PET-ORIENTED CHILD PSYCHOTHERAPY

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Boris M. Levinson was Professor of Psychology at the Ferkauf Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Yeshiva University in New York City. Dr. Levinson was also a Diplomat in Clinical Psychology and a member of the American Board of Examiners in Professional Psychology. After his retirement from full-time teaching, Dr. Levinson was appointed Professor Emeritus and accepted a position as Director of the Human/Companion Animal Therapy Program at the Blueberry Treatment Center for Children in Brooklyn, New York, a center for autistic children. After a distinguished career that spanned four decades, Dr. Levinson died in 1984.

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Second Edition

By

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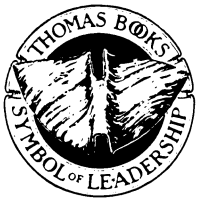

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This book is dedicated to Jingles, my co-therapist,
To whom I owe more than he owes me;
Who taught me more than I taught him;
Who unveiled a new world of experience for me;
Who doesn't care whether this book is dedicated to him or not;
And who will never learn about it.

Original Dedication Made By Boris Levinson in 1969

PREFACE

Boris Levinson was the first professionally trained clinician to formally introduce and document the way that companion-animals could hasten the development of a rapport between therapist and patient thereby increasing the likelihood of patient motivation. Originally ridiculed by his colleagues for presenting such a "preposterous" technique, he continued to pursue his work nonetheless. This book, originally published by Charles C Thomas in 1969, was the first work to document the technique which Levinson originally referred to as "Pet-Oriented Psychotherapy." Although still frequently cited by those conducting research in the field (Rowan, 1995, pp. 130–131), *Pet-Oriented Child Psychotherapy,* has been out of print for many years. It is reproduced here in its original form; not one word has been deleted. However, in an effort to update and revise the text (which Dr. Levinson always wanted to have done), footnotes have been added to identify and illuminate research and practices which have taken place since the original publication. In addition, a list of Resources is included in the Appendix.

Before looking at Levinson's most popular work, it seems fitting that readers have an opportunity to get to know Levinson the man and to review his work and life. During the course of my work as a "Levinson scholar," I met and interviewed many people who knew Dr. Levinson. Each person recalled the respect that they had for him as an innovator, but few knew the man behind the work. Even fewer hypothesized about the motivation for his introduction of the "pet therapy technique". Everyone agreed, however, that he was a generous man. His wife, Aida Levinson, perhaps, said it best:

> My only regret, is that you could not have met him yourself. If he were alive he would have been more than happy to spend time with you, to talk to you about his work. He was a generous, generous man. He was a good friend to many people, a kind, genuine, generous, honest and gentle man (A. Levinson, interview, February 17, 1994).

THE MOTIVATION BEHIND THE MAN

Background

Boris Mayer Levinson was born in Kalvarijah, Lithuania on July 7, 1907. He and his family immigrated to the United States in 1923, when he was a teenager. Friends said he spoke with a heavy accent (Mira Rothenberg, interview, April 19, 1993). The Levinsons settled in the East New York section of Brooklyn, which at the time, was a farming community. Reflecting back on his early days in this country and noting society's estrangement from nature, Levinson recalled, the following in his last published work:

> It reminds me of the time in my youth when I lived in East New York, on the outskirts of New York City. Ours was the last house within the city limits and only a hundred yards away there was a dairy farm where we could purchase milk. When I last visited that old neighborhood, I found that the farm had disappeared and that the entire area, as far as the eye could see, had been built up (1984b, p. 11).

These early influences of nature and animals may have influenced his later development of the "pet therapy technique" and to an awareness that humans were becoming more and more disconnected from their environments (See also Levinson, 1972b).

Graduating from Eastern District High School in Brooklyn, Levinson became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1930. He married his first wife, Ruth Berkowitz, in 1934; they had two sons, David and Martin. He was educated at the City University of New York, receiving his Bachelor of Science in 1937. One year later, Levinson earned a Master's of Science in Education. In 1947, he was awarded a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from New York University (Leaders in American Science, p. 417). In 1974, he married his second wife, Aida Penaranda, a diplomat from Bolivia. A deeply spiritual man, Levinson was raised in the Jewish faith (the Ashkenazi line) and was a Talmudic scholar. His spirituality was evident in his writings as the following illustrates.

> Unfortunately, the climate of man's spiritual life has become much polluted by fear, insecurity, loneliness, frustration, and anxiety. We are afraid to feel, to experience, to commit ourselves to a goal. We want to love but find that our love is misplaced, misunderstood or that a monetary value is placed upon it. Pets, paradoxical as it may seem, can help to rehumanize society because they meet many needs not fulfilled by the present social structures. Pets upgrade the quality

> of life, bring us closer to nature, provide companionship and emphasize the fact that animals must be accepted as desirable participants in society (Levinson, 1972a, p. 5).

One interviewee noted that Levinson's writing had a spiritual bent and suggested that it was this spiritual connection with humans and animals that kept the scientific community from fully accepting his ideas (Linda Hines, Executive Director of the Delta Society, interview, February 4, 1994).

Professionally, Levinson was a psychoanalytically trained child psychologist. His official biography indicates that he was a Professor of Psychology at the Ferkauf Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Yeshiva University in New York, a Diplomate in Clinical Psychology, and a member of the American Board of Examiners in Professional Psychology. He was remembered by a student as "an austere, very tough, no nonsense professor. Everybody was terrified of him" (M. Rothenberg, interview, April 19, 1993).

In 1972, after his retirement from full-time teaching at Yeshiva University, Levinson was appointed as Professor Emeritus and, additionally, accepted a position as Director of the Human/Companion Animal Therapy program at the Blueberry Treatment Center for Children in Brooklyn, New York—a center for autistic children. In stark contrast to his reputation as a rigorous academician, Levinson was described by the same colleague while at Blueberry, as:

> A wonderful man. He was loving and warm—he loved the children. He came everyday with Jingles, but the children never called the dog Jingles; they all called him—Levinson. They loved Grandpa Boris. He was completely different from that person who taught at Yeshiva (M. Rothenberg, interview, April 19, 1993).

Levinson was a prolific writer, with an active and creative mind who was constantly exploring new techniques and approaches to healing those who were emotionally troubled (Levinson and Mezei, 1973; Levinson, 1975a, 1976, 1979b). In speaking about his work, Mrs. Levinson noted:

> He was first a researcher. He was always working on something—a new idea, a new article. In fact, he kept a small light and paper by his bed at night so that if he had an idea in the middle of the night, he could write it down. He then clipped all of his ideas together and then wrote about them. He wrote so well that some people thought it was easy. He just made it look easy—he worked very hard at it (A. Levinson, interview, February 17, 1994).

Levinson's first published articles were not about animals or children, but about men from the Bowery area of New York City. Levinson's doctoral dissertation, entitled "A Comparative Study of Certain Homeless and Unattached Domiciled Men (Levinson, 1947), established him as a pioneer in the study of homeless men. He continued to study this population throughout his career (1958a, 1963, and 1966),

But he had wide research interests as well. These included: the psychological traits of children of traditional Jewish backgrounds (1959); childhood autism (1980a, Levinson and Osterweil, 1984); mental retardation (1958b, 1959) and, of course, animal-assisted therapy.

"PET THERAPY"

In 1961, Levinson presented a paper to his colleagues at the Annual American Psychological Association Conference in New York City in which he first officially described Pet Therapy, specifically reporting on cases where the success of the treatment "was attributed largely to the function of a dog featured in the therapy constellation" (Levinson, 1962, p. 60). Recalling what he termed "the accidental discovery" of the technique, Levinson, recounted, in his now famous story involving Jingles, how he began to develop insight into the possibility of utilizing a dog as an accessory in the treatment of a severely withdrawn child whom he had treated in 1953. At the time, he "rejected any thought of pursuing the subject further because it seemed much too unorthodox" (p. 60)—but, by 1961, he decided to share his findings at the conference, stating that he was at a stage (of professional security) where he no longer hesitated to modify accepted therapeutic principles if he felt that the patient would benefit. As was his custom in all of his subsequent articles, Levinson concluded his first article, by raising questions and calling for a definite research program into his newly proposed technique.

Talking about companion animals and their role in the therapeutic process, made many clinicians uncomfortable. Perhaps in response to their own discomfort, many professionals ridiculed Levinson and belittled his findings, even making disparaging remarks about his work (Levinson, 1969a). Rogers (1963) identified this response as a general reaction and resistance to new psychotherapeutic techniques. Others, however, (Corson and Corson, 1973; Quaytman, 1963; Weigel, R.G. and Straumfjord, A.A. 1969), were intrigued and began to examine the impact of animals on humans.

In fact, Levinson and colleagues, surveyed a random sample of 435 psychotherapists (50% of the membership) for the Clinical Division of the New York State Psychological Association on the extent to which pets were recommended by psychotherapists, as therapeutic aides. Thirty-three percent of the 319 who replied had utilized pets as therapeutic aides. Of those, 91 percent found them useful (1972a, p. 154).

Levinson's first article is important not only because it was one of the first contributions to the professional literature published in the human-companion animal bond field (Bossard said similar things in a 1944 article, also in *Mental Hygiene*), but because it lays the foundation for future research and ideas. However, it was his second article (Levinson, 1964) that first coined the term "Pet Therapy" (p. 243).

This article further defined Levinson's approach and pointed out that pets are useful in two ways: "first, as psychotherapeutic aides, i.e., as catalytic agents helpful in speeding up therapy in the therapist's office, and second, as aides in psychotherapy, i.e., being placed in the homes of emotionally disturbed children where they tend to restore a healthy communication between members of a family (Levinson, 1964, p.248).

The article was also reprinted as a chapter in a book that addressed issues in Residential Treatment for children and youth (Whittaker and Trieschman, 1972) and was the first apparent recognition of Levinson's pet-therapy by child welfare professionals. Levinson was an advocate for utilizing animals with children in residential treatment and wrote extensively about it (Levinson, 1971; 1979a; 1980a; 1983b). He also surveyed the utilization of pets in residential schools (Levinson, 1968a) and found that most did not permit pets in the schools. He also found that it was not universally acknowledged that children needed love objects and that poor self-concept and depression found in children who reside in residential centers "may stem from the fact that these children do not have someone to love, care for, be protective towards, and have confidence in" (p. 413). Twenty three years later, Mallon (1994a) found that a dog in a children's residential center played an important role as confidant.

In 1968, Levinson contributed a chapter (1968b) to a book which discussed abnormal behavior in animals (Fox, 1968), in which he focused on the interpersonal relationships between pets and human beings. The chapter outlined nine areas for discussion: the historical relationship between man and animal; the symbolic meaning of an animal; the child and his pet; the child and his or her fear of animals; the pet and the

family; the pet and the child's bereavement; the role of the pet in old age; the pet in psychodiagnosis and therapy; and once again, he writes about the veterinarian and mental hygiene (see also Levinson, 1965a).

PET-ORIENTED CHILD PSYCHOTHERAPY

In 1969, Charles C Thomas published the first of three books by Levinson (1969a). This book, reproduced here, was the first comprehensive text to discuss methods of utilizing animals in the treatment of emotionally disturbed children. In the introduction, Levinson states:

> The thesis of this book is that contact with the inanimate and particularly the animate world via the pets is most important to a wholesome emotional development (p. xiv).

It was at this point that Levinson stopped calling his technique "pet-therapy" and moved to a broader characterization, renaming it "pet-oriented child psychotherapy." He relied heavily on the concepts of contact comfort (Harlow, 1958; Harlow and Zimmerman, 1959) and on transitional object relations (Winnicott, 1953) to provide a grounding for pet-oriented child psychotherapy, as well as on the work of major figures in child development and attachment (Bender and Rapoport, 1944; Erikson, 1963 and 1968; Piaget and Inhelder, 1952; Searles, 1960; Spitz 1960; and Winnicott, 1965). According to him, the young nonverbal, the inhibited, the autistic, the withdrawn, the obsessive-compulsive, and the culturally disadvantaged child would benefit most from pet-oriented psychotherapy. Nonetheless, Levinson also warns that "using pets is not a magic solution to the 'inner world' of the child" (p. 71).

Throughout the development of his ideas about pet-oriented psychotherapy, Levinson expanded his interests to include a variety of populations. While he maintained a primary focus on its theoretical applicability for children (1965b; 1970c; 1972c; 1978; 1980b) Levinson began to focus more on applications for the aged as he grew older. Levinson's (1969b) article addressed the use of animal-assisted therapy with the elderly and encouraged professionals in the field of aging to explore its applicability. For example, Levinson and his associates (Levinson, 1970a; 1970b) identified possible benefits of the therapy as including: opportunities for touch, alleviation of loneliness; exercise; and companionship.

Levinson's (1972a) second book expands his ideas about the technique of pet-oriented psychotherapy for children to include other populations.

The theme of reconnecting humans to animals and nature in an attempt to rehumanize them and as a means of assisting them in their own developmental processes is also strongly represented in this work. While this theme of human-animal-environment interconnection is found in many of his writings, Levinson, however, also found it necessary to make a cautionary statement about the limits of animal-assisted therapy. In the prologue, he writes:

> It has by no means been the intention of this writer to indicate that pets are a panacea for all the ills of society or for the pain involved in growing up and growing old. However, pets are both an aid to and a sign of the rehumanization of society. They are an aid in that they help to fill needs which are not being met in other, perhaps better ways, because society makes inadequate provision for meeting them. In the meantime, animals can provide some relief, give much pleasure and remind us of our origins (p. 3).

Gaining international recognition for his work, Levinson (1975b) was asked to present a paper entitled, "Pets and Environment" at a conference in London, England. He told colleagues that the English rolled out the red carpet for him and the British press called him "The Freud of Dog Therapy" (M. Rothenberg, interview, April 19, 1993). The paper which he presented later appeared in a book edited by Ronald S. Anderson.

Until 1973, Levinson's development had largely been self-constructed, with little or no contribution from other professionals. However, in the early 1970s, Corson and Corson of Ohio State University, began working with some of Levinson's techniques, conducting one of the earliest pet-facilitated psychotherapy studies using a colony of 20 dogs at Upham Hall Psychiatric Hospital. They reported encouraging results in 28–30 patients who had failed to respond to traditional treatment including electro-shock therapy and psychotropic medications. Corson and Corson continued to work on the development of this technique and made significant contributions to its legitimacy and acceptance in the scientific community (Corson and Corson, 1973, Corson and Corson et al., 1977).

In 1981, at the International Conference on Human/Companion-Animal Bond, held in Philadelphia, Levinson, along with the Corsons, was presented with The Delta Distinguished Service Award recognizing his outstanding contribution to the Human-Animal Bond field. In a letter to the Mrs. Levinson after his death, the founder and the executive director of the Delta Society wrote:

> We recall the happy times we had with both of you at the Philadelphia meeting in 1981, and remember his insightful presentation . . . he was truly a pioneer and made outstanding contributions to our understanding of the human-animal bond. With your permission we would like to establish a Boris Levinson Memorial Research Award (L. Bustad and L. Hines, personal correspondence, April 9, 1984).

In response, Mrs. Levinson granted her permission to establish the award and wrote: "One of his greatest honors was to have been the recipient of the Delta Distinguished Service Award" (A. Levinson, personal correspondence, April 23, 1984).

As a long time proponent for research, Levinson (1982) initiated a discussion concerning the future of research into relationships between people and their animal companions. In a paper presented to the International Conference, he noted that while the field of animal-human relationships had become respected as a legitimate area of scientific investigation, that it was not, as yet, a full-fledged discipline, "having still to develop a name, a theory, and a methodology of its own" (p. 283). While noting that knowledge was not the result of methodology, Levinson called on professionals in the field to examine various methodologies, advocating for the utilization of both intuitive and scientific approaches in an effort to encompass the full richness of the animal-human interaction.

He specifically called for investigation into four areas: the role of animals in various human cultures and ethnic groups over the centuries; the effect on human personality development of association with animals; human-animal communication and the therapeutic use of animals in formal psychotherapy, institutional settings, and residential arrangements for handicapped and aged populations" (p. 283). Throughout the paper, Levinson outlined each area and delineated "fruitful avenues for researchers" to investigate. Levinson continued this discussion in the foreword to a book on animals in the helping professions (Arkow, 1984). (Levinson, 1984b).

Levinson continued to write and speak on the human/companion animal therapy (a term he coined in 1984—Levinson 1984a) until on April 2, 1984, while working with one of his beloved children at the Blueberry Treatment Center for Children, Boris Mayer Levinson suffered a fatal heart attack and died. If it was possible for one to choose where they would spend their last moments on this earth, Levinson would probably have chosen to be with "his children." Levinson (1983a), then 76 years old, called his job as a therapist to severely disturbed, autistic,

nonverbal children at Blueberry's Treatment Center "the most fulfilling one I ever had." He noted that the experience had helped him to gain insight into himself and to "discover his repressed feminine qualities of nurturance and protectiveness" (p.253).

> I want to care for, touch, be with my children, I miss them on weekends. They are my children and I love them all. I joyfully join in the barking of one child, rock along with another, make funny noises with a third, I am called Grandpa Boris. I want to help my children and only them (even though I know that the world outside is going to hell!). After all, doesn't the Talmud say that if you save one person it as though you saved the world? (Levinson, 1983, p. 253).

A generous, kind, and gentle man, Boris Levinson is remembered for his valuable scholarly and personal contributions to the human-animal bond movement.

INTRODUCTION

The World Is Too Much With Us
William Wordsworth (1770–1850)

The world is too much with us: late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not—Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

Long ago, poets foresaw the lonely dilemma that would descend upon a mankind[1] which had divorced itself from the elemental processes of nature. Today, the predictions of Wordsworth have sadly come to be. Alienation is widespread in our society. Man finds that he is a stranger to himself. He surfeits in this largess and cries out in his anxiety. He apparently lost the key to self-understanding. Man's anxiety is partly due to his withdrawal from the healing forces of nature and its foremost representatives, the animal kingdom. No longer able to identify with nature and its representatives, man finds himself in a psychological no-man's land. He may be able to regain some of his emotional harmony by reestablishing his bond with the animate and inanimate world.[2] Through identification, this process proceeds in three stages: first, with inanimate nature; then with the animate nonhuman world; and finally with human beings. "The disharmony of man's existence generates needs which far transcend those of his animal origin. These needs result in an imperative drive to restore a unity and equilibrium between himself and the rest of nature" (Fromm, 1955).

Pets represent a half-way station on the road back to emotional well-being. This is why the possession of a pet is so important for the alienated, and why pets are so helpful in handling childhood behavior disorders.

The thesis of this book is that contact with the inanimate and particularly the animate world via the pet is most important to a wholesome emotional development. We can start tracing this with the infant. The child, to borrow a phrase from William James (1890), is born into "great, blooming, buzzing confusion." At first, the young child feels omnipotent and cannot differentiate between inner sensations and outer reality. Many authorities think (Des Lauriers, 1967; Freud, 1965, Piaget, 1952, Searles, 1960, Werner, 1957) that the infant does not feel the difference between self and nonself or the world at large. The infant lives in an omnipotent state where he and the world are a unity.

As the child begins to explore the world, many authorities believe that the haptic modality is the first sense modality to emerge. Searles (1960) suggests that "the earliest modality of experience is mediated via tactual-kinesthetic sensations" (p.33). The child will try to explore the world using this modality and he will begin to differentiate the inner reality and outer world in terms of haptic manipulation and will tend to learn about the world at first from touch and later from vision. As the infant begins to feed, the mother nourishes him and supplies him with the warmth, cuddling, and softness that the child associates with love and security. He touches his mother. She is soft and seems to be yielding, succorant, and comforting. This reinforces innate feelings. He begins to associate soft touch sensations, sensations pleasing to the haptic senses, as productive of security. As a matter of fact, the desire for "contact comfort" (Harlow, 1958) with a soft mother appears to be unlearned. This is the inference drawn from the studies made by Harlow (1958) of the behavior of very young monkeys in their responses to soft cloth "mothers" and to wire "mothers."

Very young monkeys were reared singly in uncomfortable cages which had two mother figures: a "wire mother" and a "cloth mother." Behind each mother there was a light bulb providing warmth and each mother could be equipped with a nursing bottle attached to its "breast." One group of monkeys had their cloth mothers equipped with nursing bottles and another group of monkeys had their wire mothers similarly equipped . . . Both groups spent relatively more time with the cloth mother than with the wire mother in spite of the fact that only one group secured its nourishment from the cloth mother (Harlow, 1958).

Needless to say, one must be careful in generalizing from animal behavior to human behavior. However, the preference for the cloth "mother" was quite clear because apparently while "both mothers provided the basic known requirements for adequate nursing, only the cloth mother provided an additional variable of contact comfort" (Harlow and Zimmerman, 1959). We may infer that contact with something soft symbolizes to very young children feelings of comfort, security, and love.

In this connection, it is interesting to note that in a study made of "Cuddlers" and "Non-Cuddlers," i.e., very young children who did and did not actively seek physical contact with their mothers, it was established that it was "not contact per se that is avoided by Non-Cuddlers but only the restrictions of movement that is involved in certain of the contact situations" (Schaffer and Emerson, 1964). Both groups of children avidly sought contact with their mothers.

It need not surprise us, therefore, that most children at the age of four to twelve months acquire "transitional objects" which become the child's most treasured possession (Winnicott, 1953). Interestingly, the "transitional object" is usually something soft, a piece of blanket or a soft toy. Apparently, contacting and touching something soft, warm and cuddly satisfies some of the infant's inner needs, is reassuring and is another reason why a soft cuddly animal is so important. The need for a "transitional object" is normal and indicates that a beginning is being made in reconciling reality and fantasy. As the normal child grows older and develops other interests, his need for the "transitional object" decreases until it disappears. However, in times of crisis or emotional tension, the transitional object may become "a defense against anxiety," which for the child is a safe and innocuous way of lessening anxiety (Stevenson, 1954).

Generally speaking, the warm cuddly pet is usually a "treasured possession" (Stevenson, 1954) which can become the transitional object bridging the development from a state of primary narcissistic omnipotence to that of the beginning of relationship to the real (object) world.

However, if the "transitional object" continues to be a symbol of security, a comforter and a refuge when the pressure of relating and unifying inner fantasy life and other reality experiences into a unified whole become unbearable, it may be considered a regressive manifestation of withdrawal (Stevenson, 1954). This occasionally happens with children and with adults who withdraw from life and spend all their time

with a pet. Nevertheless, in this writer's opinion, it is to be preferred to a complete narcissistic withdrawal.

Only because modern man seems to have lost sight of non-man-made natural process, is it necessary to state the obvious truth that man is an integral part of nature. Early in the course of his development, man identified intimately with the living and inanimate elements of his environment. At first, we find man worshiping the inanimate forces of the universe such as trees, streams, and nearby mountains. Later, after developing powers of abstraction, we see him worshiping and endowing with human traits the heavenly constellations and the elementary forces of nature such as wind and fire. With his kinship for nature, primitive man long continued in awe of animate forces such as the animals and the inanimate forces of the forests and neighboring fields. He projected his fears of the unknown onto the animals and he endowed them with the awful and frightening powers that he felt stirring within himself. In order to placate these powers which could destroy as well as heal, man began to worship and offer to animals precious gifts like first-born children and first fruits of his field.

By domesticating an animal, man demonstrated his kinship to nature. This friendship was expressed by adopting various species of animal life as pets even before any economic benefits were evident. Psychologically, this was the beginning of a symbiotic relationship between pets and human beings in which man supplied the material needs of the pet while the pet satisfied the psychological needs of his master.

For as long as man continued in his association with nature, terrified as he may have been, he did not feel alienated either from himself or the universe. Today, however, this **kinship** with nature which encompassed all of man's relationship seems to be vanishing. In this very busy twentieth century, man is a lonely creature. There are too many alienated individuals who lack human companionship. They lack purpose and productivity. A simple addition to these lonely lives can sometimes accomplish major changes. The possession of a pet who eagerly awaits one and responds to one's care and attention may mean the difference between maintaining contact with reality or almost total withdrawal into fantasy. Literally, a pet can occasionally represent the difference between life and death.[3]

> Let us admit this and not lie to ourselves that we need the dog as a protection for our house. We **do** need him, but not as a watchdog. I, at least in my dreary foreign towns, have certainly stood in need of dog's company and I have derived

> from the mere fact of his existence, a great sense of inward security, such as one finds in a childhood memory or in the prospect often scenery of one's home country, for me the Blue Danube, for you the White Cliffs of Dover. In the almost film-like flitting-by of modern life, a man needs something to tell him, from time to time, that he is still himself, and nothing can give him this assurance in so comforting a manner as the "four feet trotting behind" (Lorenz, 1952).

However, the reasons for the adoption of pets need closer analysis. In this connection, we must recall that the most popular pet, the dog, looks at the human being as part of his family, part of a mixed pack. A further fact is very important and that is that most animals, and particularly the dog, retained their juvenile characteristics under domestication (Zeuner, 1963). This enhanced the usefulness of animals to primitive man as it tended to bring forth protective and kind feelings toward the animals in question. Searles (1960) hypothesized that various inanimate objects in our environment may be considered as parts of one's anatomy and separation from objects in our environment is equivalent to the loss of parts of our body. I would like to extend this concept in terms of Winnicott's (1953) concept of the "transitional object" and indicate that our immediate environment may function naturally in this way. This, I believe, can be seen clearly in the feeling of personal loss experienced when visiting an old neighborhood where one has spent childhood years and finds the old district destroyed and new buildings substituted. This also happens, at times, when a family is relocated even if the change is from a slum hovel to a modern apartment. This kind of grief and/or anxiety may last for a long time, according to Fried (1963), and stems from "a longing for the remembered security of the early days." The security may or may not have been real, but a familiar environment often provides feelings of security just because even the dangers were known. In this sense, the familiar environment can also become a transitional object.

Psychologists have not studied extensively the problems arising from man's reactions to his physical environment (Wohlwill, 1953). However, as has been noted, man's conquest of nature has not been accompanied by a similar conquest of his inner self and the inner forces which motivate behavior. This, with other factors, brings about widespread alienation. By destroying nature, man alienates himself from his inner being and in a sense commits suicide. Throughout the ages, nature and particularly its animals have assumed for mankind the role of "transitional objects" which mediate between the known terrors of outer reality and

the unknown terrors of the inner world. Unlike the animal, man can adapt himself to all kinds of nonhuman environments. This is at once his virtue and undoing. By removing himself from nature by being independent of nature, man also loses part of his psychological (and physical) strength. Despite man's ever-increasing power over the forces of nature, despite the immeasurable increase in our comfort and wealth for the past fifty years, our feelings of security have not grown commensurably. Paradoxically, the reverse seems to be true. With the increase of man's knowledge and power, there has strangely been a corresponding increase in tensions, fears, anxieties, and lack of ease.

"The world today is sick to its thin blood for lack of elemental things; for fire before the hands, for water welling from the earth, for air, for the dear earth itself underfoot" (Beston, 1928). With the satisfaction of our bodily needs, we discovered that we were chasing after the will-o'-the-wisp and our inward unhappiness has not been assuaged. We learned that what we were striving for was meaningless too. We developed existential despair.

Searles (1960) indicates that when man has the "sense of relatedness" to nature it "helps to assuage man's existential loneliness in the Universe, the loneliness which resides in his knowledge that he, a self-aware, reasoning being, must always stand somewhat apart from the rest of Nature" (p. 122). As a consequence, man began to feel worthless and of no account either to himself or to his fellow human beings or to the universe. It is only by coming back to nature, by developing respect for life in all its manifestations, that man develops respect for himself. During the past few centuries of the development of the modern world, important thinkers have periodically recommended "back to nature" movements. Infinite variations in naturalistic philosophies have been thoroughly propounded. To the Rousseaus, Thoreaus, Bubers and others, the dehumanization and mechanization of the human being with its accompanying illnesses was early apparent. Huxley, (1952) put it succinctly and well when he said: "Only as we discover and assimilate the truth about nature shall we be able to undertake the apparently contradictory but essential task of re-establishing our unity with nature while at the same time maintaining our transcendence over nature" (p. xi).

Further crystallization of the need for a revitalized union with Nature came from Albert Schweitzer, whose overwhelming "reverence for life" brought inspiration to himself and all those around him. Schweitzer felt such intimate identity with all . . . everything on this earth, animate or

inanimate, that he respected and revered everything around him, regardless of how strange or different (Joy, 1950).

Since the discovery of fire, instead of cooperating with nature man frequently fought against it. This fight with nature has created an alienation from self. This was due to the fact, as has been pointed out by Henry (1963), that man was primarily interested in providing for his physical needs: food, shelter and clothing. His spiritual needs, his emotional needs which, as we indicated above, depend so much upon our union with nature, were barely considered. This has further increased man's isolation from nature with a consequent increase in his inner emotional turmoil.

SUMMARY

At different levels in the development of the individual, man needs a feeling of communion with all of nature. This seems to be a common experience for everyone regardless of age or maturity. This need expresses itself in many ways. For some it is the intense yearning for a vacation in the wilderness. In others it is evidenced by an intense interest in the conservation of our natural resources including wildlife and fisheries. For some, it is an expedition at dawn to catch a brief, refreshing glimpse of some rare bird. Millions of city dwellers find faith, comfort, and optimism in the flowering of a begonia plant on the dusting window sill.

Authoritative voices from different disciplines seem today to be making two disparately opposite prognoses for mankind. Some claim that man is on the brink of totally destroying himself and the world in which he lives. Others contend that out of the present scientific maelstrom man will fashion a better organized society, free from material wants and surfeited with the goods of the spirit. All, however, are in accord with the estimate of modern man's loneliness. Some even go so far as to claim that modern man's constant fight against nature is breeding not only man's inhumanity to man but the deterioration of any individual tranquility.

Nevertheless, there seems to be a law of relatedness. A human being must relate to the world outside of himself and the world inside of himself; to things know and unknown; to things awesome, incomprehensible and bigger than himself; to things known and equal to himself and to creatures lesser than himself such as pets.

A human being has to remain in contact with all of nature throughout his lifetime if he is to maintain good mental health.

NOTES

[1]Dr. Levinson uses the masculine pronoun to describe the experience of people throughout this text, as was the custom at the time it was written. Today it would be more appropriate to either identify both genders or to use the more inclusive term "human."

[2]Human estrangement from nature and from the healing process which can occur when a healthy relationship exists between humans and the natural environment, was a recurrent and constant theme throughout Levinson's work. Beck (1990), Beck and Katcher (1987); Bustad (1979) have all written about the importance of contact with natural surroundings and companion animals.

Several authors from the field of social work have written extensively about an ecological view of practice which clearly resonates with Dr. Levinson's work. The ecological perspective focuses professional attention to the person-in-environment. It posits that living organisms and environments can be thought of in terms of an adaptive balance or "goodness of fit." To the extent that the "fit" does not meet the individuals needs, one experiences stress between themselves and the "environmental nutrients" (See Germain, 1973, 1978, 1991; Germain and Gitterman, 1980).

[3]There is a growing body of literature which heralds the benefits of companion animals in the lives of people (Allen, 1985; Anderson, Hart, and Hart 1984; Bikales, 1975; Bryant, 1990; Fogel, 1983; Melson, Strimple, and Bustad, 1992; Mugford, 1980; Netting, Wilson, and New, 1987; Rowan, 1988; Yates, 1973). Many of these citations will be identified within the text of this work.