

The Joy Of Feynman! (And The Right Combination Of Behavior)

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The following is an email I sent a colleague, then some notes on the topic, psychosis, behavior, rules, and psychiatry, introducing again the physicist Richard Feynman.

[Recipient],

The extraordinarily balanced, reasoning, creative, insightful, and teaching physicist Richard Feynman was -- found deficient by psychiatry some 70 years ago! Feynman died in 1988, soon after serving on the Space Shuttle Challenger Commission. He wrote anecdotes of his amusing, funny, and serious life in his book "Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman!", and an account of his life and work -- including comments by those around him -- is presented in "No Ordinary Genius" by Christopher Sykes.

When psychiatrists found him deficient, shortly after WWII, it was on about 6 points: all would be seen as being serious, by today's psychiatrists -- and all would be, with the right combination of behavior, grounds for a psych commitment. !

His account of this, in the book SYJMF, is hilarious and cutting.

It also offers insights, I feel, into the criteria used for gauging an interesting, balanced, insightful life -- and context for dilemma and no dilemma.

Kevin

Speaking of psychosis:

If the person indicates no psychotic symptoms, and problematic behavior, then it's a behavioral disorder.

If the person indicates no psychotic symptoms, and no problematic behavior, then there's no disorder.

If the person indicates psychotic symptoms, and no problematic behavior, then it's a mental disorder.

If the person indicates psychotic symptoms, and problematic behavior, then it's a mental and behavioral disorder.

None of this is seen as something the individual can address, or talk about in a meaningful way.

What are psychotic symptoms?

The book "Manifestation Of The Tathagatha" says, "The voice of the Tathagatha is of neither body nor mind." This says several things: 1) there are voices of the body; 2) there are voices of the mind; and 3) the voice of the Tathagatha is neither.

And this addresses a disorder symptom in psychiatry – and part of Feynman's experience.

Feynman was given a "D" for deficient, in spite of no problematic behavior. So that would be option 3, above.

So that he wasn't committed to a psych unit indicates the intersection of mental states and behavior.

This is an important point!

I wonder if many who are committed to a psych unit or are asked or insisted upon to see a psychiatrist aren't unaware of this intersection, or what allowed behavior is. They also, like Feynman, be unaware of allowed or not-allowed mental states! This can lead to an entanglement, and a false sense to diagnosis, where clarity and an etched approach yields a visual picture that is actually un-problematic or can be clarified or resolved.

One of Feynman's other supposed deficiencies was that he talked to himself (as he stated it, in particular circumstances). This might be an example of where psychiatry finds deficiency where there is none – and the rule is not spelled out in advance (it often isn't). I have had myself experience with being rendered deficient for talking to myself – and part of the reasons I was committed to a psych unit! Where I had no recourse to discuss merit, the actual, context, or meaning – all relevant. Nor rules, and these were not spelled out in advance. (Another rule I contradicted was to accept clothes as a gift, given in a Good Samaritan gesture! So some of my behavior was outlier – not indicated here, but more the dramatic – and some was not.)