agassi, *Paranoia: A Study in Diagnosis*, Kluwer, Dordrecht, 1976.

It is hard to say what description of a practice is characteristic, let alone what critique of it is just. If there is any document that the profession recognizes as characteristic of it, then surely it is usually DSM-IV, which exhibits agreement for the sake of agreement while disregarding both scientific etiquette and patient interest; see N. Laor and J. Agassi, *Diagnosis: Philosophical and Medical Perspectives*, Kluwer, Dordrecht, 1990, final chapter.

2. The popular idea that every deduction is explanatory makes all touchstones explanatory [all metal scratched by a touchstone is gold, this piece of metal etc., therefore, this piece of metal is gold]. This conclusion is absurd. Hence this idea is absurd. It is advocated by all positivists (including the "logical positivists"), and inherently so, since positivism requires that meta-scientific characterizations should not be metaphysical, and thus that they should be logical, yet there can be no logical distinction between a criterion and a touchstone. The doctrine advocated by Karl Popper in his classic *Logik der Forschung*, 1935, is somewhat better, since it involves testability, and testability is more a matter of the logic of a researcher's situation than can be characterized purely logically. Still, it is also positivist, as it frankly shuns metaphysics, and is therefore also unsatisfactory. This leads to the (general) question, how can metaphysical considerations be allowed into meta-science without commitment to any specific metaphysics? By relativizing satisfactoriness to any given metaphysical doctrine. For more details see my *Science in Flux*, 1975. (Positivists can tighten their requirement from a satisfactory explanation: they can do so by smuggling their own metaphysics, which is mechanistic, while declaring it obligatory, namely a part of logic of science. See below.)

3. See the discussion of this point in A. J. Paris's life of Sir Humphry Davy, 1838, apropos of Davy's discovery of light metals (sodium, potassium) and the question this raised as to whether these deserve to be viewed as metals. (Niels Bohr suggested in 1913 that hydrogen is a metal too.) The discovery of isotopes refuted the identification of gold by its specific gravity. Later, the discovery of the neutron led to the identification of any element with the number of protons in its nucleus. All this does not invalidate the traditional touchstone, though its use was superseded.
4. René Descartes, Discourse on Method, Sixth Part, fourth paragraph; Robert Boyle, "On the Unsuccessful Experiment", in his Certain Physiological Essays, and preface to his The Sceptical Chymist.
5. On the instituted disloyalty to patients and betrayal of confidentiality see Thomas S. Szasz' already mentioned *Law, Liberty and Psychiatry*, and his "Mental Health Service in the School", *This Magazine is About Schools*, October, 1967, 140-166, reprinted in his *Ideology and Insanity*, Anchor Books, Doubleday, N.Y. An outstanding example of the heartless disloyalty of professionals who are proud of it can be found in a very famous collection, G.B. Blain and C.C. McArthur, *Emotional Problems of the Student*, with an Introduction by Erik Erikson, Appleton-Century-Croft, N.Y., 1961, where one contributor brags about his having solved the problem, how could he protect the university from a student about to break down without violating the poor fellow's civil rights: he spied on him and caught him in a library about to throw a book on someone. See also my *Towards a Rational Philosophical Anthropology*, Kluwer, Dordrecht, 1977:eCIT., p. 112.
6. For a discussion of the question of repeatability in the social sciences see my *Technology: Philosophical and Social Aspects*, Kluwer, Dordrecht, 1985. For repeatable facts in psychiatry, see Y. Fried and J. Agassi, *Paranoia: A Study in Diagnosis*, Kluwer, Dordrecht, 1976, and *Psychiatry as Medicine*, Kluwer, Dordrecht, 1983, introductions to Chapter 3 and Conclusion.
7. This suggestion was made in Bertrand Russell's Sceptical Essays (N. Y., Norton, 1928)
8. See end of note 1 above.
9. This criticism of Kuhn's philosophy was made in great detail by both Paul K. Feyerabend, who argued that safecrackers too follow a paradigm and suffer paradigm changes or scientific revolutions the way Kuhn describes them, and by John Watkins, who showed that by Kuhn's criterion mediaeval but not contemporary theology is scientific. See their contributions to I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave, eds., *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970). See also note 12 below.
10. For decades Michael Polanyi expressed the same views, scarcely altered, beginning with his *Science, Faith and Freedom* (1946) and his *The Logic of Liberty* (1951) to his *Knowing and Being* (1969); his magnum opus is *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (1958). They were all published by Routledge (London) and the University of Chicago Press. See A. C. Crombie, ed., *Scientific Change: Historical Studies in the Intellectual, Social and Technical Conditions for Scientific Discovery and Technical Invention From Antiquity to the Present*, (New York: Basic Books, 1963), pp. 375-80, for Polanyi's judicious comments on Kuhn's "The Function of Dogma in Scientific Research," op. cit., pp. 347-69; for Kuhn's indebtedness to him, see also Kuhn's response there, pp. 391-5, esp. p. 392, where Kuhn admits this -- perhaps reluctantly and obliquely, but if so, then nevertheless unmistakably. Polanyi's chief criticism, namely that Kuhn's view is too fragmentary, still stands.
11. The matter of purity of schools was first discussed by Karl Popper. See his *Conjectures and Refutations*, Routledge, London, 1961. See my *Science and Society*, Kluwer, Dordrecht, 1981, and my "Minimal Criteria for Intellectual Progress", 1994, *Iyyun*, 43, pp. 61-83, where the practice of stonewalling is analyzed.
12. See note 9 above. The idea that Kuhn's view is presented in disregard to the existence or non-science is but the application of Polanyi's critique of Kuhn's view cited in note 10 above. Polanyi's view is not open to the same critique. Yet the fact that the commonwealth of learning can be very

- uncritical, e.g., when Kuhn's view gains so much popularity there, is a significant critique of Polanyi's view as well. See my *Science and Society* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1981) for detailed discussions of the matter.
13. it is a strange fact that the psychiatric profession refuses to admit the inevitability of conflicts between different responsibilities that one may undertake en bloc when becoming a psychiatrist. After all, this denial pre-vents the relief from some impossible burden that members of the profession suffer. The denial is common to professions that have strong guilds: They are the result of leaderships taking better care of their guilds as guilds than of the individual guild members. See my "Democratizing Medicine," in Gayle L. Ormiston and R. Sassower, eds., *Prescriptions: The Dissemination of Medical Authority*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1990), pp. 3-22.
  14. See Sir Edward Evans-Pritchard, *The Position of Women in Primitive Societies and Other Essays in Social Anthropology*, p. 127, quoted in Ernest Gellner, *Cause and Meaning In the Social Sciences* (London: Routledge, 1973), p. 149.
  15. There is a surprising absence of discussion of responsibility in the literature. The first significant discussions of responsibility are probably those of Max Weber; the first significant discussion of responsibility in the philosophical literature is in Popper's works. Much of what is known about responsibility is to be found in bio-graphical and narrative literature; I should mention here as token examples the case histories of Aristides de Soussa Mendes and of Raoul Wallenberg, as well as Rudyard Kipling's short story, "The Man Who Would Be King."
  16. See Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influences; the Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communication*, with foreword by Elmo Roper (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1955).
  17. See my discussion of this in my *Technology: Philosophical and Social Aspects* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1985), final sections.
  18. See Erik Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility. Lectures on the Ethical Implications of Psychoanalytic Insight* (New York: Norton, 1964).
  19. See my "The Logic of Consensus and of Extremes," in F. D'Agostino and I. C. Jarvie, eds., *Freedom and Rationality, Essays in Honour of John Watkins*, Boston Studies, Vol. 117 (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989), 3-21.
  20. See my *Towards a Rational Philosophical Anthropology* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1977).
  21. See my *Science and Society* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1981).
  22. See my *Technology: Philosophical and Social Aspects* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1985).