Human Complexes and Their Cure

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(A Scientific & Industrial Research Organisation recognised by the Ministry of Science & Technology, Government of India)

Abstract: The functioning of complexes within the personality is detrimental to the well-being of the individual sufferer, and to the health of the relationships with those around him. Society, as a web of interpersonal relationships, would thus benefit from the eradication of personal complexes from within the individual. Complex formation occurs in the mind at a point of emotional shock. As a coping mechanism, part of the material of the experience is repressed, and then returns at a later time. When it does so, it exerts a strong and unhealthy influence on the behaviour of the individual. The prevailing treatment of complexes requires the individual to become consciously aware of the complex and how it functions, recognising the connection to current unhealthy attitudes and behaviour. Doing so releases the suppressed emotion, and the complex itself is deactivated. This process employs the functions of the intellect, the capacity to think independently of the influence of the mind. The intellect must therefore be developed and applied. Further, complex formation can be inhibited and activation of existing complexes can be prevented when one maintains an intellectual governance of the activities of the mind – an attitude known as objectivity. Objectivity is achieved through the intellectual development that comes from reflection upon higher values, and through the pursuit of an ideal in life. While the development of the intellect is primarily the responsibility of the individual, society’s responsibility to encourage and support these efforts must also be recognised.

Keywords: Complex, Intellect, Intellectual development, Objectivity

1 Introduction

The increasing pace of global change and freedom of movement of resources across economic, information, and cultural boundaries is creating a world in which, if human society as a whole is to continue to thrive and evolve, its component communities must learn to adapt to change and work in harmony. As Tajfel, (1982, p. 32) rightly observed nearly three decades ago, “increasing global interdependence since the end of World War II has enormously increased the diversity and complexity of intergroup relations. The psychological study of these problems, which will manage to combine some of our traditional preoccupations with an increased sensitivity to the nature of social realities, is one of our most important tasks for the future.” This paper looks at the unit of human society: the individual. It specifically focuses upon human complexes, how they adversely affect social exchange, and how they can be overcome and prevented.

While social theorists differ as to the precise definitions of “society”, one popularly common theme is the idea of a ground of mutual experience, or web of relationships, the “web of communication or interaction, the reciprocal influence of persons taking each other into account as they act” (Stryker, 2006, 213). Thus, interaction and organisation are two essential elements of a society (Myneni, 2007). Each person necessarily contributes to a framework from which all other persons directly or indirectly draw (in ways that may be of benefit, of harm or neutral). As Ivey et al. (1997, p. 9) state, “we are all selves-in-relation to one another.” The importance of healthy human interaction need hardly therefore be emphasised. The individual lives in society, influences it, and is also influenced by it. Papalia et al. (2002, p. 38), in discussing human development, indicate the mutual interdependence of individual and society thus: “The changing person acts on and changes the environment, and the changing environment acts on and changes the person.” Stryker (2006, p. 216) summarises the position of Herbert Blumer, American sociological theorist and champion of the theory of symbolic interactionism, by defining society itself as “the sum of the actions of persons occurring in situations constructed and reconstructed by those persons through interpreting the situations, identifying and assessing things that have to be taken into account in the situations, and acting on the basis of these assessments”.

A person’s actions thus spring from his interests or concerns in relation to his view of the external environment, and thus along with the assessment of environment, self-concept plays a
significant part in influencing action (Haralambos, 1980). This view is shared by Ranganathananda (1986, p. 297): “Every human being is faced with the challenge of the presence of other human beings in the society. He can react to the social milieu either in a friendly way or in a hostile way depending upon his concept and assessment of himself.” The term ‘self’ refers to that subjective understanding of who or what I – as the performer of actions, as the experiencer of experiences – actually am. The functioning of complexes within the personality can adversely affect one’s self-conception. As Jacobi (1962:38) puts it, “the complex has its ultimate cause in the impossibility of affirming the whole of one's individual nature.” With action being influenced by one’s self-conception, it is thus important to recognise the detrimental influence that complexes can have on one’s relationship with the environment.

Each person is ‘multiple selves’ that shift depending upon environment, or context. That is, in any situation, each one has a particular role – “the rights, obligations, and expected behavior patterns associated with a particular social status” (“role,” 2010). A person’s sense of their role is determined by their understanding of self within environment. As such, appropriate social interaction requires proper understanding of oneself and the environment. Complexes not only create an unhealthy self-concept, but also inhibit a correct assessment of the environment. Without a clearly defined, healthy sense of self and a correct assessment of environment – i.e. a healthy understanding of role – proper relational exchange with the environment and others is not possible. Thus society as a whole suffers. As Clippinger (2007, p. 151) states: “As a species, human beings are fundamentally dependent upon benign interactions with others to develop and mature both physically and psychically … the one and the crowd are inextricably interdependent.” Thus complexes in general have a detrimental effect on individuals and society, and their treatment and prevention is thus of benefit to both.

2 Human Complexes - Root Causes and Effects

The term ‘feeling-toned complex’ was coined by Carl Jung to refer to a “psychic factor” (Jacobi, 1959, p. 19) that has as its central element an image or symbol of emotional significance to the individual, about which are ‘constellated’ various psychological associations. (The symbol is one that is generally of significance to a wider group of which the individual is a part – for example the symbol ‘mother’ has significance to all, as all beings have or have had a mother). These elements taken together form a single entity within the psyche. The term is generally used by the lay person to mean a sort of psychological ‘hang-up’ or fixation, and always takes on a negative character. Jung however asserted that complexes are the functional units of the psyche itself, “the normal foci of psychic happenings” (Jung, 1954, p. 78), and that there exist both healthy and pathological complexes. This paper will look solely at those complexes that have begun to play a detrimental role in an individual's life.

Pathological complexes can arise in the psyche when one experiences some emotionally traumatic event. Such traumata can lead to severe psychological injuries. Starak (1996) highlights the creation of ‘splits’ or ‘disassociations’ in the human psyche as a means of dealing with the pain of the traumatic experience. Complex formation is a coping or adaptive mechanism to psychological stress: the individual is unable to accommodate the entirety of an experience, and represses some of the material to which she is exposed. This inability of the inner personality to psychologically digest the experience is the essential element in the creation of a complex. This complex formation, we argue, is the result of an uncontrolled mind, here defined as lack of objectivity. When a set of circumstances sufficiently similar to those present during complex formation presents itself, the repressed material returns, and takes on the role of an autonomous entity that then has “power to manifest itself independently of the will and even in direct opposition to conscious tendencies” (Jung, 1954, p. 131). In other words, “[t]he complex forms, so to speak, a miniature, self-contained psyche which … develops a peculiar fantasy-life of its own.” (Ibid:56). Upon activation, the complex projects into the awareness of the individual past contexts and meanings, thus hindering the individual from relating properly or reasonably with the present situation. As Milon & Grossman (2006, p. 15) point out, “a seemingly neutral stimulus apparently has touched a painful hidden memory or emotion. … [Complex syndromes] reflect the upsurge of deeply rooted feelings that press to the surface, override present realities, and become the prime stimulus to which the individual responds” (Italics added).

For example, a child’s traumatic experience brings feelings of guilt and shame. As an adult, as circumstances are faced that recall the offending experience, the inner sense of guilt and shame arises again. The complex previously formed has inhibited a complete assessment of the situation. By perceiving in a present situation one
aspect that bears similarity to a past one, the focus is narrowed upon this similarity. The mind regresses, and she ‘becomes’ the child of that experience. This particular self-concept would be unhealthy and unhelpful, inhibiting the woman from appropriately expressing her mature nature. From this standpoint, all is again perceived from the position of the child, and the impaired assessment continues. Due to their ability to compromise self-concept and situational assessment, complexes prevent one from properly relating to present situations.

There are many types of complexes, and the central image around which the various associations are organised is known as an archetype. The archetypal image is “peculiar not to one individual, but to many, at the same time, i.e. either to a society, a people, or to mankind in general” (Jung, 1953, p. 530). A classification of the different types of complexes is beyond the scope of this work, but the relevant idea emerging from a study of complexes is that, whether the archetypal image be mother, father, opposite gender, shadow-self, et cetera, complexes impinge upon the freedom or autonomy of the individual to act appropriately. Thus, a negative relationship with the world results, impairing one’s ability to function effectively in daily life. Jung: “In consequence of his illness, the patient stood, partially or totally, outside of real life. Consequently he neglected many of his life’s duties, either in regard to social work or to the ordinary daily tasks” (Jung, 1915, p. 98). Stevens (1990, p. 32) neatly summarises the effect of complexes thus: “Certainly, complexes can exercise great restraint on our ability to live our lives as freely as we might wish.”

The functioning of complexes is associated with psychological distress and “prevents the individual from properly adapting himself to his inward and outward reality; it impairs his ability to form clear judgements, and above all thwarts any satisfactory human contact” (Jacobi, 1959, p. 17). The effects of complexes can vary, from the fairly innocuous (“slips or other trifling symptoms”, Jacobi, 1959, p. 15); to “the sick system of social relationships that constitutes neurosis” (Ewen, 2003, p. 65); to severe psychoses. Ivey et al. (1997) report that antisocial personality disorder (ASPD) can result from the individual employing unconscious defence mechanisms whose function is to alleviate tension experienced within the psyche. Such tension can be caused by complexes and the accompanying neurotic symptoms. The DSM IV (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) indicates that the overall prevalence of ASPD is about 3% in males, and 1% in females; Sutker & Allain (2002) report the prevalence of those meeting the criteria for ASPD among various samples of prison inmates at between 50 and 76%; psychiatric patient admissions at 14%; and substance abusers at 23 to 39%. Further, a 2001 WHO report on mental health highlighted the economic and social burden of mental and behavioural disorders (to which complexes and neuroses contribute) to individuals, families, communities and nations. It estimated that one in four families has at least one member suffering from a mental or behavioural disorder. (World Health Organisation, 2001).

Thus, complexes and their symptoms are not just disturbing for the complex sufferer, but have wider implications for those whom their neuroses affect. For example, parent-child interactions obviously influence the child’s future behaviour, and Patterson et al. (1990, p. 263) showed that “ineffective parenting practices are viewed as determinants for childhood conduct disorders [antisocial behaviour]”. A parent who brings an active complex to the interaction with a child causes detrimental flow-on effects for the adult-to-be and thereafter society in general. The functioning of complexes contributes to distress within the individual and disharmony in society. Successful treatment would benefit both individual and the situation, including others with who he is in relation, and thus their eradication is important for the integration and health of one and all.

### 3 Therapeutic Treatment of Complexes

The complex itself resides more or less below the threshold of conscious awareness of the individual (Jacobi, 1959; McLynn, 1996; Stevens, 1990). The neurotic symptoms that result from repression will, according to Ivey et al. (1997, p. 255), “repeat again and again until they are brought to consciousness and worked through”. Thus, even as one experiences the negative effects of a complex, one remains unaware of its actual functioning and unable to correct it. The misery of complexes continues until external pressure from concerned loved-ones or judicial bodies force the sufferer attend treatment programs; or the individual reaches a point where the distress is too much, and himself seeks treatment.

In the standard treatment of existing complexes, the individual is made conscious of the complex and how it functions, enabling the elements of the complex to be fully discriminated and mentally organised so that their relationships...
can be understood. Jung (1915, p. 98) summarises psychoanalytic therapy thus: “The patient, assisted by the physician, occupies himself with his phantasies, not to lose himself therein, but to uproot them, piece by piece, and to bring them into daylight. He thus reaches an objective standpoint towards his inner life, and everything he formerly loathed and feared is now considered consciously.” This facilitates “the actual release of suppressed emotion” (Jung, 1954, p. 59), and successful liberation of the individual from complexes brings greater self-awareness and “wider latitude for action” (Stevens, 1990, p. 34). This has led to various methods of therapeutic treatment, whose details are beyond the scope of this work. However, the fundamental aspect of treatment is relevant: investigation and analysis to raise the elements of the complex into the conscious mind.

The goal of these approaches is to allow the enquiring sufferer to achieve a greater psychological maturity: to gain new and deeper knowledge of themselves and to “take their new knowledge into action in their tasks and relationships” (Ivey et al., 1997, p. 1). This allows one to more effectively relate within the various social groups of which they are a part. Put another way, “[w]hen a person becomes truly in touch with the inner self, that individual will move to positive action and fulfilment” (Ibid:354).

The treatment of a complex requires the ability to objectively view one’s inner personality, actions and reactions. One discriminates between and understands different aspects of the personality so that they can be brought into harmonious balance, into “proper relation to one another” (Jacobi, 1959, p. 17). Success will achieve a perspective that allows one to confidently and safely stand apart from the complex, releasing one from its bonds. It will negate the autonomy (controlling power) of the complex and at the same time allow the individual to embrace the past experience as part of her self. This brings a new self-conception – one that is more encompassing of the personality as a whole, thus facilitating the affirmation of “the whole of one’s individual nature.” This requires not just the retrieval of the relevant elements, but seeing how they relate to each other, achieving an integration that allows them to be held as a single whole. The self-analysis thus comprises two aspects: observation and understanding. This treatment is dependent upon a capable and functioning intellect.

### 3.1 The Human Intellect

The human being is composed of three different ‘equipments’: physical body, mind and intellect. The physical body houses the five organs of perception and the five organs of action. It is the ‘outer personality’, which contacts the external world, and by itself cannot initiate action. Action is propelled by the ‘inner personality’, which comprises the mind and the intellect. Actions are determined by the mind, the intellect, or a combination of the two.

‘Mind’ refers to the seat of emotion, impulse, desire, attraction/aversion. The moods and feelings are of the mind. ‘Intellec’ refers to the ability to think freely, logically. The faculty to reason and judge without bias” (Parthasarathy, 2010, p. 22). The intellect provides the function of reason in the individual. The mind contains information related only to known experiences, whereas the intellect, existing beyond the mind, is capable of penetrating into areas unknown (thus advancing learning). The mind is relatively grosser than the intellect, which indicates the latter’s greater pervasiveness; and ability to control the mind. As such, any emotion can be treated with reason: it can be analysed, understood and directed. It is through the application of knowledge and reason that the intellect can control the mind.

In understanding the intellect and its function, it is important not to confuse it with intelligence. Following Parthasarathy (2008), ‘intelligence’ here refers to a body of objective knowledge or information that one has regarding one or more specific subject areas. One may have great intelligence with respect to horticulture, physics, music, et cetera. At best, intelligence is a body of knowledge that can provide techniques or bases of understanding that are drawn upon and employed – but this functional use of intelligence is again the role of the intellect (Parthasarathy, 2010). As Ranganathananda (1986, p. 222) observes, “[Full mental maturity] is never attained merely by mastering … the chosen subjects and passing an examination on them.” Flexible and mature reason alone can negotiate a given situation, correctly assessing its subtleties without the distorting influence of the mind’s emotions, thereby determining appropriate attitudes to adopt and courses of action to pursue.

### 3.2 Complex Treatment Requires Intellect

Complex treatment involves exposing complexes to “the light of mature reason”. (Wilber 2001, p. 234). The capacities of self-observation and understanding required in this process are the domain of the intellect. This self-reflexive or self-referential capacity is unique to humans alone, and emerges in a person’s cognitive development at the age of around 12-18 years (Ivey et al., 1997).
In psychotherapy, the complex sufferer is led through his own inner personality via a process of co-operative questioning, answering and discussion to elicit deeper meaning from, and to establish causes for, surface events and symptoms. Intellect, being subtler than mind, can penetrate into areas the latter cannot: can ‘see’ the complex to which the mind is blind. As the sufferer’s understanding of himself and of the process grows, there is a diminished dependence upon the contribution of the therapist, and one can become one’s own therapist, directing the dialectical process between intellect and mind (complex) without aid. Bradshaw (1992) speaks of healing childhood trauma via a dialectical relationship between the injured ‘inner child’ within the adult sufferer’s psyche and the adult sufferer herself; Parthasarathy (2007, p. 158) directly advises that to self-diagnose the cause of mental agitation and grief, “[g]et to the root of your problems. Go deeper into the inner layers of your personality.” This introspective thought processes brings understanding and resolution of inner conflict, the achievement of a state of harmonious functioning between intellect and mind; a ‘confluence’ of the two, where intellect embraces and knows what mind is feeling, and mind feels what intellect understands. The process is one of recognising then interpreting and reasoning out the elements of one’s own psyche, thereby making them conscious, facilitating greater self-acceptance. Thus, development of the intellect is important in the formal treatment of complexes, and in the ongoing process of self-analysis outside of the clinical setting.

4 Objectivity I – Preventing Complex Formation

Complexes may result from any experience which provides an “emotional shock” (Jacobi, 1962, p. 38). An emotional shock arises when the individual’s personality is unable to accept, assimilate, or digest the entirety of the present experience. In understanding the mechanism by which one’s emotional reaction arises, it is important to first distinguish an object itself and the subjective experience of it. The same object may produce dissimilar experiences for different people (or even a single person at different stages of life) due to individuals’ differing relationships with it.

An individual’s emotional reaction to an object is determined by the meaning that one places upon the objects. As Frijda (1988, p. 349) states, describing the law of “situational meaning”, “[e]motions arise in response to the meaning structures of given situations; different emotions arise in response to different meaning structures. Emotions are dictated by the meaning structure of events in a precisely determined fashion.” This meaning is further determined by the context within which the objects of experience arise. This context encompasses the knowledge and attitudes that one has in regards to the situation – i.e. the relationship. As Frijda (Ibid) further states, “[i]t is meanings and the subject’s appraisals that count – that is, the relationship between events and the subject’s concerns, and not events as such.” For example, a person from a small, isolated, peaceful nation would find it surprising, if not shocking, to see armed military personnel at an airport, but a regular traveller to large metropolitan airports would register no such surprise. The latter knows and understands that armed guard are common at airports. Being thus aware, the latter maintains an appropriate attitude towards (i.e. relationship with) the situation, and is unperturbed by the particular sensory experience.

The meaning of objects and the consequent emotional reaction are thus inextricably linked to one’s relationship to a situation. This relationship is moulded and shaped by one’s personal experiences. One may passively adopt an attitude towards a given situation (indeed towards life in general) that is based solely only upon past phenomena. As significant details of the circumstances change, this attitude will bear little or no relevance to the present. In effect, the relationship with the present situation is now inappropriate. However, one may consciously choose to adopt a mental attitude that is directly relevant to the present, one that permits an effective relationship with the situation. Having developed a right relationship with the situation, one can assimilate experiences smoothly, without the personality resorting to adaptive mechanisms that can result in repression and complex formation.

Maintaining a relationship that allows one to remain emotionally unperturbed by experiences is objectivity, and may be defined as intellect governing the activities of mind. With objectivity, the intellect maintains a contextual appreciation of a situation that is more encompassing than that which the mind would otherwise entertain based on past experiences. Maintaining this intellectual ‘foothold’ on a situation inhibits or limits emotional shock.

Objectivity as the application of the intellect to the mind thus proceeds via the intelligence with which the former has been imbued. Another simple example serves to illustrate. A diabetic is offered a sweet. The mind reacts with the feeling of pleasure at the prospect of
consuming it, and thus its tendency is to take the sweet. However, the intellect understands that to do so would be detrimental to health. When his intellect reflects upon the knowledge of consequences, the inner personality naturally appreciates a healthier and more appropriate response. This serves to convince the individual to refuse the sweet. In the absence of intellect, the mind alone determines action, and the sweet will be taken.

4.1 Objectivity comes Through Knowledge of Higher Values

Knowledge thus permits a wider (contextual) appreciation of a given situation, and thus a greater degree of control over action (“wider latitude for action”). However, these examples highlight an objective stance that is applicable only to the particular situation given. True objectivity enables one to maintain this relationship with every situation, remaining emotionally balanced, i.e. free from emotional shock all throughout life. For a more encompassing objectivity to be achieved, the knowledge taken by the intellect and applied to the mind must be that much more widely applicable. Knowledge that is applicable to all of life, thereby enabling one to develop life-wide objectivity, is thus the knowledge of the essential aspects of life itself. Such knowledge is referred to by Parthasarathy as ‘higher values’: “The sense of dispassion [objectivity] ... develops as you identify with higher values of life” (2007, p. 67).

To understand what knowledge of life refers to, a working definition of life is necessary. Life can be understood as a stream of experiences. Experience is described as the ‘union’ of an experiencing subject (self, individual) with an experienced object (environment, world). Proper relationship with the world requires knowledge of how the self and the environment interact. Knowledge of higher values refers to that knowledge which describes the individual and its relationship with the world. This would be an understanding of the tripartite composition of the individual as discussed in section 3.1. By understanding each of the components and how they react to the external world, one can objectively view how they serve to influence the course of one’s life. By remaining objective to a situation a person is able to relate appropriately to happenings within and without. The equipments can be steered to live more effectively. Therefore, by understanding the laws that govern life and living, one develops a greater understanding of their own relationship with the world, and there naturally follows an improvement in that relationship. The capacity to digest and assimilate life's experiences is increased because one has an effective understanding of who they are in relation to the situation.

With greater objectivity one comes to understand to a greater degree who one fundamentally is. The deeper understanding of ‘this self’ exists independent of specific situations; it encompasses ever-increasing spheres of life. Then, although responsibilities and relationships may differ in each setting, there is a single unifying self-concept that crosses all boundaries. A person with such a self-concept is said to have a ‘strong sense of self’, or to be ‘self-possessed’; is less susceptible to being thrown emotionally off balance by events; remains emotionally poised, and experiences a sense of mental calm. Thus, the development of the intellect and acquisition of self-understanding is of primary importance to one's own subjective well-being, and to improving relationships and social exchange. In fact Parthasarathy (1992, p. 254) states of the acquisition of self-knowledge that “[n]o human being can perform any greater service than this.”

4.2 Acquiring Knowledge of Higher Values Strengthens the Intellect

The faculty if intellect is promoted by using it for the very function that it serves. Intellectual development comes from exercising it against concepts and ideas that require conscious intellectual effort to assimilate and understand, a process known as reflection. In a review on how intellectual skills are acquired, Voss et al. (1995, p. 174) state that “...recent evidence indicates that intellectual skill acquisition is facilitated when individuals generate their own solutions to problems, explain and elaborate upon their solutions, and employ metacognitive skills” (Italics added). Parthasarathy (2010, p. 27) states that “[t]he intellect is developed through your individual effort by exercising the faculty of questioning, thinking, reasoning”. Intellectual development is thus learning how to think, and not simply what to think (intellect is not intelligence). Bibens (1980, p. 90), in discussing how students can come to develop thinking capacities rather than merely acquire information, states: “[t]he learner is not allowed to sit passively while the instructor reviews the main thrust of the learning experience for him. … the learner is his own teacher.” John Henry (Cardinal) Newman dubs this ‘Liberal education’, and states that this is the role of true education: “Liberal education, viewed in itself, is simply the cultivation of the intellect, as such, and its object is nothing more or less than intellectual
excellence” (Newman, 1986, p. 92). Once the capacity to think and reason has been strengthened, it can be employed in every area of life thereafter.

5 Objectivity II – Inhibiting the Effects of Complexes in Daily Life

As discussed, a complex is activated by the re-experience of circumstances similar to those that caused it. In these circumstances, the mind reacts based on past experiences – a particular aspect of the situation is perceived as having a pre-conceived, personally significant meaning. This personalisation of the experience is the gateway through which the complex enters, as it were, into the personality, thereafter functioning as the controlling entity within it. To view a usually emotionally-significant situation impersonally is to see it less as something of significance to oneself alone. A fundamental concept at the basis of Naikan therapy for example is “that a narrow focus on the self leads to neurotic and painful outcomes” (Ivey et al., 1997, p. 149); and “most depressed clients in North America focus very much on themselves and can benefit from focusing outward and seeing themselves in a relational context” (ibid.). One’s egocentric attitude is thus suspended as one appraises the situation from a wider perspective. Thus the personalised reaction that would otherwise normally occur is inhibited, the situation does not ‘impinge’ upon the mind’s collection of past experiences. With reactions based on present assessment rather than past experiences, one establishes a wider latitude for action.

5.1 Maintaining Objectivity – Pursuing an Ideal

It is the intellect that maintains this impersonal interest, inhibiting the tendency of the mind to personalise an experience. This objectivity arises as a result of pursuing an ideal in life. An ideal is “a goal beyond your self-centred, selfish interest in the world” (Parthasarathy, 2007, p. 100). To consider as primary the needs of others or the demands of the situation in general displaces the exaggerated focus on one’s own personal, egocentric ‘meaning structures;’ it diminishes the personalised outlook. Put another way, one cannot explicitly ask, ‘What does this situation demand?’ without implicitly stating that it be ‘Despite my personalised demands.’ Personality theorists such as Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers and Alfred Adler indicate that psychologically mature or well-adjusted individuals tend to have a healthy social interest, or positive regard for others (Ewen, 2003; Meyer et al., 2003). Such individuals “have the ability to view matters objectively and critically. They can therefore perceive themselves and their circumstances realistically” (Meyer et al. 2003, p. 448); they “recognise reality for what it is … [they] do not need to observe reality through the template of their own desires, anxieties, fantasies or cultural stereotypes. This is what makes their observation so much more accurate.” (Ibid:345); they have a “[m]ore accurate perception of reality. Self-actualizing people are freer of unwarranted optimism, pessimism, and other defensive distortions of reality. They are able to evaluate people and events with considerable accuracy” (Ewen, 2003, p. 225). Crabtree (1984, p. 27) summarises Adler’s view thus: “To avoid neurosis social goals must replace individual goals; the antidote to neurosis is community feeling.” It is the intellect that pitches up this ideal in life, consciously maintains awareness of it, and channels the activities of the mind towards it.

To speak of a ‘higher’ or ‘wider’ ideal is to refer to the extent to which it encompasses a wider range of potential relationships. The ideal could be to serve family, community, nation, all humanity, or all living beings now and in the future. However, the ideal chosen must be realistic for the individual: not beyond the capacity of the intellect to reasonably envisage, nor beyond the capacity for the mind to appreciate emotionally. Pursuit of an ideal brings a fundamental change in one’s attitude towards all situations to which the ideal pertains, and this attitude keeps one emotionally balanced throughout life.

6 Conclusion

The understanding of human psychopathology is essential for the well-being of a society. As each person strives to become a healthier individual in themselves, they contribute to the health of the entire body of the community. Objectivity is a measure of a person’s psychological health or maturity. Lack of objectivity distorts accurate assessment of oneself and the world; it opens the door for complex formation; and it provides fertile ground for existing complexes to become activated. The current need for the continued material and psychological well-being of humanity is thus the development of objectivity; the application of reason; the strengthening of intellect. Ranganathananda (1986, p. 296): “Creative thinking is the sure sign of the onset of social health. All growth, development, and progress flows from thinking”; Wilber (2000, p. 206), in
summarising the current state of human development: “it seems to be the case that the vast majority of the world’s population [needs] ways to get up to [rationality] … the single greatest world transformation would simply be the embrace of global reasonableness and pluralistic tolerance”; Parthasarathy (2008, p. 54) is more forcefully insistent: “People have lost their faculty to think, to reason … Humans must revive it for their survival.”

Since the prevention and inhibition of complexes in life is dependent upon a functioning intellect, it is suggested that subject matter and teaching methods be introduced at an early age (12–15 years) to promote intellectual development. As Dr Martin Luther King, Jr wrote in 1947, “Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education. The complete education gives one not only power of concentration, but worthy objectives upon which to concentrate.” (King, 1947, n.p.). The development of the intellect and the pursuit of an ideal come with the study and reflection upon the knowledge of higher values. By introducing this subject into the curriculum, unhealthy complexes will be prevented before they can form, as objectivity fortifies individuals against being adversely affected by life’s traumatic experiences.

Further, public and private enterprise have a responsibility to implement training programs to do the same. Ongoing training forms a significant part of most companies’ budgets. In 2009 US companies spent USD714 per learner, and the total training spending was USD48.2 billion – this too in time of recession (O’Leonard, 2009); and for UK companies in 2010, 78% were found to have training budgets, half of which are over GBP200,000 (Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development, The, 2010).

Such training programs could be viewed as part of an organisation’s corporate social responsibility (CSR). A review of CSR by Wood (1991, p. 694) states that “the social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time”; that “business corporations have an obligation to work for social betterment”; that CSR is “the firm’s consideration of, and response to, issues beyond the narrow economic, technical, and legal requirements of the firm … [to] accomplish social benefits along with the traditional economic gains which the firm seeks.” She further summarises: “The basic idea of corporate social responsibility is that business and society are interwoven rather than distinct entities” (ibid, p. 695). Rionda (2002, p. 2) states of CSR that “beyond making profits, companies are responsible for the totality of their impact on people and the planet.”

True CSR therefore is not merely ensuring profitability by managing ‘social risk,’ the pressure stakeholders apply to a corporation (e.g. Kytie & Ruggie, 2005). CSR should not simply be a response to an organisation’s perceived vulnerability that develops as its activities grow into a wider sphere of influence. It should include the initiative to promote the personal development of employees independently of any motivation for the company’s benefit. This is not to say that a company should engage in activities without being mindful of the potential effects on its business – as the UK government states, CSR is “the voluntary actions that business can take … to address both its own competitive interests and the interests of wider society” (UK Department for Business Innovation & Skills, n.p.). However, a company can accept its role in the wider community and act towards its benefit. Therefore, while the strengthening and application of the intellect can only come about through one’s own individual efforts, and thus the responsibility for the development of the intellect lies primarily with the individual, it is the responsibility of a society to support and encourage these efforts – by direct input of resources from both public and private entities.

7 References