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By Christopher Zehnder

Insane Psychiatry

Can modern psychiatry be reconciled with the Christian faith? No, says Doctor George Maloof, a Bay Area psychiatrist with over 28 years of experience in the field.

Maloof, 57, married and the father of six children, has a private practice in San Francisco and works for the parole department of the state prison system, counseling patients out of its Oakland office.

Maloof's severe view of modern psychiatry stems not from his practice, but from his education. "Before I even started training as a psychiatrist," he says, "I was very much involved in the Catholic faith and studying philosophy and theology. I went to Harvard and Georgetown medical school [and through Opus Dei] I was studying Thomistic philosophy and theology. So I applied those disciplines to psychiatry when I first started studying it in medical school, and pretty much dismissed all schools of psychiatry. I went through the whole handbook of psychiatry, and none of [the schools] really appealed to me."

Maloof concluded that Freud's influence over psychiatry militated against Christianity. Freud's system eliminates "responsibility for one's behavior. There's a whole structure that was concocted by Freud to explain how behavior is not responsible. So guilt is not legitimate; it needs to be eliminated by eliminating religion -- and any moral code that people seem to be influenced by. It's an attempt to overthrow morality, and specifically Catholic morality."

Freud saw religion as basically "a wishful-thinking system to escape the dreariness of reality and the meaninglessness of life. Freud basically said [life] was meaningless and anybody who tries to make meaning out of it is sick. It's a very despairing kind of philosophy, but that's what psychiatry is."

Freud's influence in psychology and psychiatry, according to Maloof, extends even to the work of Catholic psychiatrists and psychologists. "There was a Catholic psychiatry society," says Maloof, "connected with the American Psychiatric Association for many years. You would think that that group would develop some Catholic notions within the field of psychiatry. They, at least the leaders, dissented from *Humanæ Vitæ* and basically followed Jung rather than any Catholic thought. They disbanded a couple of years ago. So there is no Catholic psychiatry in the official world of psychiatric associations. There have been other groups that have tried to form Catholic psychology or psychiatry groups, and I think there is a real problem because I see psychiatry as being an attempt to usurp the role of religion -- especially in its analytic, Freudian approach, which, I think, is really at the bottom of all psychiatry. So I don't see any Catholic group now that considers itself [a] psychiatric association as being distinctly Catholic."

"One of the things I learned recently, to my dismay, is that Gregory Zilbourg [a psychiatrist and analyst] commented in the 1950s that psychoanalysis was being taught in the seminaries. He thought that was good, that there would be a rapprochement and an appreciation by the Church of psychoanalysis and psychiatry. Zilbourg was saying there's no problem -- psychiatry is different from confession, and won't replace confession. Well, I think if he were living today, he would have to eat those words. The seminaries that are now rife with Freudian concepts and Jungian concepts are unable to select out people who are prone to sexual disorders because there's an acceptance of

perversion. Freud said as much -- we're all perverted, basically, and we become neurotic if we suppress our perversion. So if you release your inhibitions, you won't be neurotic; you will be healthy, in his view, but you will be a pervert. So we're educating society and even people in the Church. When you see all the priestly sexual abuses and the millions of dollars spent trying to cover their abuse, I think you see the devastation that's been wreaked by Freud, which, I think, was his intention all along."

In order to repair this devastation, Maloof says that psychiatry and psychology must return to "what the Church has been teaching about man," namely, that man is responsible for his acts. "When I was in training 30 years ago, I formulated my own view of what mental illness was, and I wrote up an extensive outline. I was going to spend the rest of my life explaining it. I considered mental illness the consequence of the unwillingness to accept the responsibility for one's acts. This is what sin is, what the consequences were of the sin of our first parents. They didn't say, 'Yeah I want to be like you, God; I ate this apple, and me and my wife are going to take over, and you can take a hike!' They didn't say that...They knew what they did, and why they did it."

"We still don't face up to our responsibility; [and so] we develop mental illness. If we don't, we're ill in other ways, but our whole being just rebels against our not wanting to take responsibility for our acts. Most of the cases that Freud and Jung and other psychiatrists talk about have pointed this out -- their patients have done something wrong and are punishing themselves for it through their symptoms. For people who don't want to follow God's law, they just find other ways to help people get around their symptoms. If you are not helping people accept responsibility for what they've done, that's basically bad treatment."

What constitutes good treatment? "I see psychiatry," Maloof says, "as basically preparing someone for confession. I think Freud said, you can come and confess your sins to me and you will be able to keep sinning and won't feel as bad! It never worked, and I don't think he has ever been able to cure anyone with that approach. A lot of people have committed suicide that have been associated with him. He even admitted that psychoanalysis just hasn't satisfied the problem of the need for punishment, and so what that means is that we are deserving punishment, so we must have done something wrong. Psychiatry has said we haven't -- its the standards of civilization or church or your superego that are imposing things on you. [If you free yourself], you'll be a happy pervert. [But] perverts aren't that happy."

Maloof, while emphasizing the need for therapy centered upon personal responsibility, says that medication is necessary for certain patients, but warns that it is a short-term cure -- "like a wet blanket; there's a fire raging -- you're out of control, your thinking patterns are out of control, and so we have to stop your thinking, or slow your thinking organ, and that's really what medication does."

The long-term cure is religion, says Maloof. In therapy, Maloof tries to get his patients "to see what they're doing, and to admit responsibility for what they're doing and to go to confession." If they are Catholic, he says "I tell them as much and if they're not, I encourage them to go to church and try to practice a faith and ask God for forgiveness. And that basically is helpful and relieves them, the ones that will go along with it."