Rationalizations common to Alcoholism and Ischemic Heart Disease but not to Diabetes (Reasoning)

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Abstract

Purpose:

This is not about management of problematic addiction but is about highlighting the motivational trek that emerges as the problem. The fundamental issue is health psychology – the ‘why’ and not the ‘what’ – not the journey to the problem but the rationalizations and their execution that fuel progression to the problem (Glover, 1936).

To illustrate, the World Health Organization presents the causal chain of Ischemia as an example of dynamic health risks (WHO, 2009, pp. 1-2). The causal chain includes four columns: (1) age, education, income; (2) physical activity, fat intake, overweight, alcohol, smoking; (3) Type 2 diabetes, cholesterol, blood pressure; (4) Ischemic heart disease. Accounting of the motivational trek is accomplished by the insertion of a new column between (1) and (2) with focus targeted to how persons burdened with diabetes manage their execution of life – “There are seven essential self-care behaviors in people with diabetes which predict good outcomes namely healthy eating, being physically active, monitoring of blood sugar, compliant with medications, good problem-solving skills, healthy coping skills and risk-reduction behaviors. All these seven behaviors have been found to be positively correlated with good glycemic control, reduction of complications and improvement in quality of life” (Shrivastava, 2013).

Design/Methodology/Approach:

At issue is motivation as a dynamic invocation of self-harm across two pathways – covert (dissociation, introspection, transference) and overt (apathy, complacent, compliant). Attention turns to dated contributions to the knowledge base – Robert Burton (1577-1640), John Locke (1632-1704), David Hartley (1705-1757), Joseph Haven (1816-1874), Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840-1902) and Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920) – as an assertion to the character of approach to the entanglement presented by the two pathways.

Burton’s metaphorical four annotations – time, uncertainty, knowledge and reality (Burton, 1621|1903, p. 9) – are timeless. The notation of interest, folly to Melancholy, is the character of each folly and melancholy that can oscillate between covert habit (depression) and overt disposition (disappointment), with insight gained by resolving the four annotations to the dated philosophy of India (mindfulness) and China (otherness). The fundamental issue is the human penchant for meaning and precession, which digresses quite quickly to folly thereby affirming that there is no ‘law’ that declares that reality and/or knowledge descends from reason. That the bulk of living is explained by entrenchment in self-defense that unfortunately has the capacity to morph to self-harm. As an extension of Burton, Freud attempted to explain a person’s two poles, the already formed self and the to-be-formed self, in tandem with the current self in neurological terms, only to settle on the dynamics of the already formed self with his...
subsequent writings. With melancholia “The most remarkable characteristic of melancholia, and the
one in most need of explanation, is its tendency to change round into mania – a state which is opposite
of it in its symptoms” (Freud, 1917|1957, p. 253).

Locke begins with an Epistle to the reader – “Every step the mind takes in its progress towards
knowledge makes some discovery, which is not only new, but the best, too, for the time at least” (Locke,
1689, p. ix). These few words expose Locke’s position, that a person is born with a mind that is a clean
slate, i.e., “No innate principles in the mind” (Ibid, pp. 12-42). Locke’s alignment of the conscious to
experience in his discussion “of ideas” (Ibid, pp. 62-240) is sufficient to account for adaptation as well as
being consistent with the fact that each new day of a person’s life is a declining percentage of their
entire life. While Locke makes no explicit reference to the unconscious he allows for such through his
discussion “of words” (Ibid, pp. 321-423) and “of knowledge and opinion” (Ibid, pp. 424-650). In these
last two discussions Locke allows for a mature recognition of the value of a person’s self-understanding
of experience.

Hartley’s view of the human mind includes two primary tracks. The Doctrine of Vibrations (Priestley,
1775, pp. 7-11) and the Doctrine of Association of Ideas (Ibid, pp. 12-28). This is a statement about
motivation where Vibrations are about nerve sensations that can originate in the brain or be caused by a
reaction to external stimuli, and where Ideas are about communications with the pluralistic world in
that ideas build on experience and influence, hence, Association from the two perspectives that
describe the all of life.

Haven begins his preface with a candidate apology – yep, just what we need, another textbook – only to
correct his position to the needs of the students and not the needs of an author’s ego – “In none of
them [other texts] was the science of mind presented in its completeness and symmetry, in a manner at
once simple, yet scientific; in none of them, moreover, was it brought down to the present time. ...Every
year of subsequent experience as a teacher has but confirmed this impression, and made the want of a
book better adapted to the purposes of instruction, in our American Colleges, more deeply felt. The
works on mental science, which have recently appeared in this country, while they are certainly a
valuable contribution to the department of philosophy, seem to meet this deficiency in part, but only in
part. They traverse usually but a portion of the ground which Psychology legitimately occupies,
confining their attention, for the most part, to the Intellectual Faculties, to the exclusion of the
Sensibilities, and the Will” [italics in original] (Haven, 1862, p. iv), a statement that is consistent with the
WHO four-column causal chain of Ischemia. Haven begins his narrative by expanding on his purpose,
the science of mind in its completeness and symmetry (Ibid, pp. 15-28), a narrative that ties directly to
Glover’s progression and the reference to the gap between the first and second columns of the WHO
causal chain of Ischemia. With his statement of purpose in place Haven then turns to what is effectively
a macro accounting of everyday life enumerating what one has a right to expect from a classification of
the mental powers (Ibid, pp. 29-38) with his summary as Preservative, Representative, Reflective and
Intuitive. Haven’s organization is limited to three divisions – Intellectual Facilities (Ibid, pp. 39-376),
Sensibilities (Ibid, pp. 377-519), and Will (Ibid, pp. 520-583). His entire presentation is exceedingly
centrist, the mature normals. In his concluding chapter – “Historical Sketch – Outline of the controversy
respecting freedom of the will” (Ibid, pp. 573-583), Haven enumerates the strengths and flaws of the
various arguments beginning with the early Greeks. A person’s self-serving execution of the flattening
of life requires freedom of will in tandem with free-form imagination (Ibid, pp. 137-164), which is
extensible to expecting a person to be their own provider of empathy.

Krafft-Ebing in his 1886 preface sets forth what is best characterized as denial of a serious social
problem: “It is remarkable that the sexual life has received but a very subordinate consideration on the
part of philosophers. Schopenhauer (*The World as Will and Idea*) thought it strange that love had been thus far a subject for the poet alone, and that, with the exception of superficial treatment by Plato, Rousseau, and Kant, it had been foreign to philosophers. What Schopenhauer and, after him, the *Philosopher of the Unconscious*, E. v. Hartmann, philosophized concerning the sexual relations is so imperfect, and in its consequences so distasteful, that, aside from the treatment in the works of Michelet (*L’amour*) and Maritegazza (*Physiology of Love*), which are to be considered more as brilliant discussions than as scientific treatises, the empirical psychology and metaphysics of the sexual side of human existence rest upon a foundation which is scientifically almost puerile. ...The poets may be better psychologists than the psychologists and philosophers; but they are men of feeling rather than of understanding, and at least one-sided in their consideration of the subject. They cannot see the deep shadow behind the light and sunny warmth of that from which they draw their inspiration” (Krafft-Ebing, 1900|1915, p. v-vi). This extensive quote can be consolidated to a single thought: “The sudden loss of virile powers often produces melancholia, or is the cause of suicide when life without love is a blank” (Ibid, p. 13). (Here love is not about romance but is about purpose, a feeling of worth.)

Wundt in his 1913 essay entitled *Psychology’s Struggle for Existence* wrote: “Paging through the first section of this work, one might be inclined to view it as a provocation. But one who decides to read through to the end will be convinced that, on the contrary, the work could well be regarded as a peace offering. In the opinion of some, philosophy and psychology should divorce from each other. Now, it is well known that when a married couple seeks a divorce, both members usually are at fault. In these pages, it will be shown that the same is true in this instance, and that if this matter takes the course that both parties want, philosophy will lose more than it will gain, but psychology will be damaged the most. Hence, the argument over the question of whether or not psychology is or is not a philosophical science is, for psychology, a struggle for its very existence” (Lamiell, 2013).

**Summary** of Burton, Locke, Hartley, Haven, Krafft-Ebing and Wundt digresses to “…Intellectual Idealism, by which I mean the doctrine that we are capable of knowing Reality as it actually is, and that Reality when so known is absolutely rational. ...The general proof of Idealism must consist in showing that, while the determination of Reality by such categories as coexistence, succession, and causality, is capable of vindication so long as it is not regarded as ultimate, it becomes false when affirmed to be final, and that we are compelled at last to characterize existence as purposive and rational” (Watson, 1895, p. v). The issue with respect to assumptions about addiction is ‘final’ versus ‘purposive and rational’, words that imply mathematical relationships – true – but not with an implied scientific precision.

**Research limitations/implications:**

‘Intellectual idealism’, psychology in the absence of philosophy is the Achilles heel of the dynamic invocation of self-harm across two pathways – covert (dissociation, introspection, transference) and overt (apathy, complacent, compliant). While the pathways, separately and jointly, both define and protect a person, there is no absoluteness implied. To focus on absolute is akin to declaring the location of a multitude of trees while being oblivious to the possible existence of a forest. August Comte (1798-1857), John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) describe the price of this problem.

“Now, it might seem that, having defined the problem of philosophy, and indicated its three great departments [Nature, Mind and God], our next step would be to take up each of those departments in turn. But, as we have seen, there are eminent thinkers, who, either expressly or by implication, maintain that man is by the very nature of his faculties forever incapable of knowing reality as it ultimately is; and it is therefore advisable to begin by asking whether this skeptical attitude in regard to the object of philosophy has any rational foundation, or whether it does not rather rest upon an
untenable assumption. ...Perhaps the simplest way of approaching this problem will be to examine it in the form in which it is presented by Comte. The fundamental idea which underlies the doctrine of Comte is, that all attempts to obtain an 'absolute' view of existence are necessarily futile. This Comte expresses by saying that, while we are capable of a 'subjective synthesis' of existence, we are by the necessary limitation of our knowledge incapable of an 'objective synthesis'. ...Comte here uses the term 'subjective' in the sense of 'limited' or 'human'; and with this he contrasts an 'objective synthesis', as one in which things would be looked at from the point of view of absolutely complete knowledge. ...The whole history of man is regarded by Comte as the history of association by means of positive science. Man, in his primitive state has two opposite tendencies – the tendency to sociality and the tendency to individualism justified in denying to man all knowledge of the Absolute [as in subservient]" [Italics in original] (Watson, 1895, pp. 21-24).

Regarding aesthetics versus absolute, "...His intellect and his perception perfectly correspond, and therefore he naturally feels pleasure so long as he remains in the aesthetic mood. Such pleasure is very different from the satisfaction which accompanies the resolute willing of what is binding upon him by the law of his reason. The feeling of beauty comes without effort the moment we contemplate the beautiful object disinterestedly, and it therefore gives us a sort of prophecy of that union of reason and sense which no effort of ours can actually realize. Besides the beautiful we frame aesthetic judgments in regard to the sublime. These judgments agree in their main characteristics with those in regard to beauty, but there are important differences. For one thing, the feeling of sublimity arises in us even when the object as perceived has no definite limits, though it is always conceived as a whole. The feelings themselves are also different in kind, for, whereas the feeling of beauty is direct, the feeling of sublimity involves a momentary check to the vital forces, followed immediately by their more vigorous outflow. The mind is at once attracted and repelled, and the accompanying pleasure is therefore negative rather than positive: it is in fact due to the disharmony between the object perceived and an ideal object existing only for thought. Strictly speaking, therefore, there is no sublimity in nature, but only in ourselves, and in ourselves as rational beings" (Ibid, p. 297).

Mill was concerned with the addiction to precision as being superior to perception. "...Mill maintains that the supposed exactness and necessity of mathematics is a delusion. (1) Mathematics is not an exact science. What is the foundation of the science of geometry? Plainly the so-called definitions. But upon what do these definitions themselves rest? They cannot be self-evident, because all that a definition can tell us is the meaning attached to certain terms. Definitions are purely verbal, and prove nothing in regard to the reality of that which is defined. ... (2) Nor is geometry a necessary science. Like other sciences it rests upon induction, or, in other words, it states in a general form what experience has shown us to hold good in a number of particular instances. No accumulation of such instances can warrant us in saying that things must be as our experience has shown them to be. It is true that geometry draws its conclusions from figures that are not directly perceived, but are only represented in imagination. But imagination can never represent what has not been presented beforehand in perception" (Ibid, p.5). Thus, life without experience is psychology, while life in tandem with experience is philosophy.

Per Spencer, "...neither man's knowledge nor his moral consciousness can be explained on the principle of natural selection. To know is to be beyond a mere state of passivity: it is to grasp the meaning of existence in virtue of a principle implied in the very nature of the knowing subject; to will is to realize an ideal presented to himself by the subject, an ideal which he has just because he is not limited to his immediate impulses but can put himself at a universal point of view. The progress of knowledge consists in an ever-fuller comprehension of the meaning of the world; the progress in morality consists in an ever-fuller realization of what in his ideal nature man truly is" (Ibid, p. 151). Subject and object,
while having logical connectivity, are in reality logically independent. Subject reflects the immediate state of perception (as seduced) while object reflects the immediate state of existence (as summarized) (Ibid, pp. 151-165).

Findings:
Presented here are comments about healthy living, constitution, grit and philosophy. Focus extends beyond the seven essential self-care behaviors in people with diabetes, noted above, which predict good outcomes. While neuroscience cannot help as it only exposes condition at a point in time, it is worth noting that alcoholism is a social accomplishment as death by alcoholism is often overtrumped by cardiac mortality.

Healthy living: The objective of a multi-year study of 23,153 German participants aged 35 to 65 years from the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition – Potsdam study, was to describe the reduction in relative risk associated with four healthy lifestyle factors. End points included confirmed incident Type 2 diabetes, myocardial infarction, stroke, and cancer. The four healthy lifestyle factors were never smoking, body mass, physical activity, and adhering to healthy dietary principles, with “Healthy Living is the Best Revenge” the full title of the study. The 4 factors (healthy, 1 point; unhealthy, 0 points) were summed to form an index that ranged from 0 to 4. “Results: During a mean follow-up of 7.8 years, 2006 participants developed new-onset diabetes (3.7%), myocardial infarction (0.9%), stroke (0.8%), or cancer (3.8%). Fewer than 4% of participants had zero healthy factors, most had 1 to 3 healthy factors, and approximately 9% had 4 factors. After adjusting for age, sex, educational status, and occupational status, the hazard ratio for developing a chronic disease decreased progressively as the number of healthy factors increased. Participants with all 4 factors at baseline had a 78% (95% confidence interval [CI], 72% to 83%) lower risk of developing a chronic disease (diabetes, 93% [95% CI, 88% to 95%]; myocardial infarction, 81% [95% CI, 47% to 93%]; stroke, 50% [95% CI, −18% to 79%]; and cancer, 36% [95% CI, 5% to 57%]) than participants without a healthy factor” (Ford, 2009). The four healthy lifestyle factors versus the seven essential self-care behaviors with diabetes leaves open to wonder three of the seven – good problem-solving skills, healthy coping skills and risk-reduction behaviors – perhaps, this study’s reference to ‘Best Revenge’ takes all into account.

Constitution: Josef Breuer’s patient Bertha Pappenheim, referenced as ‘Anna O’, circa 1895 (Freud, 1895|1955, pp. 21-47) provides evidence. At the time Freud and Breuer were colleagues with Anna O Breuer’s case – “During the therapy, Breuer must have developed a fascination for the richness and complexity of Pappenheim’s inner world. …He was privileged to be present at the solving of an intellectual puzzle worthy of the attention of the best scientist. As her telling of stories brought emotional and physical relief, and later as her own formulation of working backward to the origin of a symptom led to the disappearance of the symptom, he must have felt the excitement of discovery” [Italics added] (Kimball, 2000). While Anna O’s joking reference was to “chimney sweeping” (Freud, 1895|1955, p. 30), she had her own recap – “I want to say that a living organization can only exist against the background of a spiritual or ethical goal. Observation of all details, collection of all experiences, which may accomplish the end, uncompromising determination, not to lose the ethical background from view, and most of all: a blessed phantasy – which will keep the creation (you call it organization) alive in outlook. I go so far as to say that it is impossible to organize without phantasy” (Edinger, 1968, p. 69; Kimball, 2000).

Grit: This is about a medical student who traversed a rough patch only to experience success. “For most of us in Student Affairs, the specter of the dismissal hearing is among the most dreaded of our responsibilities. It indicates many things – that a student has repeatedly had profound academic difficulty or perhaps was insufficiently prepared for the rigors of medical school. It could be that the
student has made a bad career – or even life – decision with which he or she cannot come to terms. Possibly, these students may be telling themselves that they weren’t meant to be doctors after all, and their difficulty is merely a symptom of that mismatch. Or, as is sometimes the case, it is a symptom of a failure of our system. Several years back, as the prospect of a dismissal hearing for Lana Tremont loomed closer, I was keenly aware of all these factors and more. ... She was required to repeat the first year of school, then the second. She was placed on academic probation and asked to seek academic counsel. ... Tremont falls desperately late in the alphabet; Lana was preceded by approximately 150 graduates before her name was called, and we had already endured a ponderously boring commencement address, even by commencement address standards. But finally, I saw her appear at the edge of the stage, adjusting and smoothing her robe as she prepared to cross it. She caught my eye, and as she moved forward to receive her diploma, she thumped her chest with her fist and gave me a 'V' for victory, kissed over the air between us. The registrar called her name: 'Dr. Lana Tremont'. She beamed as she held her diploma high over her head, her family cheering raucously from the balcony” {Italics in original} (Holloway, 2006).

Philosophy: Progression within psychiatry and psychology needs to be guided by philosophy versus Burton’s folly, the human penchant for meaning and precession as unconditional resolution of time and uncertainty. Hence, a mind versus brain issue. Thus, what is needed is recognition that “1) psychiatry and psychology are irrevocably grounded in mental, first-person experiences; 2) Cartesian substance dualism is false; 3) epiphenomenalism is false; 4) both brain-to-mind and mind-to-brain causality are real; 5) [mental aberrations] are etiologically complex, and no more ‘spirochete-like’ discoveries will be made that explain their origins in simple terms; 6) explanatory pluralism is preferable to monistic explanatory approaches, especially biological reductionism; 7) [the approach to mental health] must move beyond a prescientific ‘battle of paradigms’ to embrace complexity and support empirically rigorous and pluralistic explanatory models; and, 8) [the approach to study of mental health] should strive for ‘patchy reductionism’ with the goal of ‘piecemeal integration’ in trying to explain complex etiological pathways to [mental aberrations] bit by bit” (Kendler, 2005). Thus, a terse requirement that we need to settle on the problem we wish to solve when we try to construct a rational order (Hayek, 1945).

Social implications:

Idealism is about drama and includes two very broad issues.

First, “Mankind appear to be divided into two classes, the dupers, and the duped. ... From all these instances one inference is clear. When we depart from the guidance of reason we are liable to fall into innumerable errors. Ignorance is the source of credulity. We are therefore imperiously called on to instruct ourselves, and to attend to the results of experience. If the many would by the acquirement of knowledge, and a consequent enlargement of mind, raise themselves above the rank of dupes, the number of dupers who have been accustomed to prey on them would speedily decrease, while another numerous class, who are first duped, and then unwillingly lend themselves to spread the imposture, would see through the snare, and no longer without any bad intention act as decoys to others. According to the aphorism of Lord Bacon, ‘knowledge is power’, especially if our attention is directed to that kind of knowledge which is best adapted to our individual neglect the means of acquiring it, when we have them within our reach” (Anonymous, 1809).

Second, is the realm where heavily dated romanticism overtrumps science of an age. This is about “the relationship of personality to body shape ... one of the earliest known forms of psychology” (Hall, 1977).

Originality/value:
This is not about drug policy nor sociology. Instead, this is about the philosophical execution of life with emphasis on ‘why’ at the expense of ‘what’. “Emphasis on feelings has become almost an obsession with mental health professionals … has led to unbalanced personalities. To uninvolved observers the field of mental health appears flooded with oddball ideas and procedures. There is perhaps a confusion between treatments appropriate for relatively healthy and sick personalities. … the value of emotionalizing mentally troubled people, who are already burdened by irrational reactions, instead of strengthening their rational and moral controls. To express it in colloquial wit, unstable personalities need to have their heads shrunk, not swollen with stuff that makes for craziness” (Jurjevich, 1978).

Turning attention to the unconscious and with consideration limited to time and uncertainty opens the door to rationalizations that in turn are morphed to precision by semantics, a further invocation of hasteners and delayers. That “we typically judge that hasteners are causes of what they hasten, while delayers are not causes of what they delay” (Touborg, 2017). In a sense this is about philosophizing, but only in a limited sense as time is balanced by subjective interpretation while uncertainty is balanced by subjective expectations. The alternative to philosophizing is moralizing rationalizations with semantics the means, thus, stimuli from the space-time world are resolved to confirmation of interpretation and expectations (Winchell, 1950). This sets the need for a renewed focus on Wundt’s concern about psychology in the absence of philosophy and Glover’s progression argument. This diverts focus from the unconscious to the conscious.

**Keywords:** diabetes, ischemia, progression, substance abuse

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