PROBLEMS IN
DYNAMIC PSYCHOLOGY
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A CRITIQUE OF PSYCHOANALYSIS
AND SUGGESTED FORMULATIONS

BY

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PREFACE

It is only fair to warn the prospective reader of what is before him. This book is not a systematic treatise on psychopathology or psychoanalysis but, rather, a discussion of some of the fundamental problems which must be solved before our knowledge in this field may be accurately systematized. Limitations of space have forced me to omit description of phenomena and to confine myself to exposition of the hypotheses put forward to correlate these phenomena. Some knowledge of psychopathology is therefore necessary for proper understanding of the text, particularly of Part I, which (with the exception of some pages in the chapter on dreams) is purely critical. This knowledge, however, is already possessed by many laymen who have read the current popular literature in this field.

Dynamic psychology is a useful term which covers the study of instincts, motives, emotions and imaginative (or “autistic”) thinking as opposed to the more static functions of attention, perception, memory and similar conscious, logical processes. A rough analogy may make this discrimination clearer. One could observe the various mechanisms in an automobile, see how the pistons turn the crank shaft, how the transmission acts, what the differential does and so on. But all this would throw no light on what makes the engine go. This is a prob-
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lem in thermodynamics. The static, intellectual functions of the mind are like the mechanisms of the automobile; the emotional or instinctive functions are like its thermodynamics.

Dynamic psychology is a relatively new science which has grown up from the observations and speculations of sociologists, anthropologists, criminologists, neurologists and psychiatrists (to a less extent from the work of the psychologist with normal man). Naturally each of them is apt to see the problems from an angle where only some aspects of human behavior are strongly illuminated. Not until work is complete in all these fields and the results collated, can anything like finality be reached in formulation. In the meantime in order to criticize such tentative hypotheses as may be put forward it is well for a reader to know what the professional standpoint of a writer is. A word as to the history of this book is therefore in order.

For ten years I have been interested in the study of those graver mental aberrations which we call psychoses in contradistinction to the milder disturbances known as psychoneuroses. For eight years I have been treating the latter conditions in private practice, largely by psychoanalytic procedures. With the late Dr. August Hoch I began in 1913 a systematic study of the psychology of manic-depressive insanity—those conditions where pathological emotional reactions are the most prominent symptoms. Years before it had been demonstrated by Jung and many other psychiatrists in both Europe and America that the false ideas present in
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the functional psychoses, particularly dementia praecox, were not haphazard and lawless products of a diseased brain but that they were closely analogous to the unconscious ideas discovered by Freud in the dreams of his psychoneurotic patients and available for systematic study. The task in investigation of manic-depressive insanity was to examine the form which delusions took and see if they could be correlated with the other symptoms. The results of this work are not yet published except for one clinical group.¹ The present book represents a by-product of these researches.

The study had not proceeded far before rather definite laws began to appear. Naturally curiosity was aroused as to how close these laws were to those which Freud had expounded, so a careful examination of his theoretic writings was made. In 1913 and 1914 Dr. Hoch and I spent some hundreds of hours together in reading critically what Freud had written. To our surprise it was found that his fundamental principles were not internally consistent. It seemed possible that this was due to the haphazard appearance of his articles, which extended over a period of years, and that he would sometime put all his discoveries together and formulate his views in a systematic way. No published criticism of his theories was therefore undertaken at that time. During these years I was also becoming interested in the psychology of epilepsy and, later, of the war neuroses. These conditions would have been totally incomprehensible had it not been

¹ Hoch, ‘‘Benign Stupors,’’ Macmillan Co., New York, 1921.
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for the light which psychoanalysis had thrown on morbid mental processes, yet these studies seemed to demonstrate that instincts other than the sexual could be responsible not merely for isolated symptoms but for the very core of the abnormal reaction. This naturally excited an interest in the interplay of different instinct groups—a broader field than that of psychoanalysis as it is exposed by Freud and his immediate followers.

The purpose of this book is, therefore, twofold. On the one hand it is an attempt to show from demonstration of the limitations and inconsistencies of Freudian formulations that a broader system is needed, while, on the other, an attempt is made to outline some tentative hypotheses to make good this need. Apology for both parts of the work is in order. The critical portion of the book (mainly in Part I) is unquestionably hard reading. The only excuse I can plead is that I labored long in the attempt to find what Freud really means and discovered such complicated formulations that I could not express nor discuss them more simply than I have done. As for the more constructive portion, it would be folly to claim for this anything more than a temporary and suggestive value. Our science is new and its “laws” must be only working hypotheses. New observations—most likely to come from anthropologists—may upset any theory overnight. The only defence for publication is that the generalizations now appearing are not, in the main, new, but have been tested by applicability to clinical problems for a number of years.
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No attempt has been made to consider the theories of Jung because, quite frankly, I cannot understand them. In so far as I have caught any glimmering of Jung’s meaning it has seemed as if his “psychoanalysis” is mystical rather than scientific in its tendency. Science begins with objectively observable phenomena; its theories have to do with the correlation of these phenomena and must be altered whenever observations are made that conflict with the existing formulations. Mysticism, on the other hand, begins in subjective feelings or convictions which are elaborated into theory with the same type of logic as is used in science. But the primary observation always carries with it a feeling of reality superior to that engendered by objective phenomena. Consequently new observations are invariably interpreted in the light proceeding from the original subjective experience. It may well be that there are, and always will be, truths capable of none but mystical treatment but this method should not masquerade as science.

The situation with Freud is quite different. His original discoveries are truly objective phenomena; his observations can, in the main, be confirmed by any one who takes the necessary pains. It is his reasoning about these phenomena which is at times faulty. The author greatly regrets that it has been impossible within the narrow limits of a small book to expose that which Freud has contributed to dynamic psychology; the iteration of adverse criticism must inevitably give the impression of hostility. As a matter of fact the criticisms would never have been
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attempted except as an effort to modify the hypotheses deduced from his observations into a form compatible with general biological theory. It is better for his admirers to put the psychoanalytic house in order spontaneously than for Freud’s enemies to force revision. So far, the hostile critics have been too ignorant and too blinded by prejudice to deal with the problem intelligently. It is my belief that the greatest service which can be done to psychoanalysis to-day and the most practical form for tribute of gratitude to Freud to take is the dispassionate criticism of his work. His theories cannot endure as they stand and the sooner they assume scientific and logical form the more certain is their immortality.

If the objections taken to Freud’s formulations be sound, the deduction is inevitable that his capacity as a logician is relatively weak as compared with his scientific imagination—that necessary precursor to original observation. But only a handful of supreme geniuses have ever combined the two. Many savants have critical ability to the full but imagination—and the courage to see it through—is a gift of the gods. Columbus had it, yet he died in the belief that he had only landed on the outskirts of Asia. The very names of those who showed his error and demonstrated the separate existence of the continent of America, are forgotten to most educated people. And so they should be. We honor Columbus for his imagination and courage, not for any mean skill as a critical geographer. One ventures to predict that the generations to come will forget
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Freud’s errors and immortalize him as the founder of true dynamic psychology.

In conclusion reference should be made to another scientist, a little less original but more learned, whose essay into the field of psychopathology is treated with more sympathy than agreement by the author. I was privileged to know the friendship of W. H. R. Rivers, whose sudden death cut short a career of unique achievement. Had his strength continued he would probably have lived to see himself recognized as the first man to utilize some of the discoveries of Freud in the solution of fundamental anthropological problems. It is unfortunate that his most popular book, “Instinct and the Unconscious,” should bring his name to the attention of many psychopathologists as an amateur in this field. If one would know his real capacity and the potentiality of his method, let him read “Conservation and Plasticity” (Folk-Lore, Vol. XXXII, No. 1).

Of his relative unfamiliarity with clinical phenomena he was well aware; he welcomed criticisms from this standpoint and had promised me to read over prior to publication the chapter on his work, which was finished only the day before his death.

I wish to record my thanks to Dr. Morton Prince, the editor, for his courtesy in allowing reproduction in the last chapter of large portions of an article published in the Journal of Abnormal Psychology.

J. T. M.