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Explorations in Personality

Explorations in Personality is an account of a three-years* study of fifty young men of college age by twenty-eight psychologists of various schools and persuasions, among whom were three physicians and five psychoanalysts.

The book starts with the exposition of a theory of personality which attempts to reconcile the divergent conceptions of medical and academic psychology. It aims at comprehensiveness, internal coherence, and usability. The focus of attention is always the individual who, while evolving within an ever-changing matrix of social forces, exhibits himself objectively as a unitary force but subjectively as the product of many co-operating or conflicting inner tendencies.

The second part of the book is devoted to the description of numerous different techniques for the systematic study of human behavior under conditions which approximate those of everyday life. The authors were less interested in why a man sees red when he is exposed to light rays of a certain wave length than they were in why he sees red when he is asked to do his boss a favor, or why he sees red when he meets an exponent of collectivism. Special attention was given to the development of techniques for evoking fantasies which would provide data for an orderly investigation of unconscious processes.

The book closes with an account of the results obtained, a long case history being included as an illustration of the order of facts revealed, of the workability of the theory, and the fruitfulness of the procedures.

Academic psychologists may encounter here some facts which have not yet found a place in

textbooks; psychoanalysts with scientific leanings will be interested in the attempt to verify some of their theories experimentally; sociologists will discover that psychology is moving in their direction; and biographers will find most of the elements that have to be considered in interpreting a life history.

Dr. H. A. Murray is a graduate of Harvard, 1915, and the College of Physicians and Surgeons, 1919. A two-years' internship in surgery at the Presbyterian Hospital, New York City, was followed by five years of research in physiology, bio-chemistry, and general biology. Murray conducted researches in the physico-chemistry properties of the blood under Professor L. J. Henderson of Harvard, and in chemical and physiological embryology under Dr. Alfred E. Cohn at the Rockefeller Institute and under Sir F. Garland Hopkins at the University of Cambridge, England, from which university he obtained his doctorate in bio-chemistry.

Becoming interested in the expanding field of medical psychology, Dr. Murray spent some time with Dr. Carl G. Jung of Zurich and a year after his return to the United States became assistant to Dr. Morton Prince, whom he succeeded as director of the Harvard Psychological Clinic when the latter resigned in 1928. In the following years Dr. Murray was trained in psychoanalysis under Dr. Franz Alexander of Chicago and Dr. Harms Sachs of Boston. In World War II, Dr. Murray, " ; Lieutenant-Colonel, M. G, was in charge of the Assessment Staffs of the Office of Strategic Services, for which work he was awarded the Legion of Merit,

EXPLORATIONS IN PERSONALITY

EXPLORATIONS

IN PERSONALITY

A CLINICAL AND EXPERIMENTAL STUDY OF
FIFTY MEN OF COLLEGE AGE

By the Workers at the
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UTHO IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

This Book is Gratefully Dedicated
by its authors

to

MORTON PRINCE

who had the vision, raised the endowment and
was the first director of the Harvard Clinic,

to

SIGMUND FREUD

whose genius contributed the most fruitful
working hypotheses,

to

LAWRENCE J. HENDERSON

whose expositions of scientific procedure
established a methodological standard,

to

ALFRED N. WHITEHEAD

whose philosophy of organism supplied the
necessary underlying generalities,

and to

CARL G. JUNG

whose writings were a hive of great
suggestiveness.

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THE AUTHORS ARE EQUALLY GRATEFUL FOR LESS TANGIBLE
GIFTS ;
THE SERENITY, LOYALTY AND SUPERIOR COMPETENCE OF
MARJORIE C. INGALLS

WHO ORGANIZED AND SUPERINTENDED THE SCHEDULE OF
EXPERIMENTS AND TYPED THE COUNTLESS REPORTS AND THE
WHOLE OF THIS MANUSCRIPT

PREFACE

THIS is a book of many authors. But in writing it our
purpose
was to make an integrated whole, not a mere collection
of articles
on special topics. The planned procedure for achieving
unity
was this : to have all experimenters study the same
series of
individuals with the same concepts actively in mind,
and then
in assembly a meeting being devoted to each case to re-
port their findings and collaborate in accomplishing a
common
purpose : the formulation of the personality of every
subject. The
degree of unity attained is for others, not us, to
judge. Diver-
sity is certainly conspicuous in spots ; so difficult
is it, particu-
larly in psychology, for a group of men to reach and

hold a
common outlook. Indeed, what is now so hard for us to
realize is
that the job was done at all, that for three years the
many authors
of this book were able to work, think and talk together
with en-
joyment and some measure of productiveness.

Four years ago every investigator at the Harvard
Psychological
Clinic was a pioneer with his own chosen area of
wilderness to
map. Each area was an aspect of human personality a
virgin
forest of peculiar problems. Here he lost and sometimes
found him-
self. Though there were plenty of opportunities for
communica-
tion, his obligations to other experimenters were
minimal and he
was free to follow the wilful drifts of his own elusive
thought. He
enjoyed, in other words, relative autonomy in a
Jeffersonian
democracy of researchers an atmosphere that is ttfearth
to the
nostrils of every seeker after hidden truth.

All we workers were bound by a common compulsion : to
inquire into the nature of man ; and by a common faith
: that ex-
periment would prove fruitful. We devoted ourselves,
therefore,
to the observation of human beings responding to a
variety of
controlled conditions, conditions which resembled as
nearly as
possible those of everyday life. Our emphasis was upon
emotional

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and behavioural reactions, what previous experiences
determined
them, to what degree and in what manner. This
preoccupation

set our studies somewhat outside the university tradition. For it has been the custom in academic psychology to concentrate upon the perceptive and cognitive functions of the human mind or, more recently, upon the behaviour of animals.

The usual procedure at the Clinic was to compare the responses of a group of subjects in two contrasting situations ; each experiment having been devised to validate or contradict a prediction that if conditions were modified in a particular way the responses would also be modified in a particular way. The results which we obtained by following this well attested plan were, in general, of this nature : a majority perhaps seventy per cent of the subjects manifested the predicted change, but a minority reacted otherwise. One result, for instance, was this : after trying to complete a number of tasks, the majority remembered their successes better than their failures. Another was this : that the majority remembered best the tasks on which they had cheated. Yet another was this : that the majority persisted longer in an attempt to perform a mental operation after they had been humiliated in their initial attempt than they did after they had been commended. Now a statistical result of this kind may often be reservedly accepted as partial proof of the operation of a separable factor, but such a result conceals, as Lewin has pointed out, the other important forces, not selected for observation, which contributed to the common (exhibited-by-the-majority) response. In lay words, the subjects who gave the majority response may have done so

for different reasons. Furthermore, a statistical answer leaves unexplained the uncommon (exhibited-by-the-minority) response. One can only ignore it as an unhappy exception to the rule. Averages obliterate the ' individual characters of individual organisms' (Whitehead), and so fail to reveal the complex interaction of forces which determines each concrete event.

Thus we were driven to the conclusion that the indecisiveness of our results was the inevitable outcome of a deficient method. The correct formulation of an experimental finding must, we came

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to feel, include more personality factors or ' variables ' as they are called than the one which the given procedure had been devised to set in motion. Additional factors intuitively apperceived by an experimenter were of some aid in interpreting the results, but they were insufficient and there was no adequate proof of their operation.

We should, perhaps, have anticipated this conclusion since we were accustomed to conceive of personality as a temporal integrate of mutually dependent processes (variables) developing in time, and from this conception it follows that a large number of determining variables as well as their relations must be recognized, and approximately measured, if one is to give an adequate interpretation analysis and synthesis of a single human event.

Since it is impossible to distinguish all these variables simultaneously, they must be discovered one at a time on separate occasions.

This conclusion led to our first important decision, which was : that all experimenters should use one and the same group of subjects. Each worker continued as before with his own problem, but under the new plan he had the findings of other observers to aid him in the interpretation of his results.

It then occurred to us that interpretation might be still further facilitated if we knew more about the past experiences and the aptitudes of the subjects. Our second decision followed : to add a number of interviews, free association hours and psychological tests to the schedule of experiments. The purpose of the entire procedure was to place at the disposal of each experimenter a wealth of information about his subjects and thus to assist him in interpreting his results and arriving at generally valid psychological laws. This was our initial intent, and since it will not be referred to again, I take this opportunity to express the opinion that the reason why the results of so many researches in personality have been misleading or trivial is that experimenters have failed to obtain enough pertinent information about their subjects. Lacking these facts accurate generalizations are impossible.

As I have said, our primary aim was to discover some of the principles that governed human behaviour, but as soon as we be-

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gan to assemble and attempt to organize the biographical data we discovered that we were involved in a deeper and more fundamental problem : the problem of how to conceive of an individual life history. What should we agree to mean by the term ' personality * ? What are the fundamental variables in terms of which a personality may be comprehensively and adequately described ? Before we could compare and organize the results of different experiments it was necessary to construct a conceptual scheme which every experimenter would understand, agree to use and find efficient. This we tried to do. But, as might have been anticipated, we fell short of the goal. Even at the end, after many revisions, we could not think of our scheme as more than a rude array of concepts to classify our findings.

In our explorations each session 'session' being the general term which we shall use to denote a planned meeting between an experimenter (E) and a subject (S), whether it be a conference, a routine test or an experiment was designed to reveal a certain segment of the personality ; that is, to incite and thus bring into relief particular processes, or variables. Though it is supposed that personality is at all times an integral whole that the constituent processes are functionally inseparable it is clear that not all situations provoke the same, variable to the same extent, and, consequently, it can be said that a specific situation

serves to isolate, or dissect, a specific part of the personality. This part can rarely be understood by itself, but it can be studied as a clue to the general structure of the personality. These considerations have led us to the conclusion that if after assembling the results of many sessions the structure of the whole can be formulated, then each session may be reinterpreted interpreted in such a way that it conforms to all the other sessions.

Now, to carry out this procedure to conduct a long series of sessions and to organize the findings from all of them into an intelligible portrait of a subject called for the cooperation of the entire staff. Each experimenter had to relinquish some of his dearly prized freedom. He had to use the terminology of a constantly revised scheme of thought, to arrange the time of his ex-

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periments to fit in with others and to participate in lengthy conferences. It seemed that to obtain the desired comprehensive formulations this amount of collaboration was necessary, yet there was the question of whether for each experimenter the goal was worth the partial sacrifice of intellectual independence. We did not wish to succumb to the great American compulsion to cooperate if it was not clearly necessary. The prospect of what might be achieved, however, appealed to us and so we made our plans and worked together, with many changes in our company,

for
three years.

It is true that we never completely succeeded in merging our separate ideologies. How could such a thing come to pass in a group composed of poets, physicists, sociologists, anthropologists, criminologists, physicians ; of democrats, fascists, communists, anarchists ; of Jews, Protestants, Agnostics, Atheists ; of pluralists, monists, solipsists ; of behaviourists, configurationists, dynamicists, psycho-analysts ; of Freudians, Jungians, Rankians, Adlerians, Lewinians, and Allportians ? To the fact that we never found a language suitable to all, that some of the experimenters entertained reservations to the last, the reader can ascribe some of the annoyance or pleasure he may experience when here and there throughout the book he encounters varieties of terminology or theory.

During the two and a half years of research fifty-one male subjects of college age were interviewed and tested. The first group, intensively studied over a two-weeks period, was composed of young men drawn from the ranks of the unemployed. All the rest of our subjects were college men. The second group composed of eleven students was studied over a period of three weeks, the third group of thirteen over a period of two months, and the fourth group of fifteen, in a more leisurely fashion, over a period of six months. No subject had any knowledge of the theories and practices of psychology. The college students were so chosen by the

Harvard Employment Office that the Arts and the Sciences, high scholarship and low scholarship were equally represented. They were paid for their services at the current wage.

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It has seemed to us that more progress could be made by con-
scientious clinical researches and by seeking experimental evidence for the validity of certain general intuitions about human nature than by devising tests to measure with precision things that have no influence on the course of life. Psychology should not lose sight of human nature as it operates in everyday existence.

We have speculated freely, with an understanding, let us hope, of what we were about. If a psychologist of personality had to limit his discourse to theories that were securely proved he would have nothing to recount. In his realm there are no certainties.

In our explorations we attempted to get below the social derm of personalities. Indeed, we became so bent upon the search for covert springs of fantasy and action that we slighted necessarily some of the more obvious and common phases of behaviour. This has resulted in a certain distortion which may seem great to those whose vivid experiences are limited to what is outwardly perceived and public, to what is rational and consciously intended.

HENRY A. MURRAY

Cambridge, Massachusetts

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EXPLORATIONS IN PERSONALITY

EXPLORATIONS IN PERSONALITY

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

H. A. MURRAY

MAN is to-day's great problem. What can we know about him and how can it be said in words that have clear meaning ? What propels him ? With what environmental objects and institutions does he interact and how ? What occurrences in his body are most influentially involved ? What mutually dependent processes participate in his differentiation and development ? What

courses of events determine his pleasures and displeasures ? And, finally, by what means can he be intentionally transformed ? These are antique questions, to be sure, which in all ages have invited interest, but to-day they more insistently demand solution and more men are set for the endeavour. There is greater zest and greater promise of fulfilment.

The point of view adopted in this book is that personalities constitute the subject matter of psychology, the life history of a single man being a unit with which this discipline has to deal. It is not possible to study all human beings or all experiences of one human being. The best that can be done is to select representative or specially significant events for analysis and interpretation. Some psychologists may prefer to limit themselves to the study of one kind of episode. For instance, they may study the responses of a great number of individuals to a specific situation. They may attempt to discover what changes in the situation bring about important changes in response. But, since every response is partially determined by the after-effects of previous experiences, the psychologist will never fully understand an episode if he abstracts it from ontogeny, the developmental history of the individual. Even phylogeny, or racial history, may have to be con-

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sidered. The prevailing custom in psychology is to

study one function or one aspect of an episode at a time perception, emotion, intellection or behaviour and this is as it must be. The circumscription of attention is dictated by the need for detailed information. But the psychologist who does this should recognize that he is observing merely a part of an operating totality, and that this totality, in turn, is but a small temporal segment of a personality. Psychology must construct a scheme of concepts for portraying the entire course of individual development, and thus provide a framework into which any single episode natural or experimental may be fitted.

The branch of psychology which principally concerns itself with the study of human lives and the factors that influence their course, which investigates individual differences and types of personality, may be termed 'personology' instead of * the psychology of personality/ a clumsy and tautological expression. 1

Personology, then, is the science of men, taken as gross units, and by definition it encompasses * psycho-analysis' (Freud), * analytical psychology' (Jung), 'individual psychology' (Adler) and other terms which stand for methods of inquiry or doctrines rather than realms of knowledge.

In its intentions our endeavour was excessively ambitious. For we purposed nothing less than (i) to construct methodically a theory of personality ; (2) to devise techniques for getting at some of the more important attributes of personality ; and (3) by

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